

Module material

Project: Flip Ed Up

Module 2. Blended Learning

Submodule 1: Background

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2.1.4.5 Script LESSON 6 "How to blend small group collaboration"

[The blending of small group collaboration brings back two themes that we already looked at before. On the one hand small group collaboration has characteristics of independent work and on the other hand it is a form of group work.]

For independent small group work, you need to provide the small group with learning materials, assignments and the like. For this you can use the approaches already mentioned, such as LMS, online space, websites and pinboards, educator platforms or playlists. See also "How to blend independent work".

For the actual group work of the learners, you need to consider whether the work is done synchronously or asynchronously.

Synchronous work requires learners to meet online - usually in a video conference, although a telephone conference can also suffice. As a teacher, you need to ensure that learners have a conferencing system that they can use to collaborate.

If the collaboration takes place in small groups as part of a group lesson, use the "Breakout group" function of your video conferencing system. In this case, you are responsible for dividing the groups and starting and ending the groups.

If learners organise their synchronous online collaboration in small groups independently, make sure that learners have a clear idea of how to meet and work online. You can pose questions such as:

- When will learners meet online?
- What video conferencing system will be used?
- Who will host the meeting?
- Will each learner have access to the system and know how to log in (if necessary)?
- Do the learners need special tools that are not part of the video conferencing system? And if so, do they know how to integrate these tools?

Nowadays, learners are often experienced in using video conferencing systems and may therefore prefer one system over another because they are already familiar with it. Especially when it comes to adult education, you should let the adult learners decide for themselves which system they want to use.



If learners need to do their independent work asynchronously, we can recall what we have already said about asynchronous group discussions - please refer to "How to blend group discussions". Besides forums and chats, small groups can also use online collaboration, such as working on shared documents via Google Docs or Microsoft Office 365, working on online whiteboards via Mindboard, brainstorming via MindMeister, chatting via Slack, task management via Trello or time planning via TeamGantt. Last but not least, some specialised adult education institutions may even require specific collaboration tools, such as GitHub for coding or InVision for prototyping UX design. As mentioned earlier, as a teacher you are more responsible for ensuring that learners are able to carry out the group work than for organising it in detail. Let the learners use mainly the online tools they prefer because they are already familiar with them.

Tip: If your learners are using an online tool that you are not familiar with, take the opportunity to learn from them and benefit from 'reverse mentoring', a concept widely used in blended learning.

