

The Blended Chronicle™

The Quarterly Newsletter dedicated to raising awareness of the Blended Educational Movement in Rhode Island.

In this issue:

- Feature: The Mission
- 1:1 Ratio
- Learning Symphony
- Technology Conference
- Social Media Professional Development
- Innovation In Johnston
- Mobile Learning Is More Than Phones
- New & Notable

2015
Volume 1

1
ISSUE

The Mission: To Document & Share RI's Experiences in Blended Learning

By: Robert Pilkington, Ed.D.

An indisputable and consistently reaffirmed truth about public schools in RI is that we have become thoroughly bitten by the e-learning bug. Whether going high-tech was energized by the administrative responsibility to ramp up technology for PARCC, or that teachers within the past few years have developed a passion for using courseware and resources to enhance their instruction, our state's accomplishments in blended learning are vaster than we can imagine. It's really the perfect time to Chronicle the innovation and change we are creating every day in our schools.

In this first edition of what will be a quarterly e-publication there are varied topics which all have one theme; how is technology changing and improving the educational landscape for adults and students alike? From the contemporary #EdChatRI discourse provided by Principals Don Miller and Alan Tenreiro, to the horizons beyond e-learning as discussed by Kevin Cordeiro of Village Green Virtual, we explore the useful and the aspirational. Shawn Rubin and Laura Jackson of the Highlander Institute equate the complexities of blended learning to that of a symphon-

ic production with courseware, strategies, assessments and human interaction all "blending together" in one harmonious package.

From West Warwick and Johnston School Departments, Karen Tarasevich and Deb Turchetti-Ramm bring practical examples of infusing the classroom with new tools and approaches as well as the challenges and rewards in achieving that desirable 1:1 student to device ratio.

There is no "one single way" to work within a blended learning context. When visitors tour Village Green Virtual I am proud to say that VGV is a prototype school of tomorrow and our complete adoption of Flex-model blended learning as a school-wide courseware strategy is unique and unduplicated except for a handful of places with the closest being Atlanta and Indianapolis. I also know that two miles away at Pleasant View Elementary the future students of VGV are thriving within a digitally rich context as well. Let's all throw pebbles into our e-learning pond and watch the ripples of our stories connect, inspire and blend together.



Blended Learning in West Warwick and the Rewards of Reaching the 1:1 Ratio

By: Karen Tarasevich

1:1 Ratio

It is amazing the impact one decision can have on a school department. This positive revelation has been our experience in the West Warwick Public School Department with the implementation of our 1:1 Chromebook initiative this year. Having developed a wireless infrastructure over the past several years, our 1:1 initiative was kick started by a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation last year which allowed us to outfit one elementary school with Chromebooks. This year we were able to purchase the devices for the entire district which has brought a rapid transformation in our instructional culture.

An essential cornerstone of our district is the collaborative nature of our staff. Our 1:1 initiative has been no different. Starting with putting hardware in the hands of every member of our school community, the oppor-

tunities for blended learning has opened up exponentially! Teachers are so grateful and revitalized about their new Chromebooks, they have eagerly engaged in voluntary, district driven professional development opportunities. Conversation has revolved around best practices and how to effectively integrate the Chromebooks into their classrooms daily, as well as teach their students how to best use the devices outside of the school day. Teachers are investing their own time to develop their practice, taking risks in their classrooms to try new strategies, and willingly sharing with each other in a variety of ways including blogging in Google Blogger, through social media, and in professional learning communities.

One of the most rewarding and exciting outcomes of our 1:1 initiative has been students as teachers. We know that one of the best ways we demonstrate our own learning is when we can teach it to someone else. Our students regularly partner or work in small groups learning together. We frequently see students functioning as mentors to younger students, migrating from classroom to classroom teaching each other how to maneuver around the internet, use various applications, and even writing code! At times

our students have addressed adults in forums designed for teachers and administrators to discuss their expertise using Chromebooks and how they are integrated into their educational experience.

With the roll out of our 1:1 initiative in the WWPS, we have seen an exciting, revitalizing, rewarding shift in the educational culture. Supporting our students to be Future Ready is far beyond putting hardware in the hands of students and teachers. Future Ready means our students are embedding 21st Century skills in their thinking process giving them the power to think critically, problem solve, collaborate, and stretch their own learning through teaching others. Needless to say, it is an exciting time in education with limitless possibilities!

Karen Tarasevich and the West Warwick Public School Department's Future Ready Program have been cited by President Obama in a recent speech about the Future Ready Schools movement.

3 A Blended Learning Symphony

By: Shawn Rubin & Laura Jackson,
Highlander Institute

If proficiency is your goal and personalization is your challenge, then blended learning is your solution.

As a concept, blended learning is fairly simple--strategically blending high-quality face-to-face instruction with online content and assessment. The challenging part of blended learning is the synchronization of many moving parts, similar to a symphony orchestra coming together to make beautiful music.

Like good teaching throughout the ages, blended learning begins with an educator or group of educators across a school or district identifying the knowledge or skills they want their students to learn. Ideally these skills would be part of a larger K-12 scope and sequence, but even if the educator is looking at specific Common Core skills within one grade level or within one course, such as Algebra, it's essential that the educator(s) identify the nuanced skills they want their students to master before blended learning can begin.

Once the knowledge or skills are identified, the next step is to establish what mastery of those competencies looks like. This requires creating tasks to measure the competency or identifying "look fors" that a teacher or student may use as indicators of mastery. A scale, ranging from 1-5 for example, is useful in order to measure students' level of mastery, and to give students multiple attempts to improve over time.



After educators have identified what mastery looks like, they can use a formative pre-assessment of the competency against the mastery scale. It's important that each competency be pre-tested so that students who have already mastered a competency do not need to engage with the same content again, and instead are able to move forward to higher levels of mastery or onward to the next areas of study, as outlined in the scope and sequence.

When it is clear what students know and what they need to know, the teacher can create or curate online content to meet those needs. This is where blended learning can support truly differentiated instruction; educators can match online content geared toward different levels to students with different prerequisite knowledge and skills. In order for the teacher to assign students work that is asynchronous and accessible from anywhere, a searchable and accessible content library must be made available to both students and teachers.

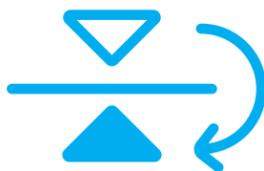
Utilizing these online mastery assessments and online content frees up the teacher to do the complex work that only a teacher can do: work in small groups or work one-on-one to isolate misconceptions in student learning, reframe challenging concepts, build relationships, and push students to levels of creation and creativity through project based instruction.

When all of these components are working together in concert, multiple models of blended learning become possible.



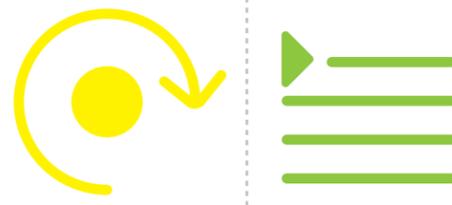
Rotation Model:

Teachers can create center rotation models in which students rotate through centers that contain one of the following: online content and assessments, small group instruction with a teacher, and independent or group work that requires higher-order thinking. This model works well in classrooms that are not 1:1 but that have enough devices to cover at least a third of the students.



Flipped Model:

This model rests upon educators creating/ finding videos and resources explaining core content and posting them online so that students can access and absorb the content from any web-enabled device. Outside of class, students can learn new content, review old content, or take formative assessments. In class, students have mostly unstructured work time during which they can get support from their teacher and classmates. Some teachers successfully combine the flipped model as a homework solution and the station rotation model in the classroom for a double dose of online content.



Individual Rotation or Playlist Model:

This model arguably requires the most work, but can also yield the largest dividends in terms of personalized learning. In this model, each student in a school or classroom has their own playlist of resources that are targeted to their skill level and needs that week or, if possible, that day. These playlists are informed by both the student's personal competency data and by the scope and sequence of the required content for the grade or course. All playlist content and assessments are tagged to a competency so they can be swapped in and out of playlists and reconfigured in any way that is necessary, based upon the student's data. The higher levels of this model break the norms of grade-based groupings as students have the ability to move through an online playlist that contains content that is multiple grade levels below or ahead of a student's age.

Clearly, while the concept of blended learning is simple, the implementation can be complex and challenging. When any one of the pieces is not quite ready for the concert hall, so-to-speak, the other components must overcompensate and the realization of blended learning becomes much more difficult.

However, like an orchestra of various instruments that come together to create music, blended learning can be achieved with practice, collaboration, and perpetual adjustment. The result is a model for taking personalized learning to scale. And that is a beautiful thing indeed.

The Highlander Institute has emerged as RI's "go-to" source for blended learning policy and advocacy. Shawn and Laura's work and names are no strangers to the blended learning movement in our state and beyond.

Innovation Powered by Technology Conference

By: Holly Walsh, RIDE

The excitement

was palpable on **Saturday, October 25, 2014** when nearly **900 educators, students, education-technology specialists and vendors**, and other community members came together for the **3rd annual statewide Innovation Powered by Technology conference**. This was the biggest technology conference we have held to date, made possible through the support and generosity of local educational organizations, exhibitors, and conference sponsors.

It was energizing

to hear our keynote speakers commend Rhode Island as a national leader in the smart use of technology in the classroom to advance personalized learning and achievement. Powerful presentations held throughout the day included a discussion of education and technology by a panel of business leaders, a showcase of student work, and presentations by many Rhode Island educators from 13 of our school districts as well as from several charter public schools.

Our student panel

impressed attendees with their ability to articulate hopes, desires and dreams for their future. They described personal learning experiences and gave advice to the adults shaping their educational experience. We were inspired by their knowledge and skills in the use of technology in ways that we couldn't even imagine a couple of years ago.

A new addition to

the 2014 conference was the "Share-Fest Playground." This "unconference" format allowed attendees to drop-in on topics of personal interest without the formal constraints of a conventional schedule, and as a result, provided an opportunity to engage in further discussion. There were additional exciting discussion throughout the day, both face to face and on Twitter, among participants who joined us from around the country.

Altogether, 110 teachers and 50

schoolchildren participated as presenters. Teachers and students who attended returned to school brimming with ideas and enthusiasm. This sharing of ideas and best practices inspires us to continue improving the use of technology to personalize the growth and development of each student in Rhode Island.



5 Social Media for Professional Development

By: Don Miller of #EdChatRI

About six or seven years ago I recall driving to work one morning and hearing the DJ on the radio talking about this new thing that all of the celebrities were doing called Twitter and how people can share information in 140 characters or less.

My first thought was how ridiculous that people will be sharing that they are going to the store for groceries, or that they are going on vacation. Nobody cares that you are going to the store and now you are just encouraging someone to rob your house. Also, what could you possibly say in 140 characters that would be worth reading. Today I realize that I could not have been more wrong. I do realize that there are still many educators out there who have that same old mindset I had about what Twitter is, or what it can be.

In April 2012, after having participated in a number of educational chats on Twitter, I had an idea to create our own state based edchat and so in concert with Alan Tenreiro, we created #edchatri and became the first state based edchat and since then 48 other states have followed suit.

Every Sunday night at 8 PM we log on and have very rich discussions on all things pertaining to education. It is an hour long PD that brings together all levels of educators from both in and out of the state. I have often said that I have learned more in 18 months on Twitter than I did in the last 18 years in education. I know that sounds ridiculous, but there is so much out there literally at your fingertips, it is just a matter of reaching out and developing a Professional Learning Network (PLN) that can help you learn and grow. With four children and a job as a transformation principal, the days of reading full length books or searching many hours for information are gone, fortunately with Twitter I have all the information I need just a click away, thanks to the Twitterverse and my powerful PLN. I challenge you all to step out of your "comfort zone" and get on Twitter and start developing your own PLN today. You won't regret it. Don Miller is the Principal of Shea High School in Pawtucket



and Alan Tenreiro is the principal of Cumberland High School. Their inventive and collaborative work with #EdChatRI has influenced our thinking about what do personal learning communities look like now and how are they linked to professional development within a blended context for adults? Follow them at #EdChatRI on Twitter.

Top Chrips!



@HollyWalshRI
Congratulations Oldham Elementary School, EP on their Verizon award for STEM learning! @deborahgist

@deb_ramm
@HollyWalshRI #FuseRI "not just for some but for all students!"

@HollyWalshRI
@thomasmurray @deborahgist
Super excited about upcoming Future Ready Summit in RI! Registration now open! futureready.schoolwires.net/site/Default...



The best performing most reliable system runs "Neuvo Software" on a basic laptop. For more details and a full review check out: [EmpowerRI/Facebook](#)

HRDWARE Review

6 Innovations in Johnston Push Fourth Grader's Creativity

By: Deb Turchetti-Ramm

December was a time for celebrating and reflecting, and students in my classroom did both at our "Tech the Halls" event. Prior to vacation, students shared their integrated technology projects with both parents and peers. The projects culminated their ELA work with Pilgrims and Colonial America, as well as their connections with Science content and their SPACE Camp challenge.

Through the use of the Aurasma app for our iPads, students created posters and summaries of their group's guided reading books. Using "trigger images" from their texts, students were able to create individualized digital posters to share. In a manner similar to a traditional book talk, students were able to share ideas from their books with other students who read similar stories. The connections made were dynamic, as students were able to move at their own pace through several posters, adding to their own learning and refining this information while synthesizing ideas from various texts.

Groups also created Screencasts of their stories to facilitate both understanding of storyline for the audience, and summary development for the creators. This was a powerful process for students, as they worked with their group to collaborate, create, and critique their work. The writing and revision process surmounted any that we could do in class. Students were authentically engaged in the entire process, as they wanted their work to shine and they wanted others to learn from their work.

Students created digital storytelling projects of their books using MyCreate. This open format platform allows the students to create their own scenes and characters using various materials (clay, paper, "junk art", etc.).

Students then add voice to their stories and modify the frames to adjust for timing and length of play. Problem solving and collaboration are key to this work, as students have full ownership of the design, revision, and production of the final product.

Students also had the opportunity to create some Green Screen projects supporting their Science/SPACE Camp projects with the focus of animal adaptations. The challenge was to engineer the animal to move in order to demonstrate its physical feature or behavior that helps it to successfully interact in its environment. Following additional research, students created some writing, which served as a "script" for their Green Screen projects.

Most work can be seen on our class website: <http://mrsramms4thgrade.wikipaces.com/>

Follow Deb on Twitter @Deb_Ramm

Debra Turchetti-Ramm has been a fourth grade teacher for the Johnston Public School System in Rhode Island for 18 years. She is a National Board Certified Teacher who has done a significant amount of professional development in the areas of science, math, and technology.

7 Why Mobile Learning Must Mean More Than “Add Phones and Stir.”

By: Kevin Cordeiro, Teacher at Village Green Virtual

A single biography added to a syllabus does not women’s history course make. The inclusion of the Middle Passage unit in a history text does not constitute the label of an African American History course, nor does the Dawes Act make a sufficient narrative to understand the indigenous history of North America. However, the lessons of curricular inclusion were hard fought after the injection of radicalism into academics in post 1968 world. When I was training as a history teacher it was a major discourse in our field to parse out how best to provide these often excluded narratives in a genuine way. Few factors were generally accepted in this discourse but one; the “add and mix” method only creates caricatures of the genuine, and always fails in both theory & praxis.



The same axiom holds in regards to the ebbing horizons of tech-ed. Most prominent for me is the emerging field of mobile learning and the need to create a genuine M-learning experience (Mobile-Learning is an already accepted form of skill attainment in the business community and it is virtually absent from public

school strategies). Asking students to text a response to an in-class poll or perform some other task that could easily be done on a desktop does not qualify as a genuine M-learning experience. Mobile learning involves a unique cache of digital and academic skills and literacies that range from new learning goals to capitalizing on the new sense of space provided by mobile connectivity. The mobile learning environment is still in gestation, its form is malleable and up to

those of us experimenting within the tech-ed field to guide it; either it becomes an autonomous field of theory and praxis, or it becomes another tendril.

In researching and beginning to develop the extremely early stages of an M-learning initiative at Village Green Virtual, I feel there is one important first step for anyone trying to wade into M-learning; changing relationships with mobile devices. Most of our students (and us) have a false technological dichotomy. Desktops and laptops are for productivity and mobile devices are for leisure and entertainment. We assume that we have sacrificed accessibility for ease of use and therefore use our mobile devices, phones or tablets, for what we see as menial tasks. The desktop or laptop do the heavy lifting of word processing, data analysis, research and so on. This is the first paradigm that genuine mobile learning challenges. Just as everyone has heard of “e-learning” in the not too distant future “m-learning” will be as ubiquitous.

Over the course of the remainder of the year this will be the focus of my experimentation at VGV, making the mobile device feel just as productive as the desktop or laptop. I cannot say that every attempt will be successful, or that every change will be lasting. In a world where the vast majority of our students can find a definition, a photograph, live footage, a primary source, or listen to a lecture while taking the bus to school when will these same activities feel redundant when assigned in a classroom? It becomes not an ‘if’ but a ‘how’ can we make a phone viewed as an e-reader, an evidence collector and collaboration tool, not just a platform for Snapchat or flappybird.

Kevin Cordeiro in a History teacher at Village Green Virtual and as co-chair of the School Improvement Team he is leading the school-wide conversation about the next generation of evolving e-learning modalities.

8 New & Notable

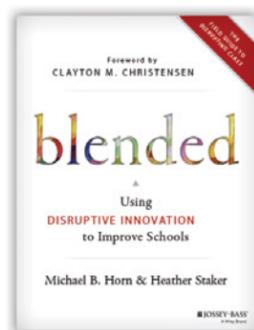
Rhode Island Future Ready Summit – April 21-22



Over 1,250 school district superintendents have taken the #FutureReady pledge. Has yours? Find out more here: www.future-readyschools.org/take-the-pledge Last November, the U.S. Department of Education announced that, as part of the “Future Ready” initiative, there will be 12 Regional Summits next year on using technology and digital learning. Rhode Island will be the host state for Northeast Regional Summit, which will take place at West Warwick High School (1 Webster Knight Dr.) on April 21 and 22. All who signed the Future Ready pledge may attend the conference free of charge. Join the teams that have already registered for the RI Future Ready Summit before space is filled! Registration information is here.

RI Uses the Groundbreaking new book Blended to Promote Digital Learning Day!

State-wide distribution helps RI to gear up for DLD on March 13, 2015



If online learning has not already rocked your local school, it will soon! Blended learning is one of the most significant and effective ways to personalize learning. Educators are clamoring for “how-to” guidance to implement blended learning in their schools

and classrooms. As part of the continuing efforts to create the conditions for a successful statewide digital transition, the Rhode Island Department of Education is providing a copy of Michael Horn and Heather Staker’s new book, **Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools**, to each Superintendent, Curriculum Director and Principal in Rhode Island in celebration of Digital Learning Day.

Blended helps to answer the call by providing detailed information about the strategy, design, and implementation of a successful blended learning program. Readers will:

- Discover a useful framework for implementing blended learning
- Unlock the benefits and mitigate the risks of online learning
- Find answers to the most commonly asked questions surrounding blended learning
- Create a more student-centered system that functions as a positive force across grade levels

There are many ways for all schools to be a part of the Digital Learning Day celebration such as asking your teachers to plan a lesson or activity; nominating a RI Digital Learning Champion; using the hashtag #EmpowerRI and #DLDay in social media posts; and visiting the Digital Learning Day web site for more ideas and resources.

8 New & Notable (cont)

RI Digital Learning Champions Initiative - Call for Nominations!



Encourage educators, school administrators, parents, students and other members of the education community to nominate a RI Digital Learning Champion who is making a difference in your community. Digital Learning Champions will be spotlighted on the RIDE web site and featured in upcoming Blended Learning Chronicles newsletter!

Digital Learning Day may only come around once a year, but RI educators work hard all year long to engage and inspire students by using technology to personalize learning. These educators champion high-quality digital learning opportunities in their schools and communities by:

- Finding innovative and resourceful ways to leverage digital tools in classrooms and youth programs;
- Advocating for students to have better access to technology that can help support deeper learning outcomes;
- Inspiring, mentoring, and coaching other educators; and
- Using digital tools to make learning relevant and meaningful for students who are traditionally underserved.

With a short video clip or picture and 250 characters or less, tell us why your Digital Learning Champion inspires you! Your video and champion could be featured on the RIDE web site. RIDE will showcase education leaders from schools and districts across the state who demonstrate how great teaching, combined with effective technology, can positively impact Rhode Island's schools—particularly those that serve high-risk and high-poverty populations.

While it is important to note that digital learning strategies look different in each district and school setting, most successful examples of digital learning share a common narrative. Critical elements include an emphasis on high-quality instruction and access to challenging content, feedback through formative assessment, opportunities for learning anytime and anywhere, and individualized instruction to ensure that all students reach their full potential to succeed in college and a career.

9 Call For Submissions!



If you are an educator, consultant, parent or policymaker engaged in work around Blended learning please consider submitting a piece to the Blended Chronicle. Public schools in Rhode Island are making amazing strides in the integration of technology and we need to showcase our initiatives!

Please email your submissions to [Rob Pilkington at rob@vgcs.org](mailto:Rob.Pilkington@rob@vgcs.org).

Please keep them in the 500 to 800 word range, feel free to include a headline and some biographic details as well. The deadline for the second edition of the Blended Chronicle is March 30, 2015.

4th Annual Blended Learning Conference



Blended Learning & Technology Conference

The Highlander Institute's 4th Annual Blended Learning Conference will be held in Providence, RI on **Saturday, March 7th, 2015 from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM**. The conference will convene local, regional, and national experts sharing their models, products and insights to support innovative classroom practices around blended learning and technology integration.

The conference will be held at the URI Providence Feinstein Camus.

For more information and to register, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2015-blended-learning-technology-conference-tickets-14877106827>

Come join us for an exciting day of learning, connecting, sharing, tinkering and having fun!



HIGHLANDER INSTITUTE
Leveling the Field for All Learners

#EmpowerRI #DLDay Social Media Highlights



Learning how to use 3D printers, sharing student work with mobile QR codes, incorporate augmented reality in a lesson and engaging in research projects are just a few of

the many ways that educators celebrated and shared their #DLDay activities this past year. Add #EmpowerRI to your posts so the world can see what is happening in RI!

DLD Live!



Join the Digital Learning Day Live! webcast from the 2015 Teaching & Learning Conference in Washington, D.C. on March 13.

The national celebration highlights examples of how great teaching, combined with effective technology, are positively impacting America's schools. Add your activity and share how you have gone digital on the Digital Learning Day web site and include the hashtag #EmpowerRI!