

## An Ohio Educational Library Media Association White Paper: Blended Learning and the Library Media Specialist

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate the ways in which the library media specialist can serve as a leader in the implementation of blended learning in today's Ohio schools. In partnership with other educators, the library media specialist provides high-quality content, standards-aligned content and professional development to teachers to access and design courses using blended learning methods to prepare students for success with online testing and college, career, and life skills.

### **Audience:**

The intended audience for this document includes school board members, school administrators, teachers, library media specialists, parents, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio State Board of Education, and Ohio legislators.

### **Definitions:**

- *Blended Learning* - defined by [ORC 3301.079](#) as the delivery of instruction in a combination of time in a supervised physical location away from home and online delivery whereby the student has some element of control over time, place, path, or pace of learning.
- *INFOhio* – Ohio's PreK-12 Digital Library, a project of the Ohio Department of Education's Division of Information Management Services, is accountable to the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN). INFOhio is governed by a board of directors and supported by a network of people across the state with years of experience in libraries, technology and instruction.
- *Library Media Specialist* - a teacher who holds library/media licensure in the state of Ohio that includes advanced training in online resources and content related to career awareness, college readiness, and online assessment.

### **Overview:**

In 2010, the Digital Learning Council produced a document entitled *Digital Learning Now* (Foundation of Excellence in Education 2010) that focused on the ten (10) elements of high quality digital learning. One of the elements speaks to digital content and instructional materials in the online and blended learning environment – “*the dynamic nature of digital content and its varied uses requires a fresh and innovative approach to ensuring high quality content that should be aligned to state academic standards or common core standards for what students are expected to learn.*” (9)

In 2013, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute published a document entitled “*Liked but Little Used: Ohio's Rural Districts and Blended Learning*” based on a survey of 344 of Ohio's 614 district superintendents. Five percent reported that blended learning has “achieved widespread use in their school district; 31 percent of superintendents reported that blended learning was of limited or no use in their district.” Among the reasons postulated for the slow adoption of blended learning are technological capacity and know-how to implement blended learning.

In a 2013 survey of school librarians (*School Library Journal 2013 Tech Survey*) 98 percent reported they instruct students and teachers in the use of tech tools such as databases, multimedia, free-based resources such as Moodle; 72 percent reported that they are tech leaders in their school and/ or responsible for the tech in their library; 69 percent use social media sites and apps such as Edmodo.

Evaluating and assessing quality content across the curriculum that meets academic content standards and integrating technology and technological tools into the instructional tools that are crucial to student learning are specific to the licensed library media specialist's training.

## **Library Media Specialist's Role in Blended Learning:**

### **Planning for blended learning:**

The library media specialist brings to the planning table knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Information systems thinking and management including online and face-to-face course management;
- Instructional design for students and educators;
- Skills and experience at curating archives of materials including the selection and evaluation of content and technology tools based on standards, quality and appropriateness and seamless access to the curated content. Includes selection and use of technology tools to enhance student learning and collaboration and communication in blended courses;
- Expertise in design and creation of instructional activities for blended and face-to-face learning that infuse inquiry-based learning across disciplines and enhance student collaboration and communication in blended learning courses;
- Informational literacy skills needed by college-and career-ready students;
- Skills and resources to prepare students for college and careers including skills needed to be successful in online assessments.

### **Professional development for educators:**

The library media specialists can lead the district/building professional development effort in the following:

- Selection and use of quality digital informational text for content that supports student learning objectives for math, English, social studies, science and foreign languages as well as tools to evaluate information, cite sources and present knowledge;
- Expertise in selection and curation of resources for career awareness such as Ohio's Top Growth Jobs Earning Above Poverty Level, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Buckeye 250, Ohio Means Jobs, and INFOhio's Learning Express Library;
- Online and physical access to resource for college readiness: ACT tutorials and practice tests, Research for College Experience;
- Identification of resources to prepare students for Ohio's online assessments;
- Introduction to INFOhio's EBSCO Professional Collection of current professional literature and journals from all disciplines providing best practices and research-based curriculum and instruction and developments in blended online learning;
- Instructional design and adult learning expertise including modeling blended learning in professional development.

### **Community outreach for parents:**

The library media specialist can support and guide parents and caregivers in the following:

- Access content for quality and appropriateness across the curriculum;
- Access resources for college-and career-readiness;
- Identifying appropriate social media tools and instruction in effective use;
- Support with the use of the learning management system.

**Conclusion:**

The most common argument in favor of blended learning centers on tailoring learning to individual students; however, this kind of differentiation depends on the teacher finding challenging material and understanding how to integrate it effectively into online instruction. Because of their training in digital literacies, licensed library media specialists are uniquely positioned to partner with other educators to select and use online content to positively affect students' learning in the blended learning environment. Licensed library media specialists prepare students to engage with information across any platform and use ideas and information effectively through critical thinking, evaluation, organization, analysis, communication and creativity.

**Resources:**

Barack, Lauren. "*Device and Conquer: SLJ's 2013 Tech Survey.*" *School Library Journal*, December 5, 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/nrq26g6> The full Tech Survey results may be downloaded from this article.

Churchill, Aaron "*Liked but Little Used: Ohio's Rural Districts and Blended Learning.*" Thomas B. Fordham Institute. May 28, 2013. <http://tinyurl.com/kez96t2>

*Digital Learning Now Alliance for Excellence in Education* December 2010  
<http://tinyurl.com/khwma6n>

*iNACOL Reports* <http://tinyurl.com/mugpv6x>