

The background of the top half of the page is a dark grey field filled with a repeating pattern of small, white and orange icons. These icons represent various educational and technological concepts, including laptops, smartphones, lightbulbs, graduation caps, maps, and network diagrams. The icons are arranged in a grid-like fashion, separated by small plus signs and dots.

RAISING **BLENDED** LEARNERS®

A RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS® FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

A demonstration initiative showcasing strategies for using blended learning to personalize instruction, thereby improving student achievement, particularly among schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps.

2019



KEY DATES

The Raise Your Hand Texas® Foundation has tried to anticipate every detail of this initiative from the start. Note, however, dates may change. Please reference RaisingBlendedLearners.org for updates and alerts.

MAY 1, 2019

Application opens online. Districts across Texas are invited to apply to be among the 75 teams to attend an expense-paid training workshop in the fall, where they will receive expert coaching to develop a blended learning plan for possible grant funding of up to \$300,000 and in-kind technical assistance.

AUGUST 1, 2019

End of the team selection process. The Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation will notify the 75 semi-finalist teams of their invitations to move on to the next round and participate in the fall 2019 blended learning workshops.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

Blended learning fall workshops:

September 17-18 – Group 1, Fort Worth

September 24-25 – Group 2, San Antonio

October 1-2 – Group 3, Houston

NOVEMBER 14, 2019

First draft of blended learning plans are due.

JANUARY 1, 2020

RSVPs are due from teams for the blended learning winter finalist workshop.

FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Finalists' revised drafts of blended learning plans are due.

APRIL - JULY 2020

Regional design studios and pre-implementation trainings take place.

JUNE 30, 2019

Applications are due.

AUGUST 15, 2019

RSVPs from teams for the blended learning fall workshops are due.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 2019

Optional conference calls are available for technical assistance.

DECEMBER 15, 2019

The Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation will announce 30 finalists.

JANUARY 2020

January 22-23: Finalist workshop (Austin)

MARCH 30, 2020

The Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation will announce up to 20 winners.

2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Demonstration implementations begin.



OVERVIEW OF RAISING BLENDED LEARNERS

Welcome to Raising Blended Learners, the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation's blended learning initiative. The purpose of this project is to showcase strategies for using blended learning to improve student achievement across diverse student demographics and geographic regions in the state, particularly among schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps.

We are choosing five-person teams from 75 districts across Texas to attend a two-day, expense-paid blended learning workshop in fall 2019. From there, up to 20 teams will be selected to receive up to \$300,000 and intensive technical assistance over three years to implement their blended learning plans.

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GOALS OF RAISING BLENDED LEARNERS

Raising Blended Learners is a success if it accomplishes these three goals:

1 Student achievement. Our primary goal is to showcase strategies for using blended learning to improve K–12 student achievement across diverse student demographics and geographic regions in the state, particularly among schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps. We invite applicants to define student achievement according to the goals and priorities most important to their students. For example, one team might set the goal of raising overall scores on the STAAR test by a specific percentage within three years. Another might focus on lowering high school dropout rates or accelerating literacy among English language learners. Yet another might target college readiness, as measured by composite ACT test scores or pass rates on Advanced Placement exams.

Additionally, if districts are looking for a place to start, they can apply for blended learning grants across areas in which Raising Blended Learners has previously found the most success in blended learning implementations. These successful areas, or guiding priorities, include:

- K-2 literacy instruction and intervention;
- elementary-level math and eighth grade Algebra I;
- cross-departmental grade level, vertical subject area, and whole-school redesign; and
- non-traditional school experiences, such as alternative school and summer school.



2 Sustainability. The Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation seeks to showcase delivery models that demonstrate long-term sustainability. Recipients of the grant must be able to maintain their projects financially, either through program cost efficiency or by eliminating other unneeded or unsuccessful programs or processes. In some cases the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation may provide fourth and fifth year matching funds to promote expansion of effective programs across the district or network.

3 Scalability. Districts must articulate how they are addressing a problem that also troubles other schools in the area and how its successful efforts will lift other districts. Districts and charter school networks must present a credible plan to expand early successes across their entire systems.



WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING?

Any fair look at education technology in U.S. K–12 schools must acknowledge that the nation has spent over \$100 billion on computers in the past few decades with very little to show for it in the way of results.

Blended learning is critically different from—but easily confused with—the much broader trend of equipping classrooms with devices and software. We believe that for Texas to lead the world in student achievement, our schools must be wise enough to look beyond the technology trap and, instead, pursue a more strategic and focused blended learning strategy.

Blended learning has three components:



1. A formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace. Some element of student control is critical. The technology used for the online learning must shift content and instruction to the control of the student in at least some way for it to qualify as blended learning from the student's perspective, rather than just the use of digital tools from the classroom teacher's perspective.

2. The student learns at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. In other words, the student attends a physical school with teachers or guides and benefits from the important social, educational, and extracurricular experiences and mentorships that physical campuses can provide.



3. Modalities along each student's learning path are connected to provide an integrated learning experience. Most blended learning programs use a computer-based data system to provide continual formative assessments, track each student's progress, and help to match the modality—whether it is online, one-on-one, or small group—to the appropriate level and topic.

For more on blended learning, see *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*, by Michael Horn and Heather Staker, whose research for the Christensen Institute provides the framework for this initiative.

WHY BLENDED LEARNING?

Schools are confronting a design problem. Educators are tasked with helping young learners become college-and-career-ready for the 21st century, but have inherited a classroom model built to prepare the previous generation mainly for factory work in the 20th century. They are told to close the achievement gap, but students who enter their doors represent an increasingly diverse mix with a wide range of learning issues and complicated individual needs. They try painstakingly to differentiate instruction, but tailoring lessons to each child is nearly impossible in a typical classroom with 20 to 35 students and only one teacher.

Today's conventional model of education, in which we batch students in classes and teach the same thing in the same way, is an ineffective way for many children to succeed. Today's students are entering a world in which they need a personalized schooling system.

Personalized learning is learning tailored to an individual student's needs and abilities. All students are held to high expectations, but each student follows a customized path that adapts based on the student's individual progress and goals. Personalized learning is competency-focused. Each student's progress toward clearly defined goals is continually assessed. Students advance and earn credit as soon as they demonstrate mastery.

For decades, the idea of a system that can deliver personalized, competency-based learning to every student has been held up as the gold standard. It's what educators mean when they talk about "student-centered" schools. Today, with the innovation of blended learning, that vision is within reach.



BLENDED LEARNING IS THE ENGINE TO POWER STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING AT SCALE IN TEXAS.

Blended learning has emerged as the engine to power student-centered learning at scale—that is, across the entire system, not only for the privileged few who can afford a personal tutor. Just as technology enables mass customization in so many parts of our lives, the blend of online learning into school will allow students to learn anytime, any place, any path, and at any pace. It also frees up teachers to become learning designers, mentors, facilitators, tutors, evaluators, and counselors to reach each student in ways never before possible.

The Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation is determined to develop the capacity of school leaders to bring the power of blended learning to their campuses. Together we will harness the best of today's technologies and innovations to raise Texas students to their highest potential and prepare them for the sophisticated demands of the 21st century.

EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

A big-picture, system-wide shift

Our vision for transformation is not merely a few more flipped classrooms. We are seeking a new system-wide vision for teaching and learning that centers on meeting the individual needs and abilities of each student. We are looking for Texas districts that are willing to lead the way in transforming their model into a truly student-centered design.

This is not an initiative for districts with a passing interest in blended learning. Our intent is to select teams that are committed to developing and implementing a multi-year strategy to support blended learning in their schools and expand successful programs system-wide. For more information about what constitutes a blended learning demonstration initiative visit: RaiseYourHandTexas.org/foundation/blended/blended-in-action/.

Full commitment

To achieve this vision, we are asking that each participant commit to the following:

- Join together as a five-person team to enter the contest. The team must include:
 1. The superintendent or his/her designee
 2. The associate superintendent of curriculum & instruction (or similar role)
 3. Principal(s) from each applying campus
- Other recommended skillsets include:
 1. Instruction (teaching and learning)
 2. Technology (infrastructure, hardware, and software at the school and system level)
- Apply to participate by completing the application, which takes roughly two hours and requires input from each team member. This application is available at RaiseYourHandTexas.org/foundation/blended/application/.
- If the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation invites the team to continue to the next round, all five participants from each team together must attend a two-day blended learning workshop. The in-person training will be held on three dates in September and October 2019.
- Following the workshop, teams are invited to submit a blended learning plan. Developing a high-quality plan will require substantial effort. Teams must signify that they have the support of the school board, superintendent, and district leadership team, as well as the principals, administrative team, and 80 percent of staff in schools of implementation.
- Thirty finalists (chosen in December 2019) are required to commit to two months of intensive technical assistance to fine-tune their plans. Finalists must commit to full participation in these critical planning months, including taking advantage of school-design support and attending an additional in-person convening in January 2020. Final drafts are due February 20, 2020.
- Approximately 20 winning teams will begin to implement their plans during the 2020-21 school year. Winning teams will receive funding and technical assistance over three years as they fulfill mutually agreed-upon milestones. Teams are expected to identify resources and build capacity to expand their efforts system-wide without our financial support after the third year.

- Winners must designate and provide for a project manager who will be available to dedicate at least 50 percent of his/her time to implementing the plan, beginning the spring of 2020.
- Winning teams also must commit to participate in and contribute to the cohort of blended demonstration sites, working together as a community to support each other's blended programs.
- All teams, at every stage of the process, must be willing to share data with a third-party evaluation firm to allow other schools in the state to learn from the collective effort. They must also be willing to allow the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation staff and its partners to visit their school(s), observe classes, capture photo/video content, and speak with principals, teachers, and students about their vision and challenges with blended learning.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

We are seeking applications from high-functioning, visionary design and implementation teams that share our vision for blended learning as a vehicle toward student-centered learning and student achievement.

To be eligible for the grant, teams must satisfy all of the following conditions:

- Applicants may represent a public school district or charter management organization (CMO) serving grades K-12 in the state of Texas.
- At least 40 percent of students served by the campuses applying must qualify for free and reduced lunch. If a district or CMO is applying, at least 40 percent of students must be free and reduced lunch as an average across the participating campuses; that is, not across the entire district, but rather, only across those campuses participating in the Raising Blended Learners initiative.
- The Raise Your Hand Foundation will ensure the Raising Blended Learners initiative cohort reflects Texas' demographic and geographic diversity to generate the proof points necessary to ignite a statewide mind shift. Accordingly, rural, urban, and suburban districts will be represented to the extent possible.



DEVELOPING BLENDED LEARNING PLANS

Following the blended learning workshops, the 75 teams will be invited to develop and submit their complete blended learning plans. During the workshops, teams will receive specific information about the deliverables and timelines associated with submitting their plans and they will begin to draft their plans. They will also learn how to upload their plans electronically. The following list represents the types of materials the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation will ask teams to submit as the core components of their plans:

Goals and Vision

- A three-minute, zero-budget video introducing the leadership team, describing the problem(s) the team is hoping to solve through blended learning, and pitching the team's SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, and Time-related) goals
- A written narrative detailing the SMART goals and the metrics used to evidence success

Team

- A written narrative that explains the various teams required and listing the people who will serve on those teams
- Verification that a qualified project manager can devote 50 percent of his or her time, beginning in the summer of 2020, to implementing the blended learning plan, in the event that the team's plan is selected for funding
- The team narrative will include verification teams have support from the school board, superintendent, and district leadership team, as well as the principals, administrative team, and staff in schools of implementation

Student Experience

- A written narrative that describes the key experiences the program will provide for students and the plan for re-integrating operations to deliver those experiences

Teachers and Leadership

- Completion of a Campus and District Level Leadership Competency Survey to assess the leadership team's readiness to implement a student-centered system

Physical and Virtual Environment

- An audit of the devices, Wi-Fi access, software licenses, and facilities already available
- A written narrative that describes the plan for improving the physical and virtual infrastructure and space

Blended Models

- A written narrative that describes the blended models to be used and why, as well as a plan to rollout these models across the system

Culture

- A written narrative specifying the processes and priorities the team intends to implement to create the right culture to buttress their plans and how the team will instill this culture

Discovery-Driven Planning

- A list of the most critical assumptions inherent to the plan and a description of how the team plans to test and learn to avoid costly failure

Budgets

- A short-term resource allocation plan identifying available and needed sources of funding to implement the blended learning plan for three years at the school and district/system level
- A longer-term resource allocation plan identifying available and needed sources of funding to expand blended learning efforts for at least two years after the Raise Your Hand Texas Foundation support ends

Scalability

- A written narrative explaining how the plan will expand over time impacting additional campuses and district systems

Terms and conditions

- All grant awards will be contingent on execution of a definitive grant agreement, which will include a set of standard terms and conditions

If your proposal is selected, you will have a very limited amount of time after the notification of award to accept the grant and return the award letter with an appropriate institutional signature.

RAISING BLENDED LEARNERS RESOURCES

Need inspiration to join us on the quest to improve Texas schools with blended learning? Check out the resources available on the Raising Blended Learners website.

- [Raising Blended Learners - Planning Year Report](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Year 1 Implementation Report](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Year 2 Implementation Report](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Profiles of Raising Blended Learners Alumni](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Student Voice video series](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Voices from the Field video series](#)
- [Raising Blended Learners - Visit a Raising Blended Learners alumni district to see blended learning in action](#)





RaiseYourHandTexas.org