Blended and Online Instructional Practices

Blended and online instructional practices utilize various digital tools and resources to enhance learning. Online learning allows for remote instruction to take place using the internet and other digital tools, while blended learning allows for classes to leverage both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches. There are four broad categories of practice within blended and online instruction: Demonstration, Collaboration, Practice, and Assessment. Effective implementation of these practices allows for more engaging and effective learning experiences.

1. What instructional practices are part of my typical face-to-face teaching?
2. What limitations or challenges impact my choice of blended and online instructional practices?
3. How do I choose the best instructional practices to incorporate in my blended or online teaching?

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KEY Elements

Indiana defines online learning as "a form of remote instruction that takes places using the internet and other digital tools", either synchronously or asynchronously, while blended learning leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches. Teachers should understand common instructional practices and how they can be adapted for blended and online learning. In blended or online learning, various factors might impact how instructional practices are planned and implemented including available technology and instructional resources, student engagement methods, and the learning outcomes. Teachers should consider whether blended or online learning is best conducted synchronously or asynchronously, or a combination of both, though this may be mandated by district or school leadership. Some instructional practices may be better suited for either synchronous or asynchronous classes.

Teachers often conduct demonstration activities in the face-to-face classroom. In blended and online learning, teachers can utilize synchronous interactive presentations using a tool like NearPod or PreziVideo for demonstrations. Additionally, teachers can utilize video creation or screencasting to record instructional material for students to view independently. Some teachers use a Jigsaw strategy in the face-to-face classroom for promoting student collaboration. Students are placed in small groups and tasked with learning about a specific topic. This strategy can be implemented online using video conferencing breakout rooms and written or video discussion forums. Teachers can utilize the Catch-Up Strategy, where during a transition point in the synchronous online class, teachers place their students into breakout rooms to compare notes and ask clarifying questions before coming back together as a whole class. Guided practice is a strategy that teachers can use in online environments. Teachers might create an interactive presentation, using a program such as EdPuzzle or NearPod, and embed questions or activities for students to complete as they watch the presentation. Independent practice is another strategy teachers can utilize in blended and online learning. For example, teachers can design independent practice activities using a game-based platform such as Kahoot! or Quizlet, the quiz feature of the school's LMS, or programs like Google Forms and Microsoft Forms.

Teachers can also implement various strategies when assessing students in blended and online learning. Teachers may utilize informal assessments, such as a short poll or survey question for students to complete as they finish a lesson. Formal assessments, such as completing a book report, can be adapted to blended and online learning by providing students the option to write the report in a Google or Word document or create a audio or video recording utilizing a program like Flip or iMovie. Additionally, teachers may ask students to complete self-reflections. The way that these strategies are implemented may vary by class and subject area, as each blended and online learning scenario is unique. By utilizing a variety of instructional practices, teachers can make the best choices for their students.