

Crafting the Perfect Blend with Virtual Virginia & Canvas LMS

Stafford Schools

 **Virginia**  **32,000 Students**  **Adopted Canvas LMS: 2020**



Stafford Schools are committed to supporting and leading effective learning strategies for students and professional educators. Virtual Virginia partners with Virginia public school divisions, providing educational opportunities to K–12 students and educators.

Stafford Schools's Michael Bolling, Director of Academic Programs and Monica VanHusen, Instructional Technology Coordinator in the Department of Professional Learning; Steven Sproles, Professional Learning Coordinator at Virtual Virginia; and Stephanie Shea, School Support Coordinator at Virtual Virginia, shared how they're working together to prepare the district for long-term success with blended learning.

BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Over the years, Stafford Schools has experienced tremendous growth in student enrollment and technology adoption. To prepare their students and staff for the future, it was essential to bring everyone onto the same page with blended learning. They also wanted to take full advantage of Canvas LMS – a tool they had invested in before remote learning.

"Virtual learning is very different than in-person blended learning," Van Husen said. "We knew we needed to bring everyone together to define what blended learning would look like at Stafford Schools."

To jumpstart this campaign, VanHusen and the Professional Learning team curated resources (inspired by Michele Eaton's work in designing student-centered learning experiences) to empower educators with information such as what blended learning is, the physical and virtual environments that make up blended learning, and the first steps for implementation.

Stafford Schools surveyed and is currently training its division leaders to ensure consistency in the definition of blended learning and Canvas tools. Bringing their leaders together with a shared understanding of blended learning will help prepare their staff with the skill set to create learning experiences that are relevant and engaging for students.

Key Insights

- To take full advantage of the technology adopted in early 2020, Stafford Schools is leading the way in educating and implementing a future-proof blended learning campaign with Canvas LMS.
- Using Discussions, Outcomes, and New Quizzes in both Canvas LMS and Canvas Studio gives Stafford educators different modes of assessing learning.
- Canvas LMS is a connected, one-stop-shop the entire division can depend on for blended learning.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR STAFFORD EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

At the heart of this intentional process to innovate instruction, educational leaders are experiencing Canvas LMS tools for Blended Learning in the following ways:

- Canvas Commons will save administrators and educators time by enabling them to find, import, and share the best resources related to blended learning as they learn together.
- Stafford Schools' educational leaders are completing blended learning walks alongside school Instructional Technology Resource Teachers (ITRTs) to observe the blended learning opportunities students are experiencing.
- Educational leaders in Stafford Schools are completing asynchronous VVA Canvas modules and collaborating with the Department of Professional Learning and ITRTs at each level.

"I'm excited about the collaboration among content coordinators and staff in the Department of Academic Programs, the Department of Professional Learning, Virtual Virginia, and Instructure, as it is imperative to our success in supporting every teacher in delivering effective instruction that blends virtual and face-to-face learning." Michael Bolling, Director of Academic Programs

“My vision is to walk around and see good blended learning practices happening at all levels. So, we’re walking into classrooms, and we’re not just seeing students with Chromebooks open, but they’re doing different things and are excited as they’re on the Chromebooks [and Canvas LMS]. They’re creating and taking ownership of their learning

Monica VanHusen, Instructional Technology Coordinator at Stafford Schools.

INSTRUCTIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND TECHNOLOGY

For some, working with technology taps into some of the difficulties of remote learning. Stafford Schools sees technology as a necessary resource to give students and educators the ability to create agency over their learning and empower them to use technology to find resources that align with their interests and goals.

“We have been working together on instructional best practices with instructional technology. We are really excited about the partnership with the Departments of Academic Programs and Professional Learning, ITRTs, and other educational leaders to collaborate on the effective use of technology and blended learning models,” VanHusen said.

To guide the conversation around both using and building upon what they’ve learned over the past few years, Stafford Schools has included the following questions as part of their blended learning initiative:

- How can we improve the students’ experience as learners?
- How can we help spark curiosity, drive engagement, foster collaboration, and create opportunities to personalize learning?
- How can we support teachers so they can focus on the aspects of their job that they enjoy and find energizing?
- How can we support teachers to find more time to work directly with students?
- How can we encourage teachers to make learning more engaging, dynamic, and relevant?

CREATING A PARTNERSHIP WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROCESS

Another crucial part of successfully implementing blended learning is collaborating with partners with expertise on the topic. And that’s where Virtual Virginia’s Shea and Sproles have been vital collaborators.

“Stafford Schools have been very proactive in learning and professional development, and that has been refreshing for us here at Virtual Virginia to see,” Shea said.

“They [Stafford Schools] came to us and said they’ve used a lot of our resources, like the Virtual Virginia Outreach Program’s course content and resources, and now they want to take action. They want to get away from the ‘just put kids in front of computers’ perspective, and it’s just been wonderful,” Sproles said.

For teachers to personalize learning for students in the classroom, they must experience it themselves. Discover more about how VVA empowers educators with Canvas LMS, Catalog, and Credentials in our blog, [Creating Voice & Choice in Professional Learning](#).

A BRIGHT, BLENDED FUTURE

“We’ve had one presentation session so far with Stafford. We received great feedback from Monica and the team, and one piece of constructive advice was, ‘Can we please have some pre-work next time?’ It’s wonderful to have educators say, ‘Give us things to read and reflect on before we begin this journey with you all,’” Sproles said.

At the heart of this intentional process to innovate instruction, educational leaders are experiencing Canvas LMS tools for blended learning. With a robust learning management system, the experienced educators at Stafford Schools, and the professional learning and support experts from Virtual Virginia, they have crafted the perfect blend.