



LEARNING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

*Blended Learning for
Elementary Homeschooling*

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Executive Summary

Learning should be captivating, interactive, and inspire world exploration. Blended learning, the latest trend in homeschool education, does just that. Educating and holding the attention of young children today is more challenging than ever. Educators and parents constantly compete with loud toys and screens that demand a captive audience, so to cut through the clutter, the educational strategy must incorporate a variety of delivery methods. While there are challenges with using online tools, the benefits of hybrid learning through a highly trusted resource are limitless. With proper education and time, blended learning can flourish into something more meaningful, lasting, challenging, and rewarding than homeschool parents could imagine. The light that turns on in a child's eyes when a lesson is learned, and not just learned but enjoyed, is the catalyst to a lifelong love of learning that will lead them forward with confidence to tackle any challenge.

At Bridgeway Academy, we've been developing transformative online learning for years. Bridgeway released its [Elementary Blended Learning Program](#) to shepherd the youngest school-aged learners into the future. Furthermore, Bridgeway offers tailored curriculum programs to meet the needs of individual learning styles and personalities. Read on to discover what learning without boundaries means, the basics of deploying a blended learning approach, some exciting blended learning techniques and their results, and how to get started. Use this informative, educational document as your first resource to start your blended learning journey. Thank you for your time and interest in exploring this exciting method of educating young minds.

To Your Success!

Jessica Parnell

President, Bridgeway Homeschool Academy



Section 1. Learning Without Boundaries

Establishing a strong foundation for a lifelong love of learning at the elementary school level increases children's opportunities for success throughout life. The building blocks formed early in life become pillars they stand on forever. Blended learning enhances and strengthens those pillars, helping students overcome some of the common challenges of homeschooling.

These challenges include:

- Parenting while teaching
- Captivating attention when home offers so many distractions (pets, neighbors, visitors, toys)
- Managing sibling conflict
- Wearing too many hats
- Lack of effort or concern for school work
- Scheduling conflicts and fitting school work into life

The most exciting thing about deploying a blended learning strategy is that many of the above issues become non-issues as children engage in and are excited about the blend of online, pencil and paper, and hands-on activities. The goal is "learning without boundaries," which means taking advantage of all the resources available to turn the whole world into a classroom. With blended learning in a homeschool setting, there is great flexibility for students to learn at their own pace, spend time studying favorite subjects, and set up the schedule to flow around the entire family.

A blended learning model promotes a mix of traditional and online educational tools. Students are more engaged in a personal way than they are with a solely online or textbook program. Plus, it provides instant feedback for both students and parents.

In a blended learning environment, students experience the benefit of both online and traditional learning models. Online instruction allows students to move through lessons at their own pace, to revisit lessons as needed, and to engage with interactive activities that challenge their thinking. In addition, their ability to control the elements of pacing, time, and course paths means there is less pressure to "keep up" with the pace of the overall class. The unique blend of online and traditional educational elements engages the student learner in both an instructor-led homeschool environment and a brick-and-mortar school. This powerful approach to learning creates a personalized educational program that leads to student success.

Teaching experts prepare course content and conduct live online classes designed to grab interest and dive into learning. These sessions make textbook pages come alive with a variety of interactive activities and challenges. Audio and video tracks, immediate response questions, and quick access to research allow students to spend as much time as they require to grasp a concept. Parents can also enhance learning by taking advantage

of hands-on activities, exploring content in textbooks, adding in field trips, and requiring the child to demonstrate their new skills to further reinforce the material.

Blended learning provides quick rewards as students learn to research online and get information instantly. Online research also teaches students to investigate subjects as deeply as they want. The immediacy of online search, and allowing the child to fully engage and explore the subject with the world's research available online (while being monitored), helps them take responsibility for their learning. Online learning also teaches students how to seek answers to complex problems in their path. Being self-directed is a valuable skill that will shape future leaders, scientists, explorers, and educators.

There are also textbooks, workbooks and other traditional learning aids available that further stimulate learners, reinforce memorization of subjects, and, through writing, better engage kinesthetic learners. The blended learning approach reinforces those valuable paper-based research and handwriting skills that are often lost in a strictly online program.

“The greatest sign of success for a teacher... is to be able to say, ‘The children are now working as if I did not exist.’”

—MARIA MONTESSORI



Section 2.

The Basics of Blended Learning

Blended learning goes by many names, including hybrid learning, web-enhanced instruction, technology-mediated instruction, and others. Blended learning is a combination of education modalities that include traditional textbook-based, teacher-led instruction, and online elements. This blend of traditional plus contemporary helps students learn at a speed that works best for them, in their style, with human feedback and the ability to leverage digital resources to more thoroughly and promptly investigate areas of interest.

According to a 2010 U.S. Department of Education report¹, “The National Center for Education Statistics (2008) estimated that the number of K-12 public school students enrolling in a technology-based distance education course grew by 65 percent in the two years from 2002-03 to 2004-05. By a more recent district survey, Picciano and Seaman (2009) estimated that more than one million K-12 students took online courses in the school year 2007-08. By 2010, more than three million students were actively learning online. Instruction combining online and face-to-face elements had a larger advantage above purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction.”

Clearly, online learning is here to stay, and for good reasons. Online learning provides students with more flexibility, interaction, and time to absorb the material, which correlates to better grades and long-term

success. Learning online also puts the world of information at a student’s fingertips, which makes assignments and projects easier to complete. Students are challenged to research, solve problems, and act in a self-directed manner.

Here is one example of blended learning success from the [School Superintendents Association](#)²: “The 1,400-student Millis district, located southwest of Boston, experienced early success through a pilot project offering course electives in art, technology, and video production in grades 5-12. This led to the adoption by all high school teachers of a project-based, blended learning model. Over the last three years, Millis teachers have used blended learning to cover more content with students and at a higher level than in a traditional classroom. They are better able to differentiate their lessons for different kinds of learners with Web 2.0 tools, freeing up class time for more applied learning through projects.”

As younger age groups begin accessing the Internet for educational activity, there are potential complications. Be aware of these concerns and stay ahead of them as you embark on a blended learning agenda.

- 1. Online Dangers:** Supervision must be maintained to monitor appropriate searches. Establish cyber-security for your home computer and network with parental control software like

[KidsWatch™](#), or using [Microsoft](#) or [Apple](#) restrictions.

2. **Tracking Progress:** Progress and competency must be tracked and measured. Recording assignment completion, tests, and the completion of required workbook sheets must be monitored and compared to required objectives on a regular basis.
3. **Information Overload:** Setting initial time limits on searches is a starting point. Internet research can become a rabbit hole and eat into valuable time. If students spend too much time on searches, accommodations must be made to cover the rest of the course material to move forward.
4. **Easy Out:** If left without supervision and tracking, some students will figure out the easy parts or the compulsory parts and begin to adapt their efforts based on that “least-work” strategy.

Blended learning is the next wave in elementary homeschooling.

- The student takes advantage of material, pace, and accountability with a combination of textbooks, worksheets, and online events.
- Access to a safer Internet provides greater opportunity for both student and parent to spend their precious time in more functional, productive ways.

Students perform better with interactive learning. According to a 2010 U.S. Department

of Education study¹, “Not only do students perform better in blended courses, but the electronic resources inherent in the modality offer other advantages as well. For example, student performance analytics can be used to study and better understand student learning. Data analytics can also identify students who need early intervention, thus increasing retention. The online tools available in blended courses can also significantly enhance student engagement, ensuring that all students participate in course discussions and benefit from collaborative learning.”

[As one report states](#), blended learning is a new and evolving form of education making its effectiveness hard to judge, but research is encouraging and points toward success. Through a study of 12 different schools, they found that students attending schools where blended learning was implemented, “outperformed students in the comparison schools not using blended learning.”¹ [Another school reported](#) that students in blended learning programs scored 18 percent higher in reading and 7 percent higher in math than those in traditional classrooms.⁴

By combining traditional methods with technology, blended learning works by developing age-appropriate physical skill sets with the ability to expand the range of inquisitiveness. Simply put, it applies the best of both worlds to help kids love learning by fueling and feeding their desire to know more.

Section 3.

Applying Blended Learning Techniques

The best part of a blended learning approach is that it is intuitive to how we all work, play, and interact today. Combining interaction with online tools, videos, and traditional textbooks is not out of the ordinary in today's landscape, which means students of all ages adapt easily.

Just as the physical act of writing improves retention value, the ability to read and search through a textbook, to page back and forth, reinforces the sense and meaning of organization. A book delivers a finite form of information, self-contained, yet perfectly organized with chapters, a table of contents, and often with an index for quick searching. Furthermore, performing math problems on paper or using a pair of scissors to cut a holiday pattern for a window display are basic skills. The traditional pen-and-paper method develops specific neural pathways used in other areas of life. The development of computer skills and resource hunting have become equally important for future academic and professional success.

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Therefore, the need to develop blended learning programs keeps filtering down to younger age groups. This is why using the combination of in-hand paper worksheets, crafts, and projects and online technology and resources is one of the exciting advantages of this approach.

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For younger students, especially at the elementary level, blended learning serves as a gateway to their future in cyber-education while maintaining a focus on the skills that develop while using handheld materials. Blended learning prepares students for success later in life by establishing a strong foundation of skills.

Reading printed books, holding real pens and pencils, and writing on real paper, taking part in music, holding paintbrushes and using paints, pulling string through holes, and [creating art projects, help develop essential cognitive skills](#) that are necessary for future growth. The hybrid learning model addresses many critical developmental needs for elementary students because it enhances the ability of these younger children to reach [specific developmental milestones](#).

With blended learning, teachers can use a combination of online tools and printed resources as part of their daily classroom instruction. By implementing many of the online tools and resources students already use for social networking, blended learning helps homeschool instructors and parents find an approach that is more engaging for this generation. Blended learning gives students a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge while appealing to diverse learning styles and fostering independent and self-directed learning skills, a critical discipline for nurturing lifelong learners.

Blended learning extends the homeschool experience beyond the “classroom” walls, developing critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, and global awareness.

- Excel at problem solving and navigating around roadblocks
- Helps students to stay driven in their studies

Long-term Benefits of Blended Learning

- Increases comfort with technologies and online research
- Ability to interpret data and explore to find answers
- Increase self-motivation and confidence for self-directed learners
- Promotes independence and critical-thinking skills
- Ability to seek answers

Check out a [video demo](#) of the Total Care Blended program!

The screenshot shows a user interface for a science lesson. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Science 6 (NEW), Schedule, Creativity Express, Pearson, and Course Resources. The main heading is "Lesson 1.1: What Is Life?". Below this is a breadcrumb trail: Science 6 (NEW) > Chapter 1: Introduction to Living Things > Lesson 1.1: What Is Life?. A large illustration of a smiling blue shark is featured. On the right, a progress bar indicates "You have completed: 4 of 9" at 44%. Below the progress bar is a green button labeled "Chapter 1: Introduction to Living Things". Underneath, the lesson title "Lesson 1.1: What Is Life?" is followed by "Activities" and a checkbox for "Introduction: Interactive Science". On the left, a lightbulb icon is next to the heading "The Big Questions!". Below this heading are three bullet points: "What are the characteristics of all living things?", "Where do living things come from?", and "What do living things need to survive?".

While implementing a blended learning agenda for homeschoolers may seem overwhelming, Bridgeway Academy offers all the tools and support needed to succeed. These include full lesson plans with traditional and online components, live online classes, and extension opportunities that promote additional blended learning opportunities and progress monitoring.

Section 4.

10 Keys to Blended Learning Success

When looking for an effective blended learning program, a variety of critical factors come into play. Top blended learning programs address these issues.

1. Anytime/anywhere access: This means student learning is accessible any time of day, which makes the world their classroom and every experience a lesson. Anytime/anywhere access to online learning means students can learn when and where it works best for them.
2. Academically rigorous and personalized for each child's unique needs, because no two are the same or learn the same way or at the same pace.
3. Students control some element of pacing, time, and place of learning.
4. Works for every type of student, including those who are advanced or need other modifications.
5. Includes both textbook and online components, and requires responses in both formats. This dual approach prepares your elementary students for the next phase of school and life.
6. Designed to promote independence with easy navigation, voice-over interactions, and more.
7. Students can delve deeper into every course based on interest, and the content is designed to be age appropriate, thereby boosting excitement.
8. Every child's learning path within a course or subject connects for a more integrated learning experience.
9. It encourages meaningful real-life applications.
10. Effective blended learning requires, and also streamlines, the record-keeping aspects of online education, tracking benchmarks, tests, and progress reporting.

Success utilizing a blended learning approach applies to a variety of students with varying needs. Therefore, blended learning works for all learning styles; in fact, this model greatly benefits students who have a strong learning style by exposing the student to other avenues for learning. For example, a strong visual learner may also connect with the kinesthetic activities promoted in the paper-and-pencil or more traditional learning tools included in the blended learning approach to expand avenues for learning.

When a family's homeschool blended learning approach includes these elements, students excel. Additionally, with the proper support, collateral and online elements motivate a child through the courses in their learning path, which further simplifies a parent's ability to monitor their achievements.

Section 5. Lighting the Way

The bottom line is, blended learning matters, especially for elementary students. As young children, they still need to develop proficiencies in tasks such as grasping and using writing and drawing implements like pencils and paintbrushes. They need to turn the pages in a book, color a drawing, glue on paper, write numbers, words and sentences, and create reports to demonstrate their knowledge. Currently, new-age skills need to be developed to meet the demands of a digitally-centered workforce.

Scholarly research continues to confirm that blended learning offers several enhancements over traditional textbook-based learning in a classroom or homeschool setting. For homeschoolers, blended learning includes additional teaching expertise for a wider range of subjects thanks to virtual and online live classroom teachers. This hybrid style of education allows for a greater number of resources, both through research and through contact with a teacher who is an expert in the subject material.

There is no time like the present to adopt the blended learning model, and new, trustworthy academies pave the way to make it simpler than ever before. Any opportunity to combine a textbook lesson with a hands-on activity, trip, or tactile approach is the key.

Section 6. Your Choice for Blended Learning Begins at Bridgeway Academy

Now is your chance to enjoy learning through the eyes and laughs of your children – the excitement will be contagious throughout your home.

[Bridgeway Academy](#) focuses on online elementary curriculum programs that meet the varying needs of homeschool families. Bridgeway, who tailors the curriculum to individual learning styles and personalities, offers fully accredited [blended learning and fully online programs](#) for middle school and high school age students as well.

Blended learning is not the wave of the future in education; it is the here and now for educational excellence.

[Learn more about our Blended Learning program](#) or call one of our homeschool specialists at 800-863-1474 to discover all the possibilities for your student.

Works Cited

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