3/28/11 and 3/29/11

Paul Nettles, Jesse Menold, and I attended the Blended Learning Conference in Oakbrook, Illinois. This conference focused mainly on the combination of face to face and online learning. We tried to adapt all information to our students and teachers in our district who are continuing their education. I have a brief overview of notes from several of our sessions:

(Big Issues regarding Blended Learning)

The biggest issue with blended learning is can it help us be more effective amid our diminishing resources? We have always looked at blended learning to help our gifted learners, but I also wonder if it could be used to help our more difficult students? By difficult, I am referring to the students who have trouble functioning in a traditional classroom, but could be guided through coursework online with the aid of a teacher in our district. This would avoid the everyday stressors of other students etc. Another issue that was discussed is community outreach. Could we get our parents to take classes provided by our district online? Teachers could design and teach individual courses for parents or our more gifted students after hours. I am not sure if or how any of these ideas could be adapted for or serve our district. They also discussed the cost effectiveness of blended learning for educators continuing their education. Could this help us to send more district educators back to school at a cheaper cost?

(Implementation of Blended Learning for the Improvement of Student Learning)

In this session they discussed engaging staff in blended learning courses in order to better educate them, and help the staff to better create their own courses.

They discussed the reasons for using technology in the classroom. Is it improving student learning? How do you know? (Pre-test and post-test)

We could also use a peer mentoring program for staff members to assist each other with technology.

Technology in the classroom can improve time management, students better engage one another, students are more engaged, and it can improve writing skills. Students can improve technology skills and writing by peer editing one another through blogs, sites such as Glogster, etc.

(Evidence-based design of Blended Learning in the Classroom)

Scott Hamm from Abilene Christian College in Abilene, Texas was the presenter. He talked about the necessity of sharing information, both resources online and books. Technology tools should only be used if they help the educator to move students toward their learning goal. He talked about the entire web world being on the “cloud”. He gave us a list of technologies to watch, they include: e-books, mobile devices, augmented reality, and game-based learning. This game-based learning research should cause us to look at the games that we web sense. Right now we are blocking sites such as Cool Math 4 Kids. He talked about the importance of using wikis and blogs with students, in order to help time management, and to keep our students up on all the latest technology tools. They will be expected to use this technology in later grades. Finally, can we learn more about/and or start using drop box for a lot of our classes to avoid paperwork.

Designing training website: Elearning blueprint [www.elearningblueprint.com/faq.html](http://www.elearningblueprint.com/faq.html) This is a web site that must be paid for, and at this point, may be over and above the district’s capability.