Westerville City
Blended Learning Cohort Pilot Study Brief

PROGRAM INFO

Innovative program: Elementary Blended Learning Cohort and Blended Learning Cohort and Blended Learning Coach

Innovative program description: For this pilot project, Westerville City Schools identified three Title I school-wide buildings to provide an additional layer of job embedded PD support, in the form of a Blended Learning Coach. This coach works with a small group of 18 volunteer teachers in three buildings, who are interested in improving their teaching practices by the use of a blended learning model. This project meets the need of building technology integration skills in our teachers so that they can comfortably incorporate them into instructional practice.

Learning focus: Elementary, Grades 2-5

Teacher training: Teachers in the pilot project are offered the targeted assistance of a Blended Learning Coach (job embedded PD). Teachers have access to planning or co-teaching with this coach at least once a week, in addition to the coaching services provided by their building Instructional Coach.

Device specifications: All classrooms in this pilot have access to a 1:1 device ratio (no take-home at this time)

Cost: Additional Devices: Chromebooks and Carts-10=$100,000. Coach: salary of 1 FTE for one year.

DISTRICT CONTEXT

District demographics: 14,534 students are in the district, served by 24 schools. 34.4% of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunches. 10.4% of students are English Learners. The District is better than 2:1 student to device ratio with Chromebooks. Teachers in the project have access to 1:1 device ratio.

Pilot demographics: The blended learning cohort includes the 387 students involved in the pilot were in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 in 17 classrooms across the three buildings.

Grades: 2, 3, 4, and 5 (17 classrooms across three buildings)

Students: 387

PILOT GOAL

Increase the capacity of a small group of teachers to develop and implement a blended learning model in order to provide a greater level of personalization of learning for students.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Duration: August 2017-May 2018

Quality of support: 56% of cohort members participated in blended learning professional development and overall had a favorable impression/experience. Spring responses indicated that nearly all had attended and the cohort's experience was further "relevant to their work", "useful" to meeting student needs, and "met their expectations", showing an increase in "agree" or "strongly agree" combined responses. Ranging from up 29%-56% in each of the subcategories.

The largest increase was in the area of "the learning helped me use educational technology to meet student needs."

Implementation model: PD is job-embedded and ongoing during the whole year. It is provided in a blended format, with a face-to-face Blended Learning Coach and an online course in district LMS.

Data collected: Surveys were administered to teachers involved in the Blended Learning Cohort in September and May.

FINDINGS

Actual implementation model: The actual implementation model aligned with the planned implementation. When asked how often their students use educational technology per week during school time, 16 educators reported 5 times or more a week. 100% of the 18 teachers that were identified in the cohort participated. Additionally, three Instructional Coaches, one Tech Integration Coach, three principals, and three district level administrators participated.

Educator engagement: Teachers were asked to share the ways that they use technology in the classroom. In the fall, 16% said they don't use data to inform instructional decision making, while 5% selected this in the spring. This is an 11% decrease. For this question, a decrease is the direction we wanted to go. In the fall, 83% of teachers cited using technology to make referrals for additional services. In the spring, this decreased to 76%. This is not

necessarily positive or negative. In the fall and spring, 100% of teachers said that they use technology to determine which students need intervention. The response rate for using technology to determine types of needed interventions also held steady at 94% between the fall and spring.

Educator satisfaction: Teachers were asked to rate their level of enthusiasm for various concepts related to blended learning. Overall, teacher enthusiasm grew in 4/5 areas. All teachers rated themselves as enthusiastic or somewhat enthusiastic to use blended learning strategies in their classrooms in the spring survey. This represented a 6% increase. All teachers also rated themselves as enthusiastic or somewhat enthusiastic about their future using blended learning in the spring survey. This represented a 17% increase from the fall survey. The use of data for instructional planning purposes increased 11% from fall to spring. Enthusiasm for assigning digital learning/work for students to use at home increased by 10% to 82% of the teachers. Finally, there was a decrease in enthusiasm for sharing blended learning strategies with other teachers or administrators by 18%. 76% of the teachers were still enthusiastic about sharing strategies with colleagues.

100 percent (18 of 18 responses) of educators indicated that they would recommend blended learning to other teachers. Reasons they would recommend blended learning included: increased engagement, ability to differentiate/personalize learning, makes teaching and learning "easier", encourages growth as a teacher, creates opportunities for students, and supports higher quality of work from the students. 100 percent (18 of 18 responses) indicated that blended learning would benefit other educators in the district. Support for that statement included; the ability to differentiate for students, increased student engagement, and increases the ability of students and teachers to grow and stay up to date with current technology trends and skills.

Results from the spring survey indicate that while time is still somewhat of an issue (mentioned 4 times out of 18 responses) a bigger challenge that arose was managing student use and students managing their time and choices on devices as well as being responsible with their devices (this might hint at the devices being used more frequently). Participants also mentioned the need for ongoing training and a chance to process through all that was learned throughout the year.

Educator learning: The Blended Learning Cohort teachers were asked to rate their comfort with using technology in the classroom, including using Schoology and G Suite, incorporating voice and choice and student control over path and pace, differentiating and personalizing instruction, using data to inform instruction, and taking a course online. The cohort members showed a 22% increase in comfort with using Schoology and in taking online courses. Spring responses also showed that the cohort members are comfortable with integrating technology in the classroom, giving students voice and choice and control over path and pace, and using data from technology tools to inform face-to-face instruction, with 100% of respondents expressing a slight or strong level of comfort for each of the areas.

Because we use the LEARN rubric as a guide for teachers to determine whether their instructional practices are student-centered (Learning and Teaching Roadmap 1.0), the Blended Learning Cohort teachers were asked to identify the percentage of their instruction that is student-centered. Results in the fall showed that 61% of their instruction was in the 50%-100% range for student-centered. Results in the spring showed that 76% of their instruction was in that same range. This was an increase of 15%.

Student engagement and learning: The Blended Learning Cohort teachers were asked to rate how integrating technology in the classroom affects students engagement, motivation, behavior, interest in learning and ability to learn. The cohort group showed increases in all areas, with the most significant being the positive impact on students' reading ability and behavior, with a 38% increase for each of those items. Teachers also showed a large increase in the impact on student ability in social studies and science, with an increase of 32% viewing it positively. The effect of technology integration on student engagement increased by 17%, with 94% of the teachers rating it as positive on the spring survey. Items with positive but less drastic gains included: teachers views on how tech integration affects student motivation to learn (9% growth for a total of 76% positive in the spring), 14% growth in student ability in math for a total of 70% positive, 3% increases in student interest in math, social studies or science for a total of 64% for each, and 2% growth in student interest in reading for a total of 58%.

Teachers in the Blended Learning Cohort were asked about ways blended learning supported students with various needs. Each area showed an increase in the agreement that blended learning supported a range of learners. These areas included supporting English language needs, up 10% from the fall; supporting students with special needs, up 11%; supporting students with gifted students, up 12%; supporting the concept of differentiated instruction, up 12%; and supporting students who needed academic intervention, up 16%.

OUTCOME

Purchasing decision: The district decided not to continue the Blended Learning Coach part of the project, due to a lack of funding, but we are looking at ways we can continue to support this group of teachers and leaders in year two.

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