EDLD 5317: Resources for Digital Environments
Publication Outline
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• What is the topic of your article?

My innovation plan involves implementing a blended learning approach to Reading Horizons professional learning. In the past year, this approach has been realized in a way that is innovative and aligns with the 5 key principles of effective professional learning (Gulamhussein, 2013). I would like to write an article for my organization's blog about how this innovation in PL allows our organization to show up as a supportive partner to the schools and districts we work with.

• Introduction to your article

Picture a room full of educators desperate to improve their students' reading skills, and consequently, their reading test scores. Their district has adopted a new foundational literacy program; today is their chance to learn about it. How will it be different from what they have done in the past? How will they teach it? What new materials will they have? At the end of the full-day Professional Learning (PL) event these same educators are tired, brains full of new information, practices, and routines; yet they still aren't feeling ready to teach their students using the new program. Why not? They didn't get enough time to practice. Blended learning could be the solution to this issue. What if teachers could access the information they need, right when they need it, on their own devices and on their own schedule? This would free up valuable face-to-face time with an expert PL facilitator to focus on active learning experiences. Let's take a closer look at what blended learning is, how it benefits educators when implemented in PL, and how blended learning can make PL more effective.

• Where do you plan to submit (consider 2-3 options)

I am confident that I will be able to publish my article on the Reading Horizons blog, however, I will first submit it to Edutopia or ISTE for broader reach. I may not be able to submit to ISTE without a paid membership.

• What is the connection to your innovation plan or initiative?

This article will address the recently updated blended learning approach to Reading Horizons PL. My innovation plan proposes another option for realizing an RH PL blended learning model. My role in my organization has shifted since I began my ADL courses and in that time, the professional learning department has changed how RH provides PL. The update is a true blended learning approach. It is ongoing throughout the school year, provides just-in-time support during implementation, is engaging with active learning strategies, provides clear modeling by a program expert, and is highly specific and relevant to teachers' grade levels and subject matter. This directly connects to my innovation plan. I want to talk more about my own experience as a PL facilitator and the positive outcomes that this innovative PL approach is having on educators using the Reading Horizons program.

• How can this information help others?

All educators are involved in PL throughout their careers. While not all educators will be utilizing the Reading Horizons curriculum, the structure of innovative blended learning PL and outlining what makes it effective can certainly help others who are designing PL to deliver to teachers or admins who are making decisions on what type of PL to purchase or provide for their school/district. The concepts of blended learning that are outlined in this article will also be helpful to others who may be interested in trying out blended learning in their classroom or school.

• Lessons learned or hoped to learn? Key takeaways/stories/experiences.

After each RH PL event, all attendees complete a feedback survey about their experience. There is an open-response question on the survey that allows attendees to share what aspect of the PL was most beneficial to them. Overwhelmingly, PL attendees call out hands-on active learning experiences as most beneficial. Specifically, attendees say that they enjoyed the opportunity to practice teaching, playing games that can be played with students in the classroom, and expert modeling. However, as a PL facilitator, I have learned that I sometimes have to sacrifice these active learning experiences in favor of delivering all of the content and answering questions.

I hope to learn how to provide the most effective PL possible so that educators leave the session prepared to teach the content to students and improve their literacy skills. Our goal is the same as the districts and schools we partner with–get students reading at or above grade level.

In one PL event, I had multiple people come up to me and express appreciation for keeping them engaged and providing several hands-on activities that helped them connect the content to instructional practices. I want this to be the case for every person who attends RH PL!

As educators, we know that our students do best when we provide explicit instruction that follows a gradual release of responsibility model (Archer & Hughes, 2011). I have seen this approach also work wonders for myself and my PL attendees. The facilitator models and explicitly teaches the phonics skills needed, and then we play a game called Act-A-Word. We get attendees up at the front of the room and the group guides them to "act out" how we would use the RH unique marking system to mark the word. It is a highly interactive, visual and spatial process. During PL, attendees play this game with the words 'price' and 'prince.' The visual representation of why the silent e at the end of the word no longer influences the vowel to spell its long sound in 'prince' is truly priceless. (Explanation-By adding the consonant n, the e is now too far removed from the vowel i to make it spell the long sound, instead the consonant n and the consonant sound /s/ make the vowel spell its short sound.)

• What digital resources will be included in your article? Describe your resources.

To implement blended learning into RH PL, we utilize short 3-5 minute videos embedded in the lesson summary for each lesson in the curriculum. These lesson-specific support videos

cover the content taught in the lesson, outline how to use recommended resources, identify common student misconceptions, and include teacher tips for student correction and engagement.

In addition to the lesson-embedded support videos, teachers also have access to Implementation Essentials videos that outline general curriculum information and instructional best practices that apply to all lessons. These 4-7 minute videos are available to watch on-demand for teachers.

These two digital resources work in tandem to ensure teachers have all the information they need to successfully teach the curriculum while freeing up valuable in-person synchronous PL time for active learning and practice activities.

• Conclusion for your article

Now that you know about a better way for educators to engage with PL, think about how you can utilize your own digital resources to provide a blended learning experience to educators in your school or district. Remember, blended learning means that some portion of the learning takes place digitally and should allow for learner choice in as many aspects as possible (Staker et al., 2014). For PL to be effective it needs to be ongoing, offer support during the implementation phase, utilize engaging active learning strategies, including modeling, and be specific and relevant to the educators participating (Gulamhussein, 2013). If we can implement these concepts, we will have a front-row seat to both teacher and student growth.

• References

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.

Gulamhussein, A. (2013, Sept). *Teaching the teachers. Effective professional development in an era of high stakes accountability.* Retrieved from Center: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/system/files/2013-176_ProfessionalDevelopment.pdf

Staker, H., Christensen, C. M., & Horn, M. B. (2014). Blended: Using disruptive innovation to improve schools. Wiley

• Include where you plan to submit and their guidelines so we will have a full understanding of your plan and the publication that you wish to submit at the end of the course

I plan to submit to the following publications:
Edutopia https://www.edutopia.org/about/your-turn-write-us
ISTE https://www.iste.org/membership/submission-guidelines/blog-submission-guidelines
Reading Horizons blog (no guidelines available) https://www.readinghorizons.com/blog/