

Effect of Blended Learning Professional Learning on K-3 Educators: An Action Research Plan

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## **Effect of Blended Learning Professional Learning on K-3 Educators:**

### **An Action Research Plan**

Over the past year, I have been developing an [innovation plan](#) that focuses on implementing a blended learning approach to professional learning (PL) within my organization, Reading Horizons. I will conduct an action research study on how blended learning might affect the PL attendee's experience and level of preparedness for implementing the Reading Horizons Discovery program. The mission of Reading Horizons is to eradicate illiteracy. How we prepare educators to deliver foundational reading instruction is likely to have an effect on student literacy outcomes. The purpose of my study is to determine in what ways, if any, a blended learning approach to professional learning will affect PL attendees' level of understanding of the Reading Horizons Discovery program and their confidence in implementing it with students. When educators have a full understanding of program content, methodology, and resources, they will be more confident and effective teachers for their students.

### **Fundamental Research Question**

My fundamental research question is 'How does a blended learning approach to Reading Horizons professional learning affect K-3 educators' program knowledge and preparedness to deliver effective foundational literacy instruction?' Despite there being a vast body of research on the efficacy of blended learning, there are limited studies that have been conducted specifically in the educator professional learning context. Asking this question is important to contribute to the available body of research and gauge the effectiveness of Reading Horizons Discovery PL events. As an organization, we value educators' opinions and data, and believe in making adjustments to our products to ensure that educators are able to successfully implement essential foundational reading instruction.

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

The [literature reviewed](#) clearly outlines various useful blended learning models that each combine traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning elements in different ways (. Blended learning allows learners to access course materials and engage in activities both in an in-person environment and through digital platforms. The literature sheds light on the clear benefits of utilizing blended learning that can be applied to the educator PL context. These benefits include increased flexibility for learners, personalized pacing, access to a wide range of resources, and the potential for enhanced engagement. However, blended learning also presents challenges that will need to be addressed and overcome, such as the need for robust technology infrastructure, effective integration of online and in-person components, and maintaining engagement and motivation to complete online components that may be viewed as optional (Hoffman, 2014). Based on this foundation of background knowledge, blended learning could be a viable solution to providing ongoing and effective curriculum-based PL. It will be enlightening to conduct an action research study to determine what effect, if any, blended learning has on K-3 educators' program knowledge and preparedness to deliver effective foundational literacy instruction using the Reading Horizons Discovery program.

## **Study Information**

This action research plan will be used to evaluate the impact of a blended learning approach to Reading Horizons Discovery PL on K-3 educator program knowledge and preparedness to deliver effective foundational literacy instruction. Educators will participate in two in-person synchronous PL events that incorporate active learning strategies, expert modeling, peer-to-peer practice, and reflection. During the time between these in-person events, educators will have access to digital resources in the form of short Implementation Essentials

videos and lesson-embedded Real-Time Coaching videos to learn more about instructional best practices, program design and program content. These digital resources are designed to provide ongoing PL support to teachers during the implementation phase. This blended learning approach is different than the PL that we have offered in the past. It will be key to gather and analyze data to determine the effect, if any, of this blended learning design on how well educators know the program content and how prepared they feel to teach it.

### **Research Design**

My action research employs a mixed methods design. I will collect both qualitative and quantitative data via a Google form survey that incorporates Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to understand educators' experience with curriculum-based blended learning PL.

While typically, my organization only collects data following in-person PL components, continuous data collection, and analysis should be an integral part of the action research, enabling the organization to assess the impact of a blended learning approach on teacher program knowledge and instructional practices during program implementation. The synthesis of findings from both blended learning literature and the action research study will inform the development of a robust, evidence-based PL product that adapts and evolves to meet the ever-changing needs of educators.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The survey data will include Likert-scale data about the PL content, attendee engagement, and attendee preparedness for implementation. The survey data will also include open-response questions to determine what was most beneficial during the PL and what could be improved. In addition to gathering data immediately following the in-person PL event, I will also collect survey response data 6 weeks post-PL event to assess what attendees remembered and

applied in their classroom. This survey will also give attendees an opportunity to share their reflections on what would have been helpful for them and allow Reading Horizons to make adjustments for improvement that may become the topic of future action research. I will utilize this [Google form](#) to collect data from PL attendees that includes both Likert-scale items and open-response questions.

While the survey data will provide me with information about educator program knowledge and self-reported preparedness to implement the Reading Horizons Discovery program, it does not tell me if the educator did, in fact, deliver effective foundational literacy instruction. Therefore, there is one more piece of data I am interested in collecting. Every Reading Horizons customer meets with their dedicated Implementation Manager to review site-wide curriculum-based assessment data in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. I will include the Reading Horizons End of Year (EOY) cumulative skill check data in my analysis to determine the effectiveness of educators' foundational literacy instruction. See Appendix A for the data collection timeline.

I will need to use a variety of analysis techniques to analyze the data collected due to my mixed methods design. For Likert-Scale items, I will look at the percentage of educators who select each rating option in a frequency distribution table and histogram. For open-ended items, I will apply an inductive analysis to identify the patterns and themes that arise within educator responses. Triangulating these two data analyses with site-specific EOY cumulative skill check data will allow me to more fully understand the effect, if any of the blended learning approach to Reading Horizons Discovery PL.

### **Sharing and Communicating Results**

I plan to share the results of my action research study with the PL Product Manager, the PL Content Team, as well as the Certified Facilitator leadership team. These stakeholders were chosen because their roles are directly related to the design and implementation of Reading Horizons PL products. These individuals have demonstrated their willingness to listen to educators, administrators, and PL facilitators and make adjustments to products and procedures to improve educator experience and outcomes. I will share my cohesive action research plan and findings by hosting a Zoom meeting where I present the fundamental research question and the reason it is important for our organization. I will then summarize my review of the literature related to blended learning and outline my data collection plan. Finally, I will create engaging visuals to share the results of my research and data analysis. Collaboration is key. Once we have looked at the research together, then I can facilitate a discussion about what, if anything, needs to change about our PL approach and content. I am hopeful that my organization will be supportive of ongoing action research in a PL context.

### **Final Reflection**

John Dewey has said, “We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience” (2012, p. 78). Reflection is a crucial step in the action research process as it allows us to examine and make sense of the outcomes of the study (Mertler, 2017). Through reflection in collaboration with key organizational stakeholders, we can gain insights into the effectiveness of Reading Horizons PL and the impact this PL has on student literacy gains. While reflecting on the data collected and the patterns and trends identified is important, there are other aspects to consider. Reflection encourages a deeper understanding of the underlying issues that may be related to how facilitators are delivering PL content or the technological infrastructure of the districts we partner with in PL. It will be valuable to confer with the PL facilitators and the

administrators who are overseeing the PL to determine their views on the content and blended learning approach. This information will help us refine research strategies for the future. In essence, reflection is the bridge between theory and practice in action research, enabling continuous learning and improvement, ultimately leading to more informed decision-making and positive change in the Reading Horizons PL environment.

## References

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## Appendix A

