

OLTD 511 – Reflection of Assignment 2 – Assessing Blended Programs. I chose this piece of evidence to reflect my understanding of the OLTD Learning Outcome – ***Examine a specific Blended Learning Program and assess its ability to engage a variety of learners.***

This assignment provided me with the opportunity to go out and explore different blended learning programs, schools, or courses. I wanted to look more closely at the South Island Distance Learning School (SIDES) I was able to get in contact with the principal Sean Hayes and interviewed him about the school, the students, and the programs and courses offered there. I was also given the freedom to present my findings and research in a format of my choosing. I decided I would get more inventive, so I created a podcast entitled ‘Mornings with Marlee.’

Before I met with the principal of SIDES, I assumed it was a relatively straightforward program where online learning happens, modules are completed, and marks were distributed to homeschoolers. What I have come to understand is that these programs must exist in order for our province to be inclusive and flexible in terms of education delivery. I became aware of the wide range of students and families that SIDES blended learning programs have affected. There were so many student/family scenarios that hadn’t crossed my mind, that were brought up throughout our conversation. SIDES designs its program delivery for students with a wide variety of needs, and their ***ability to engage a variety of learners*** is their sole purpose.

One of the main challenges in becoming an effective online instructor lies in the ***ability to engage a variety of learners***. Being able to differentiate material and content for students, offer flexibility, and provide timely, constructive feedback are all essential elements in setting up a proper foundation for online learners to remain engaged with the curriculum. Whether in a traditional classroom setting or in an online environment, keeping learners constantly engaged is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. I have never heard of a classroom full of students who across the board had learning profiles that were exactly the same. Year after year, teachers are tasked with the challenge of meeting the needs of all of their students by offering differentiated lessons and individualized learning programs. Teachers design their school years around keeping students engaged. We also live in a world where children are bombarded with an almost constant stream of dopamine through social media, videos, memes, video games etc. Although we’re never (or we shouldn’t be) competing with any of these assets in real-time, we do have to compete with the consequences of students using them outside of the classroom, and therefore we must continuously keep the engagement piece at the forefront of our planning and teaching.

This is important to me because in order to properly prepare my 21st century learners, I need to embrace these new, exciting, versatile technologies in order to deliver curated, engaging, educational lessons and unique, alternative activities. Whether I’m teaching in a traditional classroom or if I’m facilitating an online course, one of my main goals will always be to be able to ***engage a variety of learners***.