

# EAA Professional Development

**TOOL:** Blended, mastery-based professional development course

**GOAL:** Teachers who effectively leverage a blended, mastery-based learning environment to prepare students for college and career

**BREAK THROUGH**

**MODEL:** Education Achievement Authority (EAA) of Michigan

## Why was this tool developed?

EAA, a public school agency in Michigan, began directing operations at 15 of Detroit's lowest performing schools in 2012, with a blended learning approach at the heart of the turnaround strategy. The agency's model groups students by instructional level (not age), allowing them to progress by demonstrating mastery (not seat time). Students work on different projects at their own instructional level through Buzz, a personalized learning platform that serves as a content delivery and assessment tool for students, and a digital planning and data analysis tool for teachers. In EAA classrooms, teachers serve more of a facilitative role in support of self-directed student learning. For example, rather than deliver one-size-fits-all lessons to an entire classroom, teachers provide

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Mary Esselman, Deputy Chancellor

direct instruction to smaller groups of students; they oversee students working independently on laptops or in small groups working on projects, and they work one-on-one with students.

This type of role requires very different pedagogy than what teachers had experienced in traditional classrooms. **To help teachers in its blended learning classrooms, EAA developed a professional development (PD)**

**course—delivered through Buzz—that allows teachers to simultaneously learn how to progress through a mastery-based, online, personalized learning platform from a student's perspective, and how to best prepare students for college and career in a blended learning environment.**

## How is it different?

The course is built around EAA's five PD modules:

- Mindset/mission/vision
- Creating the learning environment
- Planning for instruction
- Assessing mastery
- Using data to drive performance

Teachers (both veterans and new-hires within EAA schools) are encouraged to complete the mastery-based course early within their first year, which usually takes anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Through the course, teachers learn how teaching appears through the eyes of a student, what a blended learning classroom looks and sounds like, how to act as a facilitator of learning, how to assess mastery, and many other teaching skills critical for personalized learning.

Unlike most PD that is delivered face-to-face, EAA delivers its course through Buzz, immersing teachers in the world of online learning so that they experience what students do on a daily basis. “We put them right in our platform as a student, paralleling what students are going through,” said Mary Esselman, Deputy Chancellor of EAA. “This is absolutely critical, because it develops habit of mind around a blended model.”

The blended course distinguishes EAA's model from traditional approaches. “We want to meet teachers where they are,” she said. “This course helps them build from that starting point, and ultimately helps them answer the question, ‘Who am I as an EAA teacher?’”



## What is the advantage for students?

Students at EAA's schools were performing well below grade level before the agency took over. The blended turnaround strategy aims to give students the tools, resources, and ability to advance as fast as their own pace will allow, while positioning students as active partners in learning with teachers. The success of the strategy, however, hinges on the effectiveness of teachers in a classroom environment that is new to nearly every participant. Therefore, agency staff believes the PD course is integral to student success.

The course addresses teaching strategies and classroom management unique to blended learning. This includes rituals and routines that help teachers keep the classroom productive in an orchestrated fashion, such as what students do when they

enter the classroom, what students do when the teacher is working with a small group, how students should gather for group work, how they access their laptop and materials, and so on. EAA intends to arm teachers with resources and knowledge to help students take advantage of the mastery-based model, through which they can advance to the next grade level and beyond.

## How does it improve learning?

EAA's blended PD course gives teachers the tools to enable personalized learning. For example, teachers are not expected to simply adapt lesson plans that were formerly used in a traditional classroom. Instead, the course teaches how to provision the resources, activities, and projects that allow students to advance through blended instructional units. Teachers learn how to facilitate student learning through a four-step cycle: learn (acquire knowledge), practice (demonstrate deeper understanding), assess (common assessment across instructional levels), and apply (performance task).

In the course, teachers also learn how to access professional development resources in Buzz to improve student learning. For example, teachers can access videos of model teachers and an online community of peers who are teaching the same subject. In addition, Buzz's data dashboard enables teachers to use data to inform their practice. They can see mastery of units at the student and classroom level, which might lead them to electronically assign additional resources for struggling students or gather multiple students for small group instruction.

At one EAA school, data show that student learning is improving. In 2013, at the end of its first year in

turnaround, Nolan Elementary-Middle School ranked third out of 124 schools in individual student growth in reading according to data released by Excellent Schools Detroit.

## What is the advantage for instructors and administrators?

A personalized, blended classroom and a traditional classroom are

## What are the challenges?

Following the face-to-face sessions of the PD course, teachers must find time away from their classrooms to complete the online portion, which is a challenge for busy teachers whose main priority is supporting students. Also, completing the course can take longer for teachers less accustomed to blended learning.

Mastery of Mindset/Mission/Vision Module	
<p><b>Resources (Learn)</b></p> <p>White Papers:                      Students at the Center                      Rise of K-12 Blended Learning Handbook                      Arne Duncan Reflection                      Video Library                      Classroom Visits</p> <p>Reflection: Virtual Parking Lot</p>	<p><b>Activities (Practice)</b></p> <p>Looks Like/Sounds Like (Journal)                      What It Is/Is Not (T-chart)                      Challenges/Tools, Shifts (Graphic Organizer)                      Brainstorm (Wordle)                      Responding to Student Voice (Concentric Circle)</p>
<p><b>Project (Apply)</b></p> <p>Personal Affirmation                      Marketing Storyboard</p>	<p><b>Performance Tasks (Assess)</b></p> <p>Implementation Plan</p>

vastly different. The PD modules provide teachers with information about critical elements of blended classrooms, such as instruction, assessing mastery, using real-time data for small group direct instruction, project-based learning, creative use of facility and space, and community partnerships. Each module uses the same four components as the students' instructional units (learn, practice, apply, assess). Like students, teachers choose projects and tasks to demonstrate mastery. Before finishing the course, teachers must do a three-minute presentation to staff at their school, applying the information they learned in the course and sharing their visions of themselves as EAA teachers/facilitators.

## What's next?

EAA continues to enhance the existing blended course in Buzz. However, the agency does not view course completion as the end of PD for its teachers. "The first course is all about filling up the teacher's toolbox, helping them determine how the classroom will look and operate," Esselman said. Year two, which is currently in development, will focus on design thinking including using time, space, and resources (including human resources, such as other adults or exemplary students) creatively in the classroom.

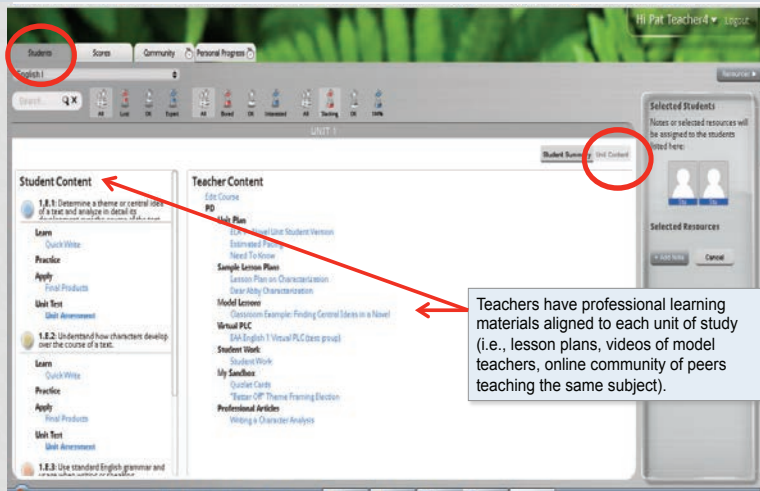
## ARTIFACT:

Screenshots of the professional development course in Buzz

### Teacher Dashboard



### Student and Teacher Resources



Teachers have professional learning materials aligned to each unit of study (i.e., lesson plans, videos of model teachers, online community of peers teaching the same subject).

### Professional Development Playlist for "What is Student-Centered Learning?"

- Call To Action
  - Driving Question
  - Five Pillars of Student Centered Learning
  - Journal
  - Interactive Graphic Organizers
  - Building Blocks of a Breakthrough School
  - Flocabulary Make Your Own Beat
- Why Student-Centered?
  - Learn
    - Teaching and Learning through the Eyes of Students I
    - Teaching and Learning Through the Eyes of a Student II
    - News Coverage of High School Student
    - Seeing is Believing
    - What Student Centered Learning is...is Not
    - Student and Teacher Roles in the Student Centered Learning Classroom
    - Arne Duncan Reflection
    - Introduction to the EAA
    - Breakthrough Models for College Readiness
    - Making Mastery Work: A Close-Up View of Competency Education
    - Next Generation Learning: The Pathway to Possibility
  - Practice
    - What Student-Centered Learning IS and IS NOT
    - Creating a Student-centered System of Teaching and Learning
    - Creating a Virtual Parking Lot
    - Looks Like...Sounds Like
    - How does SCL respond to Student's Issues regarding Traditional Public Schooling
  - Apply
    - Changing the Paradigm
  - Exploration
    - The Importance of Technology
    - Learn
    - Practice
    - Apply

### USE IT:

Launching a New Design School: The First 30 Days of Professional Development

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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