

OLTD 511
Reflection on Evidence 1

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Become familiar with common terms, definitions and elements related to online environments
 - Develop a theoretical understanding of Blended Learning and the models associated with it.
- Understand, design and commit to student success in online learning environments
- Develop practical and technical skills in all phases of concept, development, design, implementation, etc.

Evidence: Assignment #2 - Assessing Blended Programs

Reflection:

This assignment was completed in the second week of the OLTD 511 course after first reading the introductory chapters of our course text, *Blended*, by Michael Horn and Heather Staker (2015) in which the authors defined blended learning and described various models of blended learning. For this assignment I was tasked with assessing ten blended learning programs based on short video overviews of the programs available as premium content connected to our text. The California State University's Rubric for Online Instruction was used as a framework for program evaluation. After completing the program evaluations, I was to rank the program models evaluated from 1 to 10 and provide a brief rationale for my ranking choices.

Reading the descriptions of the different blended learning models in the text then seeing these models in action in various ways gave me a much better understanding of the range of implementation possibilities for blended learning. Having taught with Navigate (NIDES) for the past six years, I have experienced some ways in which blended learning can be put into practice but I did not have the knowledge of the associated vocabulary and defining elements of each model. In order to complete this assignment I first had to ensure that I had a clear understanding of the blended models that Horn and Staker (2015) categorize as hybrid innovations, including station rotation, lab rotation and the flipped classroom, as well as those that they categorize as disruptive innovations including the flex model, a la carte, enriched virtual and individual rotation. I found that the disruptive models were most familiar to me as I was able to

anchor each of these concepts to a program that I have either taught or observed as part of the Navigate faculty. The hybrid models are what I initially found the video segments to be the most valuable in illustrating as these are largely outside of my realm of practical experience. While trying to classify each of the programs viewed in the videos I learned more about the defining characteristics of each of the blended models, as well as the similarities that can be seen across models, in particular the element of increased student choice and control over their own learning. In each blended model that I observed, it was clear that the implementation of blended learning was supporting enhanced personalization of learning for the students in some fashion. As I worked through the evaluation of each sample program, I also found myself considering how I would evaluate my own blended learning program and supporting online courses according to the six domains of the California State University's Rubric for Online Instruction and in extension make improvements to enhance the overall experience for my students. Beyond expanding my knowledge of ways in which the various blended learning models can be put into action in this assignment, I also learned to critically assess and evaluate a program by looking at specific elements, including opportunities for interaction and communication among students and teachers, incorporating activities targeting the development of higher order skills such as critical thinking and problem solving skills, assessment strategies, the use of technology and opportunities for student feedback.

Having a solid understanding of blended learning and the various associated models is important as an educator as it supports creative and innovative thinking when it comes to supporting student learning and solving a wide range of problems that may exist both among current consumers in the brick and mortar school system and when it comes to nonconsumers of our educational system. With the enhanced theoretical understandings that I now have, I believe I am better equipped to consider various possibilities for addressing common challenges such as increased class sizes, a diverse range of student achievement levels, or finding ways to engage learners that do not attend the traditional school setting, and to support my colleagues in this process as well.

Being able to critically assess and evaluate a program after implementation is an important part of the program design cycle. It is through program evaluation that educators and administrators can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to student success and ensure that their program is doing what it was intended to do. The information gathered through program assessments can provide specific direction for program revisions or enhancements and allow for resources, including time, to be allocated in the most efficient and effective ways. Conducting regular program reviews

and assessments can support educators in moving forward toward their desired targets and best meet the needs of their learners. While the categories for program evaluation provided in the rubric that we used for this assignment may not be the best fit, it does provide a starting point and some direction for the potential development of an alternate program evaluation tool that incorporates what a given district or school believes are the essential criteria necessary to achieve the goals that they have identified for their learners. After completing this course I have a better ability to evaluate my own program as I know some of the right questions to ask and details to look for. I believe applying this knowledge and the practical skills developed will allow me to better support student learning overall.

Reference:

Horn, M. & Staker, H. (2015). Blended : Using disruptive innovation to improve schools.
San
Francisco, CA :Jossey-Bass.