

Using Blended Learning to Teach HiSET Reading and Writing Integrated with Social Studies and Science

June 2016 Mini-Grant



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Introduction

The inspiration for my project came as a result of the switch to the HiSET which is Common Core/College and Career Readiness Standards aligned. In studying up on the standards, I was delighted to see a more integrated approach to the core subjects. I have always liked the concept that reading and writing are incorporated into science and social studies. Additionally, I feel strongly that if we are really preparing our students to be college- and career-ready, they need to have technology skills. Rather than separating out computer skills, I have gradually made my classes more technology integrated. This mini-grant has gone to the next level by putting my lessons on a Learning Management System (LMS).

I explored a few different LMS hosts and settled on what seemed to be the easiest of the free systems, Blendspace by TES Global: <http://bit.ly/1ZvbKrt>. I set up some lessons and merged some of my Google Docs with it. As I do whenever I am introducing new technology, I demonstrated how to sign up (which is free) and log into our class. I gave the students a tour, had them try it out in class, and worked out any bugs with them. They quickly picked up how to use it. I then started putting more and more of our lessons on the site. I was able to put the notes that I used in class on it, as well as videos, worksheets, images, and additional online resources. My next step is to try videotaping my lesson and adding it to the Blendspace lesson.

Results

Blendspace was very easy to learn about and use. You can add resources from Google, YouTube, Google Drive, Dropbox, Gooru (I didn't know about this site before, check it out!), your computer, and the web. You can insert web pages, media, and one or more of the many shared resources from other teachers that are available on the system. You can search for resources by topic, subject, or theme. You can add the Common Core Standards addressed by the lesson by clicking on a search button. Best of all, my students liked it and found it useful!

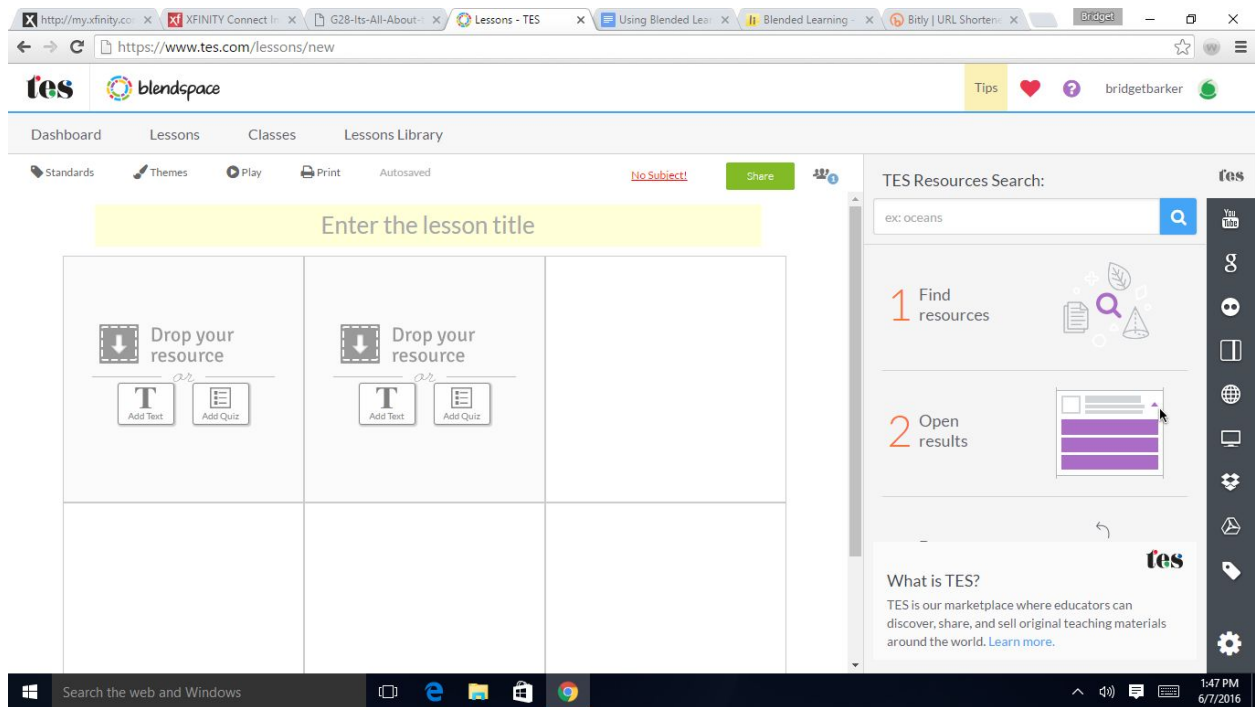
Overview of Using the Blendspace LMS

1. Go to the website and sign up for free: <http://bit.ly/1ZvbKrt>
2. To see some samples of my lessons, use the code yezm to join my class by clicking the blue “Join Class” button and then enter the code and click the green use code box.
3. Below is a screenshot of my dashboard. You can see how easy it is to add a new class (click on the green “Create Class” button) or to add new lessons (click on the green “New Lesson” button). You can also track which students have been on and how much time they have spent on the lesson by clicking on the lesson settings button (gear wheel) and clicking on “Track”. **NOTE: This feature is currently being updated and is not available at the time that I am writing this. It should be back up soon.**

The screenshot displays the Blendspace LMS dashboard. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Dashboard, Lessons, Classes, and Lessons Library. Below these are two prominent buttons: a green "+ New Lesson" button and a blue "Join Class" button. The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, a table titled "Recent Lessons" lists several lessons with their respective view counts and last edit dates. On the right, there are sections for "My Classes" and "Joined Classes", each with a "+ Create Class" button. The "My Classes" section shows two classes: "Science/Social Studies/Math" and "HiSET Science". The "Joined Classes" section shows one class: "Science/Social Studies/Math".

	Views	Last Edit		
Chemistry Bridget Barker	1	MAY 17		
Chemistry (partial) Bridget Barker	7	MAY 17		
Ecosystems and Nutrients Bridget Barker	9	MAY 31		
Evolution Bridget Barker	4	MAY 11		
Financial Literacy Bridget Barker	3	JUN 02		
Genetics Bridget Barker	6	MAY 11		
Global Climate Change Bridget Barker	3	MAY 25		

4. When you click on “New Lesson” you get a screen like the screenshot below:



5. You can see the options for adding resources on the far right side in the vertical toolbar. You can also search the shared TES resources by simply typing a keyword into the search bar (NOTE: many of the lessons are from Great Britain and thus some of the grammar and spellings are different --- wrong, obviously :). Once you locate a resource (from any source), put your cursor over the resource and you can preview it. If you decide to use the resource, you can add it by dragging it into one of the boxes. You can add a description and/or notes to the entry as well. You can have many of these boxes/entries in one lesson—simply click “Add row” on the bottom and you get another set of three. You can always remove a resource by clicking on the “x” in the lower left corner of the box it is in. You can also easily rearrange the order of the boxes by dragging them into the order you want.

6. Once you have added all of the resources you want to your lesson, you can share it with one or more of your classes. You can also go back to the shared lesson and add or delete resources from the lesson.

7. When you want to create a new class, click on the green “Create Class” button, enter a name for the class (which can be edited later) and then pick a

grade level; “other” is available for adult education. You will see the class listed with a code next to it. Give the code and the link to the website to your students, and then walk them through signing up and joining the class. Give them a tour of the site, and show them how to use it. Let the students play with it while in class.

8. Now, go play with the website using the code (yezm) and instructions I have given you!

How and When to Use Blendspace

Blendspace or any LMS allows teachers to put together more versatile lessons to better accommodate all types of learners and to go to a greater depth. It allows students to revisit a lesson and take it at their own pace. Students who want to learn more have the resources all in one place. Students are able to search resources as well and set up lessons for themselves as well. (Only one of my students has tried this so far.)

I use Blendspace both in class and for homework. This spring I had students passing different HiSET tests and ended up with a group in the same block who needed different subjects (math, science and social studies as reading and writing fit into the other subjects as well) . Blendspace allowed me to manage this mixed subject group fairly easily. I could work in one area while students who did not need that particular subject worked in a Blendspace lesson I had put together for them. Additionally, resources that incorporated reading and/or writing skills with science or social studies could be used for new students entering the class as the others were finishing. Everyone’s needs were being met. The students found the site easy to use. They had choices of resources to cover the lesson.