



Western Connecticut State University  
WestCollections: [digitalcommons@wcsu](mailto:digitalcommons@wcsu)

---

Education Dissertations

Department of Education & Educational  
Psychology

---


Spring 5-2016

## AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION, STUDENT LEARNING, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Matthew A. Correia

Western Connecticut State University, [mattcorreia1@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreia1@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wcsu.edu/educationdis>

 Part of the [Elementary Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Correia, Matthew A., "AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION, STUDENT LEARNING, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT" (2016). *Education Dissertations*. 18.

<https://repository.wcsu.edu/educationdis/18>

This Dissertation is brought to you via free, open access by the Department of Education & Educational Psychology and by WestCollections: [digitalcommons@wcsu](mailto:digitalcommons@wcsu), the institutional repository of Western Connecticut State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Dissertations by an authorized administrator of WestCollections: [digitalcommons@wcsu](mailto:digitalcommons@wcsu). For more information, please contact [ir@wcsu.edu](mailto:ir@wcsu.edu).

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF  
BLENDED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION, STUDENT LEARNING, AND  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Matthew A. Correia

6<sup>th</sup> Year Certificate, Sacred Heart University, 2010  
Master of Science Degree, Central Connecticut State University, 2008  
Bachelor of Science Degree, Southern Connecticut State University, 2005

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

in the

Department of Education and Educational Psychology

at

Western Connecticut State University

2016

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF  
BLENDED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION, STUDENT LEARNING, AND  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Matthew A. Correia, Ed.D

Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

Blended learning is an instructional approach to teaching that has been part of the education field for several years. While the concept of blended learning has been around for many years, a common definition of this concept fails to exist. In the past, blended learning was considered to be the technological component that was part of the classroom lesson, however, it may also be considered a combination of instructional approaches that includes technological components.

Utilizing a qualitative approach, this phenomenological study was used to examine the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regards to their understanding of how the concept of blended learning is defined, as well as how it may affect student learning within the classroom. Furthermore, it explored the types of supports that teachers shared were needed through professional development, as well as what they believed to be the most effective approaches to support models of professional development to aid in their learning and understanding. All items were analyzed and coded by the researcher and subsequently reviewed by an independent auditor. The triangulation of data sources included survey data, interview responses, and focus group information.

Qualitative results indicated that a shared definition of blended learning does not exist amongst educators. Although a shared definition could not be found within this study, specific instructional components were discussed and identified by participants with regards to defining the instructional approach to blended learning. It is necessary to note that all participants within this study worked within a common school district. This research revealed that educators within this study have perceptions regarding how instructional components and practices support student learning and may lead to greater achievement within the classroom. Furthermore, participants were cognizant of their own teaching strengths and weaknesses and provided ideas regarding how professional development related to blended learning, along with additional focus areas, may greater support their abilities as classroom instructors.

Copyright by

Matthew A. Correia, Ed.D.

2016

iii

APPROVAL PAGE



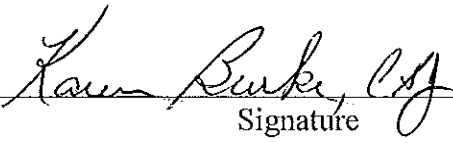

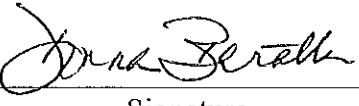
*School of Professional Studies  
Department of Education and Educational  
Psychology  
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership*

Doctor of Education Dissertation

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF  
BLENDED LEARNING: IMPLEMENTATION, STUDENT LEARNING, AND  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Presented by

Matthew A. Correia, Ed.D.

Dr. Karen Burke, CSJ Primary Advisor	 Signature	4/2/16 Date
Kathleen Gombos, Ed.D Secondary Advisor Committee Member	 Signature	4/2/16 Date
Donna Baratta, Ed.D Secondary Advisor Committee Member	 Signature	4/2/16 Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a great privilege to have been part of the Western Connecticut State University Instructional Leadership Doctoral program. Over the last five years, this program has supported my growth as an educational leader and encouraged my decision making process as both a building administrator and educator.

My completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the love, support, and patience of so many individuals. To begin, I need to acknowledge and thank my primary advisor, Dr. Karen Burke, who was there for me every step of the way.

Whenever I needed a push, some words of encouragement, or a listening ear, you were there as both my mentor and friend. Thank you! I would like to further acknowledge Dr. Marcy Delcourt, whose passion for education is both contagious and inspiring. Thank you for the advice provided over the last five years. Your encouragement helped make my dream of completing this program a reality. Additionally, thank you to both Dr. Donna Baratta and Dr. Kathy Gombos. I am honored that you both agreed to serve as my secondary advisors and I am so very grateful for your time, support, and reassurance.

In addition to earning a Doctoral Degree, I have also found a friendship I am confident will last a lifetime. Without the love and patience from my “cohort wife,” I would not have made it through this process. Jen, you are a true inspiration within my life and have taught me that no matter how bad a situation may be, it is always possible to turn it around and end up on top. I thank you for being the kind of friend who inspires and shows unconditional love and kindness.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my wife for her on-going encouragement, love, and support. Without you, this would not be possible. Also, I

would like to thank my parents, brothers, sister, and friends. Your belief in my abilities has meant more to me than you will ever know. Thank you for believing in me and for reminding me that there is nothing more important in life than having a family you can laugh with and count on.



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to a woman who has inspired me in more ways than she will ever know. This work would not have been possible without the compassion, encouragement, and kindness you have shown. Thank you, Mom for always believing in me and making me feel that anything is possible. I hope one day you come to understand just how truly special you are and know how much you are appreciated and loved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Copyright	iii
Approval Page	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale for Selecting the Topic	2
Statement of the Problem	3
Significance and Potential Benefits of Research	4
Brief Definition of Key Terms	7
Research Questions	7
Chapter Summary	8
CHAPTER TWO: RELATED LITERATURE	9
Progressive Education	9
Progressive Education and Blended Learning	10
Change Theory	15
Change Theory and Blended Learning	16
Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Approach	21
Professional Development	30
Professional Development and Blended Learning	31
Chapter Summary	37

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	38
Researcher Biography	38
Description of Setting and Participants	39
Setting	39
Participants	40
Participant Profiles	41
Interview and Focus Group Participant Profiles: Classroom	41
Teachers	
Focus Group Guided Discussion: District Administrator Profiles	43
Description of Sampling Procedures and Research Design	45
Sampling Procedures	45
Sampling Procedures for the Blended Learning Survey	45
Sampling Procedures for Phenomenological Interviews	45
Sampling Procedures for the Focus Group Guided Discussion	46
Research Design	47
Instrumentation	48
Blended Learning Skills Survey	49
Interview Questions: Phenomenological Interviewing	50
Focus Group Guided Discussion	52
Data Collection Procedures	54
Data Analyses	56
Trustworthiness	58
Statement of Ethics	59

Chapter Summary	59
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS	61
Blended Learning Skills Survey	63
Question One	63
Question Two	64
Question Three	65
Question Four	66
Question Five	67
Question Six	68
Question Seven	69
Question Eight	70
Question Nine	71
Question Ten	72
Blended Learning Skills Survey: Data Analysis and Conclusions	73
Survey Question One Results	74
Survey Question Two Results	74
Survey Questions Three Results	75
Survey Question Four Results	76
Survey Question Five Results	77
Survey Question Six Results	78
Survey Question Seven Results	78
Survey Question Eight Results	79

Survey Question Nine Results	80
Survey Question Ten Results	81
Interview Narratives	82
Participant Interview: Jenna	82
Participant Interview: Katie	87
Participant Interview: Jason	91
Participant Interview: Sierra	94
Participant Interview: Edward	98
Participant Interview Summary	103
Focus Group Guided Discussion Analysis	105
Findings	111
Development of Themes	112
Unshared Definition	113
Instructional Support	113
Change	114
Instructional Approaches	114
Ownership	114
Discussion of Themes	114
Theme One: Unshared Definition	115
Theme One Summary and Relation to Research Questions	121
Theme Two: Instructional Support	122
Necessary Skills	122
Materials and Resources	124

Time	126
Choice	128
Theme Two Summary and Relation to Research Questions	129
Theme Three: Change	132
Expectations	132
Teacher Role	134
Theme Three Summary and Relation to Research Question	136
Theme Four: Instructional Approaches	139
Differentiation and Learning Styles	139
Discourse	140
Questioning	141
Technology	142
Theme Four Summary and Relation to Research Questions	143
Theme Five: Ownership	145
Student role	145
Student application	146
Student learning	147
Theme Five Summary and Relation to Research Questions	148
Chapter Summary	149
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>151</b>
Summary of Research	151
Review of Findings Related to Research Questions	153
Research Question One	157

Research Question Two	159
Research Question Three	160
Related Literature and Research Findings	161
Evidence of Trustworthiness	167
Implications of the Research	168
Recommendations for Future Research	172
Summary	173
Conclusion	174
REFERENCES	176
APPENDICES	185
Appendix A: Blended Learning Skills Survey	185
Appendix B: Interview Session Questions	190
Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Questions	192
Appendix D: Letter of Introduction to the Blended Learning Skills Survey	194
Appendix E: Participant Consent Form (Interview Session)	196
Appendix F: Consent Form (Focus Group Discussion)	198
Appendix G: Superintendent of Schools Consent Form	200
Appendix H: Initial Codes	202
Appendix I: Final Codes	205
Appendix J: Researcher Experience with Blended Learning	207
Appendix K: Reflexive Journal	210
Appendix L: Qualitative Audit	221

## TABLES

Table 1: Description of Participants: Classroom Teachers	41
Table 2: Description of Participants: District Administrators	44
Table 3: Results from question 1 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	64
Table 4: Results from question 2 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	65
Table 5: Results from question 3 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	66
Table 6: Results from question 4 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	67
Table 7: Results from question 5 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	68
Table 8: Results from question 6 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	69
Table 9: Results from question 7 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	70
Table 10: Results from question 8 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	71
Table 11: Results from question 9 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	72
Table 12: Results from question 10 of the Blended Learning Skills Survey	73
Table 13: Participant Description of Blended Learning Definition and Components Discussed to Describe Blended Learning within the Classroom	104

## FIGURES

Figure 1: Triangulation Model	58
-------------------------------	----



## **CHAPTER ONE: THE INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

Blended learning is an instructional approach that supports the learning of students. It facilitates improved learning, access flexibility, a sense of community, the effective use of resources, and student satisfaction (Poon, 2013). A concern that teachers have regarding this instructional approach is it has yet to be defined or commonly understood amongst teachers and administrators. Poon (2013) shared that there has been much discussion about the term “blended learning” in recent years, yet there continued to be no agreed upon single definition. In the past, educators may have believed blended learning to be the integration of technology within their lesson design, however research described blended learning as the convergence of face-to-face settings, which are characterized by synchronous human interaction (Graham, 2006). Blended learning has also been described as “a flexible approach to course design that supports the blending of different times and places for learning, offering some of the conveniences of fully on-line courses without the complete loss of face-to-face contact” (O’Connor, Mortimer, & Bond, 2011, p. 63). As the number of available computers and formats of technology increased within schools across the country, along with the number of instructional approaches available to the classroom, the concept of blended learning has seen an increase in both application and practice.

As the blended learning “trend” continues to grow, it is necessary to identify components of this instructional approach, along with a commonly understood definition. While components such as technology are useful within the classroom, teachers and administrators may lack the skills to use this approach in both an engaging and rigorous way. As educators move forward with the implementation of the Common Core State

Standards, school districts have recognized their “call for technology to be used for other purposes such as communication, collaboration and location, and synthesis of ideas” (Roberts, Shedd, & Norman, 2012, p. 57). As a result of the use of technology being required within the classroom, it is possible that future professional development may be necessary to support teacher performance. This study sought to identify commonly known and understood components of what teachers and administrators believed to be blended learning, and investigated their beliefs about how blended learning impacts overall student learning within the classroom. Teachers and administrators were asked to provide insight as to which components of a blended learning approach to professional development they believed best supported teachers with the instructional approach to blended learning.

### **Rationale for Selecting the Topic**

While the instructional approach of blended learning may be common within some school districts and classrooms, in 2014, it was still considered to be a new type of education prepared for a certain group by combining the positive aspects of different learning approaches (Kazu & Demirkol, 2014). As educators recognize the importance of ensuring that students are equipped with the most updated and critical components to support their success, it is crucial that they explore all available instructional opportunities that are being utilized within the classroom. Connecticut is one of the many states that has adopted the Common Core State Standards and it is highly possible that many educators within the state do not have an understanding of blended learning with regards to current terminology, expectations, and approaches that may lead to greater student learning and desired outcomes.

Although the term blended learning may not be a new word or phrase that appears in the public educator sector, the definition or meaning of this phrase has various meanings and understandings. Olivier (2011) referred to the word blended as meaning combining things and signifies learning as an assimilation of new knowledge. Poon (2013) described blended learning as a combination of face-to-face and online delivery methods, with the aim of each complementing the other. Graham (2006) defined blended learning as the combining of the two different education models, traditional face-to-face learning and distance learning. As long ago as 1987, Chickering and Gamson referred to blended learning as a delivery method that encouraged students to engage in active learning. Based upon the various perceptions of blended learning and the multiple definitions that currently describe this instructional approach, it is evident that a common definition has yet to be shared or understood. The instructional approaches attached to the concept of blended learning appear to have evolved over the years and honing in on these constructs may support overall student comprehension and learning when implementing a blended learning approach within the classroom.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Consideration of learner's needs and management of their expectations and level of understanding are important for the development and implementation of a successful blended learning module (Bliuc et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2009; Mitchell & Honore, 2007). Research supports that teacher perceptions of blended learning have evolved throughout the years. While many individuals considered blended learning to be solely the use of technology within the classroom, others believed it to be a combination of instructional approaches that may integrate technology within the learning environment.

Identifying a common meaning and understanding of blended learning is especially important at this time due to its part within Connecticut's Common Core State Standards and the requirements placed upon teachers to provide their students with a variety of academic opportunities. Upon identifying the components necessary to be part of the blended learning model, it will be imperative to provide necessary professional development so that teachers and administrators become knowledgeable of current trends and approaches to support student learning.

Furthermore, it is urgent that research be conducted examining blended learning at the elementary level. Most studies that have been shared over the last 20 years have taken place internationally and at the university level. While these studies have provided suggestions for utilizing blended learning within the classroom, they differ from the approaches that would be applied within the elementary classroom. Currently, studies cease to exist that have reported the experiences of elementary school teachers and how blended learning may have been used to aid instruction. Studies documenting the process of blended learning instruction with elementary students may afford teachers information that can be directly applied within their classrooms and align with supporting the learning of all individuals.

### **Significance and Potential Benefits of the Research**

Blended learning is an instructional approach that when used with purpose, may support student learning. Poon (2013) acknowledged that there is considerable evidence attesting to the fact that blended learning can positively support student achievement. While technology has and will be an important component to classroom lessons for the foreseeable future, it may not be the only construct that challenges and extends the

thinking of all students. For years, educators focused on how to differentiate their lessons so that they were accessible for all types of learners and made students reach their own level of success. At the heart of many blended learning initiatives is a learner-centered model that provides choice, meaningful activities, project-based learning, and opportunities for student interaction and active learning (American Psychological Association [APA], 1993; Commission of Technology and Adult Learning, 2001). Determining the components that fall under this concept can be beneficial for teachers as they can explore various constructs that may work together to support a complete blended learning approach to teaching and learning. There are several definitions and understandings of blended learning and the present research examined how this instructional approach contains various meanings and can be applied in diverse ways within the elementary classroom setting. Furthermore, this study explored professional development as it related to blended learning and sought out to collect information regarding how previous training sessions may have supported teachers and administrators in grasping the components necessary to implementing this model within their classroom environment.

Blended instruction is one of the various methods being used to deliver meaningful learning experiences. The use of blended instruction is growing rapidly because instructors believe diverse delivery methods may significantly enhance student learning outcomes as well as increase student satisfaction from the learning experience (Lim & Morris, 2009). The research that occurred within this study attempted to identify a common understanding of the instructional approach to blended learning so that further discussion and discovery of this model could directly support classroom instruction.

Information and data were collected to provide a greater interpretation of how blended learning is understood, as well as its effectiveness as it serves as a model of instruction containing multiple components.

Districts across the United States have adopted the Common Core State Standards. As of 2016, 46 states, including all six New England states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island put these standards in place within their school districts. (2016, March 18). Retrieved from <http://academicbenchmarks.com>. These standards are being used as teachers plan their instructional lessons and assessments and gather information as to the levels that students understand the material being taught. This study sought out to investigate teacher and administrator perceptions of blended learning and attempted to analyze the impact various blended learning components may have on student learning. Furthermore, teachers and administrators were given the opportunity to discuss and analyze effective instructional approaches they believed to adhere to the concept of blended learning and considered their applicability within their classrooms to not only meet the needs of their students, but to address the requirements placed on them by their districts to meet state level goals.

Finally, the interviews and focus group discussion that occurred allowed for conversations to take place and better support the identification of professional development approaches and models for teachers and administrators at the elementary level. In future studies, these approaches or models may be considered or used to foster the relationship between elementary school teachers and a new learning practice being taught.

## **Brief Definition of Key Terms**

The following is a list of key terms and definitions that will be referred to throughout this qualitative research study.

1. Blended learning refers to “learning facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning, and applying them in an interactively meaningful learning environment” (Gonzales & Vodicka, 2012, p. 8).
2. Elementary grades, for the purpose of this study, was defined as Kindergarten through grade six.
3. Traditional learning refers to “classroom-based or practical, meaning the students can see their teacher and classmates” (Thomas, 2010, p. 2).
4. Professional development refers to activities for educators that are “designed for different purposes including but not limited to improving student performance, changing school culture, implementing new programs or curriculums and rewarding teachers” (Dean, Tait, & Kim, 2012, p. 146).

## **Research Questions**

This study was exploratory in nature as there is a lack of research on blended learning, as well as an agreed upon definition to describe and explain this instructional approach. This study addressed the following questions as research was conducted and data collected.

RQ1. What instructional approaches do teachers and administrators believe define the concept of blended learning?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the relationship between

the implementation of blended learning and student learning?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and administrators regarding the aspects of blended learning professional development that are most supportive of the implementation of blended learning within the classroom?

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional approach of blended learning. In doing so, it was essential to examine teacher understandings of their beliefs of what blended learning is, as well as if they felt a common definition was shared amongst educators. After doing so, it was imperative to identify teacher perceptions as to whether they believed that the implementation of a blended learning instructional approach could support the overall student learning experience. Furthermore, it was critical to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators and determine if professional development related to blended learning could be delivered in specific ways to support the overall learning experience of educators. This research will be used to provide information regarding how the need for a blended learning definition is necessary, as well as how the instructional approach may support student learning.



## **CHAPTER TWO: RELATED LITERATURE**

Blended learning enhances students' learning experiences by creating opportunities for them to improve their understanding through their own exploration and research of certain issues and topics (Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts & Francis, 2006). While components of blended learning may be commonly used in classroom instruction, a shared definition or meaning fails to exist in literature. To establish a context for this study, pertinent literature was divided into four sections associated with theories related to the instructional approach to blended learning components: progressive education, change theory, blended learning, and professional development.

### **Progressive Education**

John Dewey, a proponent of Progressive Education, believed that individuals learn best when given the opportunity to learn by doing or by being part of experiential learning. The foundation of Progressive Education emphasized experience, experiment, purposeful learning, and freedom (Dewey, 1938). In addition, Dewey believed that a sound educational experience involves continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned. Furthermore, he thought education could be interpreted as the scientific method by which man studies the world and accumulates a knowledge of meanings and values. These outcomes become data for critical study and intelligent living (Dewey, 1938).

Progressive Education has a purpose or objective to prepare youth for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill, which comprehend the material of instruction (Dewey, 1938). While those using the idea of Progressive Education are not looking to

solve new problems in education, Dewey believed that it will discover or establish new problems, those, which have to be worked out based on new experiences. Experience, however, must be purposeful. It must increase a person's automatic skill in a particular direction and not push the learner into a narrow line of thinking (Dewey, 1938).

### **Progressive Education and Blended Learning**

Gonzales and Vodicka (2012) defined blended learning as learning that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching, and styles of learning, into an interactively meaningful environment. As this definition relates to the concepts of Progressive Education, suggestions for varied instructional approaches to teaching and learning align with Dewey's belief of making learning purposeful, as well as keeping the learner at the center of the experience. Furthermore, this description of blended learning as shared by Gonzales and Vodicka aligned with Progressive Education. It challenges the traditional lecture style of classroom instruction and aligns with students being active in the learning process. While several instructional approaches to blended learning exist, Gonzales and Vodicka highlighted four models directed at the secondary level that meet student academic needs and provide flexibility within instructional settings. Additionally, each model reviewed allows for the learner to actively participate in the experience provided. The first model, referred to the rotation approach, had students circulating between teacher-led instruction and online learning. The second model, known as a flexible approach, required a student to experience most learning online, while the teacher is to individualize support to each learner. The third model called the self-blend model, allowed students to choose their courses from a menu to supplement their regular offerings. The last model, known as the

enriched-virtual model, refers to a student's time being divided between in-class sessions and online delivery learning. For any of these blended-learning instructional approaches to occur, it is essential that teachers have the necessary materials, as well as the appropriate technology to ensure that students are able to meet the demands of tasks required. In addition to the learning tasks being readied and materials being in place, it is critical to remember that the educator's role is to ensure that the learning experiences are both meaningful and purposeful. As learning tasks are designed, they should not only consider the individuality of each student, but the learning environment that may support the process of skill acquisition. Similar to Dewey's "social clearing house" idea, where students were placed in a practical environment and were able to exchange ideas, students should be in a learning environment that allows for collaboration and experimentation.

One of the important factors for student learning and personal development is the level of student engagement in academically purposeful activities (Kuh, 2001). Low student engagement with academic activities is considered the main reason for dissatisfaction, negative experience, and dropping out of school (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002). In his study examining student engagement in blended-learning environments, Delialioglu (2012) compared engagement and interaction with both lecture-based and problem-based instructional approaches. By designing and implementing various instructional environments and practices, Delialioglu (2012) believed that student learning and development would improve. His study consisted of 93 college students utilizing an online management system in combination of both a lecture-based instructional approach for eight weeks and then a problem-based methodology for eight weeks. Both approaches required students to take initial surveys

to measure their academic abilities as related to the content of the course. The survey was given to students at the end of their instructional experience and then again after students completed their lessons participating in a problem-based instructional design. During the lecture-based, blended learning experience, the instructor utilized teacher-centered methods such as presentation, information, demonstration, and chapter quizzes. During the problem-based blended learning lessons, students were given ill-structured cases with problems that required to work collectively with peers and to engage in conversation and various activities related to the lesson and problem objectives.

In relation to Progressive Education and the beliefs of Dewey (1938), students who utilized this approach to learning concepts were given the opportunity to internalize the information they were presented. They also were part of learning experiences that promoted their interaction with the content material and be open to the possibilities of differing results. A significant finding from this study determined that student's action learning and total time on task were significantly higher in a problem-based learning environment when compared to the traditional, lecture-based learning environment. This reflected the fact that students took part in discourse and were able to interact with one another before determining a solution to a problem. The results from this study were measured using data collected from various engagement surveys that were given to participants throughout the course of this study. This repeated measure ANOVA study concluded that when comparing these learning approaches, students were more engaged when participating in the problem-based instructional. This strategy allowed for collaboration and opportunities to work with peers in various activities. When comparing the problem-based instructional approaches to the traditional learning techniques that

utilized lecture-based methods, students were more passive during lecture because the learning experience was primarily focused on the teacher. Students reported significantly higher use of active learning strategies during problem-based blended learning because they tackled activities that encouraged interaction and application (Delialioglu, 2012). Similar to the ideas of Dewey (1938), as problems were discussed or issues developed within learning activities, students experiencing a problem-based learning instructional approach had the opportunity to work with peers and consider a multitude of ideas and solutions because this type of instruction allowed for students to be part of an active learning experience.

Student satisfaction, attitudes, and expectations in a blended-learning environment play an important role in the efficacy of the education process (Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008). As instruction plans are developed, it is critical to consider first the population of learners involved, and second any possible reactions that may be driven by planned learning tasks. A student can be considered to be satisfied if he feels that the lesson meets his needs and expectations. In other words, he feels that he learns (Ullyat, 2003). To gain better understanding of the perceptions of students learning in a blended-learning environment, Gecer (2013) studied the roles of lecturers and elementary students within the classroom in an attempt to uncover student perceptions about the roles of lecturer-to-student communication, as well as the power of student-to-student communication. This study employed 30 fourth grade volunteers participating in a computer-assisted mathematics course. Participants in this study had previous experience working in a blended-learning environment, as well as knowledge regarding the characteristics of a blended-learning atmosphere. To obtain information from students regarding their

perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the lecturer and student, they were asked to complete two types of surveys. The first instrument utilized an open-ended format and sought to collect information regarding student perceptions of the differing roles of the lecturer and student. In addition to the use of this instrument, students were given a second survey that allowed them to rate their experiences within the blended-learning environment and record their overall level of satisfaction.

Student responses revealed that they believed the role of the lecturer to be a leader, guide, and to model within the classroom. As it related to communication, students shared that they enjoyed the blended-learning approach and communicating with the lecturer outside of the classroom. When examining the role of the student, results indicated that students believed they should be active in the lesson. Furthermore, the opinions provided by students stated that they communicated and shared a lot when working with their peers in a blended-learning environment. Students were aware of their responsibilities in blended-learning environments and what they needed to accomplish during lesson tasks (Gecer, 2013). This study aligns with the Dewey that the American Educational System should respect all sources of an experience and offer a true learning situation that is both historical and social, while also orderly and dynamic (1938).

Relative to the methods of instruction, Dewey believed that the main purpose or objective is to prepare students for responsibility and success and to gird students with the skills necessary for instruction. After analyzing the responses from the semi-structured surveys, Gecer (2013) noted that students believed they should be active in the learning process and that they were aware of their responsibilities in a blended-learning

environment. Furthermore, students believe it is the role of the lecturer to engage them in the learning content, as well be the guide to a level of success. The responsibility of creating a purposeful experience is the role of the lecturer. The role of the student, as shared by elementary students of this study, is to be active and to work hard.

### **Change Theory**

Michael Fullan claimed that “educational change depends on what teachers do and think- it’s as simple and as complex as that” (Hansen, Sunnevag & Kostol, 2011, p. 32). This means that changing the practice does not only require that the teachers change the content and their way of lecturing, but it also requires a change in their pedagogical understanding and experience (Hansen et al., 2011). As instructional practices within the classroom continue to change and the expectations for student achievement continue to increase, teachers may be required to make modifications in their instructional delivery models so that they better meet the needs of students. Although a change in instructional delivery may aid in increasing student achievement, it may not be the only change necessary. Hansen and colleagues posited that for real change to occur, teachers must change the content and lecturing style and their personal pedagogical understanding and experience. Furthermore, they found that while working in teams, educators shared understanding, attitudes, and practice, with a common wish to maximize the students’ potential for learning.

Michael Fullan spent a career examining the efforts applied to school reform over the last 30 years. His research largely concluded that, “change is both a time-consuming and an energy-intensive process” (Fullan, 1991). In addition, he found that "the total time frame from initiation to institutionalization is deceptively long with even moderately

complex change taking three to five years. Major restructuring efforts can take five to ten years” (Fullan, 1991). McAdams (1997) documented Fullan’s contention that all school reform efforts may endure an “implementation dip”. An implementation dip is defined as the period of time, early in the implementation process, during which productivity and morale both decline because of the tensions and anxieties generated as educators, parents, and students attempt to deal with unanticipated problems (McAdams, 1997).

School reform inevitably requires a variety of initiatives within a school district and community. While reform initiatives may prove to be challenging to align within a specific population, it is critical that various stakeholders come to believe in and support the proposed changes. McAdams (1997) discussed the importance of change within an organization and points out that change in any environment only occurs when people are willing to make it happen. Furthermore, McAdams stated that in addition to political and structural considerations, the prospective change agent must draw on motivational theories in planning for meaningful change to occur. Stakeholders must consider that as initiatives are implemented within a school community, the culture of the organization may change (McAdams, 1997).

### **Change Theory and Blended Learning**

According to Lim and Morris (2009), as a result of the advancement in communication and network technologies, more innovative instructional delivery and learning solutions have emerged to provide meaningful learning experiences for learners in academic settings. Blended instruction is one of the various methods being used to deliver meaningful learning experiences. The use of blended instruction is growing rapidly because instructors believe diverse delivery methods may significantly enhance



learning outcomes as well as increase student satisfaction from learning experiences (Lim & Morris, 2009). As teachers and instructors consider a blended-learning approach to instruction, it will be essential to consider the stakeholders involved and understand that Change Theory may play a major role within its implementation. The individual beliefs, feelings, and actions of teachers can influence the success of a blended-learning initiative. Furthermore, it is important to consider that not all leaders and educators will support a new initiative. They may instead defend current practices as supporting the learners within their classrooms.

Moving forward, it is important to remember that there is no single teaching methodology that has proven to effectively teach every child at every level. In her research of English Language Learners, Jamal (2015) hypothesized that it may be beneficial for teachers to use a Learning by Doing (LbD) instructional approaches to support post-secondary level students. She recognized that this approach to teaching and learning would require a change from the traditional, lecture-based instructional formats often found in the classroom. Jamal (2015) identified that in many low-level English Foundation classes, teachers devote the majority of the period teaching content area material and lack the time to provide students with classroom activities to support learning objectives. Jamal (2015) suggested that by incorporating LbD activities within the classroom, self-directed learning and student application of mobile learning may increase when implemented within a blended learning environment. After speaking with colleagues and discussing the possible impact this instructional change could have on student learning, post-secondary teachers shared interest in exploring this type of model. Based on the discussion she had with her colleagues, Jamal recognized that while change

is difficult, making adjustments to teaching approaches may support overall student understanding of the curriculum. Jamal (2015) concluded that if post-secondary teachers utilize a blended learning approach to teaching and incorporated LbD activities, students may find greater academic success. Furthermore, Jamal acknowledged that while numerous activities could be incorporated during the instructional day, it would be imperative to devise activities and settings that would ultimately best meet the needs of the learners involved.

Transition, however, may be difficult for some classrooms. They may lack the necessary resources or instructional materials, or even educators who believe a change is necessary for enhanced student academic achievement. Fullan (2007) defined transition as movement, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, or concept to another. Transitions take time. For successful transformative change to take place, leaders must allow for a suitable amount of time for people to believe in the proposed change. Jamal (2015) concluded that in her research of LbD, the biggest challenge detected were teacher concerns for the style of blended learning employed and the ability to cover all topics usually taught. Discoveries from this exploration concluded a balance within a blended-learning environment is essential as it is implemented.

Similar to Jamal, Fink (2013) examined the framework of blended learning and viewed it as an opportunity for transformational organization learning. Fink examined the various roles of leaders with regards to implementing blended learning and first considered the role of individuals. Fink argued that a first critical condition is a general awareness that a better way exists. This entails faculty members learning of the need to learn and change. If this idea can be transferred to blended learning, the first step would

be to allow stakeholders to see that a better way exists to optimize learning (Fink, 2013). As new initiatives and requirements are given to educators each year, it is beneficial for teachers to examine the supports available for students and be given an opportunity to engage in professional development that will advance their teaching strategies. Furthermore, Fink (2013) declared that to create a significant learning experience; examples of blended learning should be built into the curriculum and not solely in an individual course. While some activities used through a blended-learning approach in classrooms, it may not be directly written into the curricula. Once familiar with new strategies, teachers may align various blended-learning instructional strategies with activities throughout multiple content areas.

Aligani, Kwun, and Yu (2014) conducted a study in New Orleans looking at the thought process, relevant factors, and benefits of implementing blended-learning models within an academic program. As part of this study, teacher perception of blended learning as compared to traditional instruction. Research was conducted using a data-driven model. Here data were collected and analyzed from surveys pertaining to the implementation of blended learning models. Partial findings in this study explored this change in practice and considered the opinions and beliefs of classroom teachers. This was conducted by collecting data from observations, surveys, and discussions with a New Orleans area charter organization that utilized a blended learning approach. While some might argue that there are ways to make traditional instruction more dynamic and learner-centered, this study was able to examine the versatility of blended learning with regards to software, Internet, and face-to-face instruction.

Roley and Sherman (2001) believed that teachers and instructional designers can be the experts executing a strategy for blended learning. As they do so, a transformational view of learning should be developed. Transformational learning, as explained by Mezirow (1997), is described as a process of critical reflection where individuals have a change in their frame of reference. Transformational learning can be conceptualized as a process whereby the institution makes a significant shift in the frame of reference around institutional strategies and initiatives. Graham, Woodfield, and Harrison (2013) studied the stages that institutions go through when adopting blended learning. These stages include awareness/exploration, adoption/early implementation, and mature implementation/growth. In the awareness stage, while the institution is aware of new initiatives, individual faculty members are supported in their efforts. In connection to blended learning, this would entail a school and population of teachers be aware of this instructional approach, however only a handful of teachers may be piloting various approaches. The adoption phase includes new policies and practices being implemented within a school to support blended learning. Lastly, the mature stage of this model incorporates well-established strategies, structures, and support mechanisms found to be successful blended learning approaches (Graham et. al (2013).

Singleton (2013) explored the transition from a traditional style of teaching while examining the integration of blended learning concepts into higher-level education courses. Throughout this study, Singleton recognized the importance of carefully integrating a blended learning model within the traditional learning model. When examining the transition of process for the institution, it is important to focus on how that transition will impact the culture of the organization (Singleton, 2013). In contrast to

using a lecture style of teaching, a blended learning approach to instruction incorporates a mix of traditional and interactive-rich forms of classroom instruction with learning technologies (Bielawski & Metcalf, 2003). Within Singleton's study, faculty members who taught post-secondary courses were advised by university administration to change the format of their classes to incorporate both traditional and blended learning models of instruction. Feedback provided to the researcher from participant interviews suggested that faculty members were satisfied with the new format of course design, however, acknowledged the need to find balance between the two models of instruction. Participants recognized the benefits of utilizing online discussions to teach instructional content and used the time spent within the classroom engaging students in activities for developing an understanding of course material. Furthermore, results from this study indicated that a cultural change at the university had occurred and flexibility was critical in order to maintain a positive relationship between administration and university faculty.

### **Blended Learning as a Pedagogical Approach**

The notion of blending various teaching methods to achieve an effective learning experience has been a subject of past and present exploration by academics (Benson, Anderson, & Ooms, 2011). A mix of different pedagogies has been regarded as good practice for many years. In 2002, Williams concluded that lectures are no longer the standard. Teaching involves more classroom interaction, case studies, student group work and presentation, simulations, and other types of learning activities. While a shared, common understanding of blended learning ceases to exist, various individuals have provided definitions based on their own experiences with blended learning.

Kitchenham (2005) defined blended learning as a process by which educators use varied web-print and classroom-based techniques to present a specific set of skills to a group of learners. Bielawski and Metcalf (2003) described blended instruction as a mix of traditional and interactive-rich forms of classroom instruction with learning technologies. Similarly, Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, and Sorg (2006) recognized blended learning as a mix of pedagogical approaches that combine effective instruction and the socialization opportunities of the classroom with the technological enhancements of online learning. While technology appeared to be a common component in the use of the blended-learning instructional model, Sloman (2007) argued that blended learning is more than just the use of technology and must be as much about varying learning methodology. In addition, blended-learning instructional approaches must be aligned with what motivates learners, as well as the backings necessary to support student learning.

Research involving blended learning has been conducted at the elementary level looking at the use of both web-based and classroom-based techniques. In his study, Kitchenham (2005) examined teachers' implementation of a blended-learning approach to instruction in three elementary schools, which included the use of technology within classrooms. Kitchenham also examined the degree to which elementary teachers experience perspective transformations due to their engagement with educational technology. Furthermore, he explained that these transformations, or changes, through critical reflection, came with the realization that new meaning structures need to be created and action needs to be taken to break away from constraining psycho-cultural assumptions (Kitchenham, 2005). Ten teachers were selected from three schools to

participate within this study. Participants kept a reflective journal for a period of four to seven months. They also participated in an interview and a focus group session with the primary researcher. In their journal entries, participants shared frustrations, successes, and thoughts regarding their teaching approaches using a blended-learning model.

This study suggested that specific components of blended learning were successful when implemented within teachers' classrooms. During the interview process of this study, one participant shared that she used the blended learning instructional model with her students to identify what they believed could be used to complement their own learning. Another participant shared that she wanted to use and integrate technology within her classroom by using Web-Quests with her students. She later worked with them to decide how this approach would be useful for them, which in turn, made the Web-Quests work for both teacher and students (Kitchenham, 2005).

Wang, Han, and Yang (2014) concluded from their research of blended learning that the term has been used interchangeably with "mixed mode learning", "hybrid instruction," and "technology-mediated/enhanced learning" (p. 380). While the instructional approach of blended learning has various definitions, Wang et al. aligned their study with Graham's (2006) definition of blended learning stating that the most widely held understanding of blended learning is that it is a combination of "face-to-face" instruction and "computer-mediated instruction" (p. 138). Their study aimed to bridge the gap in blended-learning research and to promote a comprehensive understanding of what has been achieved in blended-learning practice. Wang et al. (2014) reviewed blended learning models of the past, and also developed a foundation for a proposed framework called the "Complex Adaptive Blended Learning System" (CABLS). This

model of blended learning contained six subsystems and their relationships. These subsets included the learner, the teacher, the technology, the content, the learning support, and the institution. In the first subset, the learner is recognized as an individual that co-evolves with other subsystems, constantly acquiring new identities. The individual participating in a multimodal environment is a researcher, practitioner, and collaborator. The second subset, the professionals, co-evolves with the learner, to become a generation of teachers with new identities and a variety of pedagogical roles including a facilitator, guide on the side, moderator, and advisor. The content becomes rich and engaging for learners, when it includes opportunities for learning such as interactive learning, collaborative learning, deeper learning, individualized learning, and problem-based learning. The fourth subset, technology, addresses the need for both online and offline technology usage. As blended- learning activities occur, individuals will utilize technology as it aligns with an assignment or activity. The learning support offered in the CABLS model differs from other models because it ensures learners are at the helm of content material as they are provided academic and technological support. In this subset, the learner's needs are supported as they are taught specific academic strategies that align with their learning profile. The final subset examined the institution itself and requires that environment to elevate blended learning as a respected, productive strategy. This includes support mechanisms provided to the population of learners at the institutional level and also means strategies, policies, support, and services, as needed. The development of the CABLS Model was created after identifying 87 journal articles and applying coding and analysis to recognize major themes. An interaction between themes was studied and conclusions identified that this model contains all major



components of a blended-learning model, as well as addresses the major concerns that may exist when implementing this instructional approach within an institution.

Advanced technology and the development of various Web 2.0 tools have made it possible for learning to be extended outside of the classroom. Lye, Abas, Tay, and Saban (2012) explored this concept as they examined how elementary school teachers used online spaces, to supplement teaching within traditional classrooms, to enhance the overall student learning experience. The purpose of this study was not to determine if a physical learning space was more beneficial than an online learning space, as both have specific strengths and weaknesses. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) found that there is value in both asynchronous nature of discussion in an online learning space and the synchronous nature of face-to-face discussion in physical and online learning spaces. Blended learning, which occurs in both the physical and online learning spaces, has the distinct feature of leveraging the strengths of these two contrasting spaces (Gerbic, 2011). Furthermore, Garrison and Kanuka's (2004) belief in the definitional concept of blended learning considered a thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning opportunities. As it applied within this study, Lye et al. (2012) devised a case study to encourage elementary teachers to utilize both instructional forums to contribute to a complete student learning experience. To explore the student learning experience, a Web 2.0 learning design framework was integrated with what Jung and Latchem (2011) described as an e-education model that clearly defined the teacher and student roles in various learning situations. Specific to each teacher was the way they intended to use an online space to support student learning. While some teachers used the online space for discussion or blogging, other teachers used it to extend the class

learning and the focus on training and instruction of content material. This included the creation of online quizzes that immediately allowed students to see if they were correct in their responses or needed to return to the online material and review specific sections or passages. Teachers who reported using their online learning spaces for instructional purposes found that overall, their students were self-monitoring their own learning. They also appeared to be more engaged in the learning process. Additionally, a 7-point Likert scale survey was given to students to gauge their perceptions on their learning experiences. The results showed that students preferred the extension of online practice that was provided in the class online learning space. Findings from this study revealed that students who utilized the online component for completing assignments and online quizzes outperformed peers who participated in technology-based activities less frequently. In addition to enabling students in developing multi-modal literacy, the use of online space supported building the rapport between teachers and students. Students shared they had positive experiences and would enjoy having additional classes follow a similar format. Lastly, teachers who participated in this study believed that the technology utilized could enhance the overall student learning experience as resources could be used at varied levels to support individual teaching and learning needs.

The teachers using their online space for training and instruction also found it beneficial to interact with their students through online blogging. In addition to the face-to-face interactions given during class periods, teachers found that a strong rapport was further developed as they provided commentary to student questions and responses. Lye, Abas, Tay, & Saban (2012) acknowledged that the teachers utilizing the learning space this way, throughout the entire study, demonstrated a passion for the use of technology

within their classrooms and were willing to try different learning management systems that would better connect them and their students. Conclusions from this study claimed that the online space utilized by teachers complemented their instruction, however did not replace the face-to-face teaching provided. With the frequent use of online quizzes to reinforce facts, the students had outperformed their counterparts in year-end exams compared to those who had used such technology-enabled activities less frequently (Lye et al., 2012). Also, both teachers and students reported the experience beneficial. Cooperating teachers were intrinsically motivated to use the online learning space as they shared in their belief that technology had a strong impact on learning and their ability to enhance the student learning experience. Students involved in this study shared that they had a positive learning experience with the online learning space and class blog and would appreciate a similar approach in future classes.

Blended learning opportunities can be provided in a number of ways in various types of learning environments. In her study exploring the varied types of blended-learning environments and their possible relationship to student achievement, Chen (2012) developed three learning experiences that provided varied levels of blended learning to third grade students. Ninety-three third grade students were randomly assigned to one of three groups, including an online learning environment or one of two blended learning environments differing in their offerings. This experimental study provided students with an opportunity to learn the same concepts and skills, however each group received different types of treatments. The control group (treatment one) contained students who were able to interact with online materials only. They were not allowed to discuss the instructional content with their teacher or peers. The first blended

learning group (Blended-A) permitted students working with their peers in teams when they learned online instruction. Within this group, it was highly recommended that in addition to utilizing the written materials provided, that students participate in peer discussions to talk about course content learned. The second blended-learning group (Blended-B) was similar to the first blended learning group in that students were asked to use the written content materials to learn new information, as well as work with their peers to engage in discussion. They also had access to a teacher who facilitated all online learning. Assessment within this study occurred after each instructional treatment was administered. Students participated in a post-test to share their understandings of the content learned. Within each post-test, three categories existed including fact/recall, conceptual, and understanding. Results from this study concluded that students in the two blended-learning environments achieved significantly higher scores than those students in the online learning environment, however the results did not determine if scores were stronger in one blended-learning group when compared to the other. Chen (2012) concluded that blended learning environments facilitate student's learning in terms of remembering and understanding factual and conceptual findings. In addition, she found that online learners still prefer face-to-face interactions with teachers and other students.

Student academic success may be a viable component for determining the effectiveness when considering various instructional approaches. Furthermore, the academic learning opportunities that are afforded to students may also play a significant role in their overall academic success. Kazu and Demirkol (2014) conducted a study seeking to analyze students' academic performance by comparing a blended-learning

environment with a traditional learning environment at the secondary level. This study aimed to compare both learning environments on the basis of the academic achievement grades earned, as well as look individually at achievement scores to determine if students' gender played a role in their overall success. This study utilized an experimental design where students in both learning environments were given a pre-test prior to being instructed and then given a post-test measuring achievement gains. Fifty-four students participated in this study and were assigned to either the experimental group or control group. The same instructor provided both treatments during the instructional day for a period of six weeks. The traditional learning environment consisted of teacher-led lectures and minimal peer discussion. The experimental learning environment that utilized a blended-learning approach to instruction sought a flipped-classroom approach, which included the use of technology to leverage the learning classroom so that the teacher could spend more time interacting with students (Kazu & Demirkol, 2014). Also, students from the experimental learning environment were given the opportunity to access the Web environment, where a blog was also designed to provide students with an opportunity to engage in discourse and interact with their instructor. To further support this initiative, students were given access to a computer during the instructional day and were allowed to use online materials at home. Web-based videos were uploaded to the online class environment so that students could further their understandings of content being taught. Findings that were collected at the end of this study concluded that students participating in the blended-learning environment had greater academic gains when compared to students in the traditional learning environment. Kazu and Demirkol (2014) concluded that blended learning encouraged students to access information at any place

without being limited by boundaries, as well as allowed an environment that provided for the exchange of information and ideas. Lastly, a blended learning environment typically is an environment that provides simultaneous feedback and effective usage of technology while allowing learners to engage in interaction, vital to the modern education system.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development is designed for different purposes including but not limited to improving student performance (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007) changing school culture, implementing new programs or curricula or rewarding teachers (Dean, Tait, & Kim, 2012). While various models of professional development related to the field of education exist, it is critical to select a model that best supports the identified needs of a population of learners. Currently, professional development targeted to blended learning is limited. While studies have been concluded in fields such as nursing and engineering that explore the interaction of participants with blended-learning instruction and application, the field of education lacks documented experiences related to this type of instructional approach. Additionally, studies do not exist that explore utilizing a professional development model that follows a blended learning approach for training to instructional leaders and educators. Furthermore, as leaders consider various approaches for professional development activities, it is essential that what is offered is effective and relevant to the needs of the audience.

Berry, Daughtrey, and Wieder (2010) shared that an important aspect of useful professional development programs is the availability of a range of program designs where teaching staff members can select which one best suits their needs and learning preferences. Teachers who have greater autonomy in selecting a specific professional

development program tend to gain greater benefits and have higher satisfaction of their experiences. Additionally, the overall success of professional development for teachers may lie with the content area they believe will further their own success. Educators who attended professional development and offered an opportunity to take part in their own learning experience can internalize the learning opportunity and be more comfortable as they introduce new instructional techniques within their own learning environments.

### **Professional Development and Blended Learning**

Professional development models that aim to provide instruction on blended learning for educators are limited. As of 2015, there were few studies that reported either using a model that utilizes a blended learning approach to teach about blended learning or a model that has been used to enhance the learning of teachers as they hear about this instructional approach. While specific models of professional development have yet to be identified that will support teachers instructing at the elementary level, there are research studies that utilize various approaches to teaching about blended learning.

Kitchenham (2005) reviewed various models of professional development models geared to educators utilizing components of a blended learning approach to teaching and learning. As cited in Bersin (2003), Kitchenham acknowledged six elements he believed should be considered when selecting the right blend for adult learning. These elements included considering the intended audience, time, scales, resources, content, and business application. Furthermore, professional development should be directed to the audience of learners and their specific classroom situations. This allows for teachers to receive training that is based on their needs as educators, as well as consider their population of learners. Valiathan (2002) shared that he believed there are three versions of blended

learning instruction that may support professional development for educators. These models include skill-driven learning, attitude-driven learning, and competency-driven learning. While these models are similar to the model of professional development offered by Bersin (2003), they utilized instructional methods similar to those commonly used with students when a blended-learning approach to teaching and learning has been implemented. Ultimately, this type of professional development session allows teachers to experience the learning provided and also allow for hands-on activities to be internalized. Barnum and Paarman (2002) developed a blended-learning model of professional development that included web-based delivery, face-to-face processing, creating deliverables, and collaborative extension of learning. This approach to blended learning was developed to deliver information and provide learning experiences that students would encounter in a blended-learning classroom.

Korthagen and Lagerwerf (2011) suggested that personal experience, supported by concrete examples, is needed for knowledge to have a strong influence on teaching behavior, and ultimately on one's routine practices. In regards to blended learning, teacher beliefs and attitudes formed from their experience with educational technology contributed greatly to its successful adoption and integration. Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur & Sendurur (2012) added that providing teaching staff with authentic blended and online learning experiences and using the same technologies that they could use in their actual teaching practices can be an effective professional development strategy. Professional development programs for teaching staff offered in online or blended learning modes have the potential to build their confidence and



awareness of effective flexible learning and teaching strategies (Atkinson, Fluker, Ngo, Dracup, & McCormick, 2009).

Universities around the world are utilizing blended-learning models to enhance the learning experiences of students while using a blended-learning approach to teaching and learning. In their study of blended-learning innovations, Mirriahi, Alonzo, McIntyre, Kligyte, and Fox (2015) examined the professional development opportunities given to pre-service teachers as part of their training in the education field. As part of this study, a professional development program was offered to students utilizing a blended-learning approach and was targeted at helping students develop skills, attitudes, and practices of teachers. The program was designed to support students preparing for a career in teaching and utilized a flipped-classroom approach that required students to take part in activities on their own time, in addition to face-to-face classroom time. The Foundations in University Learning and Teaching (FULT) program was intended for pre-service teachers to have the opportunities to engage in a variety of experiences and designed with the principles of flexibility, modeling outcomes-based approaches, modeling blended learning and flipped classroom approaches, inclusivity and scalability, and efficiency and cost effectiveness (Mirriahi et al., 2015). In addition to examining a professional development program offered to pre-service teachers, Mirriahi et al. (2015) also explored a course developed to support teaching staff and their utilization of a blended-learning model to interact, mentor, and share knowledge with one another, alongside experiencing online and blended learning to effectively offer their students support with using technology and blended learning. The online course titled “Learning to Teach Online” was designed to offer professional development to teaching staff and intended to support

the learning of effective pedagogic principles related to online and blended learning practices. Key findings from this research concluded that participant feedback was critical as it allowed for individuals to personalize their learning experiences and obtain what they needed to support their own professional development needs. Additionally, findings suggested that professional development for teachers embody principles of blended and online learning because it provides participants an opportunity to gain understanding of theoretical rationale and practical applications, hands-on experiences, interaction amongst colleagues to gain knowledge of instructional practices utilized, aligned with criteria and standards to personalize a program for individuals, and lastly, an opportunity for choice of various types of professional development programs as educators may prefer to have options with regards to topics and modalities (Mirriahi et al., 2015).

Professional development has also been utilized to support practicing teachers with blended-learning instruction. In his study designed to gain understanding of how to best support teachers learning through an online learning system, Lee (2014) implemented a model of professional development targeted at supporting middle school mathematics teachers and their learning in mathematics. This model also aimed to improve their instructional practice and foster productive professional interactions. This professional development program spanned the course of one year and included 29 teaching participants. The activities within this professional development program included face-to-face workshop courses, web-based learning sessions through virtual interactions, and classroom implementation (Lee, 2014). Among all of these activities, participants completed various assignments online that encouraged peer interaction.

Prompts were given regarding the assignments and students were able to develop a support system and were allowed to complete assignments collaboratively. To facilitate the active learning that was encouraged of teachers, face-to-face workshops were conducted through discussions, collaborative group work, hands-on activities, problem-solving opportunities, and presentations (Lee, 2014). Data was collected from participants' online discussions and the effects of the blended learning professional development were measured by analyzing the content of all interactions. After all data was collected and coded, it was separated into three sections: the level of participation in relation to other variables, the content of interactions, and the relationship between discussion content and associated assignment topics (Lee, 2014). Findings from this study concluded that teacher participants utilized the face-to-face classroom time to focus on the activities provided or problems shared and presented in class. The virtual, online component of this blended learning course was used by teachers to reflect upon their performance of the problems assigned in addition to conferring with peers to gain feedback related to their instructional approaches. Teachers were encouraged to share their real-world classroom experiences with their peers and to discuss resources that were available to support students within their mathematics courses. Furthermore, it was shared through the monitoring of online discussions, that participants' teaching practices changed towards including more student-centered lessons, encouraging discourse amongst students, and provide various resources to aid in mathematics application. Lastly, the researcher suggested that it is essential for teachers to be given time to work with professional development ideas. As it related to this study, participants were given time to become immersed in both classroom activities and with the online learning

system as they communicated with their peers and shared ideas related to instructional theory and practice.

The ongoing professional development of educators is critical and may support their roles working with students. Schools of education, in particular, have long seen continuing professional development of teachers as part of their mandate (Owston, Wideman, Murphy & Lupshenyuk, 2008). In their study of blended learning program evaluation, Owston et al. (2008) synthesized the findings of three different programs from the perspective of model design, implementation, community development, changes in teacher practice, and the overall impact on students. Each of the blended learning programs implemented focused on the improvement of mathematics and science teaching. Participants included educators at the high school, middle school, and elementary level. Evaluative data were collected from interviews with teacher participants, project leaders, and other stakeholders. Additionally, a focus group was conducted with participants, as well as in-class observations of the activities that were included with the professional development provided. A cross-case, comparative qualitative analysis was used to examine the three programs offered to teachers and their effectiveness in supporting the instruction within the classroom. Findings from this study suggested that it is essential for teachers to learn on the job and that professional development that directly aligns with curricula may support teacher needs. Additionally, findings from this study and survey responses from participants supported that all three types of blended learning professional development increased overall teacher confidence as it related to teaching and learning. Owston et al. (2008) concluded that blended learning is a viable model for teacher professional development as it allows for teachers

to learn in environments that directly support and align with their instructional needs and interests.

### **Chapter Summary**

This review of literature grounded this study to examine the instructional approach to blended learning and the various ways it has been defined in previous literature. To date, most research completed on educator perceptions and application of blended learning have been done with secondary education or learning at the university level. The research studies reviewed provided the benefits of using a blended-learning model within learning environments and the benefits supporting the students' learning process. While the instructional practice of blended learning may occur within elementary classrooms, studies reporting on these experiences do not appear to have been shared or published.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regard to their understanding of how the concept of blended learning is defined, as well their perceptions regarding how blended learning instruction may support student learning. Teachers and administrators also were asked to share insight as to the models of professional development they believed would support the training of blended learning as it applied within their grade levels, classrooms, and schools.

This chapter provides details of the methodology used to examine blended learning and a description of the setting, participants, and sampling procedures. This chapter also includes the research questions used to guide the focus of this study and an explanation of the research design, instrumentation, and collection procedures. Survey administration procedures, data collection, and the timeline followed throughout this study are discussed in detail, in addition to commentary regarding limitations and trustworthiness aligned within this study.

### **Researcher Biography**

The researcher is a third year principal in the district where the study was conducted, however, it was not conducted at his school. He began his career in education working as an elementary school teacher in an inner city school district. Later, he was hired to work in a small suburban town containing mostly middle class families. During his time as an elementary school teacher, the researcher worked in various grade levels at the K-5 level. As a classroom teacher, the researcher attended various professional development activities related to curriculum, instruction, and technology. Additionally, he developed and presented several professional development sessions at the building and

district level related to technology integration, student discourse, and student achievement. Throughout his years teaching elementary school students and supervising and evaluating teachers as an administrator, the instructional approach to blended learning was a concept he was interested in further exploring.

### **Description of the Setting and Participants**

The following sections will describe the setting and participants within this study.

#### **Setting**

This study was conducted in a diverse, suburban town in Connecticut. The district serves approximately 6,000 students within grades Prekindergarten through 12 and contains three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The median household income for this suburban town is \$88,106, which is above the medium for the state (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states>). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov>), the district where this study occurred was considered a large public school district in the state of Connecticut. District per pupil expenditures were reported at \$15,104 in 2015. Results from state testing were provided to district Superintendents in the summer of 2015. In comparison with surrounding districts, student test scores have always been comparable and fall within the average range of this district's reference group (DRG) within this state. In regards to the test scores presented from the 2014-2015 school year, district results supported that math and literacy scores were again comparable with surrounding towns, with the majority of students at the elementary, middle, and high school level earning scores within either the proficiency or mastery bands.

## **Participants**

This study was conducted using a sample of convenience based on participants' willingness to participate. To recruit participants, a formal letter was sent to 90 elementary school teachers at their schools. A total of 90 individuals received this formal letter from the researcher explaining the study and asking for their participation in the first phase of the study, which included the completion of the Blended Learning Skills Survey. A total of 57 participants responded to the Blended Learning Skills Survey. To secure anonymity within this phase of the study, demographic information was not collected. Within the survey, six classroom teachers responded that they wished to be part of the next phase within the study, the interview process. The second phase of the study occurred in the spring of 2015, and due to a family conflict, one potential participant needed to withdraw from this study. The five remaining individuals were selected to participate within this study based on their initial response to become involved within the second phase of the study to share their experiences with blended learning. At the conclusion of each interview, the five participants were asked if they wished to continue within this study and join a focus group guided discussion with district administrators. A follow-up letter was sent to all five participants and outlined the focus of the third and final phase of the study. Prior to beginning the focus group guided discussion, 10 administrators were contacted through email and asked to participate in a focus group with classroom teachers. The email they received outlined the purpose of the researcher's study, a consent letter describing administrator involvement, and outlined the purpose of coming together to discuss blended learning. A total of six administrators



responded through email and indicated that they were interested in participating in this phase of the study.

### **Participant Profiles**

Five classroom teachers participated within the second phase of this study and met with the primary researcher for an interview regarding blended learning.

Additionally, all five participants returned for the third and final phase of this study that included a focus group guided discussion with district administrators (See Table 1 and 2).

A pseudonym was assigned to each individual in order to make every effort to protect the participant’s confidentiality.

Table 1

*Description of Participants: Classroom Teachers*

Participant	Gender	Age	Years in Education	Teaching Assignment
Jenna	Female	35	7 Years	Kindergarten
Jason	Male	41	13 Years	Kindergarten
Sierra	Female	33	3 Years	Grade 2
Katie	Female	54	23 Years	Grade 4
Edward	Male	38	14 Years	Grade 4

*Note:* Teaching assignment for the 2014-2015 school year

### **Interview and Focus Group Participant Profiles: Classroom Teachers**

**Participant One.** Jenna is a 35-year-old woman in her seventh year of teaching. Jenna had earned tenure status within the district and had experience teaching in grades

K-2. As of 2014, she was in her fourth year of teaching kindergarten. Jenna has earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and currently holds advanced literacy certification in the state of Connecticut.

**Participant Two.** Jason is a 41-year-old man in his 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. He had earned tenure status within the district and had experience teaching in grades K-4. As of 2014, Jason was in his ninth year of teaching kindergarten. Jason holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree.

**Participant Three.** Sierra is a 33-year-old female in her third year of teaching. Prior to beginning her teaching career in the district, Sierra substituted in neighboring towns. She had experience teaching in grades two, three, and four. Sierra holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and is currently working on post-graduate work in the content area of history.

**Participant Four.** Katie is a 54-year-old female in her twenty-third year of teaching. Katie had worked within the district for 20 of those years, earned tenure status, and had taught in grades K-4. Katie holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and an advanced literacy certification in the state of Connecticut. Currently, Katie is completing post-graduate work in the field of literacy coaching.

**Participant Five.** Edward is a 38-year-old male in his fourteenth year of teaching. Edward had worked within the district for ten years and has taught in grades four and five. Prior to being hired within the district, Edward worked internationally in grades three and four. Edward holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in education.

## **Focus Group Guided Discussion: District Administrator Profiles**

**Participant Six.** Nadia is a 42-year-old female in her sixteenth year working in the education field. Nadia was a classroom teacher in grade three for thirteen years and an assistant principal for the last three years. Nadia holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and administrative certification in the state of Connecticut.

**Participant Seven.** Patty is a 43-year-old female in her fifteenth year working in the education field. Patty was a classroom teacher, literacy specialist, and currently in her second year as an assistant principal. Patty holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, an advanced degree in literacy, and administrative certification in the state of Connecticut.

**Participant Eight.** Kylee is a 41-year-old female in her fifteenth year working in the field of education. Kylee was a classroom teacher in grades two through five, building administrator, and now currently serves as a district math specialist. The district math specialist is considered an administrative position, as the individual serving in this role is required to complete staff observations and evaluations. Kylee holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, administrative certification in the state of Connecticut, and is currently completing post-graduate work in the field of mathematics.

**Participant Nine.** Alex is a 40-year-old male in his fourteenth year working in the field of education. Alex was a school psychologist and is currently in his ninth year serving as a building principal. Alex holds a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and administrative certification in the state of Connecticut.

**Participant Ten.** Darla is a 60-year-old female in her forty-second year working in the field of education. Darla was a classroom teacher in grades five through eight and a

district literacy specialist serving grades K-12. The district literacy specialist is considered an administrative position, as the individual serving in this role is required to complete staff observations and evaluations. Darla holds a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and an advanced certificate in literacy.

**Participant Eleven.** Lena is a 50-year-old female in her twenty-third year working in the field of education. Lena was a classroom teacher in grades three through five and is currently a building principal. Lena holds a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and administrative certification in the state of Connecticut.

Table 2

*Description of Participants: District Administrators*

Participant	Gender	Age	Years in Education	Administrative Assignment
Nadia	Female	42	16 Years	Assistant Principal
Patty	Female	43	15 Years	Assistant Principal
Kylee	Female	41	15 Years	District Math Specialist
Alex	Male	40	14 Years	Principal
Darla	Female	60	42 Years	District Literacy Specialist
Lena	Female	50	23 Years	Principal

*Note:* Administrative assignment for the 2014-2015 school year

## **Description of Sampling Procedures and Research Design**

### **Sampling Procedures**

A sample of convenience was utilized throughout this study. Participants were selected based on volunteers.

### **Sampling Procedures for the Blended Learning Survey**

The Blended Learning Skills Survey (see Appendix A) was emailed to participants from two elementary schools within the selected district for completion. Classroom teachers were asked to complete the survey within five days of receipt. Participants were initially contacted individually through the mail as they received a letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix D) and a brief description of what participant involvement would include. A week later, teachers received a follow-up email that again explained the purpose of the study and a link to complete the first phase of the study, if interested. The survey was specific in asking questions related to defining the instructional approach to blended learning and probing on a general level as to participant involvement using this instructional technique. The survey population consisted of 90 elementary school teachers resulting in a sample size of 57 respondents.

### **Sampling Procedures for Phenomenological Interviews**

At the conclusion of the Blended Learning Skills Survey, participants were asked to leave feedback and their contact information if they were interested in being considered for the next phase within this study. Participants who had left their information were contacted through email two weeks later, as well as received a formal letter in the mail (see Appendix E) and were asked to be part of the second phase of this study, which included meeting with the researcher for a one-on-one interview regarding

blended learning. Responses from classroom teachers resulted in a sample size of six participants. After receiving their contact information, the researcher communicated with individuals through email to set a date and time for an interview. At this time, one respondent withdrew from the study citing family issues. The remaining five individuals confirmed their availability and shared dates and times for an interview with the primary researcher. Over the course of the next three weeks, the researcher met with each of the five participants for an interview session. All five participants completed the second phase of this study. At the conclusion of each interview, participants received a \$25 Visa gift card with a thank you note for their participation within this study.

### **Sampling Procedures for the Focus Group Guided Discussion**

At the end of the each interview session, classroom teachers were asked if they would be interested in returning for the final phase of this study, the focus group guided discussion. They were told they would receive an email, as well as formal letter (see Appendix F) within the mail, within the next two weeks that outlined the purpose of the discussion and if they were interested, to respond to the email request. Once again, all five participants from the second phase of the study confirmed interest and agreed to join the discussion. In an effort to collect information regarding administrator perceptions of blended learning and effective professional development models, 10 district administrators were contacted and asked to be part of the focus group guided discussion. In addition to providing information on models of professional development, the researcher was interested in collecting information related to administrator perceptions of the instructional approach to blended learning and their ideas regarding its involvement within the elementary school setting. A letter was sent to administrators through email,

which included an outline of the study conducted and the purpose of their involvement. Six administrators responded to this invitation and participated in the third phase of this study. Once an agreed upon date was selected, the focus group guided discussion occurred in the library at one of the participating elementary schools.

### **Research Design**

This research study followed a qualitative, phenomenological design. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to “reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2003, p. 58). Phenomenology is a philosophy, a methodology, or an approach to a study or research. There are several types of phenomenology that overlap philosophy and methodology. Phenomenology focuses on people’s perceptions of the world or “things in their appearing” (Langdrige, 2007). When using phenomenology as a methodology, there are criteria for gathering and analyzing data. As a methodology, one follows a set of tasks that require the researcher to collect data, analyze them and report on findings (Sloan & Bowe, 2013). The findings or outcome of this type of study is a collection of descriptions of meanings for individuals of their lived experiences; experiences of concepts of phenomena (Creswell, 2007).

At this time, past and current research indicates that the instructional approach to blended learning has been examined at the secondary and university levels within schools. Research has offered suggestions to using this approach within these classrooms and has documented potential benefits and success while utilizing blended learning techniques. Unfortunately, minimal research and case studies are available to share the experiences and benefits of blended learning at the elementary level. While the concept

to blended learning has been around for several decades, its instructional approach has changed over time and there is a need to identify how this phenomenon may impact students at the elementary level. The intended process of this study was to identify individual experiences of teachers while utilizing a blended learning approach within their classrooms. Once utilizing a qualitative approach to data collection, generalizing information at this level was essential so that a general perspective could be explained considering blended learning at the elementary level of instruction. After identifying participants who had employed a blended learning instructional approach to teaching within their classrooms, it was essential to collect data from persons who had experienced the phenomenon and develop a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 2003). This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). These descriptions helped support the identification of what educators believe defined the instructional approach to blended learning, as well as their thoughts regarding the impact it has had or may have with regards to supporting student achievement. In addition to supporting the identification of themes, participant feedback from interviews and guided focus group sessions also provided meaning to the instructional approach of blended learning, as well as helped the researcher make interpretations regarding the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003).

### **Instrumentation**

The following sections provide a description of the qualitative instruments administered to teachers and administrators for data collection during the spring of 2015.



Data were collected from the survey responses, individual interviews, and focus group discussions.

### **Blended Learning Skills Survey**

Researchers administer questionnaires to some samples of a population to learn about the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs. In sample surveys, data are collected in a standardized format, usually from a probability sample of the population (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 125). The survey is the preferred method if the researcher wishes to obtain a small amount of information from a large number of subjects. Survey research is the appropriate mode of inquiry for making inferences about a large group of people based on data drawn from a relatively small number of individuals in that group (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 125). The first phase within this study consisted of the administration of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey (see Appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to collect information related to the instructional approach to blended learning. This included exploring participant's definitions of blended learning, the ways they have employed blended learning within their classrooms, and participant perceptions regarding how a blended learning instructional approach may align with student learning. The Blended-Learning Skills Survey was sent to prospective participants through email and was accompanied by an introductory letter (see Appendix D) that explained the intent of this research study and the role of the participant. It also explained the purpose of the Blended Learning Skills Survey. The survey consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions that followed a Likert-type format to scale survey responses. Each question within the survey included the answer choices "strongly agree", "agree", "uncertain", "disagree", or "strongly disagree".

Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to share additional information within an optional comments box. Upon receiving the completed surveys, responses were reviewed and further analyzed to gauge a consensus of participants' understanding of the instructional model of blended learning. The survey data provided additional information regarding components of blended learning that supported the exploration of further components mentioned within a blended learning model and elementary setting classroom.

### **Interview Questions: Phenomenological Interviewing**

“Qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). “Qualitative, in depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures their responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). Regarding the qualitative, phenomenological design of this study, it was critical to consider that “phenomenological interviewing is a specific type of in-depth interviewing grounded in philosophical tradition” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). The purpose of this type of interviewing is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). As it was described by Seidman (1998), components of a phenomenological inquiry use an approach of “first focusing on past experiences with the phenomenon of interest, then examining the present-day experiences of participants, and finally joining these two ideas to describe the individual’s essential experience with the phenomenon” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 104). Seidman (1998) also discussed that

prior to the interviewing phase, it is “essential for the researcher to write a full description of their own experience, thereby bracketing off experiences from those of the interviewees” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 105) (see Appendix J). After interviews have been completed, the researcher is involved in the next phase of the process called phenomenological reduction. This phase occurs when “the researcher identifies the essence of the phenomenon” (Patton, 1990). The researcher then clusters the data around themes that describe the “textures of the experience” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). “The final stage, structural synthesis, involves the imaginative exploration of all possible meanings and divergent perspectives” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150) and “culminates in a description of the essence of the phenomenon and its deep structure” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 105).

With consideration to phenomenological interviewing, 10 open-ended type questions (see Appendix B) were developed to address the perceptions of teachers regarding blended learning, as well as the impact this instructional approach has on student learning. The interview questions used within this study were developed by the researcher and were created with the intention of first determining if a shared definition of blended learning existed, as well as if participants had their own ideas and beliefs regarding how this instructional approach was defined. Questions were developed with the intention of learning about each of the participants’ lived experiences within their classrooms. Furthermore, questions sought out to identify how participants used blended learning within their classrooms, as well as how they employed this approach directly with students. Interview questions were also developed with the purpose of collecting information regarding student learning. Questions inquiring about student learning

sought out to uncover the perceptions of participants with regard to how they believed their students learned best, which instructional approaches provided allowed for student progress to occur, and which specific opportunities led to greater student achievement. Lastly, interview questions were written in order to identify the professional development process participants had experienced in the past and if they had their own ideas regarding how they learn best and could benefit from professional development offered. While a set of interview questions was developed, responses from participants often determined if additional interview questions were asked or if further probing of ideas was productive. It was imperative to discover both past and present uses of blended-learning instructional approaches that were used by the volunteering participants. Each interview session lasted 30-45 minutes and consisted of participants sitting individually with the researcher. The session was voice recorded to allow for a deeper analysis of responses to occur.

### **Focus Group Guided Discussion**

A focus group guided discussion took place as the final phase within this study. The purpose of this phase was to bring interview participants and district administrators together to discuss blended learning. This included having participants discuss the implementation of a blended learning model, the impact this instructional approach may have on student learning, and models of professional development as they related to educator training. This phase joined together the five participants from the interview session with six district-level administrators. The focus group guided discussion included the viewing of a video speaking to the instructional approaches of blended learning at the elementary level. The selection of the video used for the focus group guided discussion included the researcher of this study viewing several recordings on YouTube discussing

the instructional strategies entailed in blended learning. While several videos were available that described blended learning in various ways, the video used for the discussion was selected because it included instructional techniques that were shared by participants when describing their understanding of blended learning during the interview phase of this study. The video titled, “What Blended Learning Looks like in the Classroom” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPvreKWaKjY>), focused on 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching and learning and touched upon various components discussed in all five participant interviews. This six-minute video included teacher and student interviews regarding the usage of blended learning components, as well as video segments that shared classroom observations showing how techniques were used within the elementary classroom setting.

After viewing the video, a discussion was led by the researcher to collect information regarding the perceptions of teachers and administrators about the use of blended learning within the elementary classroom and its relationship to student learning. The researcher asked four questions (see Appendix C) during the focus group guided discussion. The first question was designed to allow for a conversation on blended learning to develop by asking participants to reflect upon the video watched. The second question asked participants to discuss the components of blended learning they either viewed within the video, or have seen or used within their personal experiences to support student learning within the classroom. This question was designed to allow all participants an opportunity to become involved within the discussion and either refer to what was viewed in the video, viewed from their own personal experiences, or utilized within their own classrooms. The third question focused on asking about the perceptions

of teachers and the use of the blended learning instructional approach. This question was designed to gain input from both classroom teachers and administrators and allow for discussion to occur that might offer ideas related to blended learning practice and application. The final question asked during the focus group guided discussion sought to uncover information related to professional development and blended learning. Teachers and administrators have a wealth of knowledge regarding professional development. This question was asked with the intent to collect information regarding possible effective professional development models, along with particular approaches that might support the teaching and learning of blended learning. The discussion also led to collecting data that provided information regarding blended learning components participants felt could be effective during a professional development workshop seeking to provide support to teachers and administrators on blended learning instruction. The focus group discussion was voice recorded and later transcribed, allowing for a deeper analysis of responses to occur, as well as coding by the researcher. The focus group guided discussion lasted approximately 60 minutes.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

During the spring of 2015, teachers and administrators were contacted and informed of the study. They were told that a study was to be conducted to explore the instructional approach to blended learning. Participants were notified that an email containing The Blended Learning Skills Survey would be sent within the next two weeks. Additionally, the letter they received provided the researcher's contact information and it was explained that they may contact him if they were interested in participating or needed clarification regarding this study before committing. Upon receiving the email

containing the Blended Learning Skills Survey, participants were asked to complete it within five days of receipt. Again, if they had any questions regarding the survey, they were asked to contact the researcher by email. Participants were given an opportunity to continue in this study and were asked to provide their email address if they wished to be considered for the second phase of this study. After reviewing all surveys, the researcher emailed teachers who provided their contact information and asked them to confirm their interest in the interview process of this study. Participants received written information regarding what the interview process would entail and again, were told that their participation within this study was completely voluntary and that they could leave the study at any time. During individual meetings with teachers, verbal consent was granted to voice record their interview and it was explained that the recording would be transcribed to provide an opportunity for coding and further analysis. Individual interviews took place over the span of three weeks. After the interview process was completed, all teachers who participated in the second phase of the study were contacted via email and asked to return for the final phase of the study. The email explained that the final phase of the study would consist of a focus group guided discussion consisting of teachers and administrators. Again, participants were made aware of this voluntary meeting and asked to confirm their interest and availability. Once receiving confirmation of interest in the final phase of this study, participants were emailed and asked to join the focus group guided discussion. This discussion was audio recorded so that it could be transcribed for coding and further analysis. Participants were once again assured that their comments were to be confidential and voluntary. The analysis of the blended learning survey and interview transcriptions occurred during the spring of 2015. Data

coding of all surveys, interviews, and the focus group guided discussion took place in the fall of 2015.

### **Data Analyses**

Utilizing a qualitative approach, this phenomenological study examined the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regard to their understanding of how the concept of blended learning is defined, as well as how it may affect student learning within the classroom. Furthermore, it explored the types of supports that teachers shared were needed through professional development, as well as what they believed to be the most effective models and approaches of professional development to support their learning and understanding of blended learning. The researcher followed Creswell's (2006) phenomenological study procedure to collect data from the initial surveys administered to participants. To better understand the instructional approach to blended learning, data was collected regarding participant experiences with the blended learning instructional model. Initially, a survey was administered to classroom teachers to gain understanding of their perceptions of the blended learning instructional design. Analysis of survey responses resulted in descriptive data. Subsequently, the data obtained helped guide the questions presented during the interview sessions of this study. Additionally, both survey and interview responses supported the framework for the focus group guided discussion. Data was collected from the Blended Learning Skills Survey, individual participant interviews, and the focus group guided discussion. Data was voice recorded, transcribed, and coded.

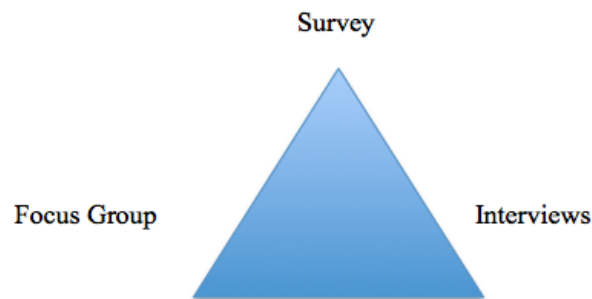
The researcher within this study administered, collected, and analyzed all survey data collected. The information was coded and responses were analyzed to identify



common themes that developed. Interviews followed the administration of a blended learning survey and attempted to collect information regarding perceptions of the blended learning instructional approach and components participants deemed effective related to student learning. Data collected from the interview phase of this study was used to gather information for further focus. This was completed with the intent that additional data will “lead to a textural description and a structural description of experiences, and ultimately provide an understanding of the common experiences of participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 61). Additional data collected during the focus group guided discussion as participants respond to a video they viewed on blended learning in the elementary classroom. Furthermore, participant responses regarding effective professional development approaches were documented and reported within the findings sections of this study. Upon completion of the focus group guided discussion, the transcript was analyzed so that “significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2003, p. 61). Lastly, all qualitative data collected within this study were coded using Researchware HyperRESEARCH. This process included the manual approach to examining all transcribed texts and marking all words and phrases that reasoned to be descriptive of the phenomenon.

In addition, a reflexive journal was kept to record all relevant information that developed during the implementation of the survey and/or during the interview or focus group sessions. Reflexivity in research improves transparency in the researcher’s subjective role, both in conducting research and analyzing data, and allows the researcher to apply the necessary changes to ensure the credibility of their findings (Finlay, 1998;

Finlay & Ballinger, 2006; Gilgun, 2006). The triangulation of data sources (see Figure 1) included analysis of information collected from the survey given to participants regarding their understandings of blended learning, data collected during individual interview sessions that was transcribed and coded, and dialogue from the focus group guided discussion consisting of teachers and administrators.



*Figure 1: Triangulation Model*

### **Trustworthiness**

The four areas of trustworthiness were applied to this study. Transferability was established within this study as the information collected was generalized so that it is applicable outside of the research study that occurred. Findings from this study are thoroughly explained and conclusions were developed based on the identified results. Credibility was internalized by participants, as they were aware of the purpose of this study, as well as the potential impact that it may have within classroom and school settings. Participants were permitted to ask questions throughout the study to better understand the phenomenon that occurred. Dependability within this study ensured that all environments included were reported in detail and any changes in environment that took place as a result of this study were explained. Although different results may be

collected if this study was repeated, the same types of responses, along with outlook could be replicated within a similar situation and environment. After initial and axial coding phases were completed, they were shared with an auditor to ensure that bias had been reduced and integrity maintained. Lastly, confirmability was addressed by using a reflexive journal (see Appendix K) to control for any possible researcher bias that may have occurred within this study. Additional information regarding the limitations within this study and greater details regarding the four areas of trustworthiness within this study can be found in Chapter Five.

### **Statement of Ethics**

Prior to the beginning of this study, a proposal for research was submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Western Connecticut State University. Permission was granted by the Superintendent of Schools to conduct this study in the selected school district. Written consent was obtained from all participants within this study. Participants were reminded at each phase that their involvement within this study was voluntary and that they had the right to exit the study at any time. Data collected were kept strictly confidential. All participants were assured of their confidentiality, thus the assignment of pseudonyms were used in Chapter Four, as individual experiences were described. All coding that took place within this study was completed by the researcher and supported the confidentiality of all participants.

### **Chapter Summary**

The methodology of the study was detailed in this chapter to explain the processes and procedures followed to conduct this study. The researcher's biography established credibility by explaining the researcher's intentions to study a population with which he

is familiar, as well as the need to identify potential benefits to support student learning at the elementary level. The survey administered, research questions asked to participants, and the focus group guided discussion, were explained with detail for the transferability of this study. Subjects, sampling procedures, instrumentation, testing procedures, and limitations were described to better understand the triangulation of data described in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ANYALISIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions regarding the instructional approach to blended learning. First, this research sought to uncover participant understanding of blended learning as it related to instructional approaches utilized within the classroom. Second, the researcher was interested in the perceptions of participants with regard to the impact blended learning may have on student learning. Lastly, the topic of professional development was explored to gain insight into the types of professional learning models or activities participants believe could support the implementation or training for using blended learning.

This chapter presents the data that were collected throughout this study. Through the administration of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey, one-to-one interviews with the researcher, and the implementation of a focus group discussion, the instructional approach to blended learning was explored. Participants within this study were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. The findings are guided by the following research questions:

1. What instructional approaches do teachers and administrators believe define the concept of blended learning?
2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the relationship between the implementation of blended learning and student learning?
3. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and administrators regarding the aspects of blended learning professional development that are most

supportive of the implementation of blended learning within the classroom?

As described in detail in Chapter Three, the administration of the Blended Learning Skills Survey, individual interviews, and the implementation of the focus group guided discussion took place over the span of three months. The Blended Learning Skills Survey was distributed to 90 individuals through email with an explanation of the research study. This first phase within the research study yielded responses from 57 participants. Once survey responses were received, an analysis of responses occurred and six participants were contacted for additional involvement. Five of the six participants were able and willing to continue within the research study and agreed to meet for a one-on-one interview. The five interviews were conducted over a three-week period with the intention to collect data that would provide information related to the research questions. All interviews were conducted in person and took place within each participant's classroom outside of school hours. At the conclusion of each interview session, each participant was asked to return for the focus group guided discussion. At this time, they were informed that administrators would join the discussion group to provide additional clarification, if possible, regarding the use of blended learning within the elementary school setting. In the third month of this study, a focus group guided discussion took place within the library of one of the district's elementary schools.

This chapter begins with sharing the data collected from the analysis of the Blended Learning Skills Survey. It is followed by individual narratives of the five participants from the interview sessions. All participants were provided a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. An analysis of individual interviews follows and explains the lived experiences that were shared by individuals. Lastly, a narrative of the focus group

guided discussion is provided that shares the discussion that occurred between interview participants and administrators. All three phases of the study provided information that supported the conclusions drawn by the researcher. Themes were generated from the data collected and their relationship to blended learning and the research questions within this study are presented.

### **Blended Learning Skills Survey: Quantitative Results**

The Blended Learning Skills Survey was distributed to possible participants with the intention of collecting information related to the instructional approach to blended learning. After completing each question, participants were given the option to provide individual comments, if desired. In order to secure anonymity within this phase of the study, demographic information was not collected.

#### **Question One**

The first question within the survey asked participants if they believed the term “blended learning” to be commonly understood by all educators. This question yielded 56 responses from participants with all answers falling within the answer choices of “uncertain,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Results from question 1 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

The term “blended learning” is commonly understood by all educators.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	0	0
Uncertain	17	30.36
Disagree	32	57.14
Strongly disagree	7	12.50

*Note:* 56/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Question Two**

The second question of the Blended Learning Skills Survey sought to collect information regarding participants’ perceptions of blended learning supporting differentiated instruction within the classroom (see Table 4).



Table 4

*Results from question 2 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Blended Learning supports differentiated instruction within the classroom.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	7	12.73
Agree	32	58.18
Uncertain	15	27.27
Disagree	1	1.82
Strongly disagree	0	0

*Note:* 55/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Question Three**

The third question from the Blended Learning Skills Survey made the statement “technology must be incorporated when using a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom” (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Results from question 3 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Technology must be incorporated when using a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	22	40.00
Agree	23	41.82
Uncertain	10	18.18
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

*Note: 55/57 participants responded to this question.*

#### **Question Four**

The fourth question from this survey asked participants to share if they felt that elementary schools were equipped with the necessary resources to support the instructional approach of blended learning (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Results from question 4 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Elementary schools are equipped with the necessary resources that may support a blended learning instructional approach.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	4	7.27
Agree	10	18.18
Uncertain	23	41.82
Disagree	18	32.73
Strongly disagree	0	0

*Note: 55/57 participants responded to this question.*

### **Question Five**

The fifth question within the survey asked participants if they believed elementary school teachers have been adequately trained to incorporate a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Results from question 5 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Elementary school teachers have been adequately trained to incorporate a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	1	1.82
Agree	3	5.45
Uncertain	16	29.09
Disagree	26	47.27
Strongly disagree	9	16.36

*Note:* 55/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Question Six**

The sixth question within the Blended-Learning Skills Survey sought to understand the perceptions of participants with regards to their beliefs that administrators expect to see blended learning within their classroom (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Results from question 6 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

School administrators expect to see blended learning within the classroom.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	4	7.27
Agree	18	32.73
Uncertain	25	45.45
Disagree	6	10.91
Strongly disagree	2	3.64

*Note:* 55/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Question Seven**

Question seven of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey asked participants if school administrators have provided professional development within the last two years that has been included or has focused on blended learning (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Results from question 7 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Your school administrator(s) have provided professional development within the last two years that has included or focused on blended learning.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	1	1.82
Agree	13	23.64
Uncertain	10	18.18
Disagree	18	32.73
Strongly disagree	13	23.64

*Note: 55/57 participants responded to this question.*

### **Question Eight**

The eighth question from the Blended-Learning Skills Survey sought to acquire information from participants regarding their willingness to attend a blended learning workshop if it was offered through district professional development (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Results from question 8 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

If blended learning workshops were offered through district professional development offerings, I would attend.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	14	25.45
Agree	25	45.45
Uncertain	14	25.45
Disagree	1	1.82
Strongly disagree	1	1.82

*Note: 55/57 participants responded to this question.*

### **Question Nine**

The ninth question within the Blended Learning Skills Survey was interested in participant's perceptions to whether or not they thought that the blended learning instructional approach would increase student achievement (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Results from question 9 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Incorporating a blended learning approach to instruction will increase student achievement.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	42	76.36
Agree	13	23.64
Uncertain	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

*Note:* 55/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Question Ten**

The final question within the Blended-Learning Skills Survey asked participants if they believed students learn best when a variety of instructional approaches are used within the classroom (see Table 12).



Table 12

*Results from question 10 of Blended Learning Skills Survey:*

Students learn best when a variety of instructional approaches are used within the classroom.

Answer Choices	Number of Respondents	Percent
Strongly agree	22	40.00
Agree	23	41.82
Uncertain	10	18.18
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

*Note:* 55/57 participants responded to this question.

### **Blended Learning Skills Survey: Qualitative Data Analysis and Conclusions**

The Blended-Learning Skills Survey was created with the intent to better understand the perceptions of classroom teachers with regards to the instructional approach to blended learning. Furthermore, it was distributed to 90 individuals teaching kindergarten through grade five to acquire a range of responses detailing lived experiences within this phenomena. Responses were received from 63% of participants (57/90). After the surveys were compiled, the responses received were reviewed and tallied using an online data collection program. The comments that were submitted for each survey item were read and coded by the researcher. This included using the coding program Hyper-Research to assign codes and identify themes. The findings from the Blended-Learning Skills Survey are provided in the following sections.

### **Survey Question One Results**

The first research question within this study sought to gather information regarding approaches educators believed define the instructional approach to blended learning. Question One was designed to not only prepare each survey participant to begin considering the instructional approach to blended learning, but consider if they believed their understanding of this topic was similar to others. Based on the results from the survey, the majority of respondents disagreed that this was a commonly understood instructional approach. One survey comment provided by a participant stated, “Does it mean teaching art, reading, drama, writing, technology etc. together? Is it differentiated instruction? Does it have to do with heterogeneous grouping? Are students using the computer to learn online at their own pace?” Additional survey comments stated, “Since terminology is constantly changing, I don’t feel like blended learning is fully defined with a concrete definition, by everyone” and “I have never heard of this term. I can guess what it might mean but I don’t know for sure.” The comments that survey participants submitted after answering this question were similar in that participants believed that a common understanding of this instructional approach and shared definition ceased to exist amongst educators.

### **Survey Question Two Results**

One of the major hurdles in preparing pre-service teachers to differentiate instruction has been their tendency not to see much differentiated instruction in actual classrooms as model to emulate (Benjamin, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). In keeping with the student-specific nature of the differentiation process, differentiated instruction is described in the literature not as a strategy or a formula, but, rather, as a general way of

approaching teaching and learning that can suggest possible methods and strategies (Martin, 2013). The development of Question Two considered research conducted on differentiated instruction and the relationship to supporting student learning modalities. Current research on blended learning shares this perspective and discusses this approach to aid classroom instruction and application. Four of the 57 respondents shared comments after responding to this question including the following:

Blended learning appears to have great potential in supporting differentiated instruction, but at this time, I'm not certain that enough educators have common understanding/feel competent with this strategy to apply it to its potential, Survey Participant Nine.

Yes, it gives kids different avenues to work and learn within the parameters that the teacher puts on the lessons or unit, Survey Participant Eight.

The coding of comment responses from this question, along with the majority of respondents selecting they agreed with the survey statement, suggest that a blended learning instructional model may support differentiated instruction within the classroom.

### **Survey Question Three Results**

Past and current research related to blended learning suggests the involvement and usage of technology. Driscoll (2002) reviewed various concepts of blended learning and found that the use of technology was a common element found within all approaches and applications to blended learning. Seven of the 57 respondents shared comments after answering this question. In total, over 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that technology must be incorporated within this instructional approach. Comments shared regarding this statement included the following:

Technology should be incorporated when teaching any subject in any classroom, Survey Participant 49.

The true definition of blended learning incorporates some online platform to be used to individualize student learning and opportunities, Survey Participant two. I find that technology has the potential of helping struggling learners reach their potential, Survey Participant Four.

Similar to the research reviewed within this study and responses from the survey, it can be stated that the majority of survey participants believe technology should be included within the instructional approach to blended learning.

#### **Survey Question Four Results**

This question was designed to gauge the perceptions of respondents with consideration to educators having resources available to utilize a blended learning instructional approach. After reviewing the responses from survey participants (see Table 6), respondents were either uncertain about this statement or disagreed. In addition to the survey responses, 10 participants provided comments including:

Blended learning can look different at the different grade levels and thus the type of technology used will differ across the grades. For example, in Kindergarten, the incorporation of iPad work into the daily classroom schedule in a rotational model of blended learning would be a sufficient launching point, Survey Participant 36.

I think it is hard to make a blanket statement that elementary schools are or are not. I think readiness needs to be determined site by site. I would think elementary schools would have the technology in place that may support blended

learning given all the upcoming assessments, which will require technology. I am unsure of the availability to access other resources needed to support blended learning, Survey Participant 18.

Relative to the survey responses, it may be possible that respondents selected uncertain or disagreed because they feel elementary schools are not equipped with the necessary resources to support blended learning. Additionally, it is imperative to consider responses that relate to the definition of blended learning and essential instructional components and the impact this belief may have regarding this survey statement.

### **Survey Question Five Results**

This question was provided within the Blended Learning Skills Survey to learn about the professional development offerings (if any) that have been provided to elementary school teachers, as well as collect data regarding specific learning components that teachers may align with the instructional approach to blended learning. Within the Blended Learning Skills Survey, this statement yielded varied levels of participant responses (see Table 7). The majority of respondents shared they “disagreed” with this survey statement. Similar to these responses, comments shared from participants included:

I’m not 100% sure that I know what blended learning actually means so I don’t know if we are trained or not, Survey Participant Five.

I don’t recall any PD with blended learning as a topic, Survey Participant Seven.

Some are far more familiar/comfortable with this concept simply due to the nature of the advances in this area over the past several years, Survey Participant 35.

An analysis of survey responses, along with comments provided, suggest that while training has been provided to classroom teachers, it is unknown if responses correlate with participant understanding of blended learning or if the effectiveness of the training that has been provided and received by classroom teachers has been inadequate.

### **Survey Question Six Results**

This question was designed to gather information related to the perceptions of educators about administrative expectations of the implementation of blended learning. It was anticipated that this question could provide information related to administrator thoughts about blended learning and if possible discussions with classroom teachers have previously occurred. Based on the survey responses, the majority of participants were “uncertain” about this statement. Comments that were shared from participants included:

I believe they expect as much digital interaction as required for the curriculum and the appropriateness for each grade level, Survey Participant 35.

They can’t expect to see it if they have not told us what it is, Survey Participant 46.

Administrators do look for the use of technology in the classroom. I think a next, more specific, step would be to look at how it is used to differentiate instruction and practice opportunities for student, Survey Participant 39.

Admins expect to see teachers using different resources to reach each kids potential and to fit their learning styles, Survey Participant Eight.

### **Survey Question Seven Results**

This statement was included within the Blended-Learning Skills Survey to collect information related to the experiences of classroom teachers and any possible

professional development they have received that relates to blended learning.

Additionally, it was intended that if teachers did describe specific training sessions or had administrators who expected to see this type of instructional approach, they would share it within their response to this survey question. The majority of respondents selected the option “disagree” when responding to this survey statement. The remaining participants selected the option “agree” and indicated they did so because they either received training related to blended learning or consider specific training that was attended to be aligned with a blended-learning instructional approach. Comments that were shared after participants responded to this survey statement included:

PD has been focused on aspects of technology and blended learning, seeking to build capacity to be employed in the classroom. To my knowledge, blended learning terminology may not be specifically articulated (but implied) and many aspects necessary to provide a blended learning experience have been covered,  
Survey Participant 30.

While the term blended learning is still unfamiliar to some, I feel that there have been multiple opportunities provided focusing on the integration of technology,  
Survey Participant 14.

### **Survey Question Eight Results**

This statement was provided to gauge if participants were interested in workshops related to blended learning. Furthermore, if offered, the researcher was interested in possible professional development offerings and models of instruction that classroom teachers may have suggested or reflected upon in the comments. The majority of survey respondents either selected the answer option “strongly agree” or “agree” as a response.

In total, more than 70% of respondents indicated they would be interested in professional development related to blended learning (see Table 10). Furthermore, no specific feedback was offered that stated that any past professional development offering related to blended learning had been provided.

### **Survey Question Nine Results**

This survey statement was included within the Blended-Learning Survey to better understand the perceptions classroom teachers may have with regards to blended learning instruction, student learning, and achievement. While this research study does not intend to make any generalizations on student achievement, this survey statement was provided to gauge the beliefs of classroom teachers, as well as their feelings as to the blended learning instructional approach supporting student learning. A participant commented “Technology integration, which enhances the content understanding while strengthening the tech skill base is a must in the K-12 teaching environment. Equity of digital resources (devices and parent support) must be highly considered so that all students have an equal learning platform. Students thrive when they enjoy the class- human integration and social building of relationships both between teachers and students play a huge role in the vital rapport.” Additional comments included:

While I do not know that we can make a direct correlation to increased student achievement, I do believe motivation increases as does college and career readiness, Survey Participant 18.

Not enough data to make a decision, either in district or nationally, articles/studies give mixed reviews about blended learning. One would hope as PD in this area



increases and we begin practice with a common understanding, clearer data will become available, Survey Participant Nine.

### **Survey Question Ten Results**

This statement was provided within the Blended-Learning Skills Survey to collect information related to teacher perceptions of student learning when a variety of instructional approaches were employed. Nearly 76% of respondents selected the option “strongly agree,” while the remaining respondents selected the option “agree.”

Comments shared from respondents included:

While the blended learning model can be diverse, at the elementary level it is of utmost importance to still provide various hands-on opportunities for physical learning and motor development. The ability to be active, develop oral language, problem solve, role play, etc. can not be forgotten, Survey Participant 36.

Not every kid learns the same way, so multiple ways of instruction are vital to kids learning and meeting their potential, Survey Participant 11.

Teachers have to adapt to the learning styles of the students in order for the students to reach their potential, Survey Participant Four.

Conclusions from this survey statement suggest that survey participants believed that students learn best when multiple instructional strategies are present in the classroom.

The Blended-Learning Skills Survey was an important aspect of this research study and provided information related to this instructional approach. Conclusions from the survey suggested that while the term may be familiar to educators, shared components of this instructional approach could be difficult to define. While this instructional

approach may have been difficult for participants to define, they concluded that blended learning may support differentiation, include technology, and possibly lead to aid student learning and overall achievement. Additionally, participants concluded that while professional development related to blended learning may not have been explicitly provided to classroom teachers, most survey participants would attend training if offered. Lastly, through survey responses and shared comments, participants referred often to the terms “differentiated instruction” and “learning styles.”

### **Interview Narratives**

Six individuals initially agreed to participate within the research study. One of those individuals withdrew from the study prior to the interview session due to a family emergency. Five individuals confirmed interest and availability to meet for an interview session regarding blended learning. Over the course of three weeks, all five interviews were scheduled and took place within each participant’s classroom. All five participants were elementary school teachers working within grades Kindergarten through five. Interview participant experience within the education field carried a range from 3 to 23 years (see Table 1). All interviews began with mutual introductions and a brief review of the overall purpose of the study. Participants were reminded that all information would be kept confidential and pseudonyms would be used when findings were reported. Each interview lasted between 30 to 50 minutes.

#### **Participant Interview: Jenna**

At the time of the interview, Jenna was a 35-year old woman in her seventh year of teaching. Jenna’s experience in education was teaching in the primary grades, kindergarten through second grade. During the time of the interview, Jenna was

currently completing her fourth year of teaching kindergarten. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The first question that was asked of Jenna required her to share her definition of the term blended learning. After pausing and saying she would need a few moments to condense her thoughts, she looked at me and said, “Well, I think blended learning is really just combining multiple aspects in your classroom of modalities of learning, including technology and music and movement and written work, using all those different things together to reach all the different students.” After stating her understanding of blended learning, Jenna immediately communicated that she wasn’t sure if what she shared was all right and if it was the real meaning of blended learning. After sharing with her that the purpose of the study was to collect individual viewpoints regarding blended learning, she appeared to be more at ease.

In the second question, Jenna was asked to provide an example of how she would implement blended learning within her kindergarten classroom. After hearing the question, Jenna immediately stood up and walked over to the carpet area across the room. She smiled and said, “Many, many ways and they take place all over the room.” While standing on the carpet area and pointing to the board that was hung on the wall, Jenna shared that she uses her SmartBoard each day when doing her classroom Morning Meeting. She pointed to the carpet and explained where each student sat and described how they participated daily. Next, Jenna moved across the room and stood under a sign labeled Math Center. Once under the sign, she said, “We use it for different learning tasks, so perhaps in math, for example. The students work in math stations and one of their stations they move through is the SmartBoard and there’s an activity on it that they

do with a partner. Very self-corrective, very engaging for them, a great way for them to practice. They'll request it, which is great in play times, to go back on the SmartBoard and do things." As she was explaining how she has used blended learning within her classroom, Jenna grabbed a pile of student work that was in a basket and placed it on the table in front of me. After a quick review of these papers on the table, I recognized math addition games, word problems with student drawn pictures, and a paper that appeared as though it went along with an iPad assignment. Jenna shared that iPads are used frequently within her classroom for both literacy and math. For these learning tasks, she shared that some were "Self-guided" and "Self-paced" because students are able to work at their own ability levels. Jenna was pleased that this instructional approach was taking place within her classroom and that students were provided opportunities that were differentiated. She went on to share a blended learning task that involved students working with iPads and using them to take pictures of shapes found around the building. She explained that this task allowed for a great deal of peer interaction and oral language to occur as students were able to talk about what they noticed and share their thinking with friends. Furthermore, this task allowed students to return to the classroom and use manipulatives, such as marshmallows and toothpicks, to construct 3-D models. As they were doing so, students were encouraged to engage in discourse with their peers and ask questions that could further their understanding of the task. After working through these questions, Jenna shared that her students decided to use Play-dough to make the curved shapes. They then presented their shapes on the SmartBoard and used iPads to report on their discoveries. Jenna concluded by sharing that the lesson generated a great deal of student-to-student discourse and that students were engaged and excited about being able

to use a variety of materials. Based on the examples she provided, it appeared that Jenna had a solid understanding and belief regarding the instructional approaches or components that align with blended learning.

The next question Jenna responded to dealt with her perceptions on whether she believed that a blended learning instructional model could be beneficial to student learning. She responded, “Oh, definitely. I think it is. There has to be a balance for sure. You don’t want to go all one way or the other, but you definitely need to have a balance. I think the engageability is important, especially with the little ones, but you have to again watch that fine line because they just get so much screen time and so much electronics at home that we try to balance here that making sure we’re full of language, that they hear a lot of language during the day. I think it’s beneficial because it really helps them focus.” Jenna was next asked to share her belief about the differing roles within her classroom and discuss her role as the classroom teacher in comparison to the role of her students. Jenna began her explanation sharing her role and said, “In the beginning, it’s definitely the scaffolder and trying to make sure you’re accessing for every student that can access what we’re working on. You’re definitely scaffolding but you want to hold back and give them time to explore and discover on their own and make their own connections. They’re held responsible for that and they know that, so they’re always looking for ways that they see themselves learning, not so much I told them what they’re learning. We do that a lot in here. Definitely the students need to take on a role as also, I facilitate the activities, but they really have to take ownership of it.” Jenna went on to explain the transition that her students make throughout the year; how they enter the school year very young and the necessary guidance and instruction that occurs to ensure

student progress and growth. When asked about her lesson planning and the opportunities afforded to students during instruction, Jenna replied, “A lot of partner work or small group work, time for them to just talk to each other and bounce ideas off of each other. They need a lot of rehearsal before they start a writing task. They need to be able to talk it out first and it’s great for them to do that with a peer instead.” In addition, she shared that movement, acting out, and music were all opportunities considered for individual lessons. Jenna also shared that she believed that her students consistently need interactivity and hands-on experiences. She concluded, “It’s a lot of blending.” When asked if she believed that teachers in the district were equipped with the training and skills of blended learning, Jenna shared that if others’ definitions of blended learning was similar to hers, then she believed so because of the level of communication and collaboration between grade level teachers. She continued to share that she believed that as a district, this type of work and instruction is being executed with regards to blended learning, however if teachers are unaware of what defines the instructional approach to blended learning, they may not realize that they are implementing its components.

After discussing her understanding of blended learning and the way it has been implemented throughout her practice, Jenna was asked to share her thoughts regarding administrator expectations during instructional time. Jenna believed that her administrators expect to see students engaged; a great deal of peer discussion, usage of materials, and technology, when appropriate. The last topic discussed during the interview session with Jenna related to professional development. Jenna stated she felt that the district level professional development that was offered to her often felt as though it was not appropriate for kindergarten teachers. She acknowledged that she believed this

to be true due to budget constraints and as a result, a “one-size fits all” approach was the reality within her district. Jenna added that she believed the most valuable professional development, was time that she was given to work with her teammates. Regarding professional development, Jenna shared that no course offerings have been provided at the elementary level for technology usage and training on instructional approaches. The interview with Jenna concluded by asking if she believed that others share her understanding of blended learning. Jenna again reiterated that she wasn’t sure if any of her colleagues understood the instructional approach to blended learning and if they did, she would suspect that it would vary grade level to grade level within her school.

Jenna appeared comfortable sharing her ideas regarding blended learning. She openly discussed the types of instructional approaches she applied, as well as linked those practices with student application and learning. She stated that she carefully selects instructional approaches based on her population of learners and employs them so that they align with the academic needs of her students. From these shared statements, it was interpreted that she is an educator who knows her students and makes instructional choices to support their learning. Furthermore, she described that by utilizing a blended learning instructional approach with students, she was proactively supporting the individual learning of all students.

#### **Participant Interview: Katie**

At the time of the interview, Katie was a 54-year old woman in her twenty-third year of teaching. Katie’s experience in education included teaching all grades kindergarten through grade four. During the time of the interview, Katie was completing

her tenth year teaching fourth grade. The interview session lasted approximately 40 minutes.

The first question that was asked of Katie encouraged her to share her definition of blended learning. Katie responded, “In my opinion, blended learning involves the student taking charge of their own learning with the teacher acting as a coach and facilitator. When the students walk into the classroom, from the minute they walk in, to me, blended learning would be my approaches to make them as independent as possible during their entire day so that they take charge of their own education with me more as a participant in their learning.”

The next question allowed Katie to share the components that she implemented related to blended learning when planning lessons. Katie’s explanation used examples from teaching mathematics. She referred to a lesson she did teaching shapes and explained her role as the facilitator, guiding her students and probing their understanding of shapes. Katie shared that the majority of the time within the lesson was spent with children engaging in discourse with one another and being given the chance to explore the shapes and being able to consider multiple options. Katie continued that her time teaching was minimal during the lesson and that her role was to ask questions, encourage students to work together, and promote critical thinking. Katie concluded her response by sharing that when considering her lessons, she thinks about the “whole student” and all of their capabilities.

The next question Katie responded to concerned her perceptions about a blended learning instructional model, including the components she described during her explanation of blended learning, could be beneficial to student learning. Katie believed



that using components of blended learning did aid in supporting student learning and that if she is to do the majority of the teaching and instructing, that she would lose students as “They would tune her out.” Katie continued by sharing that the teacher and student roles change throughout the year. She continued by saying that her goal is to get her students to a level of independence and to have them be as involved as they can be in their own learning. When asked about technology, Katie stated that she incorporates it more and more each year. Katie added that the use of technology with her students could be distracting at times, especially when using variable resources and having a variety of choices.

The next question that was asked of Katie was to share her opinions on the expectations she believed her administrators have when coming into her classroom. Katie said, “I think the first thing is they want to see students engaged in their learning. They want to see evidence of learning. They want to see students interacting. They want to see challenges. They want to see supports set in for the different ability levels. They don’t want to see me talking to the whole class. Talking to small groups, perhaps. Leading discussions, perhaps. Turning things over to them. Make them responsible. Yeah, that’s what they want to see.” Katie was then asked to refer back to her definition and understanding of blended learning, and consider if she believed that teachers within his district were prepared to instruct with a blended learning approach. She responded, “Yes, I think that’s how we operate as teachers; however, the expectations of the elementary classroom teacher have been building exponentially, so that you feel as though you want to teach a certain way, you can teach a certain way but there are too many pieces and it’s almost dizzying. To try to focus your energy on good teaching and

making sure that the students are walking out of your door every day having learned, it's frustrating."

When asked about professional development and the opportunities afforded to her, Katie shared that she felt it was important for teachers to be given more time to plan and work together. At the time, she shared that the only professional development she received within the last few years was related to literacy and mathematics. When asked about professional development related to blended learning, Katie discussed Google Chrome and said, "I want to do more of that and more of the presentations but I'm not feeling strong enough in that piece."

The interview with Katie concluded by asking her if she believed that others within her building and district shared her understanding of blended learning and utilized the same lesson components she had discussed earlier within the interview. Katie stated, "I cannot think of a single person in this building who would not think that." She concluded saying that in regards to using different components within a lesson, she referred to that as "Good teaching" and said, "That is what works well with most students."

Katie appeared confident in her response to defining blended learning. She provided many examples aligning this instructional approach with responsibility and ownership. Throughout the interview, Katie reflected a great deal on what she identified as "good" teaching. The ideas and instructional approaches she provided were supportive to instructing all learners and ensuring that as the year progressed, students developed an understanding of their role as learners. Katie's explanation of how she used blended

learning within her classroom shows evidence that she utilizes this type of instructional support to further student ownership and independence.

### **Participant Interview: Jason**

At the time of the interview, Jason was a 41-year old man in his thirteenth year of teaching. Jason's experience in education had a wide range, with his experience teaching in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. During the time of the interview, Jason was currently completing his tenth year of teaching kindergarten. The interview session lasted approximately 55 minutes.

The first question that was asked of Jason required him to share his definition of blended learning. Jason responded, "I actually didn't have a definition, which is when I took the survey, I thought I don't really know that I even know what I'm talking about. Inferring from the questions and the things that were imbedded within the questions, it actually harkened me back to the multiple intelligences. That's what I kept coming back to was that when the pendulum was up in the air, appealing to multiple modalities through whatever instructional strategies and materials that facilitated that to maximize student learning." As a follow-up to Jason speaking about his definition of multiple intelligences, he was asked if this was something he considered as he planned his lesson each day for his kindergarten students. Jason shared that he considers multiple intelligences each day as he plans lessons. When asked to provide further details regarding those specific components he considers, he shared music, movement, and a variety of materials. He continued by saying, "Some kids might be on an iPad, some kids might be on the smart cards, some kids might be using a white board, some kids might be using manipulatives, so using all those things because it's going to tap into a specific

interest or specific relevance. One little boy is the dinosaur expert so I got dinosaur stencils so that he could stencil pictures of the dinosaurs before he wrote about them. If his representational drawing isn't as strong, he can go on the iPad so that he could pull out what a dinosaur looks like and also find specific facts that could provide support."

Using Jason's definition of blended learning and its connection to multiple intelligences, he was asked if he believed the components he referred to within his response to the first question were beneficial to student learning. Jason said, "I do because I think that if I were locked into only presenting material in an auditory way, then visual learners aren't going to be able to maximize their potential. If I only worked with students by providing a mini-lesson and instruction and then expected a level of independence- students need lots of guidance and support." Jason shared that these are the approaches that he has always used as a classroom teacher and that his own previous experiences in an alternate career support his instructional approaches. Jason was then asked to speak of the varying roles of the teacher and student, and to provide an example, if possible. Jason expressed, "I believe that the role of a teacher is to be a facilitator. I think that the environment that I create and the emotional connectedness to school and to learning and the way that the environment is set up in terms of fostering student independence and fostering students' understanding of the connections of learning are about as important as I am. I think that the environment, the box that we're sitting in right now, well it's overflowing." Jason continued with speaking about the role of students and said, "I think that the students' role is using their engagement and the connections that I've helped to facilitate to discover".

When asked if Jason thought that educators within his district and school have been taught to carry out the instructional approaches of blended learning, he said that he felt younger teachers and interns now are being taught to assess students and that the majority of their training is related to data collection. Jason felt that newly hired teachers weren't being taught how to provide students with a wide-range of learning opportunities. He continued, "You really teach by responding to students and as a result, you are assessing all day every day. I think that flexibility and that fluidity of instruction and exchange is actually what's being lost in regard to good teaching".

The next topic that was addressed with Jason regarded his perceptions of district level professional development. Jason stated that he did not believe that he was offered professional development that would support his needs as a learner. If he had his choice, he would prefer hands-on support that would include resources or individuals visiting his classroom and modeling how to do an instructional practice and demonstrating how it should be carried out with his specific group of students in mind. When Jason reflected on the expectations he believed that his administrators had regarding what they would expect to see within his classroom, he responded, "I think that she would expect to see the things that I have been talking about, lots of different modalities of learning with lots of different instructional materials with lots of different groupings and flexibility."

The interview with Jason concluded by asking him about the learning opportunities he believed supported student learning each day. Jason shared an example from his classroom about choice and how his students were able to complete different tasks and have a say in what they wanted to do. As Jason summarized his example, he ended by saying, "That's what creates a community of learners."

At the beginning of his interview, Jason was upfront about being unsure as to how to define blended learning. As he considered the instructional approaches he applied within the classroom, he recognized and determined that he employed blended learning within his classroom in a variety of ways. Jason was adamant that he carefully and mindfully selected instructional approaches to adhere to the learning styles of his students. When discussing blended learning, Jason stated that he used this instructional approach on a daily basis, as he believed it provided all learners with opportunities to make academic gains. Furthermore, when discussing opportunities offered to teachers, Jason's dissatisfaction for district testing and professional development were evident. He discussed many ineffective training sessions that were provided within the district and reflected that they were missed opportunities to advance teacher learning. Jason plans lessons to support student learning and designs learning experiences by incorporating diverse learning opportunities, various learning modalities, and differentiated experiences.

### **Participant Interview: Sierra**

At the time of the interview, Sierra was a 33-year old woman in her third year of teaching. Sierra's experience in education included teaching grades two, three, and four. During the time of the interview, Sierra was completing her first year teaching second grade. My interview with Sierra lasted approximately 50 minutes.

The first question asked of Sierra concerned her definition of blended learning. Sierra responded, "Blended learning, to me, is kind of the concepts of bringing in technological components to the classroom. I also thought of it as flipped learning. That's the term that I thought was interchangeable. The idea being that students do a lot

of their learning outside of the classroom. Less direct instruction, or teacher guided, initial instruction. Then the component is that that's being done outside of the classroom. Whether it is being done in after school type programs, or extended classrooms, or even at home, where students are doing the instruction there." Sierra continued, "Then they are to come back the next day with their ideas of what they've learned. At that point the teacher can evaluate what the students have picked out of the instructional component without her initial guidance, or his initial guidance, and then they do the activity side of it. It's to see that they've been able to learn on their own and what they've constructed for knowledge based out of the instruction that they've provided themselves almost." Sierra also shared her own experiences with blended learning and referred to her time in college. Sierra shared that she used Moodle and Blackboard Learning to complete assignments online. As a learner, she discussed having the option to select the types of learning she needed, be that a lecture or lesson available online, and focus her direction towards the segments available.

Sierra then reflected upon her understanding of blended learning and if she believed that it was an instructional approach to learning that could be used at the elementary level. Sierra responded, "Elementary level, I think your lower elementary, very, very difficult. I would be very cynical to send my kids home with some sort of Moodle link or Blackboard Learning link and say you're going to read this lesson or review this lesson tonight. Tomorrow, you're going to complete an assignment." She continued, "Upper elementary perhaps. Fifth, pushing it. Middle school, sixth and seventh, perhaps. I think the general role of teachers is to provide students with that gradual release of responsibility within learning sessions. I think that is more

developmentally appropriate for elementary students”. Sierra continued by saying that she didn’t think it was possible, at the elementary level, to completely “flip” the classroom for learners. She continued by sharing that in her experience as a classroom teacher, she used online programs such as IXL and XtraMath with her students and that she would consider that part of a blended learning approach. When asked to describe the programs mentioned, she described them as databases that offered choice and self-selection to her learners and both being individualized to meet their needs as learners. Sierra went on to discuss her students’ love of using both iPads and Chromebooks. Using these devices, Sierra explained that her students used online resources such as Reading A-Z and Type Scout within the literacy block and when practicing their typing skills. Another example provided details about how she used technology and her SmartBoard to show students pyramids in Egypt. She discussed using Google Maps and modeling how to access 3-D renderings online. Sierra also referred to using the Lego Architecture Series with her students and giving them the opportunity to use the manipulatives she provided and were available to create structures. After doing so, she explained that her students would create a report using Google Docs and share their report with her online. Sierra referenced this activity as engaging and rigorous. She concluded by saying, “They want to learn more. They want to produce more.”

The interview with Sierra then moved into discussing the varying roles of the teacher and student. When talking about the role of the teacher, Sierra said, “My role is to provide really solid, guided, and modeled instruction. I think I’m to be the exemplar at times. I think at times it’s important that I let the students drive where the lesson goes.” She continued, “My role fluctuates dramatically. I think some things I know that are skill



based, foundational skills, I need to right out of the bat model from the start. This is what this should look like. This is how I'm going to show you how to get there. In other areas, where I know that they have background, I think it's important for me to understand that, let them see it, let them see how they communicate with their peers, what they can share with their peers, and how they can help teach each other. I think a lot of times I can do a lot of great instruction, but sometimes those "ah-ha" moments come from when kids sit down and have a conversation." Based on the discussions had during previous interviews, Sierra was asked to talk about the instructional approaches and components she brings into her classroom daily. She shared that her students are provided opportunities to engage in discourse often. Additionally, she stated that her students are able to perform, such as in Reader's Theatre, and have access to various manipulatives when working on math problems during Math Workshop. When asked what her administrators would expect to see within her classroom, she stated, "Quality engagement. I think they want to come into a classroom and see that kids are on task. Not only on task, but understand what they're doing." She continued, "I think it's not only that they are engaged, but that you can sit down and ask them the question "What are you doing today?" The final topic discussed during the interview session with Sierra was related to professional development. Sierra shared, that if given the opportunity, she would like to receive training on strategic group instruction. She explained that being a new teacher, it takes time to figure out "The different hurdles" one comes across.

The last question required Sierra to consider blended learning within her own classroom, and based on her explanation of blended learning, share what she would like to try out. Sierra said that she'd like to try web-based activities with her students. She

concluded her thoughts by sharing that she would probably want to try something that resembled a technology game. She stated, “I think that’d be probably the first thing I would try. Something small.”

Sierra shared many of her past learning experiences during the interview session. She discussed her experiences and shared various examples of how she used technology at the high school and college level to advance her understanding of required courses. When asked to discuss blended learning, Sierra described it as a “flipped classroom” approach to learning at the secondary level. As the interview continued and Sierra provided examples of what takes place within her classroom, she began to verbally question her definition and the effectiveness of blended learning with primary students. She commented on instructional approaches she has employed with students, as well as discussed the academic gains students have had based on the opportunities she referred to as blended learning at the end of the interview session. While she may have questioned the way she initially described blended learning, Sierra believed that learning should be engaging for all students and include high levels of peer discourse and responsibility.

#### **Participant Interview: Edward**

At the time of the interview, Edward was a 38-year old man in his fourteenth year of teaching. Edward’s experience in education consisted of working in grades three, four, and five. During the time of the interview, Edward was completing his fifth year of teaching fourth grade. The interview session lasted approximately 50 minutes.

The first question that was asked of Edward required him to share his definition of blended learning. Edward shared, “I think blended learning is a mixture of instructional components. I think that it’s using technology and I think it is working with small group

and strategy groups. I think at the elementary school level, you need to do all those things. I think that we all do blended learning and we have to. I don't know if blended learning is something you can do out of context, but I know when I plan lessons, I blend different things together." Edward continued, "I think about discourse and I think about student application. I think about them applying what they learned and giving them the opportunity to try something with little or no direction. I look for those opportunities and I think they strive when given the chance. I also think, and I have taught various grade levels and in various schools, that blended learning looks different in different classrooms. I think at the elementary level, we consider differentiation and multiple intelligences. We know we have learners that learn various ways and we have to support that. We have to get to know our students so that we can support them. If I tried lecturing, they wouldn't be engaged. When I blend together what they need, they are engaged. They are with me and enjoy instruction and the time they are at school."

Edward was then asked to provide an example of his use of blended learning in the classroom. He said that he used technology to support his instruction daily. During literacy, he described using the SmartBoard to introduce his lessons. He continued by explaining that when students go off and work after the mini-lesson, they have access to peer discourse, various devices including iPads and Chromebooks, and/or hands-on materials. Edward described that his classroom looks this way each day and that students are often doing a variety of things at the same time. He shared, "Different modalities are being addressed, different learning skills are being addressed. Student are getting what the need." Edward also provided an example using blended learning during math instruction. He shared that his students use iPads variety of reasons, including working

with different math programs. Edward added that not all students are using technology during instruction and that it was all right because they were getting what they needed with other materials. Edward described another example using blended learning and began his description with stating, “I have used blended learning if blended learning means what I have shared with you.” He continued by giving an example of a nonfiction unit of study and talking about giving students choice to select their own topics. He shared they would be using technology, in addition to resources such as articles, books, and video clips from online search engines. Edward stated, “All of those components and putting them all together like that is what I think blended learning is and might be blended learning planning. When it was time for students to work, they used Chromebooks, library books, articles, video clips, and anything else they wanted to use to collect information. I asked them to use as many resources as possible so that we could ensure the correct information was being collected. To me, they were applying blended learning.”

When asking Edward about his perceptions of whether or not he believed the instructional approach to blended learning can support student learning, he responded, “Yes, but I think that’s what teachers do naturally. They might not refer to it as blended learning, and I’m not even sure if I am using the right definition, but teachers try to use multiple modalities within their instruction. They get to know their students and how they think and learn. They think about what is happening in their classrooms and what students need. If using a laptop and the Internet will be better for research, they should do it. Again, I think that’s what good teachers do, they look at components necessary to make classrooms successful. The hard part is that some teachers aren’t ready to or

prepared to make these instructional changes. Technology may scare people and some teachers rely too much on what may have worked in the past. They are scared of making these changes or they aren't sure how to. In that case, asking for support is what they need to do.”

The next topic discussed during the interview with Edward focused on the teacher and student roles. Edward shared that at the beginning of the school year, his students follow his lead. He believed that his students expected him to take the leadership role and as they did so, he offered them choices to allow them to begin thinking about their individual learning preferences. He added that as the school year continues, he expects students to take more ownership of their learning. He shared that his role then moves from primary instructor to the role of facilitator throughout the year. He concluded, “Sometimes students need less guidance than others and sometimes they need more complete guidance and support. I can usually judge which students will fall within each of these categories.” Edward was then asked to discuss the opportunities he provided to students during instruction. Edward responded, “I follow a blended learning approach I think. I use partnerships and small groups. I use technology and have students talk to one another as much as they can. I like to bring in different modalities to appeal to all types of learners. When I can bring in the music of movement, I do it. When I can make connections to the real world, I do it.” When asking about the frequency of these components within his classrooms, he responded, “Yes, with technology and small group and partner work. Those are components of blended learning I use everyday. Movement and music, I usually bring those into writing whenever I can.”

Edward was then asked his thoughts regarding the ability of his colleagues to implement blended learning and he stated that while some are prepared, others are not and they fear the idea of change. He continued by adding, “I think most fear change and fear the way it is implemented.” He completed his explanation with stating, “It was important to take it slow and that easing into change would work better.”

When asked about his administrators and their expectations, Edward explained that he thinks they want to see differentiation, student engagement, and the curriculum being taught based on the professional development received related to math and literacy.

The last part of the interview with Edward focused on professional development. He was asked to share his perceptions of the professional development training he received and if it supported his instructional approaches to teaching. Edward stated, “Sometimes we have really good professional development and sometimes it’s not so good. We don’t have many opportunities to choose what we want to do or have to support us. I feel that my teaching strategies are the same and professional development really targets things connected to literacy or math.” He added, “I also think it is hard to provide professional development that applies to everyone. You asked about blended learning, and I think that if it’s technology or different approaches, teachers would like that. We are always wondering how to do something better or different and would love to hear about those things. It does not have to be something brand new or groundbreaking but something that could support the learning of our students.”

The interview with Edward concluded with him sharing that he believed teachers know what good teaching is and know what their students need to be successful. Regarding the definition of blended learning and his understanding of what was occurring

within his district, he stated, “I think the components I shared and believe to be blended learning are what’s happening in our district.”

Edward was confident in his response to defining blended learning. He stated that he had many experiences with employing this instructional approach and was familiar with components of this instructional model to employ with students. Throughout the interview, Edward discussed many ways he used and accessed technology to support student learning. Furthermore, he was adamant that technology was a necessary component if a teacher is planning to utilize a blended learning instructional approach. As the interview continued, Edward discussed small group instruction and differentiation. He felt that differentiation was present in his classroom each day, as he discussed spending a great deal of time planning lessons to meet individual learning needs. Additionally, he said that student usage of technology was essential as it served as a tool to promote critical thinking and problem solving. Edward has experienced technology in a variety of ways and his classroom fosters an environment that encourages technology usage and student independence.

### **Participant Interview Summary**

The interview phase of this study was designed so the researcher could learn about the lived experiences of individuals in regard to their implementation of blended learning. During each interview session, participants shared their definition of blended learning, along with the components they felt were part of this instructional model (see Table 13). Each participant discussed their experiences as they related to teaching, as well as described the opportunities they provide to students that were aligned with blended learning instruction.

Table 13

*Participant Description of Blended Learning Definition and Components Discussed to Describe Blended Learning within the Classroom*

Participant	Description of Blended Learning Definition	Components of Blended Learning				
		Instructional Approaches	Technology	Groupings	Resources	Student Application
Jenna	Modalities of Learning, Technology, Music and Movement, Written Responses	Modalities of Learning, Differentiation, Music and Movement, Real-World Connections	SmartBoard, iPads, Cameras	Small Group	Math Manipulatives, Computer Programs	Written Responses, Peer Discourse
Katie	The Student Taking Charge of Their Own Learning and the Teacher is a Facilitator of Learning	Gradual Release of Responsibility		Partnerships, 1:1, Small Group	Math Manipulatives	Independence, Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving
Jason	Multiple Intelligences, Modalities of Learning, Questioning, Music and Movement, Provide Guidance and Support	Providing Choice	iPads	Flexible Groupings	Manipulatives	Drawings, Writing Sentences, Choice Activities, Peer Modeling
Sierra	Flipped-Classroom Approach	Online Instruction	iPads, Laptops	Discussion Boards, Blogs	Online Tools, Websites	Online Assignments, IXL, XtraMath, Moodle, Blackboard Learning
Edward	Variety of Instructional Approaches Including Small Group and Technology	Modalities of Learning, Webinars, Music and Technology, Differentiation	iPads, Laptops	Small Group, Strategy Groups, Partnership	Library Books, Articles, Video Clips	Independence, Ownership, Choice



### **Focus Group Guided Discussion Analysis**

The final phase of the study, the focus group guided discussion, took place on June 15, 2015. At this time, all five participants (Jenna, Katie, Jason, Sierra, and Edward) who participated within the interview session returned to the study and joined six administrators (Nadia, Patty, Kylee, Alex, Darla, and Lena) as well as the researcher, in a discussion regarding blended learning. The purpose of including administrators in the final phase of the study was to seek clarification, if possible, regarding the implementation of blended learning within the elementary school setting. The focus group guided discussion began with mutual introductions and a brief review of the overall purpose of the study. After sitting down and sharing the format of the focus group guided discussion, all 11 participants were reminded that all information would be kept confidential and a pseudonym would be used for each individual when findings were reported.

After viewing the researcher-selected video on blended learning titled “What Blended Learning Looks like in the Classroom” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPvreKWaKjY>), a discussion was led by the researcher. The first question asked the group to discuss the video they had watched and consider the understandings of blended learning with regards to the instructional components that were observed, as well as those not present. Sierra was the first to respond to the question and shared that she felt the video observed was similar to the literacy and mathematics workshops that were followed within the district. She also acknowledged the format viewed within the lesson including partner work and small group instruction. Sierra reflected back to her own use of blended learning and shared

the example presented during her interview of using the math program IXL. After doing so, she stated her understanding of a “Flipped classroom” approach and said, “There was a lot less technology. I’m kind of starting to see more of that being the bigger focus where they did a lot more on their own, but there was teacher interaction with that small group in that rotation system so that was a little different. It just looked very similar to the workshop model that is followed in our district”. Katie shared that the teacher not being the lead within the classroom is part of blended learning. She added, “You’re seeing them [students] working with partners, interacting with other people, not just always the teacher being the one giving the knowledge, but kind of just being there as a support.” Nadia was the first administrator to respond to this question and added, “I was looking for more hands on materials. I didn’t see any in there at all. They were using computers and they had calculators in the higher level class but no actual materials, so they’re able to access anything to solve problems.” Kylee added, “And with lower level grades, I think about second graders, that would... that’s not enough, there needs to be other things happening.” Regarding the question that was asked to the group by the researcher, Jason joined the conversation and stated, “I think that really depends on what your definition of blended learning is. If it’s just the teacher taking advantage of opportunities beyond the classroom, like a discussion board or something, it gives students an opportunity to learn, then it’s present. Because I’d be interested to see how that would look or transform into a K and one classroom (Kindergarten and Grade One), given the developmental age of the students and how that might look versus some of the opportunities you might have in the fourth and fifth. But I think there’s degrees depending on what definition you have and what components it includes.” After

speaking about the importance of scaffolding, Darla shared an experience of an observation she completed prior to the focus group guided discussion. She shared that the teacher offered opportunities to students including the use of a Geo-board app, as well as other manipulatives. She stated that it was beneficial because it allowed the teacher to read the comments provided by students and assess their understanding.

The second and third questions focused on classroom instructional components, as well as the perceptions of teachers with regards to using blended learning within their classrooms. Participants were asked to reflect on the blended-learning instructional components observed within the video, as well as those from their personal experiences, that they believed supported student learning within the classroom. Edward responded to this question first and acknowledged formative assessments and the use of the exit ticket found within the video. He added that he thought it allowed the teacher to return to the objective at various times, through multiple units, and support student learning. Jenna acknowledged the use of small groups and the teacher being able to see where a student is and support his or her current needs. Sierra introduced the use of technology within the conversation and discussed the ability of students being able to present and share their work aloud. Katie added to the conversation by sharing a recent lesson that took place within her classroom and the importance of connecting the work to real world applications. Nadia stated, “Looking at a lot of different learning styles, so, using the technology, having the kids work independently a little bit, cause some of us work better that way, than with a partner, and with a teacher, so I think it was a nice blend of that as well.” Jason followed up with stating, “One of the things that we talked about, when you

and I had spoken, was the different modalities of learning and again, looking at it from a primary perspective, that it all looked way too sedentary for me.”

Additional components that were discussed at this time by participants were the use of technology and peer discourse. While speaking about technology, Katie questioned the use of technology within the video clip and asked if technology needed to be included with blended learning. Kylee responded, “It can be using a whiteboard and a marker with a partner, in your lap, instead of, you know... So I think, really, that technology piece, while it’s there, and it has an importance, it’s not necessary in order to have a blended classroom. I mean, we do lots of lessons all day long, where you’re blending all things together and you don’t have that digital technology piece.” Sierra added, “So think about what it would look like for literacy, for social studies, I mean, we do, I mean the workshop model is just that, I think it is blended.” Jenna explained that she believed the definition of blended learning needed to include technology and that it was important to blend factors from outside of the classroom with what was taking place inside with students. Edward added to this point with stating, “In my definition of blended learning, there does have to be technology.” He continued with saying that a blended learning classroom does not always need to use technology, but for a lesson to be considered blended learning, it does need to have digital technology.

The third question was designed to extend the responses of participants and gain additional understanding of the perceptions of teachers regarding their colleagues and their application of instructional approaches within the classroom. Alex, Nadia, Jason, and Edward all shared that they didn’t believe most of their colleagues saw blended learning as they did and that a common definition of blended learning was not shared.

Alex added, “So that definition of blended learning, could be a very valuable experience for a teacher, or it could be a very trying, difficult experience for a teacher, depending on what it includes.” Alex shared that he believed meeting the expectations of implementation depends on how the instructional approach was defined. Patty joined the conversation stating, “I really think the definition would be using multiple ways of accessing the same type of lesson, and it could include digital technology, but it doesn’t have to. It’s using what’s appropriate and most meaningful, and, in different ways, so that all students, so they can all access that, the material being presented, at a level that’s appropriate for them. So while it might sometimes include digital technology, it doesn’t necessary have to in every lesson, just when it’s appropriate.”

The conversation then moved into discussing online learning platforms and how participants used these platforms in the past. Sierra shared her experiences from college related to using online forums and discussed her beliefs about students using online blogs and response boards. Edward shared his experience as it related to his own personal research and application within the classroom and discussed the effectiveness of the instructional approach and how it could allow for students to share their thoughts, ideas, and overall understanding.

The final topic discussed during the focus group guided discussion focused on professional development. Participants were asked to consider what trainings would support their understanding of blended learning and more specifically, what would support their role as educators. Sierra responded first and said, “I think PD on resources, places you can go for these blended learning types of activities. Like things, like Khan Academy. I keep thinking about that in my head. Like there are certain resources that

teachers can use. I've used that in my classroom before. There are a lot of things that we can go to, to bring it in, it has to be digital, bring in technology." Jenna shared that management would be important and referred back to learning how to support a class of 22 students effectively. Jason agreed with what Jenna shared and added support with groupings. He referred back on his role as a primary teacher and reiterated that he could use support on groupings at the primary level. Jenna responded next and stated that she could use support with independent and partner work and ensuring that students were engaged when working together. Nadia agreed with the offerings of the group and added that she believed that it was essential for teachers to have time to collaborate with their grade level peers. She added, in addition to time with colleagues, it is important to have experts to support learning sessions and have them ready to offer resources and modeled examples. Darla added and referred to district portfolios and their previous role within the district. She stated, "With all the different types of assessments we're doing now, I think portfolios certainly are a part of blended learning too, so you can see progress over time." Edward said that he believed teachers needed the time to work together and share their approaches with technology. He referred to teachers applying technology within their classrooms differently from one another and stated it would be beneficial to come together and work as a team. Lena went back to the definition of blended learning and thought that it would be a good idea for professional development to focus on those instructional strategies and embrace them as a team. Kylee added that once blended learning was defined and a shared understanding was set, then identifying those most viable techniques would be important. Patty concluded that after identifying a shared understanding and models, it would be essential to "Formulate the appropriateness at

different levels, and so if we're going to include some technology, really, does that apply to kindergarten, does that make sense to what they're doing, and first grade, etc. Until you start with the foundation of a shared idea or definition, you have to do that first before we can talk about professional development, before we can have conversations around that." The final thought was explained by Alex who stated, "I think in terms of PD, I'd first think about staff capacity and differentiating across the grade levels. The usefulness to me would be, basically the effectiveness that it has for the teachers. So, if it's I want it to be as useful as possible, I think, from a definition standpoint, you want the definition to support the philosophies of those grade levels and not limit them." Alex concluded by asserting the importance of working with teachers to find out what would support their needs and making sure that it was applicable to their students and their independent grade levels.

### **Findings**

After professional transcription from all three phases within this study was complete, responses from the Blended-Learning Skills Survey, participant interviews, and focus group guided discussion were read several times by the researcher. The process of coding began with Initial Coding, which can be referred to as "the breakdown of qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). The goal of Initial Coding, particularly for grounded theory studies, is "to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). As the researcher read and reviewed the data collected, an in vivo coding process was utilized as passages of text were considered and assigned codes. The process of in vivo

coding as it applied within this study consisted of the researcher reading sections of text from the interview transcripts and carefully selecting a word or phrase that most accurately described what was shared during the interview session. The purpose of an in vivo code is to ensure that concepts stay as close as possible to research participants' own words or use their own terms because they capture a key element of what is being described. The initial coding phase generated a total of 73 codes (see Appendix H). This included a review of the survey, interview transcripts, and focus group guided discussion data. Using the online software Survey Monkey, frequencies and percentages from the Blended Learning Skills Survey were extracted and comments provided by participants were reviewed and coded. Next, after interview transcriptions were received, each transcript was read over several times for careful analysis. Charmaz (2006) suggests that "Detailed, line-by-line Initial Coding is perhaps more suitable for interview transcripts than for that detailed researcher generated field notes." Lastly, the focus group guided discussion transcript was reviewed and assigned codes. The second phase of the coding process consisted of the primary researcher focusing on the codes developed during the initial phase and condensing the 73 codes into 17 codes. Codes were condensed and purged because they occurred infrequently, were redundant, or were able to be merged with similar codes. The remaining codes guided the development of five themes.

### **Development of Themes**

Themes were developed after a careful analysis and review of the data occurred and once all phases of coding were completed. As the development of themes unfolded, techniques from Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggested reading over the text at least twice. Additionally, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) declared, "Whether the data come in the format



of video, audio, or written documents, handling them is always helpful for finding themes.” Additional techniques used to acquire themes within this study included searching for repetition, the identification of local terms as in vivo coding, and observing similarities and differences across the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The development of themes occurred as a result of initial coding that allowed for the identification of emerging concepts. Once these concepts were identified, they were carefully considered as data from the surveys, interview transcripts, and focus group guided discussion records were compared. The second phase of coding highlighted the most frequent codes and considered words and phrases that appeared to be repetitive through the second and third phases of the study and aligned with identified topics. After all coding was complete and vigilant consideration was given to the stories and lived experiences of participants, five themes emerged (Unshared definition, instructional support, change, instructional approaches, and ownership). These five themes will be discussed in detail in the next section.

**Theme One: Unshared definition.** Theme one refers to the definition of blended learning and the shared ideas and explanations that were provided by participants. Throughout this study, this theme emerged as various understandings of this instructional approach were described. Theme one emerged from the following two codes: defining blended learning and components of blended learning.

**Theme Two: Instructional support.** This theme relates to the personal experiences that participants shared regarding the types of instructional approaches they believed were necessary to support student learning. It also acknowledged the beliefs of participants and their reflections on the trainings they have received and how specific

types of professional development sessions may support their understanding and application of blended learning. Theme two emerged from the following four codes: necessary skills, materials and resources, time, and choice.

**Theme Three: Change.** This theme refers to the concept of change and how it was connected with education. Throughout the study, change was referred to with regard to curriculum developed and administrator or district expectations. It also uncovered feelings that were shared and/or interpreted from participants as they noted their perceptions of colleagues. Theme three emerged from the following two codes: expectations and teacher role.

**Theme Four: Instructional approaches.** This theme refers to the various instructional approaches that participants shared that were present within their classrooms, were expected to be implemented, or were reflected upon when considering past or current students. Theme four emerged from the following four codes: differentiation and learning styles, discourse, questioning, and technology.

**Theme Five: Ownership.** The theme of ownership, as it was considered within this study, refers to the students and their role within lessons and self-guiding their learning. Additionally, the idea of ownership was discussed as participants talked about how students worked with partners and within a group. Ownership was also presented within participant interviews as it referred to understanding and meeting teacher expectations. Theme five emerged from the following three codes: student role, student application, and student learning.

### **Discussion of Themes**

Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research

(Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This section will discuss each of the five themes in detail. Within each description, evidence from the data is presented to support the development of the theme. Evidence to support the data is offered in the form of direct quotes from the participant interviews and focus guided group discussion, paraphrased accounts from conversations, and the researcher's interpretations of the data from the survey, interviews, and focus group. All participants are identified by their pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality.

### **Theme One: Unshared Definition**

The instructional strategies inherent to blended learning have been described and interpreted in various ways. Throughout the development of this study, the research focus was to collect various understandings of this instructional approach and compare and contrast the definitions provided. While the concept of blended learning may have been present within the education field for more than 30 years, it is apparent, that within the context of this study, that the understanding of this concept has either changed over time or possibly has never been commonly understood with regards to a shared meaning.

The theme of unshared definition emerged from the codes defining blended learning and components of blended learning. Each participant interview began with the question "How would you define the term blended learning?" In each of the five interviews, a unique response to this question was given based on the participant's personal understanding and applicability of this instructional approach. For those individuals who only responded by providing a definition to blended learning, a follow-up question was provided that asked participants about their ideas of blended learning and how their understanding of blended learning was applied within their own personal

experiences. While all individuals were asked the second question at some point within the interview, many participants provided their response concurrently as they provided their understanding of blended learning.

The first interview in this research study took place with Jenna. After talking about the purpose of the study and asking her the first question, Jenna paused and initially gave a look that could be considered “unsure”. After a few moments, she responded and shared her understanding of blended learning. During her explanation, she referenced modalities of learning, technology usage, music, and movement. After sharing her response, Jenna appeared unsure of her answer. It was evident that she was looking for confirmation of her explanation. After giving Jenna a quick nod of the head to acknowledge her response, she was asked the follow-up question regarding her usage of blended learning within her classroom. Jenna shared “Well, we definitely use things like the SmartBoard on a daily basis. We use it for our morning meeting, but we also use it for different learning tasks, so perhaps in math, for example. The students work in math stations and one of their stations they move through is the SmartBoard and there’s an activity on it that they do with a partner. Very self-corrective, very engaging, for them, a great way for them to practice.” Jenna continued by discussing the use of iPads and cameras, as well as additional materials that she makes available to students during lessons.

The second interview took place with Katie. When she was asked about her understanding of blended learning, she referenced students and their abilities to take on leadership within a lesson. Katie explained that she believed it was her role to make students “As independent as possible during their entire day so that they take charge of

their own education.” Katie appeared to be confident in her response and didn’t ask any questions that suggested clarification was needed. Katie was then asked to share the components she believed to be part of blended learning that would fit within her planning and applied instructional models. Katie’s response touched upon a few different content areas and referenced various components. When relating her examples to instructional components, Katie mentioned partner work, peer discourse, and the use of manipulatives.

Jason was the third participant who was interviewed. Prior to the interview, Jason shared that he was excited to be part of the study. He was unsure about his understanding of blended learning and how it could be defined. He said that when he initially took the Blended Learning Skill Survey, he did not have a specific definition of blended learning. Jason focused the remainder of his response on Multiple Intelligences and his application of meeting the learning preferences of students through multiple modalities and varied instructional approaches. Jason was then asked to describe blended learning lesson components that he considered when planning instruction. Jason responded, “Incorporating music and movement and different learning materials. Some kids might be on an iPad, some kids might be on the smart cards, some kids might be using a white board, some kids might be using manipulatives, so using all of those things because it’s going to tap into specific interest or specific relevance.” When sharing an example, Jason referenced a nonfiction unit of study in which he provided differentiated materials based on student learning preferences. In addition, Jason added that some students might be using technology while others are using other and related instructional components.

The fourth interview occurred with Sierra. Sierra indicated that blended learning was bringing technology into the classroom. Sierra also referenced the idea of a “flipped

classroom.” Bachenheimer (2014) discussed a flipped classroom as strategies that require teachers to think about “what parts of the class work best while flipped- meaning, what pieces can students do on their own and what are the face-to-face priorities.” Sierra stated that she believed that blended learning was “interchangeable with the concept of flipped classroom” (p. 16). Sierra continued her explanation with saying that she understood this approach to be more representational of students and their ability to guide and own the instructional content presented. When asking Sierra about the blended learning instructional components she considered when planning lessons, she referenced the use of technology and using online programs such as IXL and XtraMath. Although Sierra initially discussed that it was not possible to implement blended learning at the elementary level, as she provided examples of instructional approaches and components found within her classroom, she realized that according to her definition, she has implemented a blended learning instructional approach.

The final interview conducted as part of this study included speaking with Edward. After discussing the purpose of the interview session, Edward offered that he was eager to share his experiences regarding blended learning and he was familiar with the instructional approach. Edward stated that he believed the definition to be a mixture of instructional components, technology usage, and combination of guiding various small groups within the classroom. Although Edward initiated the interview by stating he was familiar with blended learning, during his explanation, he noted that he wasn't completely sure if his response was correct. He followed up his description with stating that he “blends” different things together when planning his lessons, including discourse, differentiation, and Multiple Intelligences. When asking Edward how he has used

blended learning within his classroom, he shared, “Each day, I use technology to support my instruction. I don’t use it for every content area and in every lesson, but I do use it to support student learning.” He added, “When students go off to do their independent work, this might be a time when they access either discourse with a peer, work with iPads or Chromebooks, and other hands-on materials.”

Although a specific question related to defining blended learning was not asked during the focus group guided discussion, participants shared their thoughts and ideas throughout the discussion. After viewing the video segment during the group discussion, Sierra was the first to respond and said, “I thought it looked very similar to the workshop model.” After talking about the online programs she offers to her students, she added, “So there were components that I definitely see implemented in a lot of the classrooms, and it wasn’t as much of the flipped approach that I thought. There was a lot less technology. I’m kind of starting to see more of that being the bigger focus where they did a lot more on their own, but there was teacher interaction with that small group rotation system.” Immediately, it was noticeable that Sierra’s understanding of blended learning was changing. Her response during the focus group guided discussion was much different than how she initially responded when sharing her thoughts on blended learning. Nadia was the first administrator to share her thoughts about blended learning and when she was reflecting on the video from the focus group guided discussion, it was noted that she didn’t see the use of hands-on materials. Kylee, another administrator, added that it was necessary to have manipulatives and hands-on materials available to primary-aged students. As the discussion progressed, Jason was the first participant to acknowledge that various understandings of blended learning were present from the participants within

the focus group guided discussion. His additional comments acknowledged that statements were made regarding blended learning, but that the group should consider that responses were dependent on each individual's perception of blended learning. While research exists that has discussed the incorporation of technology within a blended learning instructional approach, Alex recognized that the video acknowledged approaches that weren't solely technologically based. Darla added, "Funny enough, when I was here the other week, I saw a lesson using the Geoboard app. And there was access for the kids to actual geoboard and things to do, so they could actually work it out, and then, they could do the representational piece on there and submit their written comments and their explanation, that way, I thought it was great, to transfer from one level to the next, because it allowed the teacher to actually see how all kids understood or did not understand." After hearing these responses from administrators, it was evident that they too shared similar views to blended learning. After listening to initial responses regarding blended learning, participants were asked to depict instructional components they either observed within the video or have used within their personal experiences that align with the instructional approach to blended learning. Edward noted an example from the video and shared how the use of the exit ticket supported formative assessment. Jenna noted that the teacher within the video was working with a small group and she felt that to be an important concept of blended learning instruction. Sierra recognized the technology component within the lesson and how it was used both for practicing essential skills like public speaking and presenting, but also within a small group. Nadia added that she noticed many different learning styles being addressed within the video clip, in addition to the use of technology, and that it allowed for students to work independently,



as well as with a partner, and that she considered that to be “a nice blend.” As he discussed in his individual interview, Jason mentioned the multiple modalities of learning necessary within a primary setting classroom. Kylee added that she felt, while technology was important, it was not necessary to have a blended learning classroom. Sierra tied Kylee’s comment to the current workshop model present within their elementary classrooms and mentioned that with the multiple approaches that are considered and integrated, that she felt that it was an example of using a blended learning approach. Regarding this research question, Edward shared the final comment and reiterated while blended learning classrooms need not use technology within every lesson, to be considered blended learning, he felt strongly that technology was a necessary component.

### **Theme One Summary and Relation to Research Questions**

To summarize, theme one, Unshared Definition, emerged from the codes defining blended learning and components of blended learning. This theme developed as it was a topic discussed by all participants as it related to questions that were asked during both the interview session and focus group guided discussion. Interview participants shared varied viewpoints in the one-on-one interview and then again when discussing the approach to blended learning with administrators. While administrators were asked to join the focus group in hopes that they would add clarification regarding the definition of blended learning, it was found that they too shared similar understandings to this instructional approach when compared with classroom teachers. Furthermore, similar to the classroom teachers interviewed, administrators had varied views on blended learning, with some believing that technology was a necessary component and others believing that

this instructional approach was more related to the differentiated methods selected by the classroom teacher to promote student learning and engagement.

Research question one stated, “what instructional approaches do teachers and administrators believe define the concept of blended learning?” This theme revealed that participants within the study had their own understanding of a blended learning instructional approach and the components that defined it. While some participants shared components of blended learning within their explanations, no response was identical and no participants appeared to be fully confident that they understood this instructional approach with regards to how it has been defined.

### **Theme Two: Instructional Support**

The topic of professional development was included in this research study to better understand the opportunities afforded to classroom teachers, as well as the needs they currently had regarding teaching and learning. In doing so, classroom teachers were asked to discuss their personal experiences, as well as to identify the types of blended learning training could support their classroom practices. Lastly, this interview question was asked to uncover what aspects of blended learning professional development would support the implementation of blended learning. Throughout each interview session, classroom teachers shared the types of approaches they believed could support their instructional practice, as well as components they felt were necessary to ensure student growth and achievement. Theme two emerged from the following four codes: necessary skills, materials and resources, time, and choice.

**Necessary skills.** Each of the five participants referred to the skills necessary to implement a blended instructional approach within the classroom. The skills mentioned

either related to what teachers believed would support their application of blended learning within the classroom or the skills necessary that students would need to exhibit. During the interview with Sierra, she referenced her students and focused on the skills she believed her students would need to have for blended learning to occur within her classroom. Although, at the beginning of the interview, Sierra mentioned she didn't believe blended learning could be applied with second graders, her understanding of this approach appeared to have changed over the course of the interview. When first discussing blended learning, Sierra felt that it was aligned with a flipped classroom approach to teaching and learning. Initially, when referring to the skills she believed were necessary for her students, she stated, "My second graders, I couldn't imagine it for a variety of reasons. I probably can think of four kids off the bat who would go home, read it, understand it, be no problem, and come back. But the majority of them, there's not that self-guidance, that self-motivation, that ability to really critically evaluate what they're learning without my guidance and structure or modeling for that matter." After acknowledging self-guidance, self-motivation, and the ability to critically evaluate, Sierra described how these skills were necessary for a student to use within a blended learning approach and for them to occur, would require the teacher as the leader through the application process. Jason shared that he believed for blended learning to be possible, it was important to have resources available and readied during the time of professional development. Jason felt that at his point in his career, he didn't need to learn how to teach, but would benefit from support that included trainers of professional development coming into his classroom and modeling approaches that would support student learning. The foundation of Katie's interview focused on student independence. Katie believed

that blended learning was about making students independent and bringing them to the level where they could make learning decisions themselves. Specifically related to independence, Katie referred to teaching her students strategies to engage in peer discourse and access materials in a variety of ways. At the time of her interview, Jenna shared she was implementing blended learning within her classroom as she believed it related to the combination on multiple modalities of learning. She stated that her students used technology within various assignments and have access to a multitude of manipulatives. When speaking about the academic content areas, Jenna said, “We also use the iPads in literacy and math, different programming. Some are self-guided and self-paced because they’re working at their own ability levels. Everyone’s on something different.” Similar to what was shared by Sierra, Jenna too recognized the role of the student and their abilities as part of blended learning. When speaking with Edward, he mentioned the abilities of his students and acknowledged that they needed guidance as he stated, “I think about them applying what they learned and giving them the opportunity to try something with little or no direction.” He continued by saying this takes time and that it evolves throughout the academic school year.

**Materials and resources.** Throughout the implementation of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey, participant interviews, and the focus group guided discussion, a variety of materials and resources were described that either are currently being utilized within the classroom or that participants felt may support this instructional approach. The most common materials and resources that were referenced throughout the study included technology, student manipulatives, and access to professional support. With regard to technology, classroom teachers referenced both their use during instructional

lessons, as well as student application of various devices including iPads and Chromebooks. Edward was adamant in sharing what he believed to be a blended learning instructional approach and believes that in order for this to properly occur, technology must be incorporated within the lesson. During the focus group guided discussion, Edward stated, “From my perspective, from my pedagogical background, blended learning is the blending of digital technology with core curriculum instruction. So anything from just using calculators would be one end of blended learning all the way to using the one school model. The one school model, where literally most of your instruction is done through digital resources and the instruction with the teacher is them coming around to support.” Similarly, Sierra’s initial understanding of blended learning incorporated the direct use of technology with students and their ability to develop their own instructional experiences through the use of a device. Jenna and Jason also mentioned technology within their explanations of blended learning. Both individuals discussed how students applied their understanding of content area material while using technology as one of their available lesson resources. In addition to technology being mentioned multiple times, participants shared that it would be beneficial to continue learning about technology during professional development training, as well as to learn about new apps that could be integrated within their classrooms. Student manipulatives were referenced during participant interviews and during the focus group guided discussion. After viewing the video clip, Nadia and Kylee recognized that the lack of manipulatives available to students during a lesson could be problematic when ensuring a blended-learning experience. They both acknowledged the importance of having hands-on materials ready for students, especially when working with primary-age students.

Additional manipulatives that were mentioned by the teachers and administrators within this study included discussion boards, Geoboards, chart paper, markers, smart cards, and other items as they related to content-specific lessons. Access to professional support was also a resource that emerged throughout the study. While technology and manipulatives were common materials referenced by participants, they also discussed needing more support to implement such lesson components effectively. The first instructional resource discussed by participants was the use of technology. Participants discussed that while they have access to various types of devices, they may not have access to full classroom sets so that all students can access technology at the same time. Participants also discussed even if the technology were available, it would be beneficial to have training for both classroom teachers and students. While teachers can support students within the classroom, several participants acknowledged that they probably are not as informed as individuals brought in for professional development. Several participants shared during their interviews, that they had been part of professional development that was supportive to their teaching role, as well as training that was not as beneficial. When asking Edward about professional development, he said, “I also think it is hard to provide professional development that applies to everyone. You asked about blended learning and I think that if it’s technology or different approaches, teachers would like that. We are always wondering how to do something better or different and would love to hear about those things. It does not have to be something brand new or groundbreaking but something that could support the learning for our students.”

**Time.** The notion of time was embedded within the responses of interview and focus group participants. Time was both referenced with regard to supporting student

abilities within the classroom, as well as being given time to work with colleagues to learn, plan, and discuss. As interview participants shared their examples of using blended learning within the classroom, they discussed the importance of application time allotted for students. They referred to students utilizing time when accessing various apps related to learning objectives, as well as their readiness in being equipped with the skills that allow them to direct their learning. Jenna, Jason, and Katie all referred to supporting student independence, but said that to get students to this level, it requires a great deal of time.

Participants mentioned that if professional development were offered that would support their own skills and teaching abilities, they would be interested in attending. Edward mentioned his interest in obtaining professional development focusing on small group instruction and peer discussions. He said that in addition to being given time to explore these instructional components, he would accept any training that was offered from professional trainers. As discussed in many participant interviews, to ready students for small group and peer discussions, begin given time to prepare and work with colleagues, along with professional support, could enhance teacher performance. The second aspect of time that was discussed during participant interviews and the focus group guided discussion related to the opportunity offered to educators at professional development. Jason was the first participant to acknowledge that he was not satisfied with professional development offerings. He shared that he believed professional development should be responsive to the interests of classroom teachers and consider what they need to be successful. When asking Katie about professional development, she too reiterated that time with a colleague, as well as having the support of professional

development trainers would be beneficial. Sierra and Jenna both stated that professional development related to classroom instruction would be supportive. Sierra acknowledged strategy groups and said, “I think especially with new teachers, I think it takes a long time to figure out all the different hurdles you’re going to come across.” She also said, “I think looking at small group and strategy group instruction and different ways to differentiate what you’re doing in the classroom, I think would be very, very helpful.” From the administrator side, Nadia mentioned, “I think PD needs to be a lot of like, time working with your colleagues, but also being able to go to an expert and say, “You know, I’m really stuck with this unit, how would you teach it, or what resources do you have available that could... or you know, what does your assessment log look like?, how did you set yours up?, and then, let me see if I can make my own.”

**Choice.** The final theme that emerged within this discussion of instructional support was choice. During interviews and throughout the focus group guided discussion, teachers and administrators shared a variety of topics that would interest them. Responses from participant interviews included differentiation, multiple intelligences, modalities of learning, technology usage, management of instructional approaches, online programs related to blended learning, and specific approaches related to academic content areas such as literacy and mathematics. While sitting with administration during the focus group guided discussion, interview participants added to and elaborated on their original responses. Sierra shared, “I think PD on resources, places you can go for these blended learning types of activities. Like things, like Khan Academy. I keep thinking about that in my head. Like there are certain resources that teachers can use.” Jason added, “Management and grouping, I was thinking. That all



blended learning workshops, all require a very high level of independence.” Jenna stated, “Just how to get them to be able to work with a partner and be independent with that partner. Even, you know, we say independent by ourselves, but independent with a partner. Like, how do you solve problems with each other? How do you, you know, work out all those things that they don’t come into school having?” Nadia also shared, “You just need time to collaborate. And when you have someone who might be an expert in blended learning, instead of presenting something, having that same type of approach we’re expected to have without children, they could have with us.” Darla commented that doing assessment portfolios would be supportive. She explained how this was an example of blended learning and that it could support assessing students with regards to progress over time. Edward shared that time to work with colleagues was important. He shared the example of using technology and being able to have time to work and collaborate with his peers.

### **Theme Two Summary and Relation to Research Questions**

To summarize, theme two, Instructional Support, emerged from the dialogues necessary skills, materials and resources, time, and choice. This theme developed as participants identified common constructs during both the interview session and focus group guided discussion. During participant interviews, classroom teachers were asked to discuss their own practice, as well as refer back to professional development experiences and elaborate on what further trainings they would find interesting. Participants shared multiple examples that touched upon both the skills that would be necessary to have for both teachers and students within a blended learning environment. Teachers were interested in direct instructional supports related to their practice within

the classroom. With regard to instruction, participants believe they would need training on skills that would make them successful with whatever instructional approaches, such as peer discourse or group work. Materials and resources were discussed at multiple points throughout the study. Participants mentioned specific materials and resources when explaining their perceptions of blended learning, as well as when describing their role as the teacher when selecting items needed for student application. The concept of time was mentioned in all phases of this study. Participants noted how they wished to have more of it during professional development experiences so that they could grow as educators. Participants referenced several examples of how time would support their instructional practice and how they could benefit from being given time to work independently and with colleagues. The idea of choice was also brought up at various times by participants. While speaking about professional development, several participants stated that they would appreciate attending training that appealed to their individual needs. In addition, several specific types of trainings were mentioned and discussed that participants believed could support their abilities to enhance student learning, as well as their individual implementation of a blended learning. Participants also referenced being given the time to apply what was being taught and felt that they could benefit from a hands-on approach to blended learning professional development. Coincidentally, the idea of choice was also discussed with several interview participants as it related to students and their options within the classroom setting. Teacher participants found that offering students choice as an instructional approach was beneficial when trying to engage and motivate students. Participants believe that students enjoy choice and hands-on learning experiences. Additionally, it was noted that several participants

believed learning could be supported by offering choice within the classroom so that students could be afforded the opportunity to apply their learning styles preferences. Similar to the ways they offer choice to their students, participants expressed a preference for choice that might support their own individual learning styles and allow them to grow in ways that could be integrated to support student learning.

Research Question Two was asked what are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the relationship between the implementation of blended learning and student achievement. The theme of Instructional Support uncovered that participants believed that it was important to provide students with instructional approaches that would aid their success within the classroom. Additionally, participants referenced the instructional approaches they apply within their classrooms utilizing blended learning and have provided reasoning as to why they felt this strategy supported student learning.

Research Question Three addressed the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the aspects of blended learning professional development that are most supportive of the implementation of blended learning within the classroom. When asking participants about professional development, each shared that they would like training that would support their direct teaching needs. Additionally, they referenced the blended-learning approaches they claimed to use with students and said that additional trainings in components such as technology usage, small group, and peer discourse would be helpful. Furthermore, conversations from the focus group guided discussion acknowledged choice and being given the opportunity to choose trainings and instructional approaches that would support their own learning styles and preferences, similar to the way they had discussed doing so for their population of students.

### **Theme Three: Change**

The idea of change was intertwined throughout many topics that were discussed during participant interviews, as well as during the focus group guided discussion. While the idea of change was not formally presented to participants within any of the questions, several participants referred to change with regard to their instruction, as well as the varied roles of teachers and students. As participants discussed district expectations, they appeared frustrated with the demands placed upon them related to assessment, as well as the one size fits all model of professional development they were offered. From the participant interviews and focus group guided discussion, several codes were generated but were joined to reflect the central ideas. Theme three emerged from the following two codes: expectations and teacher role.

**Expectations.** During this study, expectations were discussed at great length. Participants discussed both the expectations they place on their students within classroom lessons, along with the expectations that they are held to in their role as educators. Although a question was not asked regarding if participants felt blended learning was required within their classrooms, they were asked about the expectations they perceived their administrators had for them if coming in to observe. Each participant answered this question, and coincidentally, responded with a similar response to what they described as the blended learning instructional approach they apply within their own classrooms. After identifying so many similarities, and considering participant comments, it was important for the researcher to consider the following questions: If teachers believe that the instructional strategies they currently implement are blended learning approaches, do they feel blended learning is required? Does that mean that administrators expect to see

components that define blended learning? When asking Jenna about the expectations she believed her administrators carried for her when coming into her classroom, she shared, “I think they expect to see children engaged, definitely on task. They expect to see communication between the students, that there’s some kind of dialogue going on or some kind of support going on. They are using the materials that they need and they might not all be using the same materials. They might not all be doing the same exact type of activity or follow-up. I expect them to notice that I’m not standing in the center of the room talking, talking, talking and everyone’s listening.” She added, “They see the kids. That’s what they should be seeing. They should be seeing the kids and they should be hearing noise because a quiet classroom is not an active classroom in kindergarten.”

When asked about expectations, Katie said, “I think the first thing is they want to see students engaged in their learning. They want to see evidence of learning. They want to see students interacting. They want to see challenges. They want to see supports set in for the different ability levels. They don’t want to see me talking to the whole class. Talking to small groups, perhaps. Leading discussions, perhaps. Turning things over to them. Making them responsible. Yeah, that’s what they want to see.” After asking Jason about expectations, he said, “I think that she would expect to see the things that I have been talking about, lots of different modalities of learning, with lots of different instructional materials, with lots of different groupings and flexibility. I would expect that’s what she would expect to see.” When speaking with Sierra, she believed her administrators expect to see quality engagement. She said, “I think they want to come into a classroom and see that kids are on task. Not only on task, but understand what they’re doing.” Sierra added, “They want to see organization. They want to see

responsiveness to teacher instruction. They want to see when its time to move or transition, that kids can do that effectively and do that with minimizing time. They want to see rigor. They want to see that the kids, your higher level kids, they want to see that they've got maybe an enrichment activity. They want to see different things because you know that not every single kid, they're not all cookie cutter. They're all doing different thing and they should be because they're not all at the same place.” When asking Edward about the expectations from his administrator, he shared, “I think they want to see differentiation. They want us to instruct students but make sure that we are individualizing instruction enough so that we are meeting individual needs. I know student engagement is big and expecting to see students engaged in whatever learning task they are doing. I think they also want to see curriculum integrated the correct way and make sure that we use what we have learned from professional development in literacy and math. I know they also like to see student discourse.”

**Teacher role.** Within each classroom environment, the role of the teacher can vary. Research related to blended learning indicates that utilizing this type of instruction may provide opportunities for students to guide their own learning. Without relating the teacher role to blended learning, participants were asked to share how they defined their role within the classroom. During my interview with Jenna, she responded to this question by saying, “In the beginning, it’s definitely scaffolding and trying to make sure that you’re providing access for every student. You’re definitely scaffolding but you want to hold back and give them time to explore and discover on their own and make their own connections. We talk about that a lot in here, actually, and the kids will use that. “I made a connection!” They’ll share that with the class, just they’re held

responsible for that and they know that, so they're learning. Definitely the students need to take on a role and also, I facilitate the activities, but they really have to take ownership." When talking with Katie, she said, "I think for the most part, I'm thinking about reading and writing and those two subjects. We'll start with those. The reading, it's been a journey for me because I've been through teaching reading in quite a few different ways with the basal readers and the whole language program and then the small groups. Now, with Columbia... The small piece of the lesson, the mini-lesson, where I'm talking and showing them some examples, that's brief." Katie continued, "I think as soon as they come in in the fall, that's really my goal, is to get them as independent as they could possibly be and involved in their own learning because that's how they're going to learn best. That's how I believe. I think in the fall, other than the routines, no. I don't think that I change much during the year." After asking Jason this question about the role of the teacher, he stated, "I believe that the role of the teacher and instructor is facilitator. I think that the environment that I create and the emotional connectedness to school and to learning and the way that the environment is set up in terms of fostering student independence and fostering students' understanding of the connections of learning are about as important as I am. I think that the environment, the box that we're sitting in right now, well it's overflowing. It is also as essential as anything that I say in a lesson." Sierra's explanation to this question included, "I think that with elementary, my role is to provide really solid, guided and modeled instruction. I think I'm to be the exemplar at times. I think at times it's important that I let the students drive where the lesson goes. This includes literacy and mathematics instruction. I think that when you're dealing with literacy, sometimes if the unit is nonfiction based, for example, I think I

might throw out some inquiry. I think I might have more inquiry-based in the beginning of I want to be able to see what they're bringing." She added, "Prior knowledge, misconceptions, preconceived notions, whatever it is. My role fluctuates dramatically. I think some things I know that are skill based, foundational skills, I need to right off the bat model from the start. This is what this should look like. This is how I'm going to show you how to get there. In other areas where I know that they have background, I think it's important for me to understand that, let them see it, let them see how they communicate with their peers, what they can share with their peers, and how they can help teach each other. I think a lot of times, I can do a lot of great instruction, but sometimes those 'ah-ha' moments come from when kids sit down and have a conversation." Similar to other participants, Edward gave a response that echoed a great deal of what was already discussed. His response included, "I think they come in to school at the beginning of the year and follow my lead. They expect me to take the active role and guide their learning and instruction. I am okay with this and this is the time when I work with them to explore the choices I offer to them. At this age, I want them to begin to think about learning preferences and different types of learning experiences. I like when students come in and tell me they prefer to do an activity or task one way instead of another. Some teachers might find that to be problematic, but I think it is important and again, relates back to choice. Once students get to third grade, I think they want choice; they crave it and can make good choices regarding their learning."

### **Theme Three Summary and Relation to Research Question**

To summarize, the theme of change emerged from the codes expectations and teacher role. This theme developed as it was informally suggested through the



conversations that occurred with participants. While participants didn't identify that a change was necessary, they did acknowledge that they were not fully satisfied with current requirements and expectations. During participant interviews, individuals were asked to share their thoughts on a variety of topics including blended instruction, teacher and student roles within a lesson and/or classroom, instructional approaches, and professional development. Throughout both the interview sessions and the focus group guided discussion, participants were candid with their responses and incorporated their thoughts and feelings with regard to the expectations and requirements they believed to be in place for them as classroom teachers. Additionally, most participants referenced the idea of expectations as they related to their instructional performance and connected it to what was taking place within their classrooms at the time. Furthermore, it was found that both of these expectations and instructional approaches aligned with the participant's response that detailed their understanding to blended learning. While the instructional approach to blended learning was never mentioned as something that was required or expected within the classroom when being observed by an administrator, it was an approach that participants indicated is being implemented and used to support instruction. As instructional approaches were discussed, participants talked about their role as the instructor within the classroom. While some participant viewpoints referred to their role as a facilitator, others stated that direct instruction and modeling were necessary to support academic progression. Related to blended learning, reviewed research studies argue that the primary instructor can be viewed as a facilitator to support student application of content. Participant reflection proved to be the foundation of the interview and focus group discussions. It was common to listen to participant responses regarding

the questions and have them accompanied by examples, beliefs, or feelings.

Furthermore, the teacher reflection that occurred throughout this study suggested that varied understandings of expectations may be present, along with the feelings or beliefs of participants as they relate to instructional approaches and professional development offerings.

With regards to Research Question One, this theme indicated that while participants have similar viewpoints of what is expected of them, their understanding of blended learning, its components, and approach, may be something that indirectly is expected of them when administrators visit. Participant explanations of their use of a blended learning instructional model appeared to echo what they believed administrators expected to see when visiting their classrooms.

With regards to Research Question Two, answers indicated that participants believe in doing whatever they can to support individual students. Throughout their explanations of using blended learning with students, each participant, to some degree, discussed using this approach. Participant reasoning was provided within each explanation and it was discussed that the instructional approaches chosen, while most aligned with a blended learning instructional approach, were made in order to support student learning.

With regard to Research Question Three, this theme indicated that past and current offerings given to participants during professional development training were ineffective. As each participant reflected upon professional development, they shared their unhappiness with what has been provided. Participants indicated that they would

prefer choices so that they could receive training that aligned with their own professional needs and learning preferences.

#### **Theme Four: Instructional Approaches**

This study has exposed various meanings related to blended learning. Within each participant response, lesson components were shared that individuals consider to be blended learning. Additionally, instructional approaches were cited that were aligned with blended learning. As this study considered the approach to blended learning, as well as current practices being employed within the classroom, various concepts were discussed and tied back to supporting student learning and individualization. In addition to providing a definition of blended learning, participant responses suggested that a common understanding does not exist. Theme four emerged from the following four codes: differentiation and learning styles, discourse, questioning, and technology.

**Differentiation and learning styles.** Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) referred to differentiated instruction as the framework for planning for a variety of learners. They described differentiation as an instructional design method that provides for a variety for learners within the classroom. Pallapu (2007) referred to learning modalities as learning styles, which set forth how the student perceives the surroundings and what sort of reaction is shown in learning. Often, the terms learning modalities and learning styles have been used interchangeably to describe a way that differentiated instruction has been applied. With regard to this study, participants mentioned the terms learning modalities and learning styles, but when doing so, focused on the modalities of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning. Both terms, learning modalities and learning styles, were used as a means to differentiate learning for individuals within the classroom, as well as when

speaking about blended learning. Both Jenna and Jason stated their belief that blended learning was the use of implementing different learning modalities. Both referred to the usage of technology, music, and movement. Edward too, discussed a blended-learning approach that was differentiated, providing a variety of opportunities to students within the classroom. While providing examples of using blended learning, Jenna, Jason, and Edward all shared similar approaches and examples that they used consistently within their classrooms. Sierra and Katie discussed differentiation and supporting individual student learning styles needs. Sierra considered this option through online programming that supported both literacy and math. Katie provided an example of differentiated instruction when allowing students to apply their learning in a variety of ways, with a variety of preferred materials.

**Discourse.** A common instructional approach discussed within all participant interviews, as well as during the focus group guided discussion was peer discourse. Throughout the discussions that were had with participants, it was evident that peer-to-peer discourse may have been an expectation or requirement within the district and a general practice utilized at the elementary level. Within each of the participant interviews, peer discourse was an instructional approach that all educators incorporated in their instruction. Jenna, Katie, Jason, and Sierra all referred to discourse as a method used to engage student learners, as well as was a component they discussed when asking to share an example of how they used a blended instruction approach. Edward, however, incorporated peer discourse within his definition of using a blended learning approach to teaching. Additionally, when asking participants about administrator expectations, each participant believed that they felt their administrators want to see students working

together and sharing ideas with each other verbally. Additionally, peer-to-peer discourse was also mentioned during the focus group guided discussion. Alex referred to peer discourse and mentioned it as a lesson component that could be supportive to student learning and understanding of a topic.

**Questioning.** Several participants mentioned providing students with lessons that offered instructional experiences that were inquiry-based. They explained that it was important to allow students time to explore the content area that was presented and allow them to be self-selective in choosing materials they may feel will support their application. When asking participants about their roles, many teachers believed that it was important for them to keep instruction short within their mini-lessons and ensure time for students to work on applying what was taught. When talking with Jenna, she shared an example of a blended learning lesson she used with her students that allowed them to create their own 3-D shapes using a variety of materials. During the lesson, Jenna asked her students a variety of questions to engage them in the learning process. The questions she asked required students to consider how they would construct a shape, as well as why the sides had to be flat and not curved. Jenna explained that by asking these questions she felt that they encouraged students to think about what they were doing without the teacher giving away any suggestive information. Katie too discussed working with students in small group and asking questions as a way to provoke deeper thinking. When students may be providing an answer to a question or solution to a problem, she provides a line of questioning that encourages students to think of alternative solutions, as well as acknowledge the reasoning behind the explanations they provide.

**Technology.** Classroom use of technology was discussed within each participant interview, and within the focus group guided discussion. The use of technology within classrooms varied amongst participants. Variations between classrooms occurred due to grade levels being taught, as well as the capability of students with regards to application and student independence. While all participants discussed using technology in their instructional approaches, as well as provided examples of how students used technology within academic content areas, only two participants from both the interview session and focus group guided discussion believed it was essential when utilizing a blended learning instructional approach. Furthermore, from the interview session to the focus group guided discussion, Sierra changed her initial understanding of blended learning and even mentioned that she was unaware that blended learning could include instruction without the use of technology. Edward was the only interview participant who shared that he believed it was necessary to include technology within a blended learning instructional approach. While administrators were asked to join the focus group guided discussion to provide clarification regarding blended learning instructional strategies and expectations, their input echoed the responses of the interview participants with regards to differentiation and learning styles and did not add any new factors for consideration. Administrator comments focused on providing students with instructional approaches that promoted independence and student ownership. Administrators did not mention or discuss the incorporation of technology within blended learning. At this time, research related to blended learning both offers examples of this instructional approach as to including technology at the forefront of the lesson and as a necessary component, while others suggest its availability to support varied instructional approaches, when applicable

and necessary. At the primary level, teachers mentioned that their students use iPads to access a number of programs related to literacy and mathematics. In addition to modeling the use of these programs, participants discussed student independence and how online programs supported differentiation at each student's reading or math level.

#### **Theme Four Summary and Relation to Research Questions**

To summarize, theme four, Instructional Approaches, emerged from the codes differentiation and learning styles, discourse, questioning, and technology. This theme developed as instructional approaches were discussed throughout the Blended-Learning Skills Survey, participant interviews, and the focus group guided discussion. Throughout this study, participants shared the instructional approaches they used within the classroom with students. The approaches that were shared were the same strategies that participants believed were aligned with a blended learning instructional philosophy. As they discussed this approach, participants referred to a blending of instructional techniques and how they believed they supported student learning. While discussing their role, participants also provided examples that engaged their students, along with why specific learning activities were selected. Throughout all participant interviews, differentiation, learning styles, and modalities were discussed. Teachers discussed how these techniques supported student learning, as well as how they were critical as to ensure that each student received targeted support related to their individual needs. Two techniques that were discussed through all interviews and the focus group guided discussion were the use of both discourse and questioning. Participants provided examples of how they both encouraged and readied students to participate in discourse with their peers. Additionally, participants discussed how they supported discourse within the classroom

and encouraged students to take a leadership role and demonstrate ownership in discussions. The technique of questioning was also discussed as participants provided examples as to how they formulated questions and used questions to provoke critical thinking and deeper levels of understanding. While some research regarding blended learning focuses on the implementation of technology, other research, especially those studies reviewed in preparation of this study related to elementary education, discussed the use of technology along with additional instructional approaches being explored and applied within the classroom. The use of technology and its incorporation within blended instruction, based on the findings from this study, may vary within schools and differ based on the grade levels being taught. Furthermore, technology usage may also differ based on the needs of a population of learners, availability and accessibility of technology, and the skill set of learners with regards to application and independence.

In response to Research Question One, which sought to uncover information regarding the instructional components of a blended learning instructional approach, this theme supported the relationship between the importance of specific lesson components and the relationship and alignment they have in a blended learning instructional approach. In addition to identifying specific components teachers believed were necessary to implement blended learning within the classroom, they also shared instructional techniques related to differentiation that they believe continue to support students as learners.

In response to Research Question Two, which examined the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding if they believed implementing a blended learning model of instruction would support student learning, this theme allowed participants to share how



the instructional opportunities they provided supported student understanding and application of content material. Participants were specific in providing examples as to how they implemented blended learning, along with described how the use of specific instructional techniques engage and motivate learners. Several teachers mentioned that they believed this to be beneficial to student learning and enhanced the overall learning experience for students.

### **Theme Five: Ownership**

Theme five, ownership, was referred to throughout this research study. The idea of “ownership” was discussed in multiple ways as it related to both teachers and students. The first being the idea of ownership as it related to students internalizing the information or class material that was taught and their abilities to apply what was learned. Along with this understanding, participants added that students also demonstrate ownership as they modeled their responsibility to complete lesson tasks independently. In addition, interviews revealed that student ownership means demonstration of on-task behaviors during independent work, partner and small group work, or when working with a teacher. Theme five emerged from three codes that resonated during the interview phase of this study that connected the ideas of ownership to specific concepts related to the student: student role, student application, and student learning.

**Student role.** Each interview participant was asked a question related to the role of the student. Participants shared expectations for their students, as well as how the student role changes throughout the year. When asked about the student role, and after considering her kindergarten students, Jenna shared “I think in the beginning of the year, definitely they are just little babies and they really need you to guide and teach them how

to even just walk in the room in the morning.” Throughout Jenna’s interview, she discussed their growth throughout the year and eventually being able to guide their own learning with regards to following the expectations and requirements within a lesson. Jason’s response to this question was similar to Jenna’s but he discussed the independence he expects from his students and their ability to use their engagement to motivate and support their understanding of content material. Katie’s understanding of the student role aligned with Jason’s, as they both referred to student independence and the need for the teacher to get them to this level. Katie stated how her goal at the beginning of each school year, is to focus on student independence, for all students to “be involved in their own learning because that’s how they’re going to learn best.” Sierra and Edward shared a similar understanding about the role of the student. Throughout Sierra’s explanation of blended learning and her reference to personal experiences, she shared that her students have the ability to make their own choices during a lesson and are able to try out many approaches. Edward too, discussed student choice and supporting their independence within the classroom so that they can begin to consider a variety of learning preferences and discover how they believe they learn best. Administrators from the focus group concurred with what was shared by other participants during the guided discussion and placed emphasis on students being able to be independent, demonstrate ownership in their learning, and have opportunities within a lesson to make choices and establish leadership.

**Student application.** Participants within this study each shared several examples as to how their students could apply what they have learned. Common resources that were available for use within classrooms were the iPad and/or

Chromebook. Participants said that they have access to these devices and often consider ways for students to use technology to practice and apply what they have learned. Jenna, Jason, and Sierra all shared how their students apply learning in the primary grades. Examples included using the iPad to access a literacy or mathematics program. Participants shared that specific programs self-adjust based on the responses students provide. These programs allow for differentiation to occur, as well as students to take an independent stance as they proceed during assignments. Additionally, Jenna and Jason discussed hands-on approaches offered to their students and the various approaches students can take to demonstrate understanding. Katie and Edward both discussed how their students apply understanding to content material and indicated that resources available to their students included access to peers, along with the ability to access technology, when necessary. Again, as participants discussed student application, they referred to choice and providing opportunities to students that allowed them to present their understandings in a variety of ways.

**Student learning.** Throughout the interview and focus group phases of the study, participants discussed student learning. Throughout their explanations, they shared a common understanding of what support for learning looks like for students. To do so, participants stated that the instructional approaches selected were always considered with students in mind. When speaking about individual blended instruction implemented within their classrooms, participants shared a reasoning that supported their intention to individualize learning for students and ensure a beneficial learning experience. After asking participants about the blended learning instruction they implement, they were asked to discuss if they believed the choices they made supported student learning. All

participants believed a blended learning instructional approach supports student learning. All participants also believed that they implement a blended learning instructional approach in their own classrooms.

### **Theme Five Summary and Relation to Research Questions**

To summarize, the theme ownership emerged from the codes student role, student application, and student learning. Throughout the study, participants discussed their roles in their classrooms and how they integrated with the role of the student. During their explanation, participants discussed a gradual release of responsibility that was given to their students with regard to ownership as the school year progressed. Participants also provided examples that detailed how students were afforded opportunities to apply their understanding of the content being taught and that these approaches were considered with the understanding of individual student learning preferences related to learning styles or modalities. At the helm of all conversation with participants, it was evident that their intentions as classroom teachers were to support the learning of all students. Participants discussed their understandings of supporting all learners within their classrooms and the approaches they have taken and continue to explore to support individual learning styles.

With regards to research question two, this theme allowed participants to discuss the role of the student and explore the various ways that they believe they support student learning. Participants provided various examples discussing their role within the classroom and how the choices they make and opportunities they provide both support individual learning and possible overall student achievement.

## Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of participants regarding the instructional approach to blended learning. While doing so, an attempt was made to identify if participants shared a common understanding to this instructional approach. Throughout this study, participants were also asked to reflect upon their own implementation of instructional approaches, as well as their use of blended learning, if applicable. As participants discussed their implementation of this instructional approach, the researcher sought to uncover information related to participants' perceptions related to student learning and blended learning. Lastly, participants were asked to reflect upon professional development opportunities that have been provided to them. Information was collected related to participant beliefs about professional development that would be beneficial to support their role as educators.

This chapter began with discussing the findings of this study. An analysis of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey provided information related to defining the instructional approach to blended learning. In-depth participant interviews were then discussed as they shared the personal experiences and reflections of five educators. Findings from the focus group guided discussion were then shared and analyzed. As it was stated earlier, administrators were asked to join the third phase of this study in an attempt to provide clarification regarding the instructional approach to blended learning. The processes of coding, analysis, and the development of themes were described. The processes of coding and analysis resulted in the following five themes: (a) unshared definition, (b) instructional support, (c) change, (d) instructional approaches, and (e) ownership. The

implications of the findings in relation to the research questions will be presented in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Chapter Five provides a summary and discussion of the findings related to the research conducted within this study. The implications related to blended learning and field of education with regards to the elementary level are provided. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

### **Summary of Research**

The purpose of this study was to gain an in depth understanding of participants' perceptions regarding the instructional approach to blended learning. This research study aimed to uncover participant understanding of blended learning as it related to instructional approaches utilized within the elementary classroom. Secondly, the researcher was interested in the perceptions of participants with regards to the impact of blended learning and if they believed it may support student learning, leading to greater student achievement. Lastly, the topic of professional development was explored to gain insight into the types of professional development learning models or activities participants believed could support the implementation or training of a blended learning instructional model.

Through the administration of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey, interviews with five participants, and the organization of the focus group guided discussion with teachers and administrators, information and data were collected that related to the research questions developed for the purpose of this study. Chapter One identified the rationale for selecting the topic of blended learning, the significance and potential benefits of the research and introduced the study's research questions. Chapter two provided a review of all relevant literature as it related to the topic of blended learning.

Chapter Three provided information regarding the participants from both the interview sessions as well as the focus group guided discussion. Additionally, the research design, instrumentation, and trustworthiness within the study were explained. Chapter Four detailed the personal experiences shared within the one-to-one interviews with the researcher as they discussed their experiences with the instructional approach to blended learning. The interview sessions uncovered participant beliefs about the instructional approaches being implemented within their classrooms, as well as their reasoning in selecting specific approaches with consideration to teaching and learning. Participant interviews also permitted information to be collected that related to their perceptions of blended learning and its possible connection to student learning. Furthermore, participants reflected upon their experiences with past professional development offerings and provided information regarding how future trainings could support their individual needs as classroom teachers, as well as their understanding and implementation of a blended learning instructional approach.

This qualitative study was designed using the methodology of phenomenology. This approach was utilized to gain perspective into the lived experiences of participants. The profession of education is personal and as it was found within this study, each participant's experience within the education field was unique as they were experienced in a variety of ways. This approach also allowed for the researcher to learn about the feelings and beliefs of participants, the choices they make each day, and the viewpoints they have regarding the learning process. Using a phenomenological approach, this research was used to address the following questions:



1. What instructional approaches do teachers and administrators believe define the concept of blended learning?
2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the relationship between the implementation of blended learning and student learning?
3. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and administrators regarding the aspects of blended learning professional development that are most supportive of the implementation of blended learning within the classroom?

### **Review of Findings Related to Research Questions**

Participants were recruited for this study through a letter that was mailed to them at their schools, along with a mass email detailing the purpose and guidelines of the research. Approximately two weeks later, an email was sent to all possible participants that included a link to the Blended Learning Skills Survey, which was the first phase within this study. Out of 90 participants contacted via mail and email, 57 participants completed the Blended Learning Skills Survey. Within the survey, participants were also asked to leave their contact information if they were interested in furthering their involvement within this study. A total of six participants provided their contact information and left comments indicating their willingness to continue. After contacting all six participants via email, one participant withdrew from the study due to a family emergency. The remaining five participants participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. These interviews gave a voice to participants and their personal experiences. Additionally, the focus group guided discussion provided an outlet for participants to explore ideas such as blended learning, instructional components, and professional development. Throughout the participant interviews and focus group guided

discussion, a variety of topics were discussed. After the process of coding occurred, the following five themes emerged:

1. unshared definition;
2. instructional support;
3. change;
4. instructional approaches; and
5. ownership.

Theme one, unshared definition, developed after participants from the interview sessions and focus group guided discussion shared their thoughts and ideas regarding the instructional approach to blended learning. As the research in Chapter Two stated, the instructional approach to blended learning has been described in a variety of ways and defined as including a number of components. During the first phase of the study, the Blended Learning Skills Survey was administered to participants. The first question within the survey asked participants if they believed that blended learning was a commonly understood term. Nearly all participants disagreed with this statement and an analysis of the comments provided stated that while they may be familiar with components of this instructional approach, the term was unfamiliar. One-on-one interviews allowed participants to share their understanding of the instructional approach to blended learning. In each interview, participants shared their understanding of what they believed blended learning to be, as well as provided examples of how they have used this instructional approach within their own classrooms. Each interview session with participants proved to be unique as they integrated their personal experiences with students within their responses. After all interviews were completed, it was evident that

each of the five participants had a different perspective of this instructional concept. Furthermore, as conversations occurred during the focus group guided discussion, both interview participants and administrators shared differing thoughts regarding blended learning.

Theme two, instructional support, was discussed in both participant interviews and the focus group guided discussion. During individual interviews, several participants shared their unhappiness with the past and current supports that they have been offered. Discussions with participants revealed that professional development opportunities have not always been aligned with their needs as a classroom teacher and/or applicable to their role as an elementary classroom teacher. As participants explained their feelings, they discussed individualization and their longing for instructional supports that provided more training and professional development that would aid their needs and wants as educators. When discussing professional development aligned with blended learning, interview participants shared their interest in becoming more familiar with this instructional approach and furthering their experiences with the specific lesson components they each identified as part of their understanding of a blended learning instructional model. Also, participants shared that receiving professional development on blended learning would be beneficial if approached and taught in ways that allowed for choice, individualized support, hands-on opportunities, and time to directly apply what was taught and learned. Similarly to the approaches that were discussed and reviewed in the research shared in Chapter Two that aligned with blended learning instructional approaches, participants mentioned their preferences in being instructed in comparable

ways that they would provide to the students within their classrooms experiencing blended learning.

Theme three, change, emerged once all coding and analyses occurred. The idea of change appeared to surface within all conversations that occurred during the time of this study. Interview participants were eager in sharing their dissatisfaction with specific district requirements such as professional development, expectations with curriculum, and the ability to make choices regarding specific instructional approaches employed with students. As interview participants were asked questions, the responses that were given included examples from their personal experiences within their classrooms and allowed them to share their thoughts, ideas, and frustrations. Several participants discussed their dissatisfaction with professional development and believed that it did not support their role as a classroom teacher. Furthermore, they discussed their need for training that directly related to their role as a classroom teacher and consideration being made regarding their skills and abilities. Additionally, participants shared their preference in receiving professional development through instructional approaches that adhered to their own preference in learning styles. At this time, participants alluded to or stated that they have not been given choice in the past and have been required to attend trainings that do not meet their needs or immediate interests.

Theme four, instructional approaches, was central to this study as it supported how the instructional approach to blended learning was defined. This theme allowed participants to discuss their perceptions regarding student learning and how specific instructional approaches provided within the classroom may lead to greater student learning and possible achievement. Throughout this study, participants discussed

instructional approaches utilized within their classrooms. As they did so, they provided their reasoning for using specific approaches and their perceptions as to how they supported each student as a learner. During participant interviews, individuals also shared specific blended learning approaches they have used, as well as their thought process in selecting specific strategies and applying them within certain lessons. Participants also discussed the importance of differentiated instruction and being knowledgeable and supportive of the learning styles and modalities that best support their students as learners.

Theme five, ownership, was discussed during participant interviews and the focus group guided discussion. During participant interviews, individuals were asked to share their understandings of the varying roles between the teacher and student. As participants shared their ideas, it was noticeable that similarities were present such as the need for teachers to prepare their students in being independent. Participants discussed taking time at the beginning of each school year to model for students how they should use resources, work together with peers, and engage in meaningful conversations. By making students independent, participants believed it would encourage and motivate them in taking ownership over the learning experiences they were provided.

### **Research Question One**

Research Question One examined the understandings of participants with regards to having a shared understanding of the instructional approach to blended learning. During the survey and participant interview phases of this study, participants were asked to share their understandings of blended learning and provide examples of how it has been used within their own classrooms. Based on the responses provided in the Blended

Learning Skills Survey, individuals who took part in this study shared they did not believe that a common understanding to this instructional approach existed. The second phase of this study, the participant interviews, also asked participants to share their understandings of this instructional approach. After all participant interviews were complete and coding and analysis had occurred, it was evident that each participant had a unique understanding of blended learning. Through the discussion of personal classroom experiences, responses indicated that this instructional approach was being used differently based on participant understanding of this model of instruction. During the focus group guided discussion, while a question was not specifically asked regarding the definition of blended learning, it was debated after participants watched a video sample that included components of a blended learning instructional approach. Furthermore, as participants discussed what they observed within the video sample, they identified specific components as part of blended learning, as well as shared their thoughts regarding how specific approaches were necessary to further support student learning. After watching the video, participants questioned the absence of specific blended learning components and materials they had mentioned during their individual interviews, where they shared their belief that specific components were necessary to support students and their independence. As the focus group guided discussion progressed and various questions were asked, participants debated this instructional approach and disagreed on specific components they believed needed to be present to follow a blended learning instructional approach. Interview participants also shared their individual beliefs and deliberated their reasoning for aligning specific lesson components within the framework of blended learning.

## **Research Question Two**

Research Question Two was designed to better understand the perceptions of classroom teachers with regards to how a blended learning instructional approach may support student learning, leading to overall greater achievement. While this study was not designed to collect information regarding student achievement, it was looking to uncover the feelings or beliefs of participants with regards to their ideas of the instructional approaches they have used within their classrooms and the possible connection they may have to supporting student learning. From the conversations that occurred during both the interview sessions and the focus group guided discussion, participants communicated a variety of instructional approaches they have utilized within the classroom that they believe have supported student learning.

Several participants discussed the use of differentiated instruction when referring to the opportunities afforded to students. Participants also shared that when planning lessons, they consider how their students learn best and try to incorporate a variety of learning styles or modalities that they believe will best support the student learning process. While speaking about learning styles and modalities, participants discussed the ways they support their population of learners, as well as provide opportunities for choice to occur, so that students can self-select ways to demonstrate their learning and understanding.

All participants within this study shared that they believed that a blended learning instructional approach supported student learning. When discussing this with participants, they provided their reasoning and examples of how they have done this within the classroom. All participants shared that to some extent, they have implemented

a blended learning instructional model. Furthermore, while speaking about their instructional practice and the blended learning opportunities they have provided to students, all participants shared that they believed the opportunities that were given to their students were directly supporting individual learning.

### **Research Question Three**

Research Question Three was asked to participants with the intention to learn about their thoughts related to professional development. This question was developed to gauge perceptions of classroom teachers and administrators regarding the aspects of blended learning professional development that they believed to be most supportive of the implementation of blended learning within the classroom. Participant responses to this question provided information regarding past and current professional development trainings that have been attended. Additionally, participants shared their feelings regarding these trainings and how they believed they were not targeted to meet their direct needs and requests.

While sitting with individuals during interview sessions, all participants shared past experiences of professional development trainings. Within these discussions, participants noted that they have been required to attend trainings in the past that they believe have not aligned with their needs as classroom teachers or even relate to the grade level they were teaching. Furthermore, participants either used or alluded to the phrase “one size fits all” and felt that the professional development that was offered within their district was not designed with an awareness of the educator needs and abilities.

As participants spoke about topics of interest that they wished to learn more about, they discussed subjects such as blended learning, technology, peer discourse, and



student management. In addition to these subjects, participants shared that they would be interested in learning more about the instructional approach to blended learning, along with receiving training that would directly support their roles as classroom teachers. Furthermore, similar to the research reviewed for this study, participants stated they would like to receive training in a variety of ways. During participant interviews, individuals shared their own preferences for learning and discussed their interest in receiving training that would allow them to either be hands-on or learn in ways that best matched their preferred learning styles or modalities. Similar to the research that was collected and that described blended learning instructional approaches, data that were collected suggested that participants preferred learning in settings that met their needs as learners, as well as offered a variety of choices and differentiation to meet their interests.

### **Related Literature and Research Findings**

The literature reviewed for the purpose of this study was selected based on the development of the research questions. While considering the instructional approach to blended learning, it was essential to gain insight from participants regarding their beliefs of a shared understanding or definition to blended learning, perceptions of how student learning may be connected to blended learning, and ideas regarding if specific professional development models will better support the trainings of blended learning instructional approaches.

John Dewey (1938) believed it was important for individuals to be given an opportunity to apply new learning that has been taught. Furthermore, Dewey believed that the idea of Progressive Education should contemplate a learning experience and consider the importance of providing individual experiences that allow for collaboration

and discourse. As it related to blended learning, Gonzales and Vodicka (2012) described this instructional approach as a combination of modes of delivery with consideration to various teaching styles. All five of the interview participants within this study either shared or agreed that it was necessary to provide time for students to apply new learning. Furthermore, it was essential to provide students with opportunities to work with a variety of materials or resources that may better support their application of specific learning objectives. In addition to the materials or resources available to students, peer discourse was also shared as an instructional opportunity that participants believed encouraged communication. Participants each discussed how peer discourse has been utilized within their classrooms and that they saw it as a critical component that further engaged students within the learning process.

In addition to peer discourse being offered to students, both interview and focus group participants discussed providing students with differentiated instruction that will meet their preferred learning needs. As participants each shared their understanding and application of blended learning, they discussed the opportunities that they have given to students that allowed them to demonstrate their abilities with the content studied, as well as do so in a variety of ways or applications. Participants also discussed learning styles or modalities and shared that they consider these components when planning lessons and when providing instruction within the classroom.

Change that occurs within a school or district may be difficult for stakeholders to accept. Michael Fullan, an advocate of Change Theory, recognized that change might be both a difficult and time-consuming process. Fullan (1991) stated, “Change is both a time-consuming and an energy-intensive process.” Fullan also recognized that change,

depending on the environment or situation, might take time to implement and effectively execute. During the interview phase of this study, participants reflected upon their teaching experiences and shared they believed that their district has proposed several changes in the past without providing the proper support to teachers or students. To collect information regarding expectations within the district, participants were asked questions regarding their perceptions of administrative expectations within their buildings and classrooms. The responses that were collected from this question were varied. Participants shared several lesson components that they implement, however, didn't identify any as required. Overall, participants believed that administrators wanted to see evidence of differentiated instruction and that individual learning needs were being met with consideration to each student learner.

Change was also discussed within this study with consideration to professional development. Several participants shared their dissatisfaction with current expectations in place regarding curriculum, and shared they believed that change was necessary regarding current and future professional development offerings. Participants also believed that if their administrators expected to see specific lesson components or instructional models implemented within their classrooms, they should be responsible for providing time, materials and resources, and the additional supports necessary to meet the requirements of the recommended change. Furthermore, if change is required of school or district personnel, it will be essential to not only involve teachers within the change process, but also ensure that they feel supported to make the necessary and/or required changes. Regarding Change Theory and the ideas presented by Fullan, McAdams (1997) discussed the importance of change within an organization and emphasized that change

only occurs when people are willing to make it happen. Throughout this study, participants shared their feelings regarding instructional approaches, along with their perceptions regarding how to best support student learning. Also, with regard to curriculum, some interview participants discussed their unhappiness with current practices and requirements and felt that alternative measures would better support the learning of students.

The pedagogical approach to blended learning has been around for several years. Literature reviewed for the purpose of this study examined the many ways blended learning has been implemented within classrooms, as well as explored how it has been used at various grade levels within the education field. To gauge whether participants shared a common understanding to this instructional approach, individuals were asked to share their perceptions of blended learning, along with describe how they have used it within their classrooms. The data that were collected within this study suggested that participants had diverse viewpoints of a blended learning instructional approach and were utilizing it within their classrooms in various ways. Similar to the research that was reviewed, participants' ideas of blended learning and instructional constructs were similar to the lesson components found within the reviewed research.

The research presented in Chapter Two also explored specific research studies that occurred at the elementary level and discussed how blended learning has been employed within elementary classrooms. These studies discussed components that were used within both traditional and blended learning environments and shared results as they related to either scores received or perceptions of classroom teachers. The literature discussed in Chapter Two also provided details with regards to components used within

blended learning instructional models. This research provided information regarding how researchers perceived blended learning and the lesson components they identified as being part of this instructional model. As the literature was reviewed and analyzed, researchers, based on their experiences and perceptions of blended learning, identified and reported on specific components that aligned with this instructional approach. While similar approaches to blended learning may have been found and were discussed within the literature reviewed within Chapter Two, researchers utilized different instructional approaches and lesson components to explore this instructional model.

Through an analysis of available research studies discussing blended learning, it was found that technology appeared to be the most common lesson component integrated within a lesson at the high school and college level. Research supporting blended learning at the elementary level was limited, however it explored multiple lesson components, along with the integration of technology. Within his explanation of blended learning instruction, Kitchenham (2005) discussed this instructional approach utilizing both components of technology, along with additional classroom techniques. During the interview phase of the study, participants shared a variety of lesson components they utilize within the classroom that align with blended learning instruction. Participants also shared classroom experiences and how the instructional approaches that they implement within the classroom support student learning. Within these instructional approaches, several participants discussed the use of technology. While describing this approach, examples were provided describing how students rely on technology and use it as a resource to support their application of academic content. While several definitions are available describing blended learning, they differ in either stating that technology is

necessary within a blended learning model or can be optional, as it should be implemented only if it supports the objectives of a lesson. All interview participants shared that they use technology within their classrooms and believe it to be an important resource to support learning.

Professional development was discussed during both the interview and focus group phases of this study. Research analyzed and discussions with participants considered professional development as training that was intended to support classroom teachers. Interview participants were asked several questions regarding blended learning and the training, if any, they have been provided. Most interview participants shared that they have not been offered trainings related to blended learning. While they have not attended past trainings on this topic, all five participants shared they would be interested in blended learning trainings if they were offered. Although participants shared they were interested in blended learning, they discussed their interest with regards to their own personal understandings and definitions of this instructional approach.

Interview and focus group guided discussion participants also were asked to share their thoughts regarding professional development related to blended learning and specific models of instruction they believed would best support this topic. Participants shared they would be interested in attending professional development that offered them choice; allowing them to select the types of components they would learn about and do so in a variety of instructional ways. Participants shared their interest in training models that allowed for application of content material, as well as taught with consideration to preferred learning styles or modalities.

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (2006) have identified four components that should be present within a study related to qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To establish credibility within this study, it was important for all participants to know both the purpose of the research as well as the impact the findings might have when working with student learners. Initially, this was addressed with the formal letter that was sent to participants' schools, along within the email that was sent to them asking for their participation. In addition, during participant interviews, the researcher both reiterated the purpose of the study, as well as confirmed that information and data collected would be kept confidential so that participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Individual questions were also answered throughout the study as the researcher intended to engage participants so that they were able to speak freely about the phenomenon that occurred within their classrooms.

To support transferability, the researcher used thick descriptions to describe the participants from the interview sessions and focus group guided discussion. Furthermore, he discussed the town setting and community where the study occurred. Findings were described in detail and the feelings and perceptions of participants were shared including raw data from meetings. One limitation to this study was that a sample of convenience was drawn to engage participants within this study. A large number of individuals were contacted, however only 11 participants responded and volunteered.

Dependability ensured that all environments included within this study were reported in detail. Although different ideas may be communicated from participants if

this study were repeated, it is possible that the same types of responses could be collected if this study is replicated within a similar setting or with a similar group of participants. In addition, after initial and axial coding phases were completed, they were shared with an auditor to ensure that bias had been reduced and integrity maintained.

Confirmability was addressed by using a reflexive journal to control for any possible researcher bias that may have occurred within this study. After meeting with interview participants and directing the focus group guided discussion, the researcher briefly described the event and recorded it within the reflexive journal. Additionally, an audit was conducted to confirm the findings of the researcher and ensure that researcher bias did not occur throughout this study. The auditor that was contacted to support this study has completed qualitative studies and is familiar with the process of qualitative research.

### **Implications of the Research**

While research exists regarding the instructional approach to blended learning at the secondary and post-secondary levels of education, it ceases to exist with regards to its implementation at the elementary level. Past and present research examined a blended learning instructional approach and offered suggestions of how it has been used and can be implemented at either the high school level or with college students. While these descriptions provide examples of how blended learning has been used, most examples are applicable only to that level of students. As a result, the explanations of blended learning that have been provided, along with definitions, may only be relevant when considered with an older population of students. Furthermore, studies that discuss blended learning



at the elementary level offer various understandings of this instructional approach; along with a variety of components researchers have aligned with this model of instruction.

The data collected within this study supports the notion that the instructional approach to blended learning may lack a common, shared definition amongst educators. Interview participants all shared their understanding of blended learning, along with examples of how it has been applied within their classrooms. Furthermore, it is important to note that all participants stated that they were unsure if their understanding and explanation of blended learning was similar to others and was actually correct.

Participant examples of blended learning touched upon various lesson components including differentiated instruction, learning styles or modalities, peer discourse, materials and resources offered to students, and the use of technology. In addition to lesson components, participants also discussed independence and ownership and related these ideas to a blended learning instructional model. This may suggest that the implications of this research could be critical if working with educators at the elementary level and discussing the instructional approach to blended learning or similar model components.

While speaking with participants during this study, several spoke about student learning and the instructional decisions that were made to ensure success. During each interview session, participants were asked if they believed that a blended learning model of instruction supports student learning. All of the five interview participants agreed with this statement and provided examples of how they believed implementing a blended learning instructional approach supported their population of learners. Participants shared several types of instructional techniques they employ within their classrooms and cited specific examples using the mentioned techniques to support student learning.

Throughout each of the conversations had with participants, it was evident that their focus was to ensure the success of all students. Participants added that several instructional decisions are made each day with regards to planning and instructional implementation. Participants concluded that they consider each of their students, along with their capabilities, and design lessons that encourage students to apply their knowledge in a variety of ways that best meet their learning profiles. Furthermore, participants expressed their beliefs that it was necessary to ensure that students were successful with task objectives and that it was their responsibility to provide choices related to learning styles or modalities. These perceptions that were collected from teachers may suggest implications including that while a variety of instructional approaches exist within the elementary field of instruction, specific approaches may better support the learning process of specific grade levels and possibly student achievement.

Professional development related to blended learning was also discussed within both interview and focus group guided discussion participants. Initially, this topic was explored with interview participants as they were asked to discuss their past experiences with professional development, along with identifying offerings that they might be interested in attending that relate to blended learning instruction. All interview participants expressed interest in attending professional development that was related to blended learning. While all participants addressed their desire to attend blended learning professional development, they did so with the understanding that blended learning instruction aligned with each of their individual responses that described this instructional approach. In addition to sharing their interest in attending blended learning professional

development, participants shared their preference in attending training sessions aligned with their current needs as classroom teachers. As participants shared the instructional approaches that they have utilized within their classrooms, they discussed attending training that allowed for choice and application time.

Participants also shared that they believed that professional development opportunities should consider the individual needs of classroom teachers. During the interview sessions that occurred, participants shared their disappointment in not being able to have input into the training sessions that were offered or being given a choice to attend relevant sessions that applied directly to their needs or wants as a teacher. As the researcher discussed past training sessions that were offered, teachers expressed being dissatisfied with course content and stated that they felt the training that was provided was done so without careful consideration to the learners in attendance. Implications suggest that if professional development related to blended learning was offered, it would be beneficial to consider the components being addressed within training sessions and consider the expectations teachers may have for such workshops. Furthermore, participants shared their preference in attending professional development opportunities that provide choice, time, and are conducted with consideration to teacher learning preferences. To address professional development related to this instructional approach, implications suggest that it may be beneficial to explore various models of blended learning professional development and seek data that reflect the effectiveness of such models with consideration to an audience of educators at the elementary level.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This section explores recommendations for future research. These recommendations were developed based on the research questions and results reported that were explored throughout this study. The recommendations provided below may encourage further investigations related to blended learning.

Limited research is available regarding how the instructional approach to blended learning is utilized at the elementary level. Currently, research is available detailing how blended learning has been implemented at the high school level and again with college level students. Additional research detailing how blended learning has been supported at the elementary level and implemented by classroom teachers may be beneficial for student learning and teacher application.

During the course of this research study, participants offered varied understandings regarding blended learning. The Blended-Learning Skills Survey administered during this study provided results suggesting participants were unaware of how to define blended learning. Furthermore, while interview participants each shared their understanding of blended learning, several participants indicated that they were unaware if their explanation was correct. Future research examining varied definitions may lead to defining this instructional approach and more accurately, portray its use within classrooms.

Several participants shared that they consider differentiated instruction and the inclusion of various learning styles or modalities to be blended learning. Participants added that these types of instructional approaches allow students to demonstrate understanding through a variety of approaches, along with supporting and promoting

student independence and ownership. Future research that identifies effective instructional approaches at the elementary level may be beneficial in supporting student learning. If specific instructional approaches have proved to be beneficial and support the overall learning experience, teachers may benefit from trying out these approaches with their diverse populations of student learners.

Professional development related to blended learning was explored during this study as participants were asked about their feelings regarding attending training related to blended learning. Additionally, participants were asked about the modalities of professional development training that they believe would best support the learning of blended learning. Several participants shared they would prefer to learn from trainings that considered their own learning preferences. Identified learning preferences from participants included being able to work with peers, being hands-on, and being given time to apply the new learning that has been presented. Additional research regarding effective professional development models may better align with supporting teachers as learners and ensure that the learning segment is beneficial to its attendees.

### **Summary**

This qualitative research study was developed to explore the instructional approach to blended learning and identify if participants involved within the study shared a common understanding of this method. As the term blended learning continues to be used within the education field and with elementary teachers, it may be beneficial for educators to identify a common understanding. Likewise, as elementary teachers continue to work together and discuss lesson components, the instructional approach to

blended learning may either be referenced or utilized to support learning within the classroom.

Through the administration of the Blended-Learning Skills Survey and meeting with participants during the interview sessions or focus group guided discussion, personal experiences were shared allowing the researcher to identify participants' understanding of blended learning. Furthermore, each phase within this study allowed for participants to share their personal experiences as they related to instruction, student learning, and the relationships that were present with students. Findings suggested that individuals that participated within this study had varied understandings of a blended learning instructional approach. While all participants had a unique view of blended learning, they all shared that they believed that it supported the learning of students within their classrooms. Qualitative analysis revealed the following five themes: unshared definition, instructional supports, change, instructional approaches, and ownership. After a thorough review of these themes and their relationship to the research questions developed in preparation of this study, implications of research for educators were offered, in addition to suggestions for further research regarding the instructional approach to blended learning.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research study is presented to identify the varied meanings and understandings of the instructional approach to blended learning. While this term may have been present within the education field for more than 30 years, it is possible that a common, shared definition ceases to exist. Furthermore, as the term blended learning continues to be used within the education field, it may be beneficial to align it with

various lesson components, materials, and resources. While it may not be essential or necessary to properly define this instructional approach, it may be supportive to educators to describe blended learning similarly with consideration to specific grade levels and components. If this occurs, it may be possible to examine this instructional approach and explore how it may support student learning within the classroom. In addition, professional development offerings may be designed to support teacher understanding of various instructional components and how they can be utilized to support specific student learning needs. The instructional approach to blended learning may not be used by all educators, however, may be worth exploring if it can support the student learning experience at the elementary level.

## References

- Akkoyunlu, B., & Soyulu, M.Y. (2008). A study of student's perceptions in a blended learning environment based on different learning styles. *Educational Technology & Society, 11*(1), 183-193.
- Alijani, G., Kwun, O., & Yu, Y. (2014). Effectiveness of blended learning in Kipp New Orleans' Schools. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 18*(2), 125-141.
- Atkinson, K., Fluker, G., Ngo, L., Dracup, M., & McCormick, P. (2009). Introducing a learning repository using a blended professional development approach. *Same Places, Different Spaces: Proceedings Ascilite Auckland*, pp. 35-39.
- Barnum, C., & Paarmann, W. (2002). Bringing induction to the teacher: A blended learning model. *The Journal*, Retrieved from <http://thejournal.com/magazine/vault/articleprintversion.cfm?aid=4158>.
- Benjamin, A. (2002). *Differentiated instruction: A guide for middle & high school teachers*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Benson, V., & Anderson, D., Ooms, A. (2011). Educators' perceptions, attitudes, and practices: Blended learning in business and management education. *Research in Learning Technology, 19*(2), 143-154.
- Berry, B., Daughtrey, A., & Wieder, A. (2010). *Preparing to lead an effective classroom: The role of teacher training and professional development programs*. Center for Teaching Quality.
- Bersin, J. (2003). What works in blended learning? *Learning Circuits*, Retrieved from <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2003/jul2003/bersinhtm>.



- Bielawski, L., & Metcalf, D. (2003). *Blended elearning: Integrating knowledge, performance support, and online learning*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.
- Bliuc, A. M., Goodyear, P., & Ellis, R. A. (2007) Research focus and methodological choices in studies into students' experiences of blended learning in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10(4), 231-244.
- Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chen, W. F. (2012). An investigation of varied types of blended learning environments on student achievement: An experimental study. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 39(3), 211-218.
- Chickering, A.W., & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Implementing the seven principles: Technology as lever. *AAHE Bulletin*, 49(2), 3-6.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2006). *Five qualitative approaches to inquiry*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dean, M., Tait, A., & Kim, G., (2012). Evaluating professional development of educators in an international context. *The International Journal of Learning*, 18(9), 145-163.

- Delialioglu, O. (2012). Student engagement in blended learning environments with lecture-based and problem-based instructional approaches. *Educational Technology and Society*, 15(3), 310-322.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Collier.
- Driscoll, M. (2002). Blended learning: Lets get beyond the hype. *Learning and Training Innovations Newslines*.
- Dunlap, T. (2014). Interview with education technology leader Dr. Barry Backenheimer. *The Education Digest*, Retrieved from <http://www.learningfirst.org/interview-education-technology-leader-dr-barry-bachenheimer>
- Dziuban, C., Hartman, J., Juge, F., Moskal, P., & Sorg, S. (2006). *Blended learning enters the mainstream. Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Ertmer, P. A., Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T., Sadik, O., Sendurur, E., & Sendurur, P. (2012). Teacher beliefs and technology integration practices: A critical relationship. *Computers & Education*, 59(2), 423-435.
- Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses, revised and updated*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Finlay, L. (1998). Reflexivity: An essential component for all research? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(10), 453-456.
- Finlay, L., & Ballinger, C. (2006). *Qualitative Research for allied health professionals: Challenging Choices*. West Sussex, England: Whurr Publishers Limited.

- Fullan, M. (1991). *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Teachers College Press.
- Garrison, R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7, 95-105.
- Gecer, A. (2013). Lecturer-student communication in blended learning environments. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 13(1), 362-367.
- Gerbic, P. (2011). Teaching using a blended learning approach- what does the literature tell us? *Educational Media International*, 48(3), 221-234.
- Gilgun, J. F. (2006). Commentary: Encouraging the use of reflexivity in the writing up of qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy Rehabilitation*, 3(5), 215.
- Gonzales, L., & Vodicka, D. (2012). Blended learning: A disruption that has found its time. *Leadership*, 42(2), 8-10.
- Graham, C.R. (2006) *Blended learning systems; definition, current trends, and future directions*. *Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*. pp. 3-21, San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W., & Harrison, J. B. (2013). A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of blended learning in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 18, 4-14.
- Greenwood, C. R., Horton, B. T., & Utley, C. A. (2002). Academic engagement: Current perspectives in research and practice. *School Psychology Review*, 31(3), 328-349.

- Hansen, L., Sunnevag, A., & Kostal, A. (2011). E-learning and school development- strengths and challenges of capacity building in school development projects. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 4(3), 30-34.
- Institute of Education Sciences. (2014). National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states>
- Jamal, H. (2015). Mobile technology in a blended learning environment: A learning by doing approach. *Perspectives (Tesol Arabia)*, 23(2), 27-29.
- Jung, I., & Latchem, C. (2011). A model for e-education: Extending teaching spaces and extended learning spaces. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42(1), 6-8.
- Kazu, I., & Demirkol, M. (2014). Effect of blended learning environment model on high school students' academic achievement. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 13(1), 78-87.
- Kitchenham, A. (2005). Adult- learning principles, technology and elementary teachers and their students: The perfect blend? *Education, Communication & Information*, 5(3), 285-302.
- Korthagen, F., & Lagerwerf, B. (2011). Making teacher education relevant for practice: The pedagogy of the Realistic Teacher. *Orbis Scholae* 5(2), 31-50.
- Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change*, 33(3), 10-17.
- Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research, and method*. England: Pearson Education Canada.
- Lee, H. L. (2014). Conceptual framework of blended professional development for mathematics teachers. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 17(4), 81-92.

- Lim, D., & Morris, M. (2009). Learner and instructional factors influencing learning outcomes within a blended learning environment. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(4), 282-293.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2006). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lye, S., Abas, S., Tay, L., & Saban, F. (2012). Exploring the use of online space in an elementary school. *Educational Media International*, 49(3), 155-170.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing Qualitative Research*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Martin, P. (2013). Role-playing in an inclusive classroom: Using realistic simulation to explore differentiated instruction. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 22(2), 93-106.
- McAdams, R. P. (1997). A systems approach to school reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79(2), 138-142.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). *Transformative learning: Theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mirriahi, N., Alonzo, D., McIntyre, S., Kligyte, G., & Fox, B. (2015). Blended learning innovations: Leadership and change in one Australian institution. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology*, 11(1), 4-16.
- Mitchell, A., & Honore, S. (2007). Criteria for successful blended learning. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 39(3), 143-149.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenology of perception*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Connor, C., Mortimer, D., & Bond, S. (2011). Blended learning: Issues, benefits, and challenges. *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 19(2), 62-82.

- Olivier, J. (2011). *Accommodating and promoting multilingualism through blended learning*, (Unpublished PhD thesis), Northwest University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa.
- Owston, R., Wideman, H., Murphy, J., & Lupshenyuk, D. (2008). Blended teacher professional development: A synthesis of three program evaluations. *Internet and Higher Education*, 11, 201-210.
- Pallapu, P. (2007). Effects of visual and verbal learning styles on learning. *Institute for Learning Styles Journal*, 1, 34-39.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Poon, J. (2013). Blended learning: An institutional approach for enhancing students' learning experiences. *Merlot Journal of Online Learning and Training*, 9(2), 271-289.
- Rowley, D. & Sherman, H. (2001). *From strategy to change: Implementing the plan in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ryan, G. & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 85-109.
- Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., Roberts, G., & Francis, R. (2006) The undergraduate experiences of blended e-learning: A review of UK literature and practice.  
Retrieved from  
[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/teachingandresearch/Sharpe\\_Benfield\\_Roberts\\_Francis.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/teachingandresearch/Sharpe_Benfield_Roberts_Francis.pdf)

- Seidman, I. E. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Singleton, D. (2013). Transitioning to blended learning: The importance of communication and culture. *Journal of Applied Technology*, 3(1), 12-15.
- Sloan, A., & Bowe, B. (2014). Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: The philosophy, the methodologies, and using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design. *Qual Quant*, 48, 1291-1303.
- Slovan, M. (2007) Making sense of blended learning. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 39(6), 315-318.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, M. (2010). Is online learning different from traditional learning? *Education Centers*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationcenters.com/faq/online-education/is-online-learning-different-from-traditional-learning011.php>.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction: Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Toronto Catholic District School Board. (2015). What blended learning looks like in the classroom. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPvreKWaKjY>
- Ulliyat, D. (2003). *Satisfaction of students and administrators to awards support systems in online degree programs: A case study*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertations, Seton University.
- Valiathan, P. (2002). Blended learning models. *Learning Circuits*. Retrieved from <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2002/aug2002/valiathan.htm>
- Wang, Y., Han, X., & Yang, J. (2015). Revisiting the blended learning literature: Using a complex adaptive systems framework. *Educational Technology & Society*, 18(2), 380-393.
- Williams, C. (2002). Learning on-line: A review of recent literature in a rapidly expanding field. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(3), 263-272.
- Yoon, K., Duncan, T., Lee, S., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. (2007). Reviewing evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement: Issues and answers. *Regional Educational Laboratory*, 33, 1-62.



## Appendix A: Blended Learning Skills Survey

## Blended Learning Skills Survey

1. The term “blended learning” is commonly understood by all educators.
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

2. Blended learning supports differentiated instruction within the classroom.
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

3. Technology must be incorporated when using a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom.
  - a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

4. Elementary schools are equipped with the necessary resources that may support a blended learning instructional approach.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

5. Elementary school teachers have been trained to incorporate a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

6. School administrators expect to see blended learning within my classroom.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

7. School administrators have provided professional development within the last two years that has included or has focused on blended learning.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

8. If blended learning workshops were offered through district professional development offerings, I would attend.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

9. Incorporating a blended learning approach to instruction will increase student achievement.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:

10. Students learn best when a variety of instructional approaches are used within the classroom.
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Uncertain
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly Disagree

Comments:
-----------

Optional:

Please include your name and email address if you would like to be considered and possibly contacted regarding an upcoming interview session and focus group discussion consisting of teachers and administrators from the district. The interview session and focus group discussion will help compile information regarding the instructional approach of blended learning.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B: Interview Session Questions

## Blended Learning Interview Session Questions

1. How would you define the term blended learning?
2. What components, if any, do you believe are components of a blended learning instructional model?
3. Have you had any experiences designing lessons that include a blended learning instructional model? If, yes, please discuss and describe your experiences.
4. Do you believe that a blended learning instructional approach to teaching is beneficial to student learning? If you answered yes, please explain.
5. What do you believe to be the role of a teacher during instruction?
6. What do you believe to be the role of students during instruction?
7. What types of learning opportunities do you afford to students during instruction?
8. Do you believe teachers are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and/or materials to implement a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom? Please explain.
9. Do you believe blended learning is an instructional approach that administrators/evaluators expect to see upon entering a classroom?
10. Do you believe blended learning is an instructional approach that teachers believe they need to incorporate within their classrooms?

## Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Questions



## Blended Learning Focus Group Discussion Questions

The video titled, “What Blended Learning Looks like in the Classroom” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPvreKWaKjY>), was used during the focus group guided discussion.

1. Please discuss your thoughts regarding the video you just viewed on blended learning in the elementary classroom.
2. What blended learning instructional components, either shown within the video or from your personal experience, do you believe support student learning within the classroom?
3. What do you believe to be the perceptions of teachers with regards to using a blended learning instructional approach within the classroom?
4. Which blended learning components do you believe would be effective during a professional development workshop seeking to provide support to teachers and administrators on blended learning instruction?

Appendix D: Letter of Introduction to the Blended Learning Skills Survey



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

February 2015

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Matt Correia and I am a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. The topic of my dissertation research is to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators when considering the instructional approach of blended learning at the elementary level.

In order to conduct my research, I am seeking volunteers to participate in completing the attached skills survey regarding blended learning. Completion of the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. If you wish, you may provide your name at the end of the survey so that you may be considered and possibly contacted for the upcoming interview and focus group sessions consisting of teachers and administrators. These additional sessions will include examining the perceptions of teachers and administrators when considering the blended learning instructional approach to teaching, as well as professional development that may support this type of instructional initiative.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval # 1415-74). It is the hope of this study to collect information regarding perceptions of blended learning and the impact it may have on student learning and achievement.

Again, any information obtained through this study will remain confidential and this process is completely voluntary. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at (203) 695-2425 or via email at [mattcorreia1@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreia1@gmail.com) or the Institutional Review Board at [IRB@wcsu.edu](mailto:IRB@wcsu.edu).

Warm Regards,

Matthew A. Correia

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form (Interview Session)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

March 2015

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Matt Correia and I am a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. The topic of my dissertation research is to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators when considering the instructional approach of blended learning at the elementary level.

In order to conduct my research, I am looking for volunteers to participate in an individual interview session designed to collect information regarding blended learning. As you may recall, a Blended Learning Skills Survey was recently delivered to your school and you were asked to complete the survey, if interested. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes and will be video recorded. All information obtained through this research will be confidential and will be coded to maintain the confidentiality of all individual participants.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board (Approval # 1415-74). It is the hope of this study to collect information regarding perceptions of blended learning and the impact it may have on student learning and achievement.

Again, any information obtained through this study will remain confidential and this process is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to be dismissed from the interview process, you may do so at any time for any reason. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at (203) 695-2425 or via email at [mattcorreia1@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreia1@gmail.com) or the Institutional Review Board at [IRB@wcsu.edu](mailto:IRB@wcsu.edu).

Warm Regards,

Matthew A. Correia

-----  
Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand the purpose of this study and wish to participate. I am aware that all information will remain confidential throughout this process and that my participation in the interview session is completely voluntary. I may leave this study at anytime.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F: Consent Form (Focus Group Discussion)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

March 2015

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Matt Correia and I am a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. The topic of my dissertation research is to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators when considering the instructional approach of blended learning at the elementary level.

In order to conduct my research, I am looking for volunteers to participate in a focus group discussion designed to collect information regarding blended learning and professional development that may support classroom instructional approaches. As you may recall, a Blended Learning Skills Survey was recently delivered to your school and you were asked to complete the survey, if interested. The focus group discussion should take approximately 90 minutes and will be video recorded. All information obtained through this research will be confidential and will be coded to maintain the confidentiality of all individual participants.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board (Approval # 1415-74). It is the hope of this study to collect information regarding perceptions of blended learning and the impact it may have on student learning and achievement.

Again, any information obtained through this study will remain confidential and this process is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to be dismissed from the focus group discussion, you may do so at any time for any reason. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at (203) 695-2425 or via email at [mattcorreia1@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreia1@gmail.com) or the [Institutional Review Board at IRB@wcsu.edu](mailto:IRB@wcsu.edu).

Warm Regards,

Matthew A. Correia

-----  
Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand the purpose of this study and wish to participate. I am aware that all information will remain confidential throughout this process and that my participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. I may leave this study at anytime.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix G: Superintendent of Schools Consent Form





Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

January 2015

Dear Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University. This program requires that I design and implement a dissertation research study. The topic of my dissertation research is to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators when considering the instructional approach of blended learning at the elementary level.

In order to conduct my research, I am looking for volunteers to participate in the completion of a Blended Learning Skills Survey, 45-minute individual interview session, and a 90-minute focus group session. The interview session and focus group discussion will be video recorded. The purpose of the interview session and a focus group discussion is to collect information regarding blended learning and professional development that may support classroom instructional approaches. All information obtained through this research will be confidential and will be coded to maintain the confidentiality of all individual participants.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board (Approval # 1415-74). Participation in this study is completely voluntary and subjects may withdraw at any time. Teachers and administrators who agree to participate will submit all information to the researcher.

I wish to thank you and the Berlin Public Schools district for considering participation in this study. It is hoped that results of this investigation will enable educators to better understand instructional components that support student learning and achievement. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to contact me at (203) 695-2425 or via email at [mattcorreial@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreial@gmail.com) or the [Institutional Review Board at IRB@wcsu.edu](#).

Sincerely,

Matthew A. Correia  
[mattcorreial@gmail.com](mailto:mattcorreial@gmail.com)

I agree that the study described above can be conducted in the Berlin Public Schools.

---

Superintendent's Signature

---

Date

## Appendix H: Initial Codes

*Initial Codes and Frequency*

---

Initial Codes	Frequency
1. Access	1
2. Applying blended learning	10
3. Assessment	9
4. Attributes	1
5. Balance	2
6. Blended learning	34
7. Budget	2
8. Change	6
9. Choice	10
10. Collaboration	1
11. Combining	8
12. Comfortable	1
13. Common core standards	2
14. Components of bl.	121
15. Date	1
16. Definition	114
17. Differentiation	38
18. Difficult	3
19. Discourse	24
20. Effective	1
21. Engagement	17
22. Environment	4
23. Every day	1
24. Expectations	37
25. Experience	1
26. Facilitator of learning	7
27. Flipped learning	7
28. Follow-up	1
29. Guidance and support	1
30. Helpful to students	1
31. Individualized	3
32. Inquiry	1
33. Instructional approach	150
34. Instructional areas	9
35. Learned for teaching	7
36. Learning	15
37. Limitations	1
38. Location	1
39. Lower elementary	2
40. Materials	36

---

Continued

Initial Codes	Frequency
41. Meaningful	1
42. Modalities	18
43. Motivation	3
44. Multiple modalities	8
45. Necessary skills	10
46. Ownership	23
47. Perceptions	2
48. Playtime	1
49. Preferences	1
50. Professional development	95
51. Progression	1
52. Purpose	2
53. Range of learners	4
54. Relationships	1
55. Self	4
56. Self-assess	1
57. Self-doubt	1
58. Shared understanding	1
59. Stress	2
60. Student abilities	4
61. Student application	46
62. Student roles	62
63. Students as leaders	5
64. Teacher experience	2
65. Teacher perceptions	1
66. Teacher questioning	17
67. Teacher reflection	71
68. Teacher roles	44
69. Technology	107
70. Technology problems	8
71. Technology programs	18
72. Unfamiliar	10
72. Upper elementary	2

*Note: 73 codes*

## Appendix I: Final Codes

*Final Code List*

---

Identified Themes	Associated Codes
Unshared Definition	Blended learning, definition, components of blended learning, instructional areas.
Instructional Supports	Necessary skills, materials, resources, time, choice, effective, professional development, assessment, collaboration, guidance and support.
Change	Expectations, teacher role, teacher reflection, facilitator of learning, unfamiliar, attributes, learned for teaching, shared understandings.
Instructional Approaches	Differentiation, discourse, technology, modalities of learning, questioning, technology programs, purpose, range of learners, individualized, meaningful, modalities, inquiry, balance.
Ownership	Student role, student application, student learning, student abilities, students as leaders.

---

## Appendix J: Researcher Experience with Blended Learning

## **Researcher Experience with Blended Learning**

In 2011, I was introduced to blended learning. Prior to this instructional approach being discussed by a former principal and fellow colleagues, I was unaware of what it was or how it could be applied within the classroom. At the time of it being introduced, it was presented as a concept that may support the differentiation process within the classroom, as well as be a creative way to support learners who required additional challenges within the content areas. As a former classroom teacher, I always felt and believed it to be critical to consider all learners within the classroom, however, a difficult task when trying to do so on a daily basis in meaningful and purposeful ways.

My experience and application with blended learning began with the integration of technology within the classroom. While I had often used technology during a mini-lesson, my application of blended learning included using iPads for small group instruction. My approach would include giving each student within a small group an iPad and provide them with the directions to work independently or together as they explored new topics or learning tasks. While utilizing the technology, students were encouraged to make their own choices or decisions and complete a learning task how they saw fit.

In addition to technology integration, the other component of a blended learning instructional model I applied within the classroom was providing choice to my students. Offering students choice within the classroom was an instructional approach that I was familiar with and believed to support the learning process. Additionally, I felt that by providing choice within the classroom, I was supporting student learning preferences and allowing them to demonstrate their understanding of content material in a variety of



preferred ways. Usually, after presenting a topic to a small group, I would discuss the multiple ways a task could be approached and completed. After providing specific guidelines, students were given the opportunity to make their own choices regarding their approach and determine how they wanted to demonstrate their understanding and/or mastery of a topic.

Shortly after being introduced to this topic, I left my position as a classroom teacher and transitioned into the role of a building administrator. While my interest in this topic has remained, it hasn't been an instructional approach I have been able to apply within the elementary school I supervise. While I was unable to integrate this instructional approach within classrooms throughout my elementary school, I was able to select this instructional approach as a dissertation topic and explore it through a great deal of research and my own qualitative study.

## Appendix K: Reflexive Journal

**Dissertation: Reflexive Journal**

Date	Thoughts/Ideas/Questions	Next Steps/Notes
11/11/14	Just came home from my practice proposal with Dr. Burke. After considering her ideas from last week, I believe I presented a defense that truly represents my intentions for this study.	Prepare for tomorrow!
11/12/15	Dissertation Proposal presented and approved. Talk with Karen about next steps in the process. What should be completed before the end of the semester? Over winter break?	Look over feedback notes from dissertation panel- look at phenomenology studies.  Talk with Dr. Burke – received Phenomenology article.
11/19/14	Continue to collect and read articles for dissertation.  Look at concerns that Marcy had regarding Phenomenology and talk with Karen about ensuring this process is accurate and consistent throughout research study.	Set up Skype with Karen.  Look for articles.  Research.
12/1/14	Make final corrections to proposal – so they are correctly applied to dissertation draft.	Correct any corrections necessary.
1/10/15	Look at the Blended Learning Skills Survey. What information should be included? Think about format for sending? Review surveys online.	Talk with Karen about Blended Learning Skills Survey- Make changes? Add anything? Send date?
1/20/15	Look over questions for interview session with participants. Review other qualitative dissertations and see if the types of questions they asked are similar- check how they aligned within their study and purpose of the study.	Look at sample dissertations and questions.
2/1/15	Look over focus group questions developed. Send to Karen for ideas regarding making changes to any of	Skype session.

	the questions. Consider interviews and how the responses or feedback might require changes to process.	
2/11/15	Look for any recent articles related to blended learning and professional development.	Print out articles.
2/19/15	I attended seminar last night at West Conn and met with Dr. Burke to discuss the next steps of the research study. We discussed sending out the survey next month to possible participants. Not sure if this is necessary.	Work with survey- review to others.  Add graphics to the survey.
2/25/15	Read through a few articles regarding blended learning, as well as qualitative studies to see how they abstract was written. Will need to write at completion of the study (to include results)  Reviewed Survey Monkey tutorial.	Survey Monkey follow-up.
3/5/15	This morning, I sent out the Blended Learning Survey to all possible participants. An email was initially sent to all possible participants asking them to consider taking the survey, regardless of their experience with the instructional approach of blended learning. Additionally, the email included an attachment with the official letter explaining my study and research steps. It was good to begin this process and I am looking forward to the responses I receive.	Review Survey Monkey site and monitor the number of responses I receive from the survey.  Talk to Dr. Burke- let her know this step was completed and ask her about how long I should wait before sending out another email as a reminder to take the survey- what should the email include? And... what language would be appropriate so that possible participants do not feel bothered or pressured into taking the survey.
3/11/15	Skyped with Dr. Burke today and we discussed sending out a follow-up email regarding the survey. As of today, I have about 40 responses. It was great to see this number,	Review email for second phase of the study- interview sessions.  Start to review question 12 for interview candidates.

	<p>although I have only briefly read through about half the surveys completed (to get an initial feeling about the quality of responses). It was also reassuring to see that 6 individuals have stated that they would be interested in participating in the second phase of the study- the interview session.</p> <p>Dr. Burke and I discussed the interview sessions briefly and my protocol for setting up appointments to meet and conduct an interview. Prior to this occurring, all surveys need to be read.</p>	<p>Think about compensation and talk to Dr. Burke about what I will offer to participants- gift cards?</p> <p>Schedule for interviews &amp; focus groups- look at school calendar- avoid April vacation.</p>
3/15/15	<p>I received an email today from Lexia Learning with regards to blended learning. The short article attached within the email discussed blended learning and components of the instructional model.</p> <p>It also included information on rotation-model; flex models, a la carte models, and the enriched virtual model. These are new to me- I haven't heard about these four components in any of the research that I have conducted.</p>	<p>Review article.</p> <p>Look into four NEW components offered within the blended learning article.</p>
3/17/15	<p>I received a few emails (3) from participants asking questions about completing the survey. All three individuals shared their interests in working on the survey, but believe they do not know a lot about blended learning. It was interesting to get this email – or maybe this will even start a chain of emails – as it goes with my thoughts that a shared definition to blended learning is lacking. After reading these emails, I was excited about my work and what I am hoping to accomplish with this research study. I began to consider though,</p>	<p>Construct email response to staff members in response to their participation with the survey.</p> <p>Continue to look at current blended learning articles (2015) and consider newer definitions- may be a good idea to bring these into the interview or focus group- maybe find an article to present- bring, or have participants read prior to- talk with Dr. Burke about this being a possibility.</p>

	<p>what would the proper definition for blended learning be? Would it include several components? Is vague better or is that what really started this entire thing and movement with blended learning?</p>	
3/22/15	<p>I completed working on my Blended Learning Poster for the Instructional Leadership Conference taking place in May. As I was organizing this poster, it was great to see that I have already accomplished many of the steps within my research study and I am on track with my designated timeline. After seeing my entire study on the poster, I need to continue to my exploration and reading into phenomenology.</p>	<p>Continue research on phenomenology and understanding the lived experience.</p> <p>Talk with Dr. Burke about survey implications.</p> <p>Wait for approval (poster) from Dr. Burke and send it to Dr. Delcourt for printing.</p>
3/25/15	<p>Dissertation Visit @ West Conn:</p> <p>It was great attending Patty's dissertation and listening to the line of questioning that occurred with regards to data collection.</p>	<p>Consider questioning for dissertation defense.</p> <p>Talk with Dr. Burke about level of questioning that may occur with regards to phenomenology.</p>
3/30/15	<p>Continue to research and print out articles related to Phenomenology. Look at approaches taken within this type of research and how studies that are reported on are similar or related to my study.</p>	<p>Talk with Karen about authors/theorists who have experience with Phenomenology.</p>
4/5/15	<p>Look over results from Blended Learning Skills Survey. Any ideas formulating? Any common ideas or themes from participant feedback?</p>	<p>Share results with Karen.</p>
4/23/15	<p>Prepare documents for interviews. Review and send Karen email about next steps. Continue to look over results from survey.</p>	<p>Print documents.</p>
5/1/15	<p>Reread newest articles related to</p>	<p>Print out latest articles in folder.</p>

	blended learning- consider for dissertation.	
5/4/15	Tutorial on REV app.	Review for voice recording.
5/6/15	Interview today. First Interview complete- participant was helpful and seemed comfortable asking questions to the researcher, as well as sharing her ideas regarding blended learning. Participant shared components of blended learning and shared she has applied this instructional approach within her classroom.	Bring interview questions and cell phone to use REV app for voice recording.
5/7/15	Interview today. Second interview in the process complete. Interview candidate appeared slightly nervous about not being informed about the topic of blended learning. Participant still was open about sharing her ideas and thoughts. Participant shared that they have applied blended learning within their classroom.	Bring interview questions and cell phone to use REV app for voice recording.
5/8/15	Interview today. Third interview in the process complete. Interview candidate seemed more than comfortable meeting and discussing his beliefs about blended learning. He seemed confident in his responses, but he too questioned if his definition was correct or not. He mentioned a great deal about professional development. Review PD questions for focus group. Participant shared they have used blended learning within the classroom.	Bring interview questions and cell phone to use REV app for voice recording.
5/12/15	Interview today. Fourth interview in the process complete. Interview candidate seemed comfortable, but secure with blended learning being used at the secondary level and not so much at the elementary level.	Bring interview questions and cell phone to use REV app for voice recording.

	Review information about flipped classroom- may want to include in dissertation chapters. Participant began stating she didn't use a form of blended learning before but then provided examples of how she integrated blended learning. I think this was a thought process for her- she developed her ideas about blended learning as the interview occurred.	
5/15/15	Interview today. Fifth and final interview in the process complete. Candidate seems informed about blended learning with regards to his perceptions of this approach. Candidate appeared to be excited about using this process in his teachings. Candidate has many experiences.	Bring interview questions and cell phone to use REV app for voice recording.
5/18/15	Review notes from interviews. Determine if I need any information clarified and if so- talk with Karen about this being a possibility.	NA
5/22/15	All interview notes appear to be complete. I was able to get all information from the REV app saved in files on the computer. Send these to be transcribed immediately.	Review REV app and send interviews for transcriptions.
5/25/15	Received transcriptions from REV app back through email. Quality appears good- need to review now and determine if all information is present.	Review transcriptions from REV.
5/30/15	All transcriptions are good quality. A few have words that were used instead of another word that was actually said- however this was an easy item to identify and clarify for the purpose of coding next month.	Let Karen know all information from interview phase of study was received and appears to be in good quality.



6/3/15	Review all questions for focus group and see if anything needs to be changed prior to the group meeting. Look at examples of how focus groups have been run in research studies.	Send questions to Karen for final review before the focus group guided discussion.
6/15/15	Completed the focus group guided discussion today. All participants were present and shared their feelings as they related to blended learning. One individual seemed to change her opinion of blended learning being more than just a flipped classroom approach (was she influenced by the discussion)?	Report to Karen- share experience.
6/17/15	Review notes from focus group guided discussion. Is follow-up necessary- do I need to clarify anything prior to closing the participant involvement portion of the study?	NA
6/22/15	Participant involvement complete. All information that was collected appears to be complete and makes sense as I move forward into the next coding process.	Report to Karen- let her know all information appears to be collected and ready for next steps.
6/24/15	Send focus group guided discussion for transcription and then review.	Send transcription from REV app.
6/27/15	Review transcriptions for focus group guided discussion. Similarly to the interviews- a few words were not properly identified but again, I was able to determine the words that were said.	Talk with Karen about receiving this document.
7/24/15	Continued work on chapters 1-3 of dissertation.	NA
7/28/15	Continued work on chapters 1-3 of dissertation.	NA
8/2/15	Send of new revisions of chapters 1-3	Email edits.

	with edits.	
8/15/15	Looked at articles related to blended learning and search for any relevant definitions (elementary grades) that should be incorporated within my dissertation.	Look at definition of terms- anything need to be added?
8/22/15	Looked over sample dissertations in MAD Wiki. Read sections about their experience with coding.	NA
8/23/15	HyperRESEARCH- look at tutorial and how to begin coding process using this platform.	Make purchase.
8/24/15	Looked over more sample dissertations.	Print off samples and talk with Karen about beginning this process!
9/3/15	Begin the coding process- initial. Re-read all blended learning surveys and reviewed the comments. Not many to work with, but appears to be enough that they will need to be coded.	Look at samples of how surveys have been coded. Compare how authors completed this process. Look back on qualitative texts in office.
9/10/15	Begin coding process of interviews.	NA
9/14/15	Received edits from Karen regarding chapters 1-3. Review and make changes. Look over chapter 2 and what type of additional information may be needed or added to in chapter 2.	Review and edits.
9/18/15	Begin coding process of focus group guided discussion. Consider how this should be separated within the write up of findings. Should it be done individually or should all information be considered and results reported in a summary format- discuss with Karen.	Talk with Karen about reporting the findings from a group discussion. Should this be done collectively? Look at dissertations in wiki and see how these findings have been reported prior to reporting in chapter 4.
9/22/15	Look over qualitative information. Begin separating it by section for	Review qualitative findings and talk with Karen about

	reporting in chapter 4.	dissertations that have been written in qualitative format.
9/24/15	Review dissertation of chapters 1-3 Look over format and continue edits.	Edits.
9/25/15	Review sections of Designing Qualitative Research by Marshall and Rossman.	Search for text.
10/2/15	Begin writing chapter 4. Look over samples for format and review dissertation guidelines about what is necessary and required components of chapter 4.	Print guidelines, review sample qualitative dissertations. Look at format and length of each section- take notes on what should be included- not included.
10/14/15	Received final edits for chapters 1 and 2 from Karen. Make these changes and these chapters are all set until final review.	Make final edits to chapters 1 and 2.
10/15/15	Look over formats for tables and figures. APA format. What tables are important to include- what has to be included within this chapter?	Look over guidelines in wiki and look at APA format in text and online for how tables need to be formatted.
10/20/15	Talk with Karen about progress of chapter 4. Almost completed.	SKYPE session.
11/5/15	Begin writing chapter 5. Look over Anna Rocco's and check for format and requirements. Look over dissertation guidelines.	Review guidelines for chapter five of dissertation. Qualitative audit- ask Karen about this process.
11/12/15	Reviewed email from Karen regarding a few sections to review in chapter 3. Make final edits to chapter 3.	Make final edits to sections in chapter 3. Complete until final review.
12/15/15	Dissertation sent to Karen with drafts of chapters 4 and 5. Will wait for feedback and then make edits.	Send email with chapters 4 and 5.
12/20/15	Received edits from Karen- make edits.	Edits.
12/21/15	Continue to make edits for chapter 4.	Edits.

	<p>Make changes with regards to theme titles- talk with Karen about professional development vs. instructional approaches.</p> <p>Also look into ownership- is there a better way to look at this finding? Better word?</p>	
12/22/15	Final review of chapters 4 and 5 draft. Email Karen- ask for feedback and if any parts are missing.	Email chapters.
1/4/16	Send Karen corrected drafts of chapter 4 and 5.	Send chapters for review.
1/9/16	Received email from Karen- she would like final dissertation in complete format for last review. Send off to Karen when finalized.	Send finalized dissertation to Karen via email. Compile final questions list for her to consider when she is reading paper.
1/10/16	Review of references. Complete this process- look over APA format.	Discuss format with Karen.
1/16/16	Final review of chapters 4 and 5. Ensuring that "See Appendix" labels are in the right place within these chapters. Looking at Appendix for final codes- final updates.	Talk to Karen about this chart and make sure that it is both understandable and acceptable for dissertation.
1/17/16	Reread for final read through and send to Karen for final corrections.	Talk to Karen about not having complete information for Blended Learning Skills Survey- ask where to put in oversight.
1/20/16	Ask Karen about a "reader" and this process for the dissertation. What is the process?	Skype with Karen.
1/20/16	Final dissertation sent to Karen.	Email dissertation.

## Appendix L: Qualitative Audit

## Qualitative Audit for Matthew Correia

I conducted a qualitative audit for Matthew Correia on February 20, 2016. Prior to the meeting with Matthew, he emailed the draft of his dissertation, and I was able to read chapters two, three and four. Matthew also forwarded additional supporting documents including a frequency table generated from HyperRESEARCH software which identified each code and the frequency of occurrence of each code as they appeared within transcripts, as well as a source document that identified the source of each code. At our meeting, the participants' transcripts were reviewed. Matthew and I met for approximately two hours. During this time, we discussed the following:

- **Overview of methodology** – To gain a better understanding of his study's methodology, I asked Matthew to provide an overview of how he conducted the interviews and focus groups and how the data was coded. Matthew was able to describe the coding methodologies used.
- **Logical sequence of coding** – In general, Matthew described a very logical approach to coding. In Vivo coding methods were used during the initial coding phase. Seventy-three initial codes were generated. After second cycle, axial coding, these seventy-three codes were collapsed into seventeen final codes resulting in the identification of five themes.
- **Meaning of the coding terms** – I asked Matthew to state, in his own words, the meaning of each of his main codes. He was able to do so. I suggested that he re-name a few of his terms to be more specific. Several of the codes were very descriptive and specific. For example, “components of blended learning” is fairly easily understood. On the other hand, the terms “instructional approach” or “expectations” may mean many things. I suggested that the following step be taken:
  - Clarify the names of a few of the codes that are currently unclear
- **Coding agreement** – I randomly selected ten instances of data to code. I was in agreement with how Matthew had coded the data.

In summary, Matthew's data and methodologies appear sound and rigorous. I suggest the following as an option to improve the study:

1. Review the list of codes and clarify any that may be misunderstood.

Respectfully Submitted,



Anna M. Rocco Ed.D

Principal

Ellsworth Avenue School

Danbury, CT 06810

(203) 885 2540

