

RIO SALADO COLLEGE SURPRISE REACHES NEW HEIGHT WITH THE BURLINGTON BLEND

BY DEBBIE GILMAN, EDITORIAL AND MARKETING SUPPORT SPECIALIST, BURLINGTON ENGLISH INC.
AND VICKY DENKUS, MARKETING SPECIALIST, BURLINGTON ENGLISH, INC.

“Relevant, realistic, meaningful content that makes sense to students.” These are the words that Jennifer Shaffer, Instructional Services Supervisor from Rio Salado College (RSC) in Surprise, Arizona, uses to describe BurlingtonEnglish.

From January to May of 2018, Ms. Shaffer embarked on an ambitious journey with her teachers and students. Ms. Shaffer was provided with the BurlingtonEnglish (BE) program as part of the Arizona statewide purchase. Once she took a closer look at BE, she realized that it was a full ESL curriculum designed for a blended learning classroom. As an innovative instructional leader, Ms. Shaffer recognized the value of a fully blended curriculum and knew she needed to try something unique with her staff. A meeting with the RSC College Bridge Pathways leadership team and Sylvia Gomez, BurlingtonEnglish Customer Manager, led to the approval of a pilot program in which BurlingtonEnglish would be used as the sole curriculum at RSC Surprise. The goal was to see if students would make significant learning gains in a technology-rich classroom without traditional textbooks. In the pilot, instructors were directed to only use BE content, without any supplemental materials. Sylvia Gomez provided training and professional development to help create the instructional framework needed to initiate this unique blended learning experience.



Implementation of the BE curriculum was deliberate and carefully designed for teachers and students to seamlessly transition to the new learning system. For this blended model, four different veteran instructors led six leveled classrooms, consisting of pre-literacy, intermediate, and advanced ELAA students. The RSC Surprise instructional team selected several specific content modules, and with help from Sylvia Gomez, designed pacing guides, lesson plans, and a reflective feedback platform for the teachers. During twice-weekly face-to-face instruction, teachers taught BE content using the In-Class Lessons, alternating with independent student practice to reinforce classroom instruction. Additionally, students were able to work on student lessons, explore career specific courses, and practice vocabulary on their own devices, including tablets, laptops, and mobile phones while away from school.

So, you may ask, what was the outcome of this unique blended learning experience? Ms. Shaffer couldn't say enough about the positive effect this pilot had on everyone involved. With regard to her teachers, Ms. Shaffer observed that “Burlington helped instructors become confident in implementing a new curriculum, and building upon it so that students can actually obtain mastery at their level.” As the year progressed, it was evident that the new model was working for students, as well. “Student usage and learning gains increased dramatically, across the board,” she reported. In her observation “students have learned that independent work on the computer and classroom instruction is one. They have been able to really mesh the two together. Their hours increased because they felt successful ... It all made sense.”



The RSC Surprise instructional team looks forward to continuing success with the BurlingtonEnglish blended curriculum. The RSC College Bridge Pathways leadership team will meet to decide the next steps with regard to a wider implementation of the Burlington curriculum at other locations. The RSC Surprise team will serve as a model to other instructors and will share their knowledge, processes, and expertise in the implementation of the Burlington curriculum.

