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**Response #2**

**Benefits of Blended Learning**

Traditional methods of teaching, that have persistently stood the tests of time, are being met with revolutionary concepts in education in attempt to better the current systems in place for learning. Focus has gradually shifted from teacher-centric classrooms to student-driven, personalized learning - an arguably more productive and engaging way for students to build their knowledge with facilitation from their teachers, as opposed to conventional instruction. Widespread approaches to education and learning researched thus far have demonstrated the need for review of traditional methods, that is, a consideration of what is most effective for student learning and what is not. In a digital age with younger generations nearly entirely immersed in technology, it is not surprising that an effective method to enhance student learning has been found in the integration of technology and the classroom. Traditional methods however, are not completely replaced, thankfully. Rather, they are revamped to ask something new of teachers: to use technological resources *and* traditional methods to meet the unique learning needs of individual students and set younger generations up for successful futures.

Blended learning is a relatively modern concept in education that refers to learning taking place through various forms of delivery in both traditional and online environments at individual students’ pace and understanding (Blended Learning (B), n.d). Blended learning allows for learning to occur in a more flexible manner; information and learning tools can be accessed outside of the classroom or designated school hours as well as in a classroom via digital devices, all while still offering collaborative feedback and communication between learners (teachers included). Although blended learning can come in a variety of forms and vary in different conditions or circumstances, the desired outcome is generally the same across the board: to enhance learning for every individual on their personal journey through the exploration of what is perhaps the most beneficial learning approach in this day and age. The amalgamation of traditional instruction and online learning can involve any combination of real face-to-face interaction/discussions and online communication, online tests, quizzes or electronically submitted assignments and paper-and-pen projects or presentations and more, depending on the learning goals and better yet, depending on the students (Blended Learning (A), 2013). Hybrid education systems seems to be on the rise as an ever-improving development in K-12 classes interested in reorganizing the delivery and design of their education system (Horn & Staker, 2011). As this innovative and “disruptive” wave of education technology blends into existing educational practices, both teaching and learning practices are affected (Blended Learning (B), n.d). With blended learning, teachers are given the opportunity to create and differentiate lesson plans that give choice and accommodate learning styles in order to meet individual needs of their students.

Online organization, assessment and communication tools are just a few of the ways in which teachers can integrate technology effectively for their students. Online and in-class lessons run parallel to suit specific learning objectives and various technological tools are selected to act as a counterpart that engages students in collaborative and active education while also affording them accountability for their own individual learning (Horn & Staker, 2011). Blended learning allows for a de-emphasis on fully teacher-dominated instruction, although teachers still play a major role, it changes as onus is placed on students to take control of a more personalized approach.

There are undoubtedly benefits to both virtual/online learning and authentic, facilitated learning that takes place in the classroom, and fortunately with the opportunities offered through blended learning, students can find appropriate support from both. Today’s educators are able to combine two valuable and effective means of educating to enhance learning for individual students. Classrooms are changing. The roles of the teacher and students are being redefined as new methods of teaching support teachers in facilitating effectively learners taking a new found responsibility for their learning.

References

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