



NEWS RELEASE

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Columbus schools join Ohio Blended Learning Network

Association encourages high-quality blended learning in Ohio classrooms

COLUMBUS – Columbus City Schools has joined Reynoldsburg, Hilliard, KIPP Columbus, and Nexus Academy in a statewide network that will promote and encourage the development of high-quality blended learning instruction in Ohio classrooms, the Network announced today.

The Ohio Blended Learning Network has grown to include 23 schools and districts representing more than 175,000 students in Ohio, from small charter and rural schools to the state’s largest school districts.

“The members of the Ohio Blended Learning Network are banded together by the desire to see high-quality blended learning implemented in more classrooms in their districts and the state,” said Andrew Benson, Executive Director of Smarter Schools, the Cincinnati-based non-profit that sponsors the Network. “We are pleased that Columbus City Schools – a highly innovative district – has joined the Network.”

The Network is chaired by Matthew Miller, Superintendent of Mentor Public Schools, a nationally recognized innovative school district that is implementing blended learning across its district. Mentor was inducted this year into the League of Innovative Schools, a national group of 43 school districts and educational agencies promoting education innovation. Reynoldsburg City Schools is also in the League of Innovative Schools.

“We definitely see the value in blended educational opportunities for our students and students across Ohio,” said Miller. “I appreciate the opportunity to work with other superintendents and school districts to use blended learning to collectively reshape what teaching and learning looks like in Ohio.”

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The Network receives technical support from Education Elements, a California-based education consulting firm that has worked with more than 100 schools across the nation, including Mentor and Reynoldsburg in Ohio.

Columbus City Schools joins Nexus Academy of Columbus and founding members Hilliard City Schools, KIPP Columbus, and Reynoldsburg as members of the Network in Franklin County. Other members include:

Cincinnati Public Schools
Dayton Public Schools
Fairborn City Schools
Fort Recovery Local Schools
Lancaster City Schools
Lorain City Schools
Midview Local Schools
Milford Exempted Village Schools

Minster Local Schools
Nexus Academy of Cleveland
Nexus Academy of Toledo
Nordonia Hills City Schools
Northwood Local Schools
Oak Hills Local Schools
Stepstone Academy
Valley View Local Schools
Vermilion Local Schools

The focus of the Network is to encourage the development of blended learning in Ohio classrooms as way to effectively integrate technology to extend the reach of educators and increase the engagement of students. Blended learning is an approach to education in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction. This is becoming an effective strategy for schools and districts that want to use technology as a tool to enhance and extend the skills of teachers and want to more effectively identify and meet the needs of students.

The Network plans to help create standards for high-quality blended learning in the state as a way to ensure that educators have a model to use as a guide for how they can use technology effectively as a tool to enhance teaching and learning. The Network also plans to help the state create a blended-learning credential for educators who learn to use blended learning effectively in their classrooms.

The Network is pursuing grant funding from Ohio's Straight A Fund for Fiscal Year 2015 to increase capacity in the state to train more educators to implement high-quality blended learning approaches in classrooms.

"We believe that schools and districts can help define and support high-quality blended learning and, with partners, can provide training to educators that will build capacity to create more blended learning classrooms in the state," said Benson.

For more information, visit <http://www.smarterschools.net>