

Blended learning done right: Marshall Pomeroy finds Common Core success



At Marshall Pomeroy Elementary School in Milpitas, CA, Principal Sheila Murphy-Brewer and her staff adopted a blended learning approach to tackling the Common Core and getting students college- and career-ready. Their successful implementation depended on three key components: common data and curricular tools, comprehensive professional development, and a clear approach to differentiating instruction.

Snapshot

School: Marshall Pomeroy Elementary School

Location: Milpitas, CA

Grades: Pre K–6

Size: 730 Students

Free/Reduced lunch: 23%

ELL: 39%

Special Education: 7%

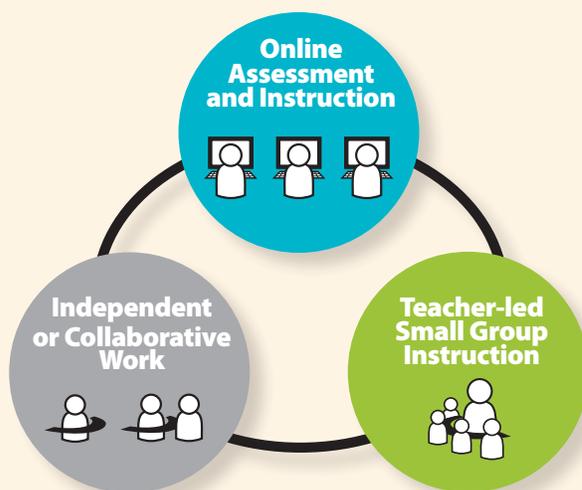
Implementation: *Ready* and *i-Ready* were used in a station rotation model.

Favorite thing about *Ready*: "The ability to differentiate instruction"

Common data tools Professional learning communities Differentiated instruction

Murphy-Brewer explained, "Blended learning is all about the differentiation of instruction that you can provide students online as well as in small groups with the teacher. This became the purpose and the driving goal of our blended learning model. Instead of one-size-fits-all instruction, our students would receive the personalized instruction they need when they need it."

Marshall Pomeroy Blended learning rotational model



Each classroom used rotations between online instruction with *i-Ready*; small-group instruction with *Ready*; and independent or collaborative work with resources from *i-Ready*, *Ready*, and additional teacher-created materials.

“We couldn’t have had the blended learning success without the common language *i-Ready* and *Ready* gave us.”

Putting Ready and i-Ready to work: Finding a common language

The transition to the Common Core State Standards necessitates changing the conversation that teachers and schools have around students, pedagogical approaches, and curricula. At Marshall Pomeroy, Murphy-Brewer implemented Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to facilitate these discussions, but there was a challenge: “The data tools that we were using were so varied that we couldn’t have across-grade-level conversations—or even within-grade-level conversations—about student outcomes and efficacy of curriculum.”

Murphy-Brewer knew that her school needed a common data tool in order to analyze the outcomes of their new blended learning approach. In retrospect, she remarked, **“We couldn’t have had the blended learning success without the common language i-Ready and Ready gave us.”** During PLC meetings, teachers used data from *i-Ready* reports to make instructional decisions for their classrooms and grade levels. “Everything we did was rotated around *i-Ready*, and the data we got from it was what teachers primarily used to group their students.” For example, the Instructional Grouping report provided teachers with effective small groups, as well as information that enabled them to tailor *Ready* instruction to meet each group’s specific needs.

The rotational model in action using Ready and i-Ready

Jennifer Grist, a 3rd grade teacher at Marshall Pomeroy, employed the station rotation model within block scheduling. Mondays and Tuesdays were ELA days; Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Friday mornings were dedicated to math. In total, she spent 120 minutes in rotations each day. Every day she met with four small groups for 30 minutes each to work on part of a *Ready* lesson. When they were not meeting with her, students rotated through *i-Ready* and differentiated independent or collaborative work. Below is a simplified version of what her weekly *i-Ready* and *Ready* implementation looked like.

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
English Language Arts Days		Mathematics Days		Mathematics Days		Mathematics Days		Wrap-up Day	
30 min.	Spelling	20 min.	Whole Class Ready Lesson: Parts 4 & Close Reading	20 min.	Whole Class Ready Lesson: Part 1	20 min.	Whole Class Ready Lesson: Part 3	60 min.	Teacher-led Small Group: Ready Lesson: Part 4
40 min.	Whole Class: Ready Lesson Parts 1 and 2	45 min.	English Language Development	45 min.	English Language Development	45 min.	English Language Development	⌛	i-Ready Math
120 min.	Teacher-led Small Group: Ready Part 3	120 min.	Teacher-led Small Group: Review Ready Part 4 and revisit text	120 min.	Teacher-led Small Group: Ready Part 2	60 min.	Teacher-led Small Group: Ready Part 4	⌛	Math by myself: Review problems on overhead
⌛	i-Ready ELA and typing	⌛	i-Ready ELA	⌛	i-Ready Math	⌛	i-Ready Math	⌛	Math prompt: How can we model multiplication?
	Independent: Opinion Writing		Independent: Opinion Writing		Math by myself: Review problems on overhead		Math by myself: Review problems on overhead	90 min.	Whole Class: Ready Math & ELA Common Core Practice Pages
	Independent: Word Work		Independent: Word Work		Math prompt: How can we model multiplication?		Math prompt: How can we model multiplication?		

■ Ready
 ■ i-Ready
 ■ Core Program
 ⌛ Activities done in Rotations

PLCs to support implementation

“I gave up all of my staff meeting time for PLCs because that’s what my teachers needed. I typically started the PLCs with a 10-minute mini-lesson, demonstrating a trend that I noticed through my walkthroughs, that they would then incorporate into their planning or data analysis.” The PLCs gave teachers the opportunity to discuss student outcomes and methods of instruction, as well as time to plan instructional units. Murphy-Brewer recognized that this weekly time was vital for teachers to build their own knowledge of the Common Core State Standards and instruction.

Why teachers love Ready and i-Ready: Differentiated instruction

Ready and *i-Ready* provided teachers with essential tools to differentiate their instruction and meet the needs of their diverse learners. Though all students received instruction with a grade-level *Ready* lesson, teachers used *i-Ready* data to change focus slightly and tailor instruction for each small group. For instance, teachers may have read the same passage with two groups and—based on the instructional recommendations in *i-Ready*—focused on word-learning strategies and academic vocabulary with one group, while discussing more complex comprehension strategies with the other group.

Principal Murphy-Brewer especially appreciated how *Ready* is true to the intent of the Common Core State Standards. “Our goal is to get students to go deeper into each standard, and *Ready* teaches the deeper conceptual understanding in the way that the Common Core intended. A lot of programs that claim to be Common Core offer one-size-fits-all instruction, which is inherently not Common Core,” Murphy-Brewer explained.

“The reason we pursued blended learning was for the level of differentiated instruction that you can provide the students 1 to 1 with computers and the personalized instruction you can do in small groups,” Murphy-Brewer explained. Therefore, in addition to the teacher-led instruction, a vital component of Marshall Pomeroy’s differentiated instruction approach was the individualized lesson plans within *i-Ready*. Students worked independently on *i-Ready* for at least 60 minutes per week per subject, gaining critical foundational skills and filling learning gaps from previous grades.

Tips for success

Instructional change on this scale takes commitment on all levels. Principal Murphy-Brewer gives other administrators the following advice for success in implementation and improved instruction:

- “Follow the data.”
- “Give teachers the gift of time to plan.”
- “Check for understanding in your teachers. They are learners too, and if we don’t treat them that way, then we are making assumptions that can lead to the propagation of misconceptions in student learning.”



“Ready teaches the deeper conceptual understanding in the way that the Common Core intended.”