

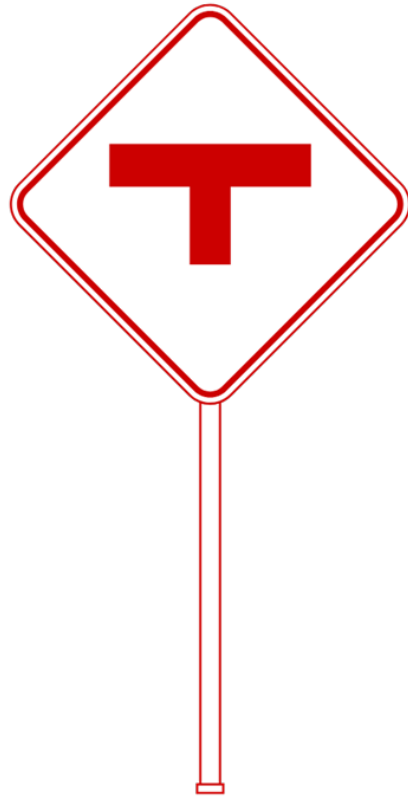
# Quality Teaching Matters

Policy considerations for supporting  
teacher quality in the distance / virtual  
learning age.

2020 EPFP Policy Project

Whitney Dove, Ashauna Lindo, Kellie Wilkes

# Exploring: The Concept

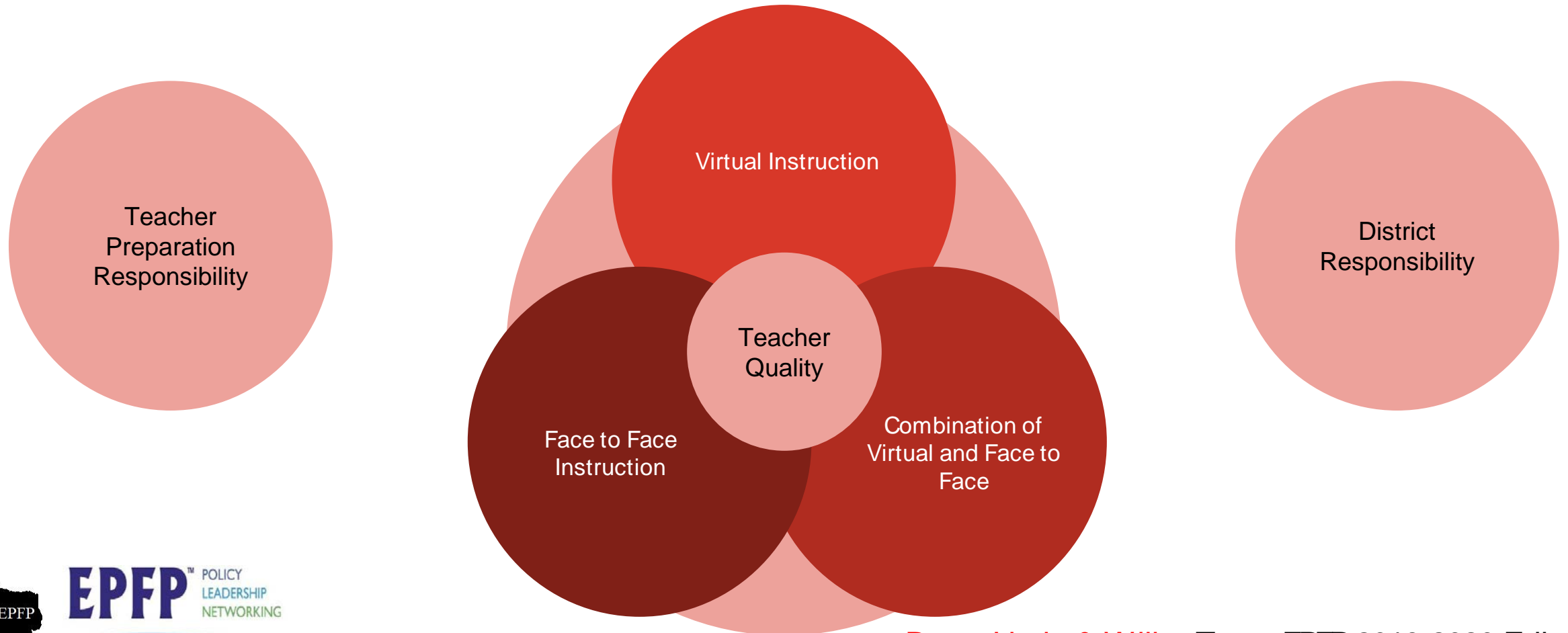


## **Our Idea:**

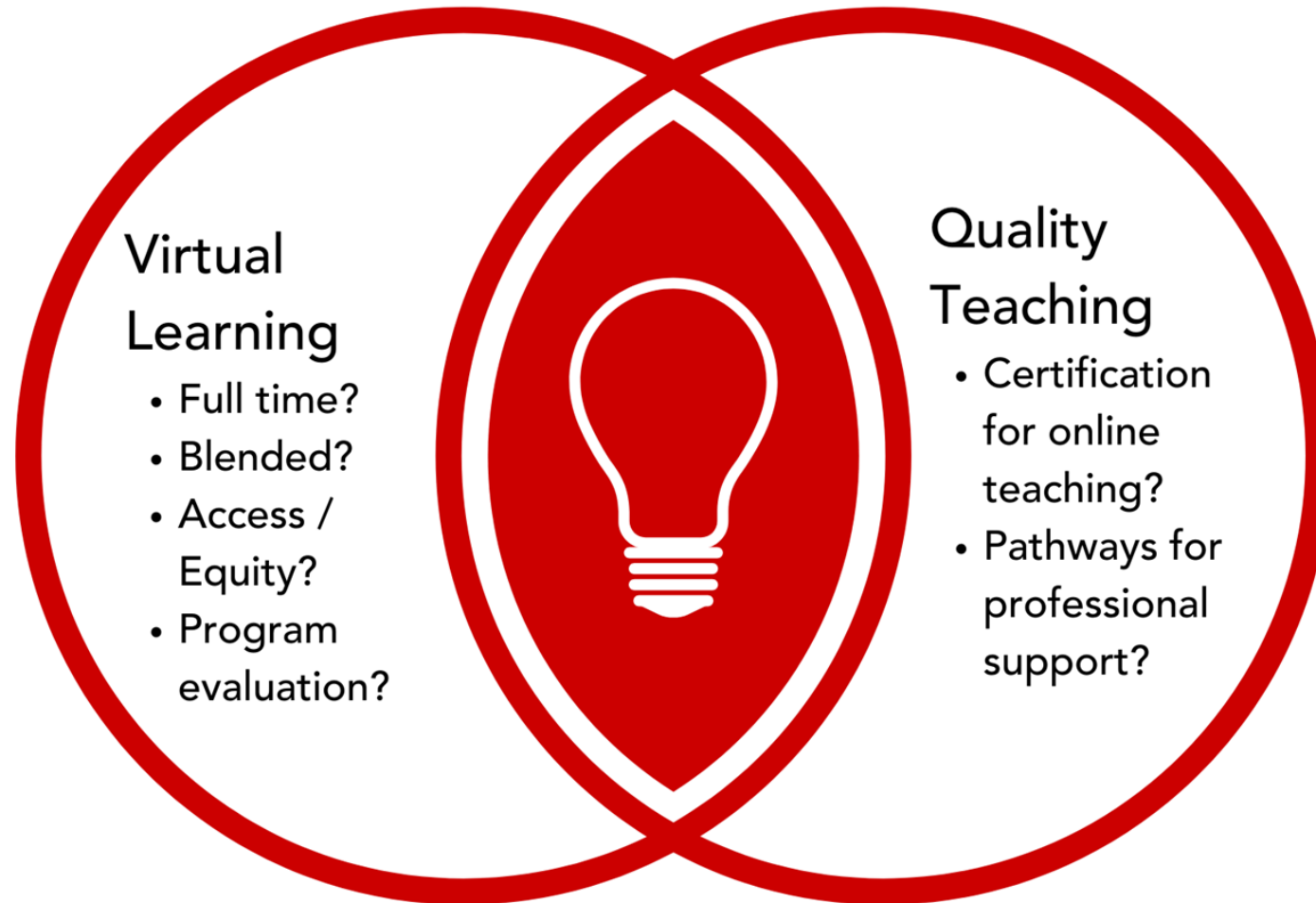
Explore the policy matters sitting at the intersection of virtual learning and quality teaching.



# Exploring: The Concept



# Exploring: Policy Issues



# Engaging: The Experts



- David Anderson, General Counsel and Policy Analyst - Raise Your Hand Texas (RYHT)
  - Three different policy areas
    - Virtual School Network
    - Full Time Virtual Schools
    - Blended Learning
  - RYHT is most interested in Blended Learning.
    - Key issue here is teacher professional development.

# Engaging: The Experts



- Dr. Joshua Childs, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, University of Texas
  - Distance / Virtual learning presents unique challenges in the areas of -
    - Access / equity
      - How can we ensure access to high quality learning in the distance learning age?
    - Teacher professional development
      - There are not many resources out there that adequately prepare K-12 teachers to teach online

# Engaging: The Literature

- Teacher quality is the **most significant predictor** of students' achievement (above influences of the home) (Fullan, 2013; Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2014 ; Hattie, 2017)

# Engaging: The Literature

What can we learn from full-time virtual schools?

- Texas Full Time Virtual Students are:
  - 5x more likely to be held back
  - 5x more likely to drop out
- Only 1 Full Time Virtual School is:
  - consistently meeting TEA standards
  - rated “A” according to accountability measures
- RHYT recommends:
  - **blended learning**
    - use technology to provide high quality virtual learning experiences
    - maintain brick and mortar practice to maximize learning

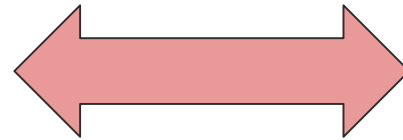
Texas Virtual Schools Update



# Engaging: The Literature

## Virtual School Advantages:

- Flexible learning opportunities for ALL students
- More opportunities for 1-on-1 instruction
- More access to content and instructors



## Virtual School Disadvantages:

- Opt for Alternative Education Accountability system
- Ability to hide performance
- Lack of financial and funding accountability

# Engaging: The Literature

Blended Learning as a viable option for all learners in our classrooms today.

Enrolling in a full-time virtual school has limitations, students have to be enrolled in a public school at least a year prior to enrolling in a local full-time virtual school (TxVSN). This creates a problem for students who were homeschooled and would like to enroll in virtual school. However, blended learning offers students the technology pedagogy that will help to elevate their learning skills, increase academic engagement and provide opportunities to extend their knowledge base in preparation for their future studies and careers beyond their K-12 educational years.



# Engaging: Current Policy

## Senate Bill 1455

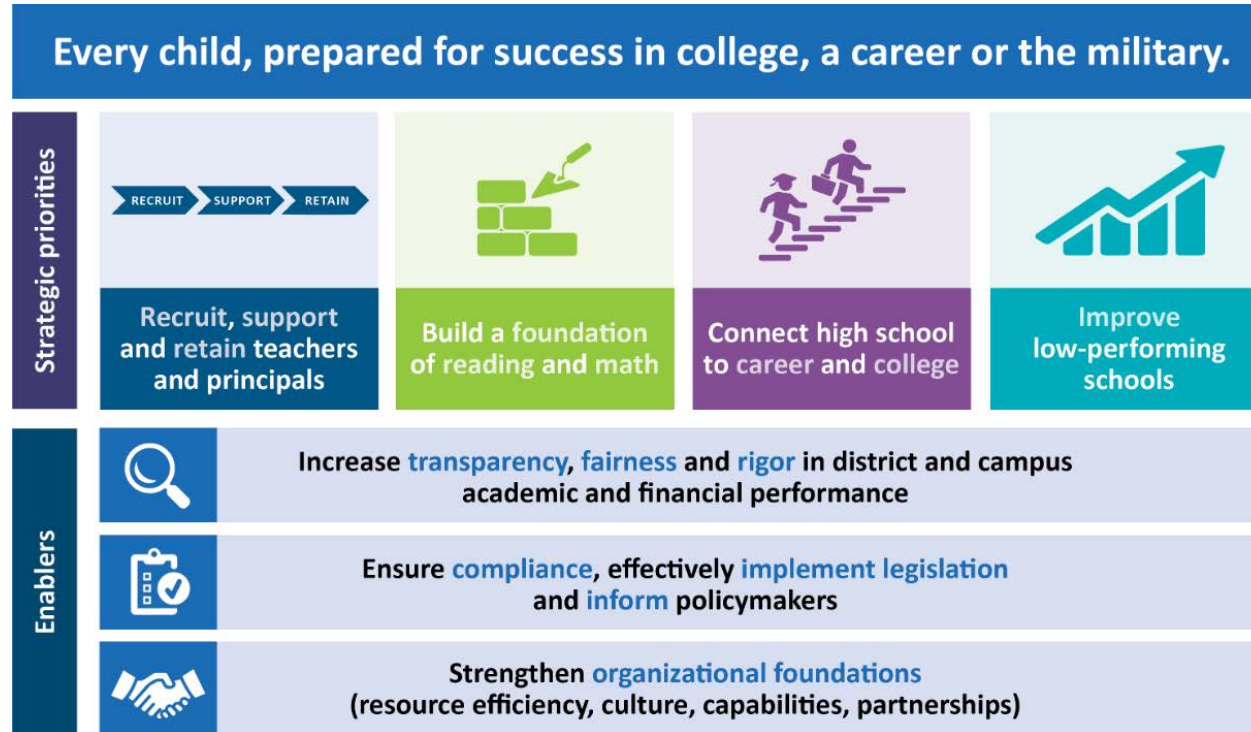
- Although, S.B. 1455 is left pending in the committee as of 5/7/2019, it poses a setback to the opportunity for virtual learning for students in k-12.
- Essentially, the S.B. 1455:
  - Limitation on the number of students who can enroll in the State's Virtual School Network (TVSN) through a district or charter school
  - A fee is required (initially proposed was a \$400 but is currently amended to be determined by the commissioner)
  - A school district or charter school can run a full-time virtual school if the district received an overall performance rating of a 'C' or higher

<https://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB1455/id/2000289>



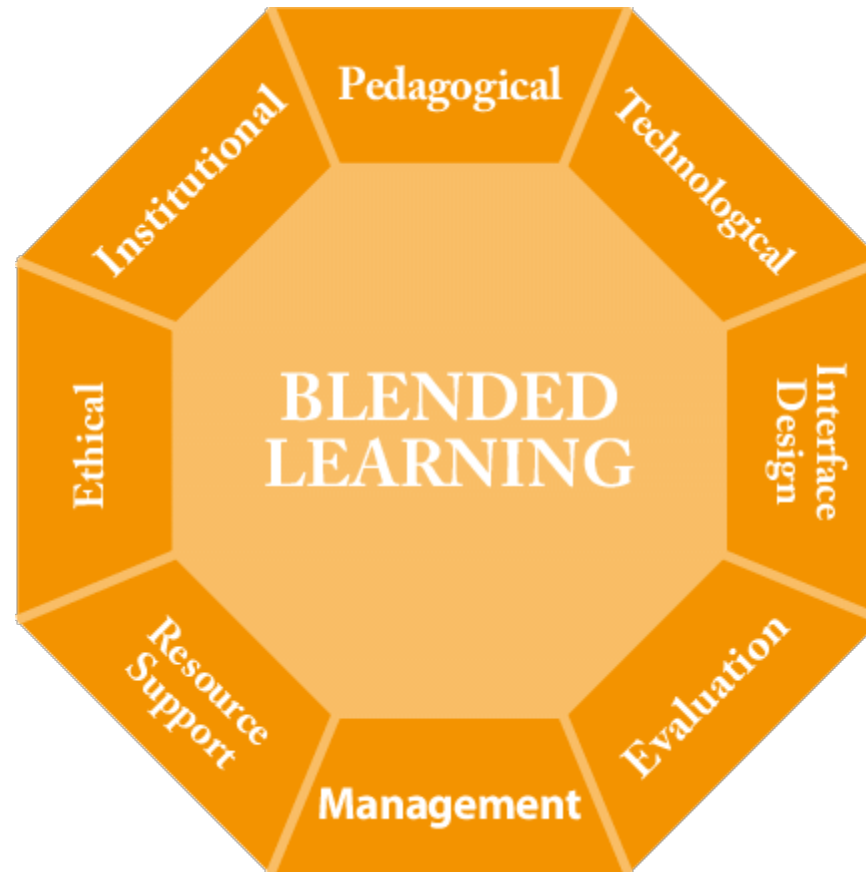
# Engaging: The Policy

- Texas Education Agency's Strategic Plan includes recruiting, supporting and retaining teachers and principals.



# Engaging: The Literature

- Khan's 2005 Framework for an effective Online Learning Experience for both Teachers and Students

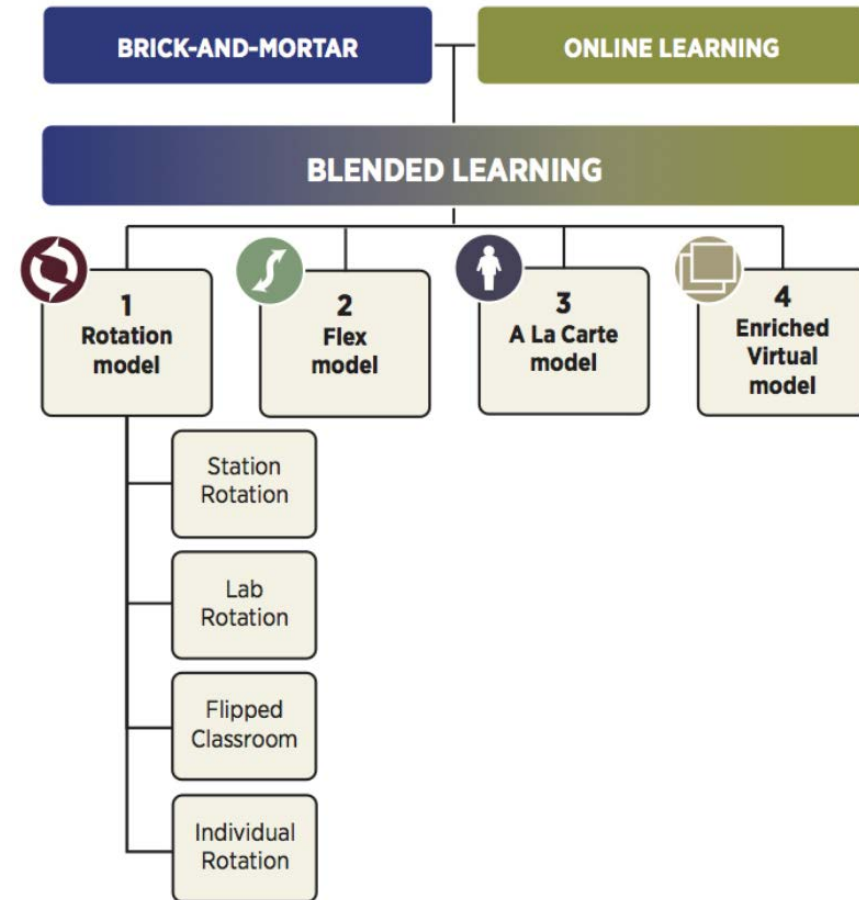


# Engaging: The Literature

The definition of blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns:

1. at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace;
2. at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home;
3. and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience.

*Christensen Institute*



# Engaging: The Exemplars

## Who's Doing it Well?



- iUniversity Prep
  - iUniversity Prep is an online public school that offers rigorous academics, innovative instructors and a collaborative community that offers resources and support to students to create a well-rounded academic experience.
  - A deep look into iUniversity, you will observe the opportunities the program provides to its students--one-on-one; group learning; tutoring sessions and local meet-ups to name a few
    - <https://www.instagram.com/iuniversityprep/?hl=en>
  - Although they are a full-time Texas public school, their methods of instructional aligns very closely with a blended learning model!
  - **The ONLY full time virtual school to receive an “A” rating for 2018-2019.**

# Co-Design

## POLICY PROPOSAL

Proposed policy enabling public schools in the state of Texas to -

- Adopt a consistent framework for the design, delivery, and evaluation of virtual learning,
- Ensure students have equitable access to high quality virtual learning opportunities,
- Access funding that equips districts with the ability to offer a viable alternative to the traditional brick and mortar classroom such as Blended Learning,
- Define and provide quality professional development for all state certified teachers,
- Receive feedback and support from exemplars in the field.



# Co-Design

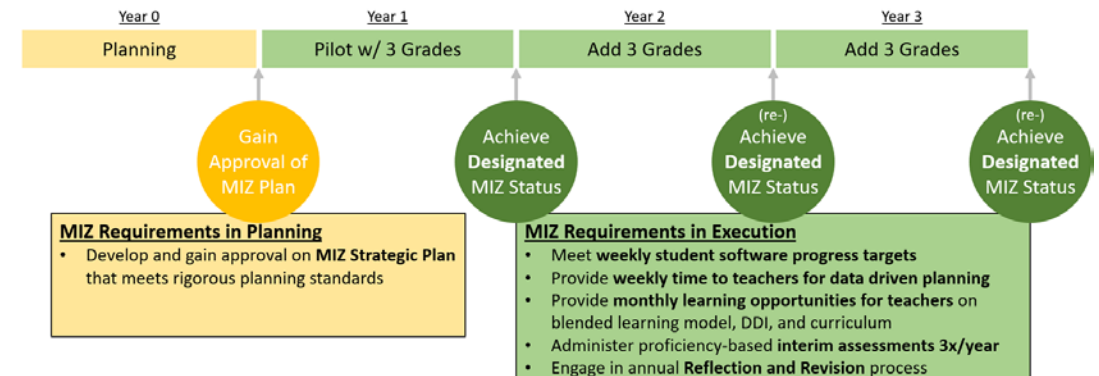
Grants that Exist to Help Districts across the State implement a Blended Learning classroom environment:

- Math Innovation Zone (MIZ Grant) - From TEA, enable districts to provide blended learning model
  - Planning grants of up to \$125K
  - Follow-on execution grants of up to \$100K
  - Implement blended learning across feeder patterns over a four-year time frame.



## Math Innovation Zones Overview

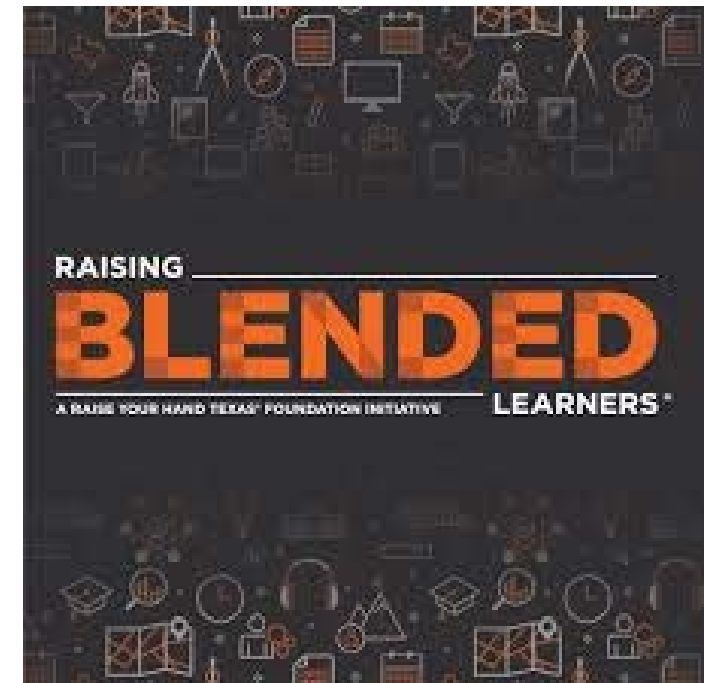
Math Innovation Zones is a four year process to design, launch, scale, and sustain a high-quality blended learning model in math throughout a K-8 feeder pattern.



# Co-Design

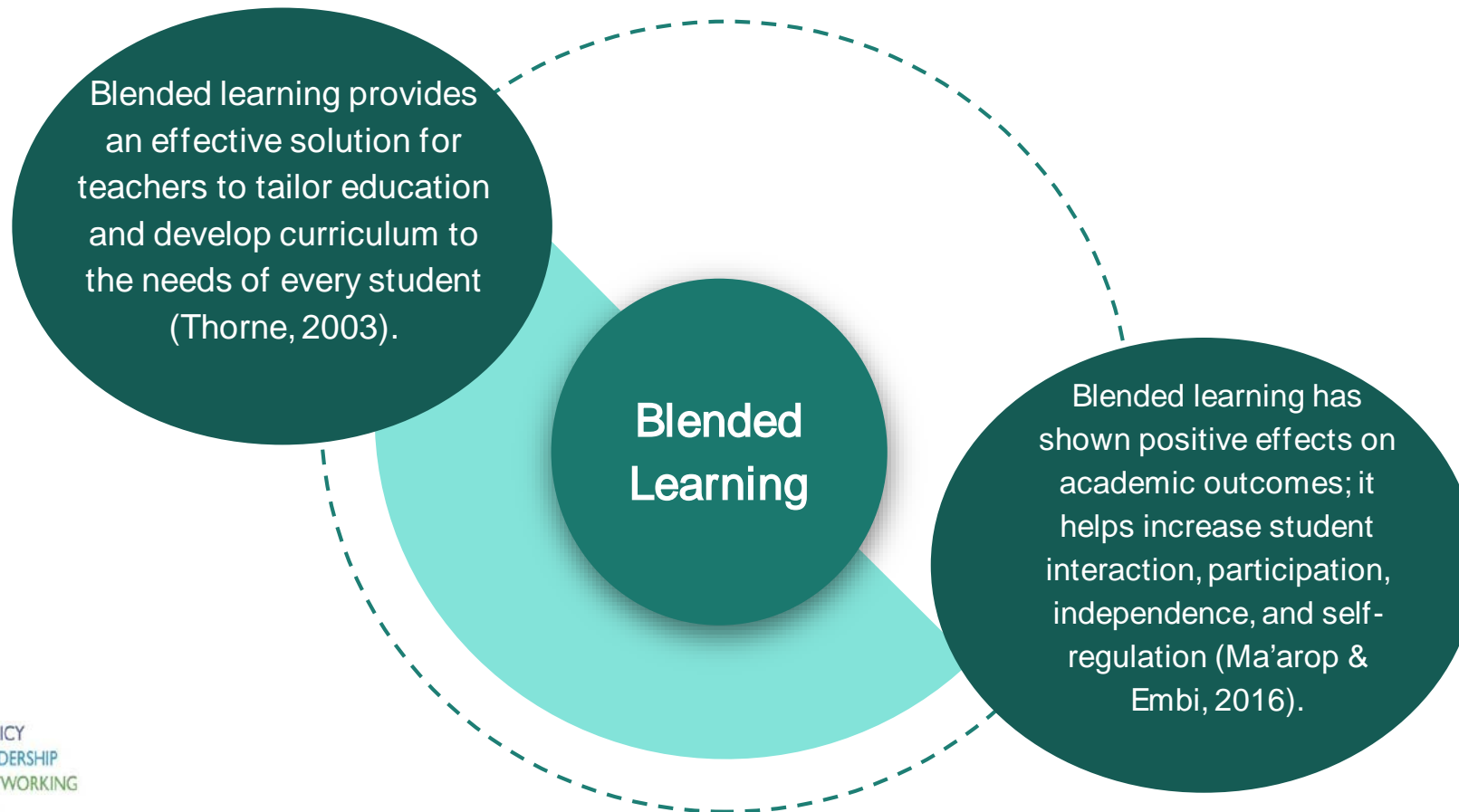
**Grants that Exist to Help Districts across the State implement a Blended Learning classroom environment:**

- **Raise Your Hand Texas - Raising Blended Learners Grant**
  - Raising Blended Learners is a four-year demonstration initiative showcasing strategies for using blended learning to improve student achievement across diverse student demographics and geographic regions in the state, particularly among schools and districts with persistent achievement gaps
  - Awarded \$300,000 over 4 years



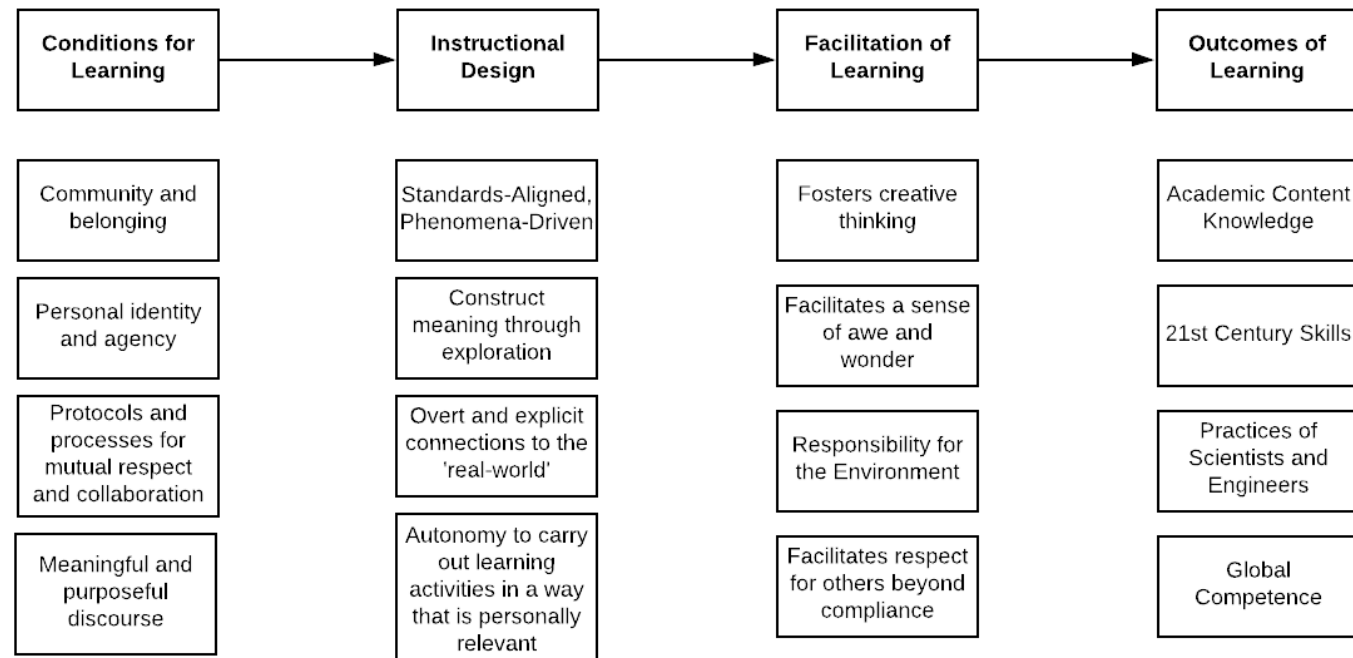
# Implement

## Blended Learning to improve equity outcomes at the local level



# Implement

## A Proposed Framework for Virtual Learning (Unpublished, Dove, 2019)



# Study

## The Teacher's Perspective (A. Lindo)

- Raising Blended Learners through Raise Your Hand Texas (RYHT)
  - Exploration of students' and teachers' experiences and conceptions of blended learning in relation to increased student agency and academic rigor at KIPP Zenith Academy.
- KIPP Zenith Academy was selected as a recipient of Raising Blended Learners through Raise Your Hand Texas (RYHT) and Math Innovation Zones through the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The blended learning program at KIPP Zenith Academy focuses on students' college readiness, particularly in math, and student self-motivation and advocacy for their own learning (RYHT, 2019).
  - KIPP Zenith Academy includes 85% African Americans and 14% Hispanic.
- *In the following slide, I explore 5 themes that emerged from my experience visiting a RYHT Blended Learning school*

## The Teacher's Perspective (A. Lindo)

After observation at a RYHT Blended Learning Site visit, 5 Themes Emerged for successful implementation of Blended Learning

### Theme 1: Professional Development

Professional development is a must for teachers, administrators and all stakeholders. District must be fervent in their search for grants to assist with intensive teacher training.

### Theme 2: Accountability

Student accountability increased significantly when comparing the years prior to the current year. Several students expressed (during a post interview) that they felt they had more control over their learning and had increased responsibility for their own academics.

### Theme 3: Data-Driven

At the blended learning site; students used 'tracking forms' to keep up with the course expectations and for self-reflection. Students had the capability to see how they were doing at any given time (Behind, On Target or Ahead).

### Theme 4: Time for Onboarding

Onboarding takes time. It will become unsuccessful if teachers are rushed through training, asked to then implement and expect high academic results. It takes time! Districts must plan, design, prepare and train months in advance for successful implementation of blended learning.

### Theme 5: Beneficial for Title 4 schools

It is common for districts with a high percentage of disadvantaged students to have classrooms with high teacher-student ratios. With the average ratio of teacher-to-student at 1-to-32, the blended learning model enables teachers to work with all students one-on-one consistently or several times throughout the semester.

# Study

## The K12 Administrator Perspective (K. Wilks)

- There are non-profit organizations willing to help.
- The State of Texas wants education to change and is creating funding opportunities for school districts to try new instructional practices.
- There is flexibility in Texas Education Agency policy.

# Study

## The For Profit Perspective (W . Dove)

### Questions Asked:

- What does a comprehensive framework for virtual teaching and learning look like?
- What are the success criteria for full time or blended virtual learning environments?
- What are the measures and interventions are needed to support teacher growth and development?
- What kinds of PD opportunities will work best to meet these needs?

### Action Steps:

- Propose a conceptual framework for quality virtual teaching
- Design, develop, and push to market a series of online PD courses for teachers



# Summary

- Problem We Explored:
  - Began as a Conversation → Evolved into Sense of Urgency
  - How can we ensure equitable access to high quality learning during blended or full time virtual learning situations?
- What We Discovered:
  - There are a number of promising programs and frameworks available to guide our approach
  - This issue is currently being discussed in the legislature
  - Districts, campuses, and teachers are looking for leadership
- Our Action Steps:
  - Advocate for policy measures at the local and state level
  - Facilitate conversations between thought leaders and those looking for help
  - Provide leadership and guidance within our respective spheres of influence

