QUALITY STARTS HERE: GUIDELINES FOR BLENDED AND ONLINE LEARNING

The Exceptional Blended and Online Learning Team (EBOLT)

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Authors

I am a retired 7th grade US history teacher with a Master's degree in Curriculum Instruction and I am currently working on my second Master's from George Mason University. In addition to teaching US history for 27 years, I have also been a sponsor of after school activities like cheer and pom, team leader, history department chair as well as participated in numerous pilot programs instituted by the district. Online learning can personalize learning and eliminate time, space, pace, path and allows for personalization of the learning experience. Using technology effectively can amplify and transform the learning, it can be interactive, engaging and promote creativity instead of learning being a passive experience, as long as it is not being used as a substitute for instruction. The technology has to be used in a way that transforms the learning and impacts student learning in a positive way. The most effective way to deliver instruction in an online format is in a blended teaching (combination of face to face and computer mediated learning) format utilizing core knowledge and skills around personalization. Blended teaching allows the shift from teacher-led practices to more student centered practices that give students power over their own learning. In a blended learning environment, differentiation and personalization are combined. Online learning continues to grow, if it is going to be a sustainable and viable alternative to the traditional setting then a set of standards that outline and measure what a quality program online learning program must include is mandatory.
-***Lolita Breckenridge***

I am a 4th grade teacher in the Fairfax County Public Schools Virtual Program. This is the first year of this program and it is based on the medical needs preventing in-school learning of many FCPS students during the COVID pandemic. It is a program that services students ranging from Preschool through 12th grade with general education, special education, specialists, and advanced academic educational support. I currently have 14 students in my class and there are 2 fourth grade teachers. I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Radford University, a Masters degree from Marymount University, and am currently in my last semester of my graduate program at George Mason University focusing on blended and online learning in schools. I believe that while technology adds so much to teaching, it shouldn't be used just for the sake of using it. My definition of quality instruction using technology is a curriculum that improves student engagement as well as provides access to content for different learners. (JES)
-***Elaine Simonsen***

I am a Ph.D. student in the literacies, culture, and reading education program at GMU. I am a public school teacher in Korea teaching reading, writing, and literature in grades 10-12. I was a Korean language instructor at GMU and am currently working as a

Graduate Research Assistant at the CEHD department. I earned my B.A. from Seoul National University, majoring in language and literature education, and an M.A. from Texas A&M University in ESL education and educational technology. I started interested in online and blended learning when the pandemic started. I was taking courses in the Ph.D. program at that time, and all the courses shifted to online classes due to the Covid-19, and I started seeing the possibilities and challenges of online/blended learning. After completing all the required courses in my program, I had a chance to take electives in the EDIT program. It is my fourth semester taking classes in the EDIT program since fall 2020. My definition of quality learning is a lesson that helps students have a meaningful experience and grow through the learning.
-Kate Park

I am a 1st grade teacher in Manassas City Public Schools. I taught kindergarten for 24 years and this is my 3rd year in 1st grade at Haydon Elementary. I am one of the general education teachers (1 of 2) in the grade level, and then there are three dual teachers. Our school is the only dual language elementary school in the city. This is my second semester in the EDIT program and I have learned so much and have been able to teach my students lots of technology tools and skills that have helped my little ones with blended learning. I feel that quality online learning allows students to be exposed to a different way of learning and allows for more options for space, pace and path to work on activities and assignments. This allows teachers opportunities for feedback and explanation for the students.
- Kara Hagerman

I am a fourth grade teacher in Danville Public Schools. I was also a math interventionist, first grade teacher, and last year a virtual fourth grade teacher. My elementary school has three general education grade level teachers, with two of us experienced with teaching completely virtually last year. The experience of teaching virtually stoked my interest in blended learning, which led me to the EDIT program. I feel that quality online learning is more about experiences than changing an existing in person program to online, where students and teachers are given more opportunities for personalized learning.
- Christy Woody

I am a Kindergarten teacher at the American Community School of Abu Dhabi. I have taught in many places around the world. My husband is a US diplomat, and he takes us around the globe every two to three years; we are on the move. I had a chance to teach in many different schools. I have taught PYP at Stamford American School in Singapore, 4th grade at a DoDEA school in Germany, ELL at the Tashkent French

school in Uzbekistan. I have also taught pre-school while I was in college in SLC, Utah. This is my second semester in the EDIT program, I have loved it. The program gives me a broader overview of how technology should be used in the classroom. It also gives me an understanding of what quality in online education is.

- Cleia Peterson

Introduction

Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to act as a growing document that provides resources and information to teachers who are either interested in, actively teaching in, or possibly teaching in any type of online environment. This collaborative document will benefit administrators, teachers and students alike as it will encourage intentional curriculum development.

Issues and Concerns Related to Quality of K-12 Blended and Online Learning

- Lack a definition of quality learning
- No set of national or universal standards/ guidelines to measure programs
- Lack of professional development training on the different types of blended learning formats and implementation
- Lack of time for lesson design and planning
- Limited case studies, research and data in the K-12 domain
- Attempt to use in-person method of teaching in online environment

Challenges to achieving quality K-12 Online Learning

- Teacher buy-in and professional development to guide the new structure in t school
- Lack of parent involvement
- A shortage 0f devices in some areas
- Intermittent connection
- Software support
- Needing to recreate assessments/assignments so young children can complete and submit
- Having enough special education certified staff
- The time involved to teach and model good, safe, quality online learning in class and out

Online learning can play an important role in meeting diverse student needs especially in small, rural, and poorly funded school districts. But, many of those school systems are struggling with not having the ability to provide any type of virtual options. I came from a rural area in Virginia and know that even now, those same schools are struggling to provide the same quality education that the rest of the state can. Due to the landscape there, we don't have consistent access to proper and consistent internet

connection! This is unfortunate and usually forgotten/misunderstood by those in the other parts of the state.

- A significant issue can be in the low-income communities, where many students don't have access to technology or the internet, making it impossible to access the content at home.
- Another major issue still struggles to find a budget to fund computers for students to take home.
- Districts do not have a digital curriculum or Learning Management Systems (LMS) to deliver a robust digital experience at home.
- Teachers and administration don't have the proper training or experience to support a good quality eLearning program.
- Families don't have the time or resources to support students at home.
- Low engagement has become a significant issue for many students online. The lack of face-to-face interaction can be a big problem for students K-12, who need it for motivation.
- Personalization is a key element for successful eLearning. The lack of personalization can be an issue if the teacher doesn't know how to personalize learning.

Facts, Statistics about Quality B/OL

ProLiteracy (Spring 2019) surveyed New Readers Press customers and World Education technology newsletter subscribers. 509 responses were received. Of these, 12% were volunteers, 31% were teachers, and 57% were program managers. Slightly less than half (48%) responded that they or their staff implement blended learning. Teachers and volunteers who say they use blended learning represented 25% of all respondents; 22% of respondents were program managers who say most or some of their teachers and/or volunteers use blended learning.

They expressed considerable consensus about the challenges in implementing blended learning. The most common challenge relates to the learners. Nearly half (47%) said the learners have trouble being self-directed enough to make good use of the technology, and 25% reported learners not being interested in using technology. The other challenges focused on their own circumstances including not enough knowledge about technology to take full advantage of its affordances (26%), not having enough planning time (25%), and not having the budget to implement as they would like (22%). For responses listed as “other” challenges, nearly half had to do with access issues to Wi-Fi, hardware, or software.

FAQs

Q. **What is a good example of a definition of quality online learning? (JES)**
A. “By quality, I mean ‘Reaching the same level or better with an online course as for an equivalent face-to-face course.’ This has two quantitative critical performance indicators:

- completion rates will be at least as good if not better for the online version
- grades or measures of learning will be at least as good if not better for the online version” (https://www.tonybates.ca/2012/05/06/nine-steps-to-quality-online-learning-step-1-decide-how-you-want-to-teach-online/)

Q. **What are the components of quality blended learning? (LB)**
A. A program that (is)

- personalized learning experience for each student
- mastery based
- based on high expectations
- allows student ownership/agency (https://youtu.be/npbbl_obYUA)

Q. **What types of blended learning models can be used in the classroom? (KH)**
A. There are multiple types teachers use in the classroom, the main one is the rotation models:

- station rotation
- lab rotation
- flipped classroom
- individual rotation
  Blended Learning in the Elementary School

Q. **Is online education as effective as face-to-face instruction?(CP)**
A. A study done by the US Department of Education found that, on average, students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction. Of course, there are many possibilities as to why online learning has become so popular, especially blended learning. A similar study was done by Mickey Shachar (TIU) and Yoram Neumann (United States University) and stated that online students had a 70%of the time advantage over students in person. The pandemic showed a different side of online learning; students and teachers were involuntarily put in a situation where online learning became a challenge, indicating the need for quality and training on online education and realizing that online learning is not for everyone.

Q. What are the examples of quality dimensions in online learning? (KP)

A.

- Instructor-Learner Interaction: The instructor attempts to stimulate student interest in the course content, to motivate the student, and to facilitate the learning process. (e.g. timely response, frequent feedback)
- Learner-Learner Interaction: Learners interact with other learners (e.g. discussion board, online group work)
- Learner-Interface Interaction: Interaction between a student and the digital interface that mediates all interactions in the online instructional context. (e.g. a learning management system, workable hyperlinks)
- Learner-Cognitive Strategies: Instructors help students become independent, strategic learners. (e.g. problem-solving tasks, knowledge application, reflections)
- Social Presence: Feeling of connectedness between instructor and learner or among learners. (e.g. welcome message, humor, collaboration)

Glossary of terms

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online learning course at different times, it is known as asynchronous learning. This might also be called eLearning or web-based training (WBT). Asynchronous learning allows learners to go through a course at their own pace and on their own schedule. (JES)

Concurrent Model- is when instruction is delivered simultaneously for students in-person, and virtually, at home. Concurrent teaching might be used for a few grades, an entire school, or as a part of a hybrid learning model.

MOOC) Massive Open Online Courses
MOOC has become popular worldwide, allowing students to pursue career development, changing careers, college preparations, supplemental learning, lifelong learning, corporate eLearning & training, and more. Most MOOC doesn't award credit hours, but they might offer certificates. (CP)

MULTIMEDIA: Multimedia refers to the presentation of information and instruction through a combination of graphics, audio, text, or video. Multimedia instruction is often interactive. (JES)

QUALITY LEARNING MODEL: learning that is personalized, mastery-based, based on high expectations and student agency that will lead to new, different and more relevant learning outcomes that are better served online.(LB)

STATION ROTATION MODEL: A sub model of the Rotation Model; students within a given course or subject rotate on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion between classroom-based learning modalities such as small-group or full-group instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, offline assignments, and the required online learning. In this model, students rotate through each station.(LB)

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: When learners participate in an online course with the instructor at the same time each day/week from different places. This learning allows students to work collaboratively with others and get immediate feedback from instructors and peers. (KH)

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM: The virtual classroom refers to a digital classroom learning environment that takes place over the Internet rather than in a physical classroom. It is implemented through software that allows an instructor and students to interact. (JES)

Elements of Quality

Relationship Factor

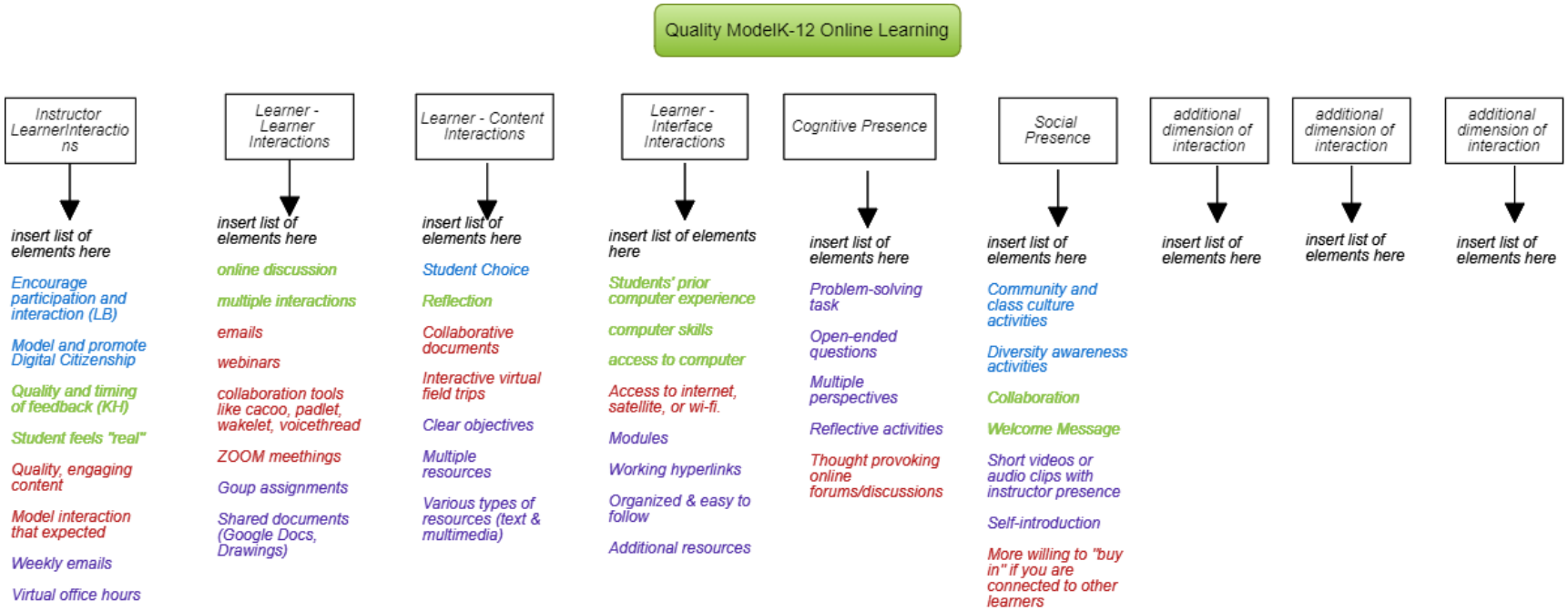
- Connection: Build Social Presence
- Intentional, frequent, and helpful feedback: Students will have less face to face interaction with the teacher simply because of the nature of the beast. Teachers need to make sure that they provide quality feedback frequently to their students in different kinds of ways (voicethread, moto, video, email, comments, etc) to really show support.
- Personalization: Flexibility and targeting personal needs and other interests.
- Encourage participation, participation and growth privately and publicly
- Model and promote digital citizenship to create a community environment that promotes collaboration
- Offer activities online and offline that support diversity and create a supportive class culture

Pedagogical Factor

- Rigorous content: High quality, aligned material; content and assessment.
- Focus on faces and voices - Creating a welcoming, safe community is even more important than ever when you have a virtual classroom. As a teacher, you must be intentional in your planning of engaging morning meetings, discussions, and activities. They should guide and facilitate genuine connections between students and teachers.
- Active Learning: Encourage cognitive effort and deep interaction with concepts.
- Mastery Learning: structure/process that supports practice and built competency.
- Offer student choice to support different interests and learning styles

Technology Factors

- Accessibility: All users can access materials and support needed to learn.
- Ease and Support: Users can access material and support needed to learn.
- Match: Mode(s) are appropriate for goals and content instruction.
- Organization: Navigations and material/ task focus cognitive load on content.
- Immediate feedback: How students receive feedback from instructors.


Quality ModelK-12 Online Learning
Instructor LearnerInteractions
insert list of elements here
Encourage participation and interaction (LB)
Model and promote Digital Citizenship
Quality and timing of feedback (KH)
Student feels "real"
Quality, engaging content
Model interaction that expected
Weekly emails
Virtual office hours
Learner - Learner Interactions
insert list of elements here
online discussion
multiple interactions
emails
webinars
collaboration tools like cacoo, padlet, wakelet, voicethread
ZOOM meethings
Goup assignments
Shared documents (Google Docs, Drawings)
Learner - Content Interactions
insert list of elements here
Student Choice
Reflection
Collaborative documents
Interactive virtual field trips
Clear objectives
Multiple resources
Various types of resources (text & multimedia)
Learner - Interface Interactions
insert list of elements here
Students' prior computer experience
computer skills
access to computer
Access to internet, satellite, or wi-fi.
Modules
Working hyperlinks
Organized & easy to follow
Additional resources
Cognitive Presence
insert list of elements here
Problem-solving task
Open-ended questions
Multiple perspectives
Reflective activities
Thought provoking online forums/discussions
Social Presence
insert list of elements here
Community and class culture activities
Diversity awareness activities
Collaboration
Welcome Message
Short videos or audio clips with instructor presence
Self-introduction
More willing to "buy in" if you are connected to other learners
additional dimension of interaction
insert list of elements here
additional dimension of interaction
insert list of elements here
additional dimension of interaction
insert list of elements here

Quality Elements vs. Models of Online Learning

The purpose of this team is to create a living guide that details the characteristics of a quality blended and online program which can be used to assess the quality of existing programs or guide in the creation of a successful program. After defining exactly what is meant by quality online learning and a set of standards, the next step is introducing the different models and assessing the models strengths in supporting the different dimensions and elements of interaction.

Station Rotation is a Blended Learning Model
Students take a seat, but not for long
Work by yourself, with a small group and even the teacher
Technology at one station, you can't go wrong
Online Learning Quality Assurance League

The Station Rotation Model is a program that includes almost all of the quality dimensions at some point because it is fluid based on the students. Student engagement at its most optimal form can be achieved because it provides the opportunity to create smaller learning communities. Students rotate to every station at some point and can get immediate feedback from the teacher or a management system. Students have opportunities to work at their own pace (personalized), they can collaborate and problem-solve with their peers or the instructor. Students can take on ownership of their learning and the station that incorporates technology eliminates the issue of access.

As you learn from a distance you meet with your class each week
If you enjoy learning with a group, then it's time to sit
You gain a sense of community and immediate feedback
This Synchronous learning may be a good fit
Online Learning Quality Assurance League

Synchronous learning is a quality model of Online learning and happens at the same time each day or week, but not in different locations and in the virtual setting. Students join the discussion and lessons through various forms of technology. They can interact, chat and are able to work in break out rooms to collaborate and create with one another. The instructor is able to teach and work with students virtually and give immediate verbal feedback as needed. It is a need where students can learn from anywhere with a wi-fi connection. The best thing about synchronous learning is the instant feedback, a chance to build a community and learning from anywhere.

Build Your Knowledge and Skills at Your Own Pace

Hardworking Instructors Behind the Scenes
Interactive Exercises with Ample Resources
Support from Online Community Always on Your Screens
Online Learning Quality Assurance League

Asynchronous learning can be described as a form of education or instructional learning that does not occur simultaneously or at the same time. While there may be course deadlines provided by the teacher, instructor, or program, students can access and fulfill each of the deadlines on their own time. In this module, a well-organized course divided by modules and chunks of knowledge and skills will be helpful for students to make progress step by step. Timely, frequent, and meaningful feedback from teachers will help students stay on track and head in the right direction. Providing proper and ample resources will also help students build up knowledge and skills with guidance. Also, a good online community provides an opportunity for students to interact with each other and build a sense of belonging.

Massive Open Online Courses is the new way to go.
My dream was to study a few years ago
Now you can do this Bro.
Unlimited classes to become a computer pro.
You can't say no,
To a Massive Open Online, yo.
Burma Shave.

MOOC has become popular worldwide, allowing students to pursue career development, changing careers, college preparations, supplemental learning, lifelong learning, corporate eLearning & training, and more. Most MOOC doesn't award credit hours, but they might offer certificates. Classes are not regulated, and it doesn't follow a set of standards. There are many different types of courses available open to anyone. It isn't easy to measure MOOC quality assurance due to the broader courses available and the fact that there is no structure to the system. There is a need to foreground learner perspectives, using various measures of learner perceptions, behaviors and actions, and experiences as the foundation for assessing quality.

A CONCURRENT MODEL OF LEARNING
HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS
COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

TO RID BOTH GROUPS OF FROWNS
ONLINE LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE LEAGUE

Features of Concurrent Model:

- Some students attend class in person and other attend virtually
- The teacher meets the needs of both groups of students at the same time
- Teaching 2 groups of students in two different learning environments
- Two different learning experiences
- Use of technology to bridge the gap between both groups of students

I felt that these quality elements, in particular, are essential because equity is so important to all student's learning and being set up in a concurrent model lends itself to inequality in many areas. I feel that making sure every student is getting what they need to fully access the provided curriculum is a daunting task from the very beginning and can feel overwhelming for teachers. To have these essential elements provided, it gives teachers a guide or framework to build their class on.

Assessment and Evaluation

Evaluation Rubric

Exceptional Blended and Online Learning Team **Quality Blended Learning Analytic Assessment Rubric**						
Dimensions of Quality	**Element of Quality Description**	**Poor (1)**	**Fair (2)**	**Good (3)**	**Excellent (4)**	**Comments**
Instructor-Learner Interactions **(Breckenridge)**	Encourages participation and interaction and continuously models inclusive behaviors, expectations and digital citizenship					
	Provide quality, meaningful and timely feedback which could include weekly emails and virtual office hours					

	Creates quality and engaging content, demonstrates knowledge through lectures, chats and discussions					
	Encourages private and public communication, speaks in a conversational tone, provides opportunities to ask questions, personality comes out creating an environment wherein the student feels real					
Learner-Learner Interactions **(Hagerman)**	Encourage group members to work collaboratively in a group discussion and assignments in multiple ways					
	Learners ability to communicate and share/reflect with their peers					
	Communication that shows learners engaging in discussions and chats to show their knowledge of skills					
	Peer interaction and create a sense of community and trust					

Learner-Content Interactions **(Cleia Peterson)**	Allow for different types of interaction.					
	Tutorials (using text, still images, audio, and/ or video). Quizzes (if the feedback is useful and usable)					
	Web quests/simulations (Links to an external site). Reading/video discussion or reflections					
	Include opportunities for active learning. include opportunities for students to think and reflect on what they are learning, how they are learning, and the significance of what they are learning.					
Learner-Interface Interactions **(Kate Park)**	The course is organized by units and lessons that fall into a logical sequence. Each unit and lesson includes an overview describing objectives, activities, assignments, and resources.					
	Clear and consistent navigation is present throughout the course.					
	Rich media are provided in multiple formats for ease of use					

	and access in order to address diverse student needs.					
	Students are offered an orientation to take an online course before starting the coursework.					
	All technology requirements (including hardware, browser, software, etc...) are specified.					
	Prerequisite skills in the use of technology are identified.					
	Copyright and licensing status, including permission to share where applicable, is clearly stated and easily found.					
Learner-Instructional Strategies **(Elaine Simonsen)**	Expectations of what learners need to achieve are clearly defined prior to beginning of coursework and students have successfully reached that goal indicated by thoroughly completed assignments.					
	Students show levels of technical competency when necessary to successfully reach					

	the learning outcomes provided by teachers.					
	Responsive to questions,participates in pertinent discussions, asking clarifying questions, and showing what they know through student led dialogue.					
	Students are actively engaged with teachers and students during classroom activities as indicated by completion of instructional assignments/projects.					

Feedback/Comments						

Define each Scale here. For example, if one of your scale descriptors is Exemplary, what does exemplary look like? If you are assessing Instructor interactions, what would you look for in a course that represented Exemplary?

Reviews of sample online learning opportunities

Virtual Virginia

George Mason EDIT 760 Introduction to Online Learning

FLV and Virtual Virginia

Virtual Virginia and Stride K12

FCPS Virtual Program 4th grade - Simonsen

The Online Academy- World History- Simonsen

George Mason EDRS 8** Synchronous Online Learning

George Mason EDRD 8** Bichronous Online Learning

Conclusion

The purpose of this guide was to act as a growing document that provides resources and information to teachers who are either interested in, actively teaching in, or possibly teaching in any type of online environment. It is our hope that this collaborative document will benefit administrators, teachers and students alike as it will encourage intentional curriculum development.

What is quality learning? Quality in learning should be the norm but honestly, it gets lost behind the other numerous tasks that go along with a normal school day. That does not mean that we, the educational community, don't strive to create quality learning situations and environments for our students. An appropriate definition of quality learning must be determined that is universal, the only way to do that is to create a set of standards that can assess programs. What does quality learning look like? Once a definition of quality learning is established and a set of standards have been set for the k-12 arena, then existing k-12 blended, and online learning programs can be assessed and begin the process of collecting necessary data that will reveal if a district is offering a quality blended or online learning program based on the criteria developed by EBOLT and included in this guide.

Online education has expanded in the past few years, and navigating all those options can be challenging. QOBL is the key to getting quality education online. Lupita Romo-Gonzálezan from New America reports that when organizing an online school, it is necessary to have “five pillars:

1. Implement and manage the class structure and clear communication,
2. Delineate clear and aligned learning objectives,
3. Provide regular feedback,
4. Build on supportive technology, and
5. Support student connection and community.”

These pillars are just a few guidelines online schools and teachers have to think about before implementing them in their classrooms, schools, and districts. There are numerous ways to have quality control in online schools; as technology changes, quality control also needs to change. The goal is to maintain quality education online.

Quality Online and Blended Learning can and will take on many faces if done correctly! One of the most attractive features for both students and teachers is the fact that learning can be done the way that best suits the learner. It can provide an individualized learning path, it can provide flexibility for students to work that normally

isn't there in a traditional classroom, and it allows students to show what they know in a way that makes sense to them. This is no easy task and it’s one that educators must take on with passion and focus. We should never stop researching, learning and growing in this field- to benefit our students.

Quality Online Blended Learning is a way for students to be able to learn using multiple tools. This allows for the student to feel independent in how they best learn. When they can choose their own learning path, they feel so excited to share what they have learned. It may be a struggle for some teachers to let go and allow the students this opportunity, but it is a way to begin to guide children to be independent and strengthen thier minds for the future. When students feel included, cared for and part of a family, they are more engaged and ready to learn.

During the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, interest in online/blended learning has increased. However, concerns have also emerged about students' mental health issues and lower academic achievements during this time, especially in K-12 education. We need to think about what quality online learning is and how we realize it to solve these problems at this point. Quality online/blended learning requires standards at school-level, district-level, or state-level, and systemic support based on the standards are necessary to achieve it. Online/blended learning has many advantages and will be an important part of education in the future. To fully utilize its benefits and reduce its risks, it is essential to think about the practical ways to accomplish quality online/blended learning.

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