



Blending teachers and e-Learning

The effectiveness of online learning to develop 21st century skills

According to the NCREL *Synthesis of New Research on K-12 Online Learning*, online learning is rapidly growing, expands educational options and provides equal opportunities for all learners. But just as important, the study proves that online learning is effective and that online learning can actually improve teaching. (“On average, students seem to perform equally well or better academically in online learning.”)

For example, it cites that “of those who reported teaching face-to-face while teaching online or subsequently, three in four reported a positive impact on their face-to-face teaching.” Similar results were also found in a recent 93 page report by SRI International for the Department of Education.

That is great news since at the heart of it all, technology and tools can engage students and assist with solving the challenges of educational scale and affordability. By democratizing education, making lessons more interactive and visually appealing, and providing these supplemental educational resources 24/7 to today’s busy teachers and parents, online content can further educational objectives and reach all children, regardless of their ZIP code.

Ideas for complementing, and extending, learning beyond the classroom

What are some ideas for blending classroom and online learning day-to-day in the classroom? Depending on the proficiency level of a child in specific subject areas, as well as the availability of resources at the school, the online learning can be used to support an

this, the teacher will ask the children to take a specific online learning course — from the math curriculum in this example — in small groups or individually. The teacher will walk around, monitor progress, and help children where needed.

Example 2

The teacher will access and launch an online course in front of the class and project the course on a screen for all to see. He/she will ask children related questions and get answers on the various exercises. After the course has been completed in front of the class, the teacher may ask the children to go to their computers in groups or individually and take the same course and/or take a more advanced course on the same topic.

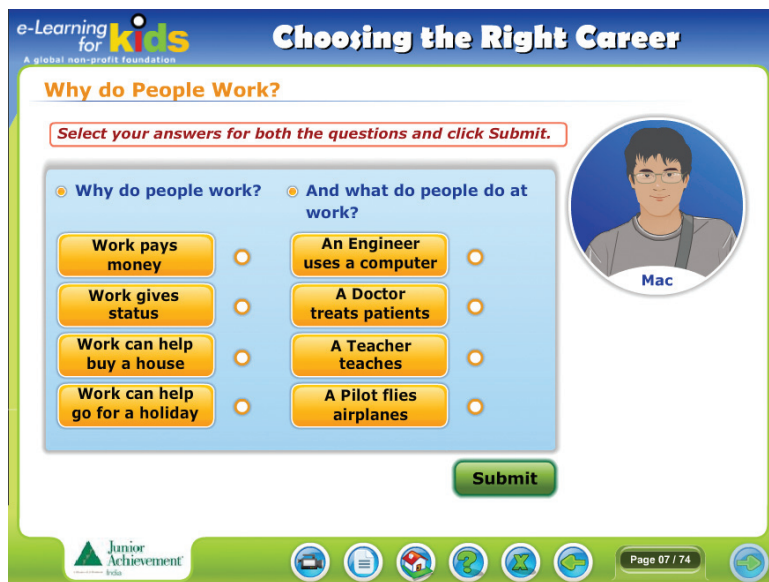
Example 3

The teacher will explain a subject in the class and ask the children to take an online course on this subject as part of their homework. Depending on the availability of computers at the school, the children can take the course in the computer room at school or in the after

school care center or other such facility equipped with computers or at home. The teacher will follow up with the children in the classroom and explore if any of them ran into difficulties doing their assignment(s).

Example 4

The teacher requests children who see BLENDING TEACHERS page 64



existing classroom curriculum, provide additional practice at school or at home and/or introduce additional learning time and instructional elements into an existing curriculum. Some specific pedagogical usage models include:

Example 1

The teacher will give a brief introduction on a specific topic — e.g. multiplication — in front of the class. After

Blending teachers

continued from page 63

have challenges with specific subjects to take additional online courses — in school or at home — in order to enhance their proficiency level. The courses will provide additional insights into the subject matter as well as practice opportunities.

Example 5

Children who are ahead of the “average” child in the class in certain subject areas may be asked to take advanced online learning courses in certain subject areas to further stimulate their interest and leverage their talent.

Example 6

A number of courses can be recommended by the teacher to children for additional practice of difficult topics. For example, children are asked to take courses on fractions to have more opportunities to develop their competencies and skills by completing additional exercises.

Example 7

There might not be enough time in

the existing school day/curriculum to develop competencies in certain areas which are considered important or of general interest for children — e.g. computer skills, health education, life skills or even learning another language. The teacher may encourage children to take online learning courses in a computer room at school or at home.

Example 8

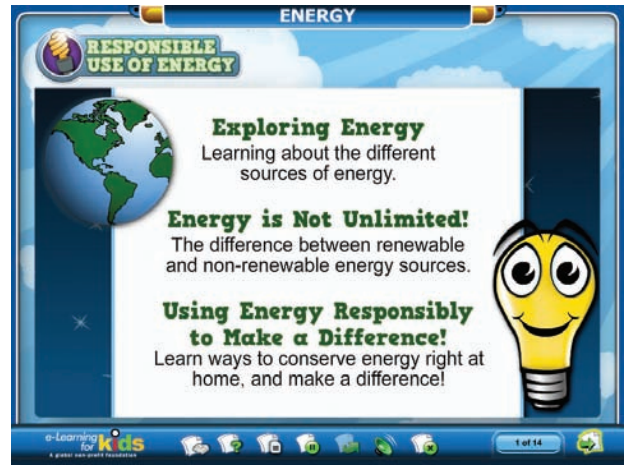
The online courses are taken as part of homeschooling. Parents will instruct their child to take a number of courses and provide them with help/support as necessary as a way to supplement the homeschooling requirements.

In summary, online learning courses can be prescribed by teachers or parents, not only as a way to supplement formal curriculum opportunities as described above, but also to make learning “fun,” allow children to learn at their own pace, and informally teach them to take

charge and be in control of their own learning.

Strong instructional design: The cornerstone of successful online learning

Online learning requires strong instructional design principles to support



the various learning styles a teacher may encounter. These include strong visual and auditory — narrative, music — cues. From a content perspective,

it is recommended to use bullets, small paragraphs and shorter sentences. Also to draft clear and concise instructions so the learner can be guided appropriately through each section. All courses should have objectives that are measurable and can be used with various didactical models — Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism).

An array of different exercises should be woven into the instructional design approach with the questions directly supporting and validating the course objectives. A variety of different question types — Drag and Drop, Fill-in, Multiple Choice, Matching, Ordering, True/False, etc. — aid in keeping the learning connected with the subject matter. Courses should provide more than one chance to answer the question correctly. For example, if the learner provides an incorrect response, the feedback should give support to the learner so he/she can increase their chances of answering correctly. If the learner provides the correct response, the feedback rationale reinforces the learner's choice.

These elements give learners robust and rewarding learning experiences.

Implementation: one school and child at a time

One example of an online learning curriculum for school children is the e-Learning for Kids foundation (EFK) which is a global, non-profit foundation dedicated to fun and free learning on the Internet — or via CD-ROM or pre-installed on computers — for children ages five to 12. The foundation was one of the 2011 Learning! 100 award recipients honored by Elearning! Media Group, publishers of Elearning! And Government Elearning! Magazines.

Accessing the courseware: with OR without Internet

Because many schools, and kids at home, may have access to older computers and/or may not have Internet access, or it may be too slow, it is important that online learning resources are provided in both an online and offline format.




Online portals for learning can also be a site where parents get more engaged in their kids' education and educators champion e-Learning and contribute their knowledge on how kids can learn better.

Laurie, a certified Pre K-6 U.S. teacher summarizes it all nicely when she states: "As a classroom teacher, the need to

Vicki Cerda is the Director of Marketing and Outreach at e-Learning for Kids. Michael Williams is the Director of Courseware Development at e-Learning for Kids.

For more information visit www.e-learningforkids.org or email info@e-learningforkids.org.

e-Learning for Kids
A global non-profit foundation



Browse for free Online Courseware!
For Kids of 6 - 12 years!

Choose From:
Math & Science
Health & Life Skills
Language Arts
Learn English
Keyboard Navigation

Visit <http://www.e-learningforkids.org>

About e-Learning for Kids: Established in 2004, e-Learning for Kids is a global nonprofit foundation dedicated to fun and free learning on the Internet for children ages 5 - 12 with courses in math, science, reading, health and computers. Currently, more than 25 e-learning related companies, several associations and 70 individuals are sponsors and supporters of the Foundation. An all-volunteer staff consists of education and e-learning experts and business professionals from around the world committed to making a difference. e-Learning for Kids is actively seeking funding, volunteers, sponsors and courseware developers; get involved! For more information, please visit www.e-learningforkids.org.

raise students who know how to use the Internet is of the utmost importance ... True interactive courses [can help] to teach concepts and reinforce classroom learning in all subject areas."

With online learning being one of the fastest growing trends for using technology in education today, this hybrid approach enhances the teacher-student interaction to make a for a successful partnership that blends the best of both worlds.