



THE IMPACT OF BLENDED LEARNING ON STUDENT MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN READING AND WRITING

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: November 4th 2021 Accepted: December 4th 2021 Published: January 7th 2021</p>	<p>This article study answered three questions: 1) What impact do blend learning strategies have on student motivation in a Reading Seminar elective course classroom? 2) How does the implementation of blended learning strategies in a Reading Seminar elective course affect student writing skill? 3) How does the implementation of blended learning strategies in a Reading Seminar elective course affect student reading skill? The results of this study could be transferred to non-professional students to help teachers analyze their own strategies for engaging students and for increasing student achievement with blended learning instructional methods.</p>

Keywords: At-risk learners, blended learning, 21st Century Skills, 21st Century Teacher, Common Core Standards, Common Lit digital curriculum, device, digital immigrants, digital natives, double-dipped, LMS (learning management system), MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), marginal students, mastery learning, onboarding, 1:1 classroom, reading seminar.

A disconnect exists between teachers and students in today's 21st-century classrooms. While teachers are charged with meeting the needs of all students, the prevalence of technology has required teachers not only to bridge the divide, but also to meet students where they are while in their classrooms. Although Alfred Einstein is often credited for this quote, it is actually from a movie: "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots" (Novak, 2014, para. 7.).

The teacher-researcher for this study was reminded of this concept daily when she saw her classroom of disengaged students with phones in their hands and earbuds in their ears. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) advised teachers not to use technology more often, but to use it more wisely. Expert on blended learning Catlin Tucker (2012) addressed the connection between technology and effective human interaction, instructing teachers to harness teens' obsession with technology and use technology to save class time. After strategically using technology to save class time, teachers implementing blended learning instruction should then require students to interact face to face collaboratively, polishing the 21st- Century skills of collaborating with their peers—of building and maintaining that human interaction without a cell phone or earbuds.

Simply put, blended learning is the ideal 21st century classroom, where students have experiences that teach the skills companies want young workers to

know: creativity, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, collaborative group work, managing technology, and innovation (Tucker, 2012). Educator Catlin Tucker has remained in her own high school English classroom in California while sharing her best practices about blended learning through social media and professional books for teachers. Tucker (2012) stated that classrooms must remain student-centered. To be student-centered, to engage students, to improve learning, teachers must meet students where they are with the use of technology. Indeed, students walk into classrooms in August with varying levels of maturity, cognitive development, and educational experiences that will affect their achievement that school year, but a 21st century teacher must meet them where they are with relevant, current best practices. Teachers who begin this release of control in a blended learning classroom grant more responsibility to students as they begin the tasks of reflection, goal setting, and making choices about their learning. Blended learning combines face to face learning, social interactions with peers, and online instruction. During these various engagements, students are presented material and given opportunities to construct their understanding. The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to determine the impact of blended learning on student motivation and achievement in reading and writing. Student-centered learning "is broadly based on constructivism as a theory of learning, which is built on the idea that learners must construct and reconstruct knowledge in



order to learn effectively, with learning being most effective when, as part of an activity, the learner experiences constructing a meaningful product" (Attard, et al., 2010, p. 2).

A 21st Century teacher offers students opportunities to produce for authentic audiences while modeling the importance of maintaining a responsible digital presence. A 21st Century teacher makes an effort to learn new technologies to share with students, utilizing the Internet and cell phones instead of fighting these tools that are already in the hands of students. Indeed, students walk into classrooms in August with varying levels of maturity, cognitive development, and educational experiences that will affect their achievement that school year, but a 21st Century Teacher must meet them where they are with relevant, current best practices. In short, a teacher today can no longer stand in front of the classroom and deliver information (Prensky, 2016). The information students seek is already there on the Internet. Teachers are accustomed to delivering content through traditional teaching; however, they must harness a teaching style that empowers students (Prensky, 2016). A teacher who empowers students and provides them with opportunities is a 21st Century teacher. An effective teacher understands the importance of challenging students to think, to take action, maintain relationships, and enjoy effective accomplishments. With this being said, that teacher also must remember the importance of the underlying foundation of the relationship she has with the digital natives in her classroom. Teachers will have difficulty achieving a balance in their role as they learn to fluctuate from the "silent facilitator" to the "involved facilitator". The blended learning instructional models provide more opportunities for interaction and engagements using online tools, but teachers should not feel pressured to spend more time grading. Instead, a teacher can assess students more wisely, especially with technology.

The At-Risk Learner and Blended Learning

The importance of this study is the foundation in Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1982). In short, Bandura (1977) stated that students will be motivated to try if they believe they can be successful. Lewis, et al. (2014) identified online learning as a new challenge for at-risk students and discussed several conclusions at the end of their study. At-risk learners need a strong foundation in managing online learning. The LMS must include mastery learning so that at-risk learners can begin with their weaknesses and move at their own pace. At-risk learners need the teacher

as mentor, coach, guide for the face-to-face instruction and guidance. At-risk learners struggle to develop the self-discipline to balance the freedom and time management that they will experience in a blended learning classroom. The conclusions from Lewis, et al. (2014) were essential components for a classroom using blended learning models. Blended learning can be very successful in the non-professional students classroom when the teacher uses the LMS to facilitate feedback about student work and conversations among peers (Tucker, 2012). The technology component of blended learning in English classrooms can motivate students to write and improve their writing. Students in today's classrooms are different than previous generations in how they learn, but educators do have the tools to meet the needs of today's students. Blended learning models can meet the needs of today's students with flexible learning environments that accommodate student choice, interest, and pace of learning while at the same time using technology to engage them in deeper learning with authentic audiences and meaningful activities. Factors such as motivation and self-efficacy have always affected students, making an educator's job more challenging to reach those students.

Blended learning models of instruction can build motivation and self-efficacy for students with the components of goal setting, tracking progress, engagement with peers, and feedback from the teacher.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study was to determine the impact of blended learning on reading and writing achievement and student motivation. Blended instruction can be overwhelming for teachers, and technology can be a deterrent to student learning, so blended learning must be planned and implemented carefully with an understanding of how to blend face to face instruction and online instruction. In addition, an explanation of the context and setting of the study and the role of the researcher is provided.

The increase of technology tools accessible to teachers for instruction and the distractions for students from cell phones and other personal devices (laptops, Chromebooks, iPads) intended for instruction can work against each other in the classroom. Blended learning combines face to face instruction with online instruction. The significance of this study was to identify how teachers could implement blended learning strategies in their own classrooms to increase



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achievement in reading and writing and improve the motivation of their struggling learners using technology as an advantage, not a deterrent, to learning.

This action research study explored how blended learning strategies could affect the motivation, reading, and writing skills of ninth grade high school students "double-dipped" in both English and Reading Seminar class. This study was significant because it explored motivation and instructional strategies for students with marginal skills in reading and writing, topics that continue to interest teachers regardless of their years in the classroom. The qualitative data collection methods included recording the class on video for the teacher-researcher to take notes, conducting pre- and post-study semi-structured interviews, and recording notes in a teacher journal. Quantitative

data collection included conducting pre and post study student opinion surveys, collecting tickets out, and tracking student performance for reading and writing based on reading passages in the Common Lit LMS.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

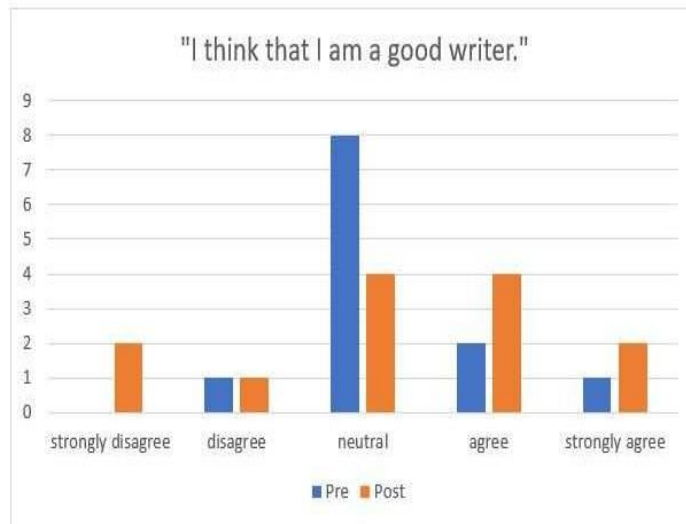
The purpose of this action research study was to examine marginal students and how blended learning may improve their motivation, reading skills, and writing skills. The study provided three sources of qualitative data and three sources of quantitative data. The intent for this study, as for all action research studies implemented by teachers, was for the teacher-researcher to study herself and her practices in order to improve student achievement



The student survey questions 7, 8, and 9 addressed goals of blended learning designed to increase student motivation: making choices, setting goals, and managing their own time. Student responses on the pre-study survey were dispersed across the Likert Scale for these

self-awareness of what helps or hinders their learning regarding making choices, setting goals, and managing their time during Reading Seminar class. While only 1 to 2 students replied “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to these questions, 12 students indicated that they are

Category	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Pre	0	1	8	2	1
Post	2	1	4	4	2



questions. Question 7 asked student-participants if they felt they could make choices about their learning during Reading Seminar class. Three students responded “strongly disagree” or “disagree.” Three students were neutral about making their own choices during class. Six students responded “agree” or “strongly agree” about the ability to make choices in class about their learning in Reading Seminar class. Question 8 asked students if goal-setting helps them learn. Seven students responded “strongly agree” or “agree.” Three students were unsure or “neutral,” and 1 student “strongly disagreed” that goal setting helps them learn. Question 9 asked students if they feel that they manage their time well during Reading Seminar class. Only 4 students replied “strongly agree” or “agree.” Six students were unsure or “neutral” about their time management, and 1 student “disagreed” about his/her ability to manage time during class. Overall, the results of the pre-study student opinion survey, as outlined in Figure 1.1 indicated that students do not have a strong

unsure or “neutral” about understanding these three skills for learning in a Blended Learning classroom. The results of the post-study student opinion survey showed a growth in awareness and confidence in the three blended learning goals of making choices, setting goals, and managing time. The post-study student survey questions 7, 8, and 9 as outlined in Figure 1.1 shows more students selecting “agree” and “strongly agree.” Furthermore, several students admitted during their post-study interviews an increased awareness about themselves as learners. Based on the growth shown between pre-and post-survey questions 7, 8, and 9 and the supporting statements from student-participants in their post-study interviews, the teacher-researcher concluded that student-participants did actualize the three goals of blended learning for this study and grow as learners as a result.

SUMMARY

This study provided a deeper understanding of blended learning and marginal adolescent



learners for the teacher-researcher. Blended learning strategies did not prove to be the root of student motivation for this particular study. Blended learning strategies for this particular study did not provide conclusive evidence that student performance for reading or writing improved. Instead, student maturity and self-awareness, distractions to learning by peers in class, extrinsic rewards such as grades, parent support, and the students' preference for whole-class engagement with the teacher were factors that impacted motivation for the student-participants and affected their performance for the reading and writing assessments.

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