

Helping Adult Learners Graduate at NCDES with Credit Recovery and the use of Career and Elective Courses through eDynamic Learning

OLTD 511 Major Inquiry Project: By Fenella Olynick and Lisa Cole

What is the Problem?

At North Coast Distance Education (NCDES), which operates under the umbrella of the Northwest Trades and Employment Training Centre, a critical problem to solve is the engagement level and activation rates for non-graduated adults (i.e., for courses they require to achieve graduation status). It is hoped that by offering options for credit recovery, thus increasing the completion and graduation rates, it will also increase the financial viability and sustainability of the school.

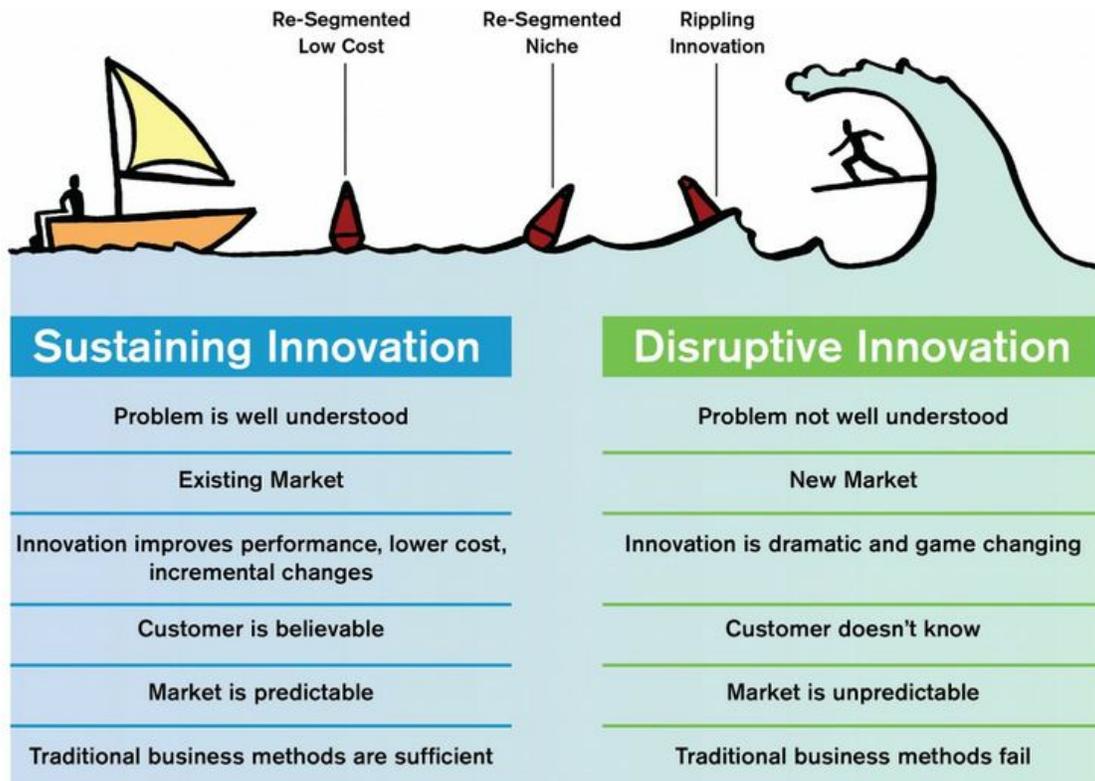
Like all DL schools in BC, NCDES has experienced a significant decrease in the enrolment of upgrading graduated adults (in May, 2015, the Ministry of BC pulled funding, meaning upgrading graduated adult students now have to pay for courses that used to be tuition-free). Therefore, the non-graduated adults (who are still fundable) seem to be a demographic group that, if focused on, might show expansion, growth, and success, thus making up for some of the lost revenue. Moreover, interviews with past graduated adult students (from NCDES) have indicated that by helping adult students to graduate, it also [helps their children](#) (as stated at about the 2.00 mins mark on the 2014 NCDES video), their communities, and the brick and mortar schools that their children attend. This seems to be supported by The Literacy Center's article titled [Why Literacy Matters](#), which notes "The greatest single indicator of a child's academic success is the educational level of his/her mother" (2014).

What Level of Innovation Is Needed to Address the Problem?

In *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*, the above type of problem and associated goals (i.e., serving students who have dropped out of school or not graduated, and providing accessibility to courses) fall into what is said to require a **disruptive innovation**; one that will one day replace the majority of the current system. Horn and Staker (2014) state that a

disruptive innovation occurs when a system, “gives more...without accepting less...(thus) toppling a paradigm” (p. xviii of 304). This type of innovation highlights typical areas of “non-consumption”, which are noted to be more successfully addressed when a two-pronged approach is taken (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 104). For this reason, the problem has been broken into two parts:

1. ***A core problem and goal:*** The goal would be addressed by a “**sustaining innovation**” that “offers an important enhancement and improvement to the traditional classroom” (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 68). In this case, an example of sustaining innovation could be to add videos, graphics and interactive pieces to a course that adults often need for graduation (Communications 12). This could lead to higher student engagement and, therefore, improved results and greater student success. This core problem would use innovation and technology to better serve and engage students.
2. ***Non-consumption problems and goals:*** The goals would be to serve adult students who have dropped out of school or did not graduate, and to provide accessibility to courses. Accessibility might mean addressing the '[digital divide](#)' by offering the technology or means to take a course (i.e., creating a physical space at a learning centre, or helping students to get organized and thereby learn how to take courses online), or it could mean providing a new/updated selection of courses to better address graduation requirements. The availability of course options (i.e., exciting new Ministry approved course offerings from [eDynamic Learning](#)) is particularly important for non-graduated adults, as students are far more likely to engage and be successful in courses that are of interest and/or well-matched to their learning style and/or ability.



Although the graphic above mentions 'business' rather than 'educational' models of innovation, it clearly illustrates differences between Sustaining and Disruptive Innovation.

Image source: *Disruptive Innovation Vs. Sustaining Innovation* by [Rakesh Choudhury](#), Manager at Amazon (External Payments). Published on LinkedIn (via a Forbes article): <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141123100030-18176179-disruptive-innovation-vs-sustaining-innovation>

What Approach Can We Use to Address the Problem?

In the third chapter of *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*, Horn and Staker (2014) refer to a method of writing aspirational goals and objectives that was created by George Doran back in 1981 called [S.M.A.R.T.](#) (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time-related). It is important to analyze our goal of adult credit recovery to see if it is really possible and if it is in fact S.M.A.R.T. Here are the key elements that lead us to believe that it is:

- Specific - The specific area of improvement is increasing engagement and acquiring improved activation rates for non-graduated adults.
- Measurable - Increased enrolment will be our key indicator of progress, and completion rates of courses will indicate increased engagement.
- Assignable - We will have a team of four (or more) individuals that will each have a different role in the project. We will discuss these roles later on in this paper.

- Realistic - With the resources and staff at NCDES already in place, the new credit recovery program, if led properly by the appointed team, can quite possibly be very successful
- Time-Related - As the program already exists, our goal is to promote the new program and new courses to acquire a %50 increase in the number of students enrolled in the program in September 2016 compared to September 2015. We currently have 220 non-graduated adult students, so we are hoping to gain an additional 110 next fall.

The Framework

As noted in the above section, non-consumption problems are more successfully addressed when a two-pronged approach is taken. Therefore, non-consumption problems often require **multi-types of teams**, which in this case might include a combination of **light-weight** and/or **heavy-weight**, and **autonomous** teams (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 128-129).

The core problem and goal would require **either**:

A “**light-weight team**” (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 122), made up of key individuals (often department heads) who can coordinate activities across subject areas or departments, and who can make suggestions for subsequent change. A light-weight team works best to bring about sustaining innovation.

or,

A “**heavy-weight team**” (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 124), made up of people in formal leadership roles who are chosen because architectural changes may be needed, such as changes to a timetable or a teacher’s role, changes to bandwidth or the physical structure, etc. Heavy-weight teams usually consist of teachers, administrators, other staff members and/or experts from different parts of the school and community. The team should be lead by a manager with “significant clout” (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 124).

Meanwhile, non-consumption problems and goals require an autonomous team.

Autonomous teams are critical when launching a disruptive model; the autonomous team is “a tool to create a new economic model that can profitably serve the new market, with the freedom to develop new processes and priorities, and to approach the problem from a new context (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 118).

The Light-Weight Team or Heavy-Weight Team

The team needed to address the identified core problem will consist of:

- The school Vice-Principal (who teaches the Communications 12 course)
- A secondary online teacher who will be doing the course development
- IT support
 - District technology staff **may** be needed to set up an existing area with technology and/or Internet access, should students not have access to technology at home. A ‘light-weight manager’ can ensure that the different departments’ work fits together (i.e., course teacher, course developer, and IT department, if needed); however, an administrator’s ‘clout’ could help, thus the potential need for a heavy-weight team.
- A knowledgeable representative/consultant from eDynamic Learning

The Autonomous Team

The team needed to address the identified non-consumption problem will consist of:

- The school Vice-Principal (who teaches the Communications 12 course) and the Trades Principal
- A secondary online teacher who will be doing the course development
- IT support
- A knowledgeable representative/consultant from eDynamic Learning
- The superintendent or school board representatives

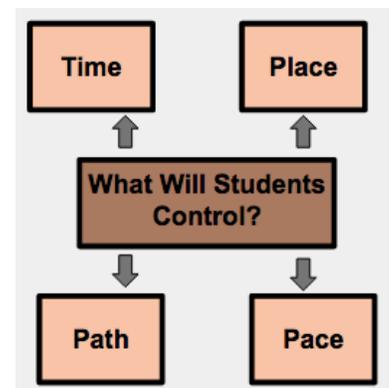
The Team Leader

Although the team leader could be the Vice-Principal, Horn & Staker state (2014, p. 125) that, “classroom teachers who are ready and eager to innovate and solve problems can take the lead in many cases, especially if their principal or superintendent empowers them”. An article titled [The Many Faces of Leadership](#) (Danielson, 2007) argues for the necessity of teacher leadership in schools. Therefore, the leadership role to address the core problem will be taken on by the lead teacher. However, **as the shift occurs with regard to the type of team needed (i.e., to better address the problem of non-consumption), so too will the shift in leadership.** It is hoped that there will be some back and forth type of leadership between the lead teacher and the Vice-Principal, ultimately leading to further involvement and leadership from district administration.

Our Desired Student Experience

When it comes to control, there are 4 separate variables that students can face in a blended learning program. These are time, place, path and pace.

What is the Variable that we would Specifically Like the Student to Control?



Path: Although we would like students to control **all four factors** of time, place, path, and pace, we believe the **path** is ultimately the most crucial component for adult non-graduated students to control. After all, if students recognize their path options with regard to credit recovery (and modes and modalities of learning), and if they are able to control this learning path via their DL courses, then students may feel empowered to continue on the road to successfully completing these courses in order to graduate. We believe that with all the new exciting options that we will be offering through eDynamic Learning, they will be able to choose a course that they are interested in pursuing after graduation and this can ultimately drive them to graduate.

The Variable(s) we Believe Might be More Difficult for Us to Control:

Time: Students will ultimately decide when they are ready to start their course(s), and when they will work on their online studies (although some groups of students may be working on their course(s), in the order or manner they choose, within a given time slot). Therefore, this is not a variable that will be easily controlled, as this may depend on work schedules, parenting schedules, etc.

Place: Although there will be a few options for local students (i.e., designated places to start the course, such as a brick-and-mortar face-to-face session offered at the NCDES school site, or a session at an employer's classroom site), the target group of adult students will need some flexibility for the place they choose to work for the duration of the course. For some students this may be set by an employer (i.e., the trades groups often have 'classroom' time for students to work on courses), but as a school, we will be leaving it up to the students to choose where they wish to work on their course(s). Our school has a few computers available for use; however, there are also other places in town where adult students may choose to access technology if they don't have the technology at home (i.e., an employment training centre, the library, etc.).

Pace: Students will need to find their own pace; one that that will contribute to the desired result of course completion. We suspect this will be different for each adult, as the students will be entering the course with very different background skills and knowledge. Each student will need to find a pace that is comfortable for his/her circumstance.

Teacher Opportunities

As outlined by Horn & Staker (2014), "teachers are critical to the success of blended learning" (p. 170). Therefore, it is important to integrate teachers into the design and to help teachers fulfil their own job aspirations and priorities. Consequently, this will help students to get their jobs done. Restructuring the roles of teachers to maximize motivators (i.e., creating content experts, small group leaders, project designers, mentors, etc.- when warranted and dependent upon the size of one's staff and scope of blended learning) may need to be considered to ensure success with blended learning implementation. Horn & Staker (2014) note, blended learning is said to be

shifting the teacher's or leader's role from the "sage on the stage" to an "orchestrator and inspirer" (p. 171).

Below are some opportunities for teachers that we feel are important for the blended learning context this paper outlines.

- Teachers will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with other staff members to 'grow' the program(s) and offer students a variety of options.
- There will be an increased opportunity to fill a mentoring role.
- There will be an opportunity for professional and personal growth, arising from the integration and use of technology (this is an area that changes daily, and as such, ongoing educational and training opportunities often exist and are recommended).
- Teachers will gain insight into new courses available through eDynamic Learning, leading to the opportunity to work in collaborative partnerships.
- Blended learning opportunities for students will allow teachers to feel a greater sense of connection to the students.

The Primary Role of the Teacher(s):

The primary role of the teacher will be to help students develop a plan for success, and thus guide students into the online world so they feel comfortable and empowered. The teacher(s) will:

- Ensure students feel comfortable - be welcoming and positive!
- Provide students with options for credit recovery or graduation.
- Help students learn how and where to begin.
- Walk students through the first steps to ascertain their comfort level with online learning.
- Provide support as needed to students completing orientation tutorials/activities and/or activation activities.
- Ensure students understand how they can access help.
- Monitor and support students with their online studies, and help students to set realistic goals - i.e., with regard to credit recovery and working through individual courses.

- Help students to develop study skills and a plan/schedule for proceeding through their course(s) in a timely fashion. Encourage students to monitor their own progress.
- Implement supports and adaptations to programs and courses based on individual need.
- Maintain the course(s) to ensure online activities work and are well-suited and engaging for the learner(s).
- Mentor and guide students through online activities.
- Provide technical support as needed.
- Ensure **social presence** and **teacher presence** are adequately incorporated into the blended learning program, to foster community and thus success. Note: **cognitive presence** will be integrated into the course structure. As illustrated by the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model of learning, these three presences contribute to the construction of knowledge and personal meaning (and mutual understanding), thereby forming the educational experience (Vaughan & Garrison, 2013).
- Recognize that in order to effectively integrate technology, teachers need content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technical knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

Our Physical Space

The NCDES Side of NTETC



Blended Face-to-Face On-Site Component

- North Coast Distance Education (NCDES) is now housed in The Northwest Trades and Employment Training Centre. This newly created training centre opened at the end of September 2015.
- NCDES is equipped with two individual work/test rooms and a computer lab. These rooms may be used for workshops or instruction, individual/group work areas, testing, etc.
- NCDES also has a conference room equipped with a large projection screen for computer conferencing, training, meetings, small group instruction, etc.
- Future space may become available for face-to-face instruction as programs develop (i.e., currently unused classroom space within the building).

The Trades Side of the NTETC



Blended Face-to-Face ‘Other’/Off-NCDES-Site Component

- The classroom of a trades program or other facility may be used

Note: The second possible model for a blended learning face-to-face component would operate more like the suggested flex model by Horn and Staker (2014), where the students would spend their time working in a brick-and-mortar facility. In this case, the proposed scenario involves students who are taking the Pipefitters International College (PIC) courses. They have a classroom but need to pick up some DL courses so they can meet their graduation requirements. Supervision of the students will be by the pipefitters program, but there is concern that the students will have a difficult time with the courses as they have been out of school for a while. It has been suggested that some initial face-to-face sessions (in their NTETC classroom or in a building located in a nearby community) may help to alleviate some of the difficulties with integrating students back into the educational world. Therefore, the physical environment has already been set up and arranged by PIC, and as such, any additional changes, if needed, will likely only involve the addition of a few more workstations (the bandwidth, etc., is already in place).

How Many Internet-Connected Devices are Available?

Computer Lab - 5 computers:

- HP ProDesk Desktop PCs
- Acer 23” monitors
- We hope to get more computers soon!

Conference room - 2 laptops:

- HP ProBook 4530s 15.6-inch

Individual spaces/2 rooms - 1 computer in each:

- HP ProDesk Desktop PCs
- Acer 23” monitors

Additional technology available for use (i.e., for use in computer lab or elsewhere) - 3 laptops:

- HP ProBook 4530s 15.6-inch

Software

Courses and platforms/tools:

- NCDES developed courses
- BCLN and Content Connections courses
- Future inclusion of eDynamic online courses (as proposed)
- Courses presently use the school's Moodle Learning Management System
- Use of Blackboard Collaborate is available for video-conferencing (Skype is also an option students may use).

On-site computers have:

- Windows 7

Students will be accessing their courses using the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS), and this will require students to have a computer set up as outlined below. (Students will also at times be given the option of using some web-based tools; however, this will not be a requirement for this initial blended learning unit/component.)

In order to access course content, students will need a computer with:

- [Firefox](#) or [Google Chrome](#)
- Full Flash and Java support
- Office suite ([LibreOffice](#), Microsoft Office, [OpenOffice](#))
- The ability to play audio and video files ([VLC](#))

Note: Free software packages such as [LibreOffice](#), [OpenOffice](#) and [VLC](#) are available for download.

The following file formats are recommended for student work:

For documents:

- Microsoft Word (.doc or .rtf only)

- Portable Document Format (.pdf)
- For presentations and similar:
- Microsoft Powerpoint (.ppt)
- Portable Document Format (.pdf)

For video:

- Audio Video Interleave (.avi)
- MPEG (.mpg)

For audio:

- MP3 (.mp3)
- Wave for very short clips (.wav)
- WMA (.wma)

For images:

- JPEG (.jpg)
- PNG (.png)

Our Blended Learning Model

<u>Blended Learning Models</u>	
1.	Rotation
	a. Station Rotation
	b. Lab Rotation
	c. Individual Rotation
	d. Flipped Classroom
2.	Flex
3.	Self-blended/A La Carte
4.	Enriched Virtual

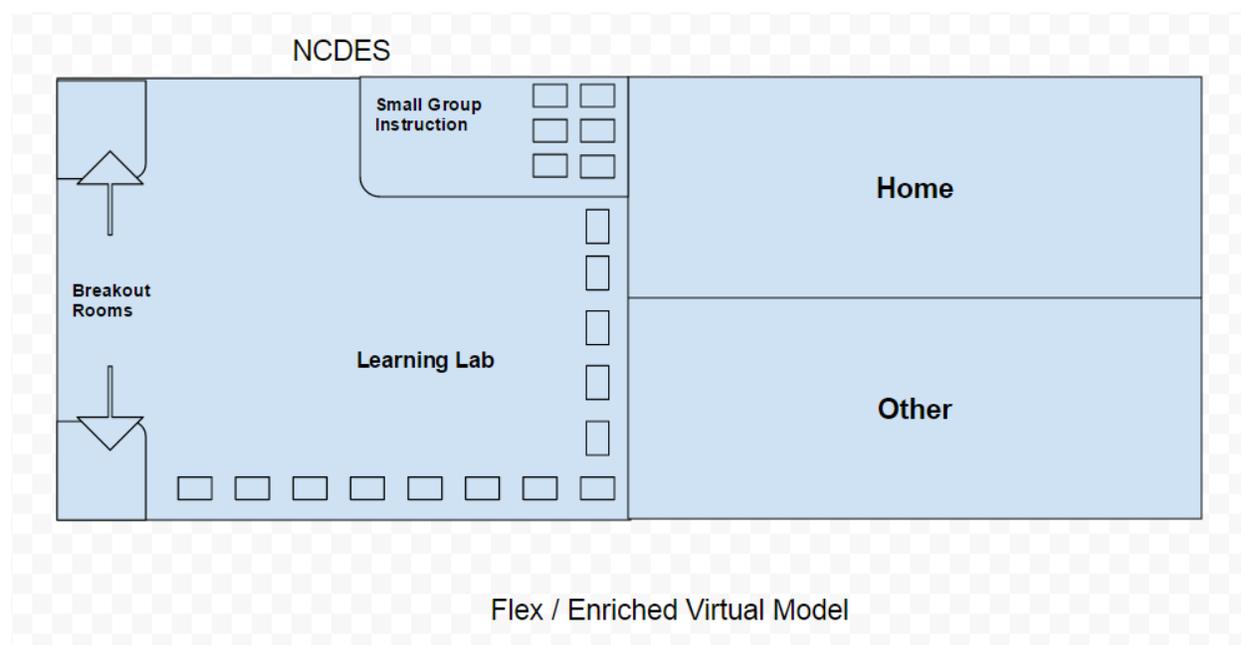
We feel DL courses offered either by a ‘*Flex*’¹ or an ‘*Enriched Virtual*’² model of blended learning might work well for non-graduated adult students - i.e., helping students to seek credit recovery or those who want the “un-classroom” experience (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 47). These models provide options for students seeking a ‘fluid’ schedule. Flex models require students to show up to a brick-and-mortar facility where they would access courses that are primarily online, allowing students to set their own schedule and modalities of learning, alternating as they choose between online and face-to-face formats (which

might include small group discussions, tutoring, etc.). Enriched Virtual models are more like the traditional online learning (or DL), except that brick-and-mortar experiences are required.

Therefore, in the NCDES proposed context, the model of blended learning will probably grow to be a combination of the aforementioned models. As Jane Higgins so eloquently noted in the Blackboard Collaborate session on November 26, 2015, the model might be called an “enriched virtual model within a flex realm”.

The Combination Model

This blend of models is referred to by Horn and Staker in Chapter 2 as a combination approach (p.51). Many schools choose a combination approach, because the single approach just doesn't work in their school based on the students or based on the building's physical structure. In our case, the combination approach works best as we are catering to adult learners and we want to give them as much control over their learning as we possibly can. The happier the students are with their physical learning environment, whether it be at home or elsewhere, the more likely it is that they will find success and complete their courses.



This diagram shows that the adult learners are free to choose where they learn best. There are also areas at the school for small instruction and breakouts

Student Orientation

Horn and Staker discuss in *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* that students need to feel fulfillment in jobs that matter to them, and when this happens, they are ready to show up and learn (2014, p. 145). It is our responsibility to set them up to succeed in their job of credit recovery. The first step to this is creating a place and program where we can prepare students for their learning so they can eventually show independence and control over place, time, pace and path. Many of these learners have never experienced a blended learning classroom or even taken a course online, so the orientation is key to a strong foundation.

The following types of activities might be used for the initial ‘blended’ session:

- Initial introductions – whole group
- Video introduction to online learning – school video
 - Introductory vocabulary, if needed
- Whole group discussion of requirements for online learning
 - Workspace
 - Computer setup
 - Schedule
 - Supports
 - Cyber-safety and Digital Citizenship (introduction, more to be addressed later)
- Small group accessing and viewing of an Orientation Tutorial (by NCDES)
 - Use computers (rotating or viewing in small groups for each unit of the tutorial, to allow for discussion after each video)
- Whole group Introduction to Communications 12 and/or other courses for credit recovery
- Small groups at computers to look at course overview and note questions
 - Individuals working with teacher to log on
- Whole group review of introduction session and summary of important takeaways from the session. Reminder of vocabulary.
- Students will independently complete their “Online Navigator Badge” activities, which will check their level of understanding of areas introduced in the face-to-face introduction session, thereby providing an integrated learning experience.

Example of Orientation

Day Schedule

Once students have completed the orientation training, they will be encouraged to spend the first week of their coursework ‘on campus’ in case they run into any problems or have additional questions about the

Time	Activity
8:30 - 9:30	Initial Introductions - Whole Group
9:30- 9:45	Break
9:45 - 10:15	Video Instruction
10:20 - 11:30	Requirements for Online Learning
11:30 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 1:30	Orientation Tutorial by NCDES
1:30 - 2:00	Instructions for Credit Recovery
2:00 - 2:15	Break
2:15 - 3:00	Begin online courses
3:00 - 3:15	Review and final questions

courses or technology. We also will use this time to build relationships with students to make sure they know all the different ways we can help out and how we can be reached. Once we have put the building blocks in place, and the students are comfortable with the technology, the courses, and how to contact teachers for support, they will be equipped with the necessities to do their job and they will have the freedom to choose if and when they want to be ‘on campus’ (this will also depend on classroom space).

Culture

As Horn and Staker note in *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* (2014), “Blended learning accelerates good culture and it makes it great, but it will also accelerate a bad culture and make it terrible” (p. 245). Therefore, an important consideration when implementing blended learning is: How will you shape and maintain a positive culture in your school.

Below are initiatives we believe will help form a positive school culture.

Initiatives for students

- Due to the computer lab being used in a fluid and flexible manner for students to work, learn, problem solve, engage in activities and lessons, etc., it will be important to respect the noise level and maintain an environment conducive and appropriate for the activities

of the hour and day. For example, there may be times when due to group discussions and class activities the noise level will be higher than other ‘quiet’ work times.

- Students will be asked to refrain from bringing food or drinks into the computer lab in order to maintain a clean working environment.
- Students are encouraged try a web search (to seek an answer) or ask other students for help first, before asking an instructor.
- Students are encouraged to contribute towards a collaborative and supportive learning environment by offering their peers help when they are able to and time permits.
- The privacy of student passwords, log-in information, and personal identifiable information is of utmost importance, and as such, students will respect the privacy of others and follow the school’s Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

Initiatives for teachers

- A positive, welcoming, and encouraging tone to the school will help to foster a ‘can do attitude’ for students.
- Teachers will announce or advertise regular face-to face sessions for support and/or introduction to online learning and credit recovery.
- Teachers will seek feedback from face-to-face and online students regularly in order to make adjustments to programming, learning activities and options.
- Teachers will communicate with their online students regularly (a schedule may be set) to check on how students are doing (especially if things are ‘quiet’).
- Minor adjustments to the on-site learning environment will be made in order to facilitate community building and learning, including:
 - The spatial configuration of a room (i.e., moving a computer or two to allow participants to look towards a central point or front board/ screen, if needed).
 - Bringing a ‘whiteboard’ or projection screen into the computer lab
 - Hanging pictures of former adult graduates to build a sense of community and foster hope and a ‘can do’ attitude.
 - Adding to the number of computers with some of the portable school laptops, if available.

Cost of Implementation

As an existing blended learning environment, we are fortunate enough to have in place the basic needs to support a flex / enriched virtual model. There are a few items that we may need to consider in our budget to support more students as we grow.

Cost of Courses

For the non-graduated adult learners that are taking Ministry approved courses, there is no additional cost involved, but if they are wanting to take any board approved courses through eDynamic Learning, we will need the adult to either pay for it on their own or we as a staff will try to look for funding through our sources.

IT Support

NCDES has a contracted systems analyst, and we also have IT support in place through the district, but as we grow and need more hardware for students, we will need to budget for additional time.

Hardware

As we grow, we will need additional work stations with computers for the students, as well as a budget put into place for upgrades. We would also like to look into a leasing program for student laptops so they can take them off campus if they do not have the technology at home. This would mean we would need a budget to purchase the laptops before leasing them out.

Teacher Support

With an additional 100+ students, we will need additional teacher time to facilitate student learning. Although the research about teacher to student ratio in adult learning is still inconclusive, we are going to push to still keep class sizes low in order to harness relationships.

Conclusion

The introduction of *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* poses a question that asks, “Is the growth of online learning a good thing, or should we fight to protect the traditional classroom?” (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. xxvi) A response to this could be: Did the traditional classroom always succeed at educating students, or do we need online education to fill the gaps and, where appropriate, enhance and/or change the traditional classroom? This paper has outlined the need for online learning, particularly to support students working towards credit recovery and graduation, but more importantly, it has demonstrated the need to also consider a blended approach to better support students in their educational journey.

Non-graduated adult students are a demographic group for whom the traditional classroom has not worked. However, review of non-graduated adult completion rates in the NCDES online courses reflects that online learning also has its challenges. We believe these challenges indicate the need for a different approach; this may be blended learning. It is hoped that this proposal to create a blended learning environment, and the aforementioned discussion of eight key considerations (i.e., the problem to be solved; the organization of the team; the experience we would like to provide to students; the primary role of the teacher; the hardware, software, and physical space; the model of blended learning that might work best; how to shape and maintain a positive culture in the school; and how to manage cost to make this program realistic), will be a springboard for change, leading to success for our non-graduated adult students.

Horn and Staker (2014) note that blended learning is:

Any formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace, and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. The modalities along each student’s learning path in a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience. (p. 52)

In keeping with this definition, we feel that the learning environment we have proposed will provide an integrated learning experience, in that students will be able to fluidly move from large group or small group face-to-face instruction and/or mentoring (at our school or in another classroom) to small group and/or individual online learning, where students will participate in

the construction and creation (or co-construction and co-creation) of artifacts of learning. This will demonstrate their acquisition and synthesis of knowledge. Online assessment of learning tools will demonstrate an ability to directly apply skills learned during the face-to-face sessions. Meanwhile, the transition from face-to-face activities and instruction to web-based instruction occurs fluidly, and students will be able to move seamlessly from each modality at their own pace while learning through NCDES. The learner is at the centre of this learning model, and we therefore believe the non-graduated adult students will be more successful at meeting the goals they need to achieve.

Finally, should this plan be accepted for implementation, it is our recommendation that the organizational team take the recommended planning timeframe suggested by Horn and Staker (2014) to implement prudently:

A healthy planning timeframe for schools that are adding a blended component to their existing model is six months at a minimum; for those that are launching a new model, twelve to eighteen months is more normal. (p.282)

This will allow the team to identify and prioritize assumptions (for the SMART goals and outcomes), which may influence negatively or positively the plan's success. A healthy planning timeframe will also allow for systematic and methodical testing and/or evaluation during the implementation stage. Implementing checkpoints to learn whether assumptions are proving right or wrong, therefore providing an opportunity for learning and modification (if needed), should be built into the plan and an integral part of this '*discovery driven planning*' method, as outlined by Horn and Staker (2014, p. 277). Without the testing of hypotheses, updating of assumptions, and continued iteration of plans as more information is gained, it will be difficult to learn where the successes and failures lie, in order to tweak or redesign the blended learning model to bring about success. Keeping the end goal in mind will bring success for all!

¹The **Flex model** term refers to "courses or subjects in which online learning is the backbone of student learning, even if it directs students to offline activities at times. The teacher of record is on-site, and students learn mostly on a brick-and-mortar campus, except for any homework. Students move through a Flex course according to their individual needs." (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 47)

²The **Enriched Virtual model** "describes courses that offer required face-to-face learning sessions but allow students to do the rest of the work online from where ever they prefer." (Horn & Staker, 2014, p. 49)

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