

## **History & Benefits of Blended Learning**

Maintaining a blended learning classroom can be challenging at first. Blended learning is a style of education where students learn electronically using different resources and traditional face-to-face teaching. I believe the main challenge with blended learning is ensuring students aren't doing too much work online just to pass time. Making sure teachers are not replacing learning with technology, but instead adding it for utilization. Teachers must realize that students aren't on Chromebooks and tablets all day just to pass the time. Students still need face-to-face instruction to keep balance. In my [innovation proposal](#), I am focusing on social processing by demonstrating that SpEd students can utilize technology in their learning and connect with their peers through ePortfolio blogs.

Blended learning was first discovered in the 1900s with computer-based training for workers. Employers wanted a more efficient way to train employees without counting on printed material and face-to-face instructions. With employees simply being able to log into their character-based terminal, it was easier for them to access the information (Pappas 2021). Blended learning was also practiced by a group of Prekindergartners back in 2001. Teachers wanted to combine the concept of work and play in an abundance of activities (Guzer & Caner 2014).

Blended learning gives SpEd students the opportunity to not only learn on their own, but it can also give them the opportunity to teach and learn from other students. Implementing blended activities in lessons can open up a different social environment for SpEd students. SpEd students are often left to only communicate with their peers in their classroom instead of with different class members and teachers. By allowing students to build ePortfolios, it can allow them to communicate with their school community.

## **Technology in Special Education Classrooms**

Special Education was the last group to implement technology in the classrooms. The number of resources that are available for SpEd students is unlimited. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, dictation software, and learning software such as MyOn,

N2Y, and Edutopia, are all great sites for SpEd students to learn in addition to learning a lesson in class. Utilizing technology in classrooms should not be a replacement for teaching, but should be used as an addition. There are different types of ways you can use technology for students that are in Special education classes. Teachers can put lessons on an application and let students follow along as they teach them face-to-face. Teachers can have all lessons and videos of them teaching strictly online, or teachers can combine the two by having lessons online and having students come to do the work in class and ask questions if they do not understand. For special education classes, I believe the most effective way to utilize technology is by combining the lessons. Putting lessons on an application such as an ePortfolio will help students refer back to it on their own time and allows them to teach themselves. Although SpEd students have learning disabilities, they still have to learn independence.

### **ePortfolio in Special Education Classrooms**

Special Education teachers try to find the best resources and tools to involve in special education learning. COVA is an important part of when students start building their own ePortfolio. Choice, Ownership, Voice, and Authenticity will be vital for students to be able to explore learning through technology and explore their personal interests. Blogging and starting discussion posts, it can connect students to each other through shared interests. When students are comfortable enough to have a voice online and be able to connect with peers, they can develop those social connections in real life. Students being able to collaborate on ePortfolios gives them the opportunity to connect their learning styles, shared interest, and skills (Juniewicz, 2003).

ePortfolios have great benefits inside and outside the classrooms. When students are working on their ePortfolios in their personal time, it gives them the opportunity to search for their interests on their own and connect to others outside of their classrooms. General education can also utilize ePortfolio's to connect with SpEd students through shared learning styles. The flexibility of ePortfolios allows everyone to connect to different learning communities.

## References

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