Purposeful Design for the Digital Classroom (3 MSDE/CPD Credits/ 45 PDPS)

Course Overview

The landscape of K-12 teaching has shifted considerably over the past two decades, moving from a model in which the teacher is the primary source of knowledge and instruction toward one in which students are increasingly positioned as active participants in their own learning. Yet for many classrooms, the dominant structure remains largely unchanged: whole-class, teacher-paced instruction that struggles to meet the diverse needs, paces, and strengths of every student. Blended learning has emerged as one of the most promising and practical responses to this challenge, offering teachers a concrete framework for redesigning the relationship between online and face-to-face instruction in ways that give students more agency while giving teachers more time for the work that matters most — knowing and responding to individual learners.

This comprehensive three-credit, 45-hour course equips K-12 educators with the instructional design skills and practical knowledge needed to implement blended learning in their own classrooms. Rather than treating blended learning as a technology initiative, the course frames it as a fundamentally pedagogical shift organized around three core transformations: designing learning experiences rather than delivering instruction, knowing individual students rather than managing the class as a group, and iterating on instructional design rather than pursuing a finished product. Teachers situate themselves on the blended learning continuum, select a model suited to their specific instructional problem, explore interaction design and the Learning Management System as equitable infrastructure, and apply SAMR and TPACK as reflective frameworks for intentional technology use. Throughout the course, teachers build a Planning Template that moves from problem identification through model selection, interaction design, and launch planning.

Alignment to Standards

This course meets the standards for Content, Instructional Design, and Technology as defined in the National Standards of Quality for Online Courses, published by the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL).

This course provides teachers with an opportunity to meet the Engage in Professional Growth and Leadership standard as defined in the National Educational Technology Standards and Performance Indicators for Teachers, published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

The Maryland Teacher Technology Standards (MTTS) provide the basis for the professional knowledge and skills teachers need to master to address student learning needs. Course participants will develop skills and understandings for the following MTTS standards:

- Access, evaluate, process, and apply information efficiently and effectively.
- Use technology effectively and appropriately to interact electronically.
- Use technology to analyze problems and develop data-driven solutions for instructional and school improvement.
- Design, implement, and assess learning experiences that incorporate use of technology in a curriculum-related instructional activity to support understanding, inquiry, problem solving, communication, and/or collaboration.
- Develop professional practices that support continual learning and professional growth in technology.

Session 1: What Blended Learning Makes Possible for You and Your Students

Guiding Question: What is the instructional problem you need blended learning to solve, and which model gives you the best starting point for solving it?

Description:
This session explores blended learning not as a technology format but as a fundamentally different approach to teaching — one that shifts the question from how do I explain this clearly? to how do I design an experience where every student can learn? Teachers examine the blended learning continuum, study the major models through readings and classroom vignettes, and locate their current practice within the broader landscape of blended instruction.

Session 2: Designing Experiences That Reach Every Student

Guiding Question: How does your blended design create the time, data, and space to know and respond to individual students rather than managing the class as a whole?

Description:
This session shifts from model selection to interaction design. Teachers examine the five interaction types that characterize robust blended learning — student-to-content, student-to-student, student-to-teacher, student-to-community, and student-to-online resources — and explore how intentional design of each interaction type creates the conditions for personalized learning. The session includes hands-on exploration of content tools and interaction tools, and asks teachers to make deliberate decisions about which activities belong online and why.

Session 3: Building a Classroom That Works for Every Learner

Guiding Question: How does your LMS make your blended design navigable and equitable for every student — including those who are least likely to succeed in a traditional online environment?

Description:
This session turns to the infrastructure that makes blended learning work for every student. Teachers explore the LMS as more than a content delivery platform — as the organizational environment that either enables or frustrates student success. Drawing on the Universal Design for Learning framework (Guidelines 3.0), teachers audit their emerging blended design for equity and accessibility, identify tools that support diverse learners, and consider what the course experience will feel like from the perspective of a student who is the least likely to thrive in an online environment.

Session 4: From Plan to Practice — Launching and Improving

Guiding Question: Is your technology use intentional — and how will you know after the first few weeks whether your design is actually working for your students?

Description
This capstone session brings together everything built in the previous three sessions and adds the final reflective layer: intentionality. Teachers apply the SAMR and TPACK frameworks to evaluate the technology choices in their plan, develop formative assessment practices for monitoring the effectiveness of their blended design after launch, and complete the Launch Readiness section of the Planning Template. The session closes with the submission of the completed Planning Template and a final discussion that asks teachers to synthesize the course's three core shifts in the context of their own classrooms.