NATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

*equalizing access to quality tutoring*

# Choosing and Using Blended Learning Software

In this National Student Support Accelerator webinar, we will be discussing how your program can choose and fully utilize a blended learning software for tutoring.

Throughout this webinar, we will discuss what blended learning software is, why it can be beneficial to use blended learning software for tutoring, what you should consider before, during, and after your sessions if using blended learning software, and what considerations you should make when selecting the software that is the best fit for your program. We will also discuss several different options available to your program in terms of existing software platforms.

First and foremost, blended learning software allows you to combine live instruction with independent digital practice. Tailored activities presented on different learning modalities like visual and auditory information can be utilized through blended learning software, and using this technology can also provide your tutors with useful data on student learning and progress.

When deciding if blended learning software may be a good fit for your program, note that using this technology can support instructional individualization by allowing tutors to assign specific practice in a targeted, data-informed way. It can centralize and automate tutoring in a way that reduces required tutor prep time for supplemental practice materials, and can more efficiently provide tutors with student data. Blended learning software can also maintain the rigor of tutoring while reducing actual tutor-student interactions – a benefit that allows the same number of tutors to serve more students with the same effectiveness.

Before you choose or design a specific software for your program, it is important to consider how your tutors and students will use this software in practice. Before your live sessions begin, ensure that your tutors are fully trained on all important features of the software, teach students how to navigate the software on their own, and as much as possible, restrict student access to only the required applications. During each live session, use student performance data from independent practice to inform your live sessions. Tutors should still make sure to devote a sufficient amount of time to each student by rotating between software learning and live learning. Tutors should also directly connect what students are learning on the software to what they are learning in live tutoring sessions. After each live session, make sure that your program has a plan in place to help students who may have difficulties accessing the appropriate technology at home, or who may need technological or pedagogical support at home.

When finally selecting which blended learning software your program will use, or creating your own, consider the following questions to ensure that you are best fulfilling your goals:

- Does the software provide concise and actionable data to both the tutor and the student? This can include asking if the software assesses student data in real time and if the software's data analysis tools suggest instructional next steps for tutors.
- Will the software be engaging for students to use? This can include if the software uses gamification and facilitates productive peer-to-peer communication and collaboration.

- Is the design of the software grounded in research and best practices? This can include if the software uses both content and pedagogical best practices.
- Is the software's curriculum implementation scaffolded, adaptive, or dynamic? This can include if tutors can select specific content for a student to practice, and if the learning material adapts to each students' strengths and struggles dynamically.
- Is the software's interface intuitive for both students and tutors to navigate? This can include if the software is accessible for all students, and if it is minimalistic and not overwhelming for users.
- Finally, will infrastructure limitations (such as slow internet connections or old devices) prevent students from using the software at school or at home? This can include asking what devices your least well-equipped students will be using, how slow their internet will be, and where your students can get faster computers and connections.

Lastly, let's look at the following list of just some of the blended learning software options that are available to your program.

- ALEKS, an adaptive online assessment and learning system for grades K-12
- Cignition, an adaptive math game learning software for grades 3-7
- Khan Academy, a collection of free online tutorials and interactive exercises in a wide range of subjects
- Newsela, an online "news-as-literacy" platform for grades 3-12
- Woot Math, an adaptive online math curriculum for grades 3-7
- and Zearn, a platform that combines live math instruction and adaptive online lessons for grades 1-5

Also note that other data-driven programs can provide supplemental backend software for tutors that are not student facing, but can provide useful data analysis.

Thank you for watching this National Student Support Accelerator Video on choosing and using blended learning software. Be sure to check out the Accelerator website at the link below to find the complete collection of Accelerator tutoring tools, including those utilized in this video. Thank you!