

Blended Learning: An Effective Professional Development Solution

Performance Learning PLUS #22

Focused on improving the quality of instruction for its 700 fifth and sixth graders, Tennessee's Maryville Intermediate School implemented an innovative and effective blended learning staff development program to increase student learning. Blended learning combines traditional, on-site training with online, Web-based training.

The school worked with Performance Learning Systems, a national educational services company, to design and deliver a blended learning program that focused on "Learning Styles."

The program began with a day-long training presented by PLS consultant Jim Malanowski. His powerful message helped motivate the school staff and set the stage for their online learning experience. Teachers were then given a period of time to complete 10 hours of PLS online training. Convenience is one of the many advantages of online training, so some teachers chose to work at home, while others came into the school to complete the online portion of the training.

The online training included designing lesson plans that addressed the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Teachers found the lesson-planning process both meaningful and practical. Principal Jan Click reported, "Designing lessons based on learning styles reinforced the Adventure Learning Training we began last year. It is a key element in reaching all types of learners."

Teachers met within their pre-established teams to discuss their online experiences and share lesson plans. Many of them chose to incorporate learning styles into their Professional Growth Plans.

The learning didn't stop with the teachers. Angie Norriss, the school's guidance counselor, involved students! Working with the school's technology department, every student in the school took the online version of The Kaleidoscope Profile®, the PLS learning styles inventory. The profile identified student preferences among 12 different learning styles. Once every student had completed the profile, Norriss met with small groups of students to discuss their results. Using information from the online training, she explained learning styles and presented practical ways students could apply learning styles to classroom situations.

Debbie Huff, technology coordinator, and Beth Fair, assistant principal, acquired funding for the blended learning program through Goals 2000 grant monies. Their vision of using technology to increase student learning is a model for other schools to follow. "This was my first experience with online training and I really liked it; my staff did also," explained Jan Click. "Blended learning is a wonderful in-service option, and I would like to use more courses online for staff development in the future."

To find out how to bring blended learning to your school, call: (888) 424-9700.

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