



**ESSENTIALS FOR BLENDED LEARNING:
A STANDARDS-BASED GUIDE -
by JARED STEIN AND CHARLES R. GRAHAM -
BOOK REVIEW**

Ozlem Yagciogluⁱ

Full-time instructor, Dokuz Eylul University,
Modern Languages Department, Izmir, Turkey

In this article, I would like to summarize the book, entitled **Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide**. This book has 204 pages. It was edited by **Marjorie Vai** and written by **Jared Stein and Charles R. Graham**. Jared Stein is the director of Knowledge Resources at Instructure. Charles R. Graham is a professor of Instructional Psychology and Technology at Brigham Young University. He also currently serves as the Associate Dean for the David O. McKay School of Education. This book was first published in New York in the United States of America in 1974 by Routledge. Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor and Francis Group, an informal business. The International Standard Book Number of this book is 978-0-415-63515-5 (hbk). The International Standard Book Number of the printed version of this book is 978-0-415-63516-2. The International Standard Book Number of the ebook version of this book is 978-0-203-07525-8.

The foreword part of this book was written by Brian J. Beatty in April 2013. He is an associate vice president for Academic Affairs Operations at San Francisco State University in San Francisco, California. As it has been stated by Beatty (2013: p.p. ix-x):

“One of the great challenges in writing a book like this is the need to incorporate best practices for both online and face-to-face environments, and then to guide readers as they choose combinations of each mode that will lead to effective, engaging, and efficient learning environments. That’s hard enough to do well as an individual designer or instructor, and the effective way that the authors have found to support the efforts of others is a testament to their expertise-both in the field of blended learning and as

ⁱ Correspondence: email ozlemygcgl@gmail.com

teachers, basically just helping others learn. The bulk of this book (Chapters 4-8) provides specific, practical design guidance. When the exact form of the intended outcome, in this case a unique blended learning design and course, is often impossible to prescribe, the challenge of providing design guidance that is effective time and time again is real and substantial.

This book doesn't just provide design guidance, but it also explains the fundamental values and benefits that blended learning offers learners, teachers, and institutions. It is important for teachers (and administrators) to appreciate the potential benefits and acknowledge the challenges of adopting blended learning practices."

The first page of this book starts with the Introduction to this Guide. In this introduction part, Stein and Graham (2014: p.p. 2-3) state that;

"This guide is for those involved with blended teaching and training at all levels, including:

***Teachers** challenged with redesigning a face-to-face or online course into a blended mode.*

***Instructional designers and technologists** working with teachers to apply models, examples, and principles of the blended course through a standards-based approach.*

***Staff development trainers** who may use this guide as a framework or primary resource for a staff development program on blended teaching.*

***Instructors** teaching courses on blended learning design in schools of education, who may use this guide to reduce the burden of developing resources of their own*

***Students** in educational technology programs exploring blended learning in their studies or internship experiences.*

***Administrators** who want to learn more about blended teaching, or who may even be skeptical about the effectiveness and practicality of online or blended courses."*

This book has ten chapters. The title of the first chapter **Orientation to Blended Teaching and Learning**. The sub-titles of this chapter are as follows: **1.1.** Changing World, Changing Literature **1.2.** What is Blended Learning? **1.3.** Why Blend? **1.4.** Critical Concepts for Blended Course Design **1.5.** Time Expectations for Teachers and Students **1.6.** Summary and Standards *References and Further Reading*

Stein and Graham (2014: p.p. 12-13) denote that;

“Though there is no single definition of ‘blended’, this guide focuses on blended courses as a combination of onsite (i.e. face-to-face) with online experiences to produce effective, efficient, and flexible learning.

If one imagines a spectrum of technology enhancement, with traditional onsite on the left and fully online on the right (Figure 1.1.), a blended course could fall anywhere in between the two. Some institutions designate a certain percentage of the traditional onsite meetings be replaced with online activities, but these designations are generally arbitrary.

And they depend on your perspective: an online course becomes blended as soon as it introduces onsite, face-to-face meetings. Typically, an onsite course becomes blended when online activities are designed to replace onsite sessions.

Reducing the number of onsite meetings is one way that blended courses move beyond simply technology-enhanced or Web-enhanced courses. A three-credit course that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays might, as a blended course, meet only on Tuesdays (Figure 1.2.). In the space of the week, students may watch an online video, discover additional resources, engage in an instructor-led online discussion with their classmates, take an online quiz, or review peers’ draft papers.”

The title of the second chapter of this book is **Elements of Blended Courses: A Tour**. The second chapter of this book starts on the 28th page. The sub-titles of the second chapter of this book are as follows: **2.1. Considerations for Blended Course Designs 2.2. Blended Course Tours 2.3. American Literature since 1865 2.4. Introduction to Oceanography 2.5. Technology for Elementary Education Teachers 2.6. Summary**

In the second chapter of this book, Stein and Graham (2014: p.28) state that;

“In the best blended learning design, the selection and organization of learning activities and assessments support desired learning outcomes while maximizing the strengths and minimizing the weakness-of both online and onsite environments.

There is no single best model for blended courses. A number of variables specific to technology-enhanced teaching will influence blended course design decisions throughout the process. Some of these must be addressed at one time, for example:

- *How much learning time can be onsite versus online?*
- *What learning theories or teaching philosophy does the teacher subscribe to?*
- *How literate are teacher and students in these specific technologies?*

Other variables may be addressed repeatedly throughout the course design process, such as:

- *Which mode-onsite or online-best fits the specific learning outcome (s)?*
- *Is limited onsite time being used to maximum benefit?*
- *What available technologies support learning without distracting?*

How you answer these questions will influence what assessments, activities, and rhythm you adopt in your blended course design."

The title of the third chapter of this book is **Engaging Learners in a Blended Course**. It starts on the 51st page of this book the sub-titles of the third chapter of this book are as follows: **3.1. Engaging Heart and Mind 3.2. Creating Engagement through Learner Interaction 3.3. Designing Human Interaction to Engage Learners 3.4. Designing Content Interaction to Engage Learners 3.5. Summary and Standards References and Further Reading**

The title of the fourth chapter of this book is **Designing Blended Courses**. The fourth chapter starts on the 66th page. The following are the sub-titles of the fourth chapter of this book: **4.1. Rethinking Course Design 4.2. A Strategy of Iterative Development 4.3. Summary and Standards References and Further Reading**

As it has been mentioned by Stein and Graham (2014: p.72) that;

"Iterative development bolsters the backward design approach for individual learning activities, lessons, or units by emphasizing ongoing improvement through three activities:

- *Designing - Create a version of a lesson using backward design.*
- *Engaging - Students learn by working through the blended lesson as the teacher facilitates.*
- *Evaluating - Examining the results of and feedback on the design. What changes-onsite or online-can improve the design?*

In this model, engaging students in the learning experience leads to an evaluation of the course's effectiveness.

This model process is particularly effective with blended course design because:

"...most teachers need to ease into blended design; there are so many possibilities-both online and onsite that the best method may not be obvious the first time."

The title of the fifth chapter of this book is **Planning Your Course from Goals and Outcomes**. The fifth chapter starts on the 79th page. These are the sub-titles of this

chapter: **5.1.** A Concise Course Description **5.2.** Mapping Course Goals **5.3.** Writing Specific Outcomes **5.4.** Fitting Goals and Outcomes into a Timeline **5.5.** Planting Goals and Outcomes in Your Course Website **5.6.** Summary and Standards *References and Further Reading*

The title of the sixth chapter of this book is **Blended Assessment and Feedback for Learning**. The sub-titles of this chapter are as follows: **6.1.** Assessments in Blended Environments **6.2.** Onsite Assessments **6.3.** Onsite Assessments **6.4.** Supporting Academic Honesty Online **6.5.** Evidence in the Open **6.6.** Set Expectations with Clear Instructions **6.7.** Online Grading **6.8.** Summary and Standards *References and Further Reading*

In the sixth chapter, Stein and Graham state (2014: p.92) that;

“Assessments aim to evaluate student attainment of learning outcomes by examining student performance either directly (e.g. by observation) or indirectly (e.g. by an exam).

Assessments-and the outcomes they are based on-should reflect the kind of real-world activities or skills that you envision students performing in the future, after they’ve left your course and are applying what they’ve learned.

Blended courses can expand the means and methods by which teacher’s measure student learning by using both onsite and online assessments. This allows teachers to select assessments that are most appropriate for their specific learning outcomes. Onsite, teachers can carefully monitor exams and directly observe presentations, demonstrations, or communication. Online, student work can be recorded and reviewed digitally. Performances can be recorded or live-streamed, knowledge can be objectively assessed through computer-based testing, and progress can be tracked over time through logs, blogs, and analytics.

Assessments don’t just measure; they can also provide students with useful feedback. Feedback should happen as soon as possible in order to help students apply it to improve learning.”

The title of the seventh chapter of this book is **Blended Content-Driven Learning Activities**. The seventh chapter of this book starts on the 115th page. The sub-titles of this chapter are as follows: **7.1.** Designing Activities for Efficiency and Purpose **7.2.** Interactive Lectures, Presentations, and Demonstrations **7.3.** Worked Examples and Practice Activities **7.4.** Online Self-Assessments **7.5.** Weaving Content-Driven Activities **7.6.** Summary and Standards *References and Further Reading*

The title of the eighth chapter is **Blending Community-Driven Learning Activities**. The eighth chapter starts on the 140th page of this book. The following are the sub-titles of the eighth chapter of this book: **8.1. Why Community Driven Activities Matter** **8.2. Blogs and Learning Journals** **8.3. Synchronous Peer Instruction** **8.4. Class Discussions** **8.5. Weaving Community-Driven Activities** **8.6. Summary and Standards** *References and Further Reading*

In this chapter, it has been stated by Stein and Graham (2014: p. 140) that;

“Community-driven activities encourage learners to explore, share, analyze, and refine their thinking and practice through social interaction. They emphasize the social aspect of being human, and capitalize on learning effects that may capitalize on affective responses. Community-driven activities tend to target higher-level cognitive skills often enshrouded as ‘critical thinking’ (e.g. application, analysis, evaluation, and creation). Like content-driven learning activities, community-driven activities also tend to gain significant advantages when done online. However, because they involve person-to-person interaction, some of the innate attributes of face-to-face interactions may provide additional benefits that may lead teachers to choose to lead some of these activities in-class.”

The title of the ninth chapter is **Weaving it All Together**. The ninth chapter starts on the 162nd page. In the ninth chapter, Stein and Graham (2014: p.164) denote:

“Each lesson should begin with an introduction that explains the structure and flow. The introductory lesson page should:

- *Get students’ attention with a story or case study that gives real-world meaning to desired learning outcomes.*
- *Prime students’ thinking by proposing a question or challenge.*
- *Outline required tasks for the lesson using numbers to indicate sequential order.*
- *Indicate which lesson tasks will be done onsite versus online.*
- *Link to the next activity in the lesson.*
- *Link back to the course home page.”*

The sub-titles of this chapter are as follows: **9.1. A Lesson Prototype** **9.2. The Course Home Page as a Hub** **9.3. Usability from Start to Finish** **9.4. Constructing the Blended Syllabus** **9.5. Summary and Standards** *References and Further Reading*

The title of the tenth chapter is **Ongoing Improvements of the Blended Course**. In this chapter, it has been mentioned by Stein and Graham (2014: p.p. 183-184):

“As you teach, you should commit to regularly improving your blended course from the beginning. This is important because with blended learning your selection of either onsite or online modes can impact students’ ability to reach learning goals and outcomes. The aims of ongoing improvement include:

- ***Revise learning activities and assessments** so student outcomes improve.*
- ***Simplify the website** for students so they spend less time on the mechanics of workflow and focus more on learning.*
- ***Simplify class management tasks** and assessments for the teacher so she can spend more time on meaningful interactions with students.*

Ongoing improvement is a cycle based on three phases: (Figure 10.1):

- ***Engaging** students with the course design.*
- ***Evaluating** student success with the designed and understanding why the design was or wasn’t successful.*
- ***Designing** a new version or revision based on what you discover through evaluation.*

This model reduces the pressure to get everything ‘right’ the first time, and provides opportunities to better implement blended course design standards, which should positively affect learning. Careful, small revisions-based on the best available information on instructional effectiveness-give you the best chance of knowing what design changes positively affect learning outcomes.”

The following are the sub-titles of the tenth chapter of this book: **10.1. Making Improvement Part of the Process** **10.2. Engaging Students through Teaching** **10.3. How Do You Know What is Working?** **10.4. Revising Blended Course Design** **10.5. Teaching as Sharing** **10.6. Summary and Standards** *References and Further Reading*

Finally, it can be said that this book presents the advantages and the outcomes of blended learning with unique and global perspectives. Quotes which are shared in the chapters of this book also give enthusiasm and excitement to the readers of this book to learn the details effectively. It is certain that this book has brought many innovations in ELT classes, in the international schools, or in the international programs. It is also certain that it will go on inspiring many teachers or professionals to use this book on blended learning.

References

1. Beatty J.B. (2013). Foreword. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.*: p.p. ix-x. Routledge. New York: USA.
2. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). Who is the Guide For? In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.p. 2-3. Routledge. New York: USA.
3. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). What is Blended Learning? In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.p. 12-13. Routledge. New York: USA.
4. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). Considerations for Blended Course Designs. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.28. Routledge. New York: USA.
5. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). A Strategy of Iterative Development. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.72. Routledge. New York: USA.
6. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). Assessments in Blended Environments. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.92. Routledge. New York: USA.
7. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). Why Community-Driven Activities Matter. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.140. Routledge. New York: USA.
8. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R. (2014). Engaging and Orienting Students with A Lesson Introduction. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.164. Routledge. New York: USA.
9. Stein, J. and Graham, C.R.(2014). Making Improvement Part of the Process. In Vai, M. (Edt.) 2014. *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standards-Based Guide.* p.p. 183-184. Routledge. New York: USA.

Ozlem Yagcioglu
ESSENTIALS FOR BLENDED LEARNING: A STANDARDS-BASED GUIDE
By JARED STEIN AND CHARLES R. GRAHAM -
BOOK REVIEW

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).