

Blended Learning Proposal

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### **Rationale**

The purpose of this technology systems proposal is to assist the school administrative body and decision making team in the development of a proposed five year growth and restructuring plan. Adopting a blended learning platform for instruction would allow the A. Harry Moore School to continue offering innovative technology and instructional programming to its diverse body of 145 students received from seven surrounding school districts. Blended learning would help provide student centered learning, uninterrupted individualized instruction for homebound students and those absent due to an extended medical placement. Staying relevant in the ever changing specialized services placement community requires marketing of the distinctive aspects of our program. Offering a blended learning option to parents and school districts would highlight our outstanding program.

### **Background Research**

Blended learning has been reviewed in the educational community over the past decade as a possible solution to the current concerns facing a failing U.S. school system. Often in a brick-and-mortar environment, blended learning is described as learning at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace (Stacker & Horn, 2012).

Understanding the components that are the foundation of the blended learning movement would be necessary to explain why this learning style continues to be considered innovative in the year 2015. There are numerous models that approach blended learning in unique ways. Wang and Associates (2015) identified the following influential models within their discussion;

Shea's Grounded Model (2007), McSparran and King's (2005) Generic Framework for Blended Learning, Khan's (2001) Octagonal Model and Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, (2000) Community of Inquiry Framework. While each approach focuses on their individual points of view, they have all impacted the blended learning environment.

### **Policy Consideration**

U.S. school systems continue to search for ways to identify avenues by which to address the varied learning styles and circumstances defined by the physical location needs of today's student. There is a need for students who are prepared to join the workforce of tomorrow to be self-directed learners who can work collaboratively to problem solve and are capable of adapting to meet the ever changing technological advances in the work place. This has been an on-going struggle which our educational system continues to seek solutions to. The International Association for K-12 Online Learning's Center for Policy Advocacy has identified five areas that states have to attend to before changing elementary and secondary educational programs; "creating competency-based education systems; improving student access and equity; measuring and assuring quality from inputs to outcomes; supporting innovative educators; and supporting new learning models through connectivity, data systems, and security."

Past practice has identified differential learning as a means of addressing the necessity of providing instruction that is structured to meet the needs of the individual. The concept of a student centered approach to informational delivery in education is not a new one. The advances in technology over the past twenty years has made that concept closer to reality. School populations are facing issues related to geographical settings, sustaining student enrollment, and student health and wellbeing which may hinder student attendance. An attempt to answer these issues has been tackled with the addition of online learning.

### Current State of the Field

There are different terms that describe what here is identified as online learning; e-learning, cyber learning and virtual learning all take place completely online. Carmody (2009) in her review of the text *Disrupting Class, How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns* quotes the authors as defining disruptive innovation as “the process by which an innovation transforms a market whose services or products are complicated and expensive into one where simplicity, convenience, accessibility, and affordability characterize the industry” (p.11) . When a system is unwilling to adapt to the inclusion of the new disruptive technology or systematic change agent, the system will ultimately fail.

The previous belief many educators held was that online learning was an inefficient means of delivery of content which failed to provide adequate opportunities for students’ collective, collaborative and collateral learning. Blended or hybrid learning offers the mixture of both the online learning format and the brick-and-mortar school setting by pairing online delivery of instruction using assorted methods with classroom practical student driven activities. Online learning in either format, be it completely online or partially online (blended) with a portion happening in the cyber world and partly in the traditional school setting, answers many fiscal, physical and theory based difficulties.

The possible application for online learning for students with disabilities on the K to 12 educational landscape has some embedded concerns which will require weighing to make it a success. The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities found “online teachers of students with disabilities particularly challenged in identifying, developing and delivering appropriate accommodations to support the diverse learning needs presented in the blended and virtual environment. (Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities, 2012). Preparing

current teachers and those of tomorrow to utilize the blended learning platform has become a mandate of teacher training programs on many campuses.

### **Application for A. Harry Moore**

The A. Harry Moore School as a laboratory setting for teacher preparation and instructional innovation would serve as a model testing ground for the study of the deployment of a blended learning concept designed to meet the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities. The health related issues that may prevent students from attending school have been a logistical and economical concern for the school and sending districts that it serves. The requirements for the distinction of instruction that students with Individualized Educational Plans require may be better served through a blend of the two settings. A lack of inclusive opportunities for students which has been criticized for its separate setting can be enhanced through the collaborative aspects of online learning.

### **Roadblocks to Implementation**

The building originally opened in 1931 and began its partnership with Jersey City State College (NJCU) in 1963. The A. Harry Moore School has faced a growing issue surrounding physical limitations of space and infrastructure that has plagued the school in its attempts to remain in the forefront of the special education field that was a part of its original mission. As it continues to serve this distinct population preparing for an online presence will require a complete redesign of the school. Curriculum design, staff training, ICT support and family engagement through support and training will all have to be conceptualized and implemented in new ways.

### **Recommendations**

A fiscal study of the possible cost and long term benefits to the implementation of a blended learning initiative would be recommended to determine the feasibility of a full building wide systemic change. To remain relevant within this quickly changing educational arena, the A. Harry Moore School will need to support blended learning.

## References

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