

## Technology for Teaching

### *Ready to Jump Into Blended Learning?*

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What is Blended Learning, you might ask? Blended Learning is as simple as using a website to post assignments or as complex as integrating your curriculum within a learning management system (LMS) such as Blackboard or Schoology. Jeff Pankin, John Roberts, and Mike Savio at MIT, view blended learning “as structured opportunities to learn, which use more than one learning or training method, inside or outside the classroom. This definition includes different learning or instructional methods (lecture, discussion, guided practice, reading, games, case study, simulation), different delivery methods (live classroom or computer mediated), different scheduling (synchronous or asynchronous) and different levels of guidance (individual, instructor or expert led, or group/social learning).”<sup>1</sup>

So, according to this definition, you might be incorporating blended learning into your lessons already. Ready to take it a step further? And why would you want to?

The advantages of creating a blended online class outweigh the time investment. Naturally, creating something new and making it work, personalizing it for you and your students will take time but once that initial investment is made, the benefit to you and your students make it worth the effort. Students will always know where to find the assignments, due dates, notes, and project descriptions. No more lost papers, or excuses for ignorance of assignments. Train your students to check the online class for assignments for when they are absent. Show your parents how to access the site so they can be part of your instructional home team. Advantages are easier grading and fewer papers/folders/stuff to carry home and back to school as well as less copying, less frustration for both you and your students. You will have increased time to spend in the classroom, devoting it rather to speaking and listening in the target language, which is the goal of every foreign language teacher.

Here are a few of the best LMS options that are free for individual teachers. Of course, if you want premium features, there are different levels from which to choose. Always start with free as those features will provide most of what you need.



Schoology is the fifth most popular LMS, according to Capterra<sup>2</sup>. Its ease of use makes it great for teachers and students just starting to use technology. The clear interface (landing page) makes finding activities and assignments simple for students. Features that teachers will love are the discussion boards, calendar, third party apps you can link to (like Vimeo and Dropbox). Once you set up one class, you can easily duplicate it if you have multiple sections of that same class or duplicate it next school year and save valuable time and energy. In addition you can connect with other foreign language teachers for collaboration!



Edmodo is the Facebook of education which makes it attractive and intuitive to students. Load your digital files into your library, create folders and organize them, and you have the basis for classes in groups and small groups.



[Haiku Learning](#) is reasonably new but provides teachers greater flexibility to customize the look of their online class. Cool themes and choice of fonts helps you create an engaging digital classroom for your students.

All the LMS options mentioned give you the ability to create lessons, assignments, even flip your classroom if you wish. Explore each and decide which works best for you and your students. It's a great time to blend!

<sup>1</sup>Pankin, J., Roberts, J., & Savio, M. (2012, July 1). Blended Learning at MIT. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from [http://web.mit.edu/training/trainers/resources/blended\\_learning\\_at\\_mit.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/training/trainers/resources/blended_learning_at_mit.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Top 20 Most Popular LMS Rankings (Infographics). (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2015, from <http://dp2web.blogspot.com/2014/11/top-20-most-popular-lms-rankings.html>