

Planning and Designing for K-12 Next Generation Learning

RETHINK >>>



Are you looking to implement next generation learning in your school, district, or charter management organization (CMO)? If so, you can use this toolkit to:

- **Understand next generation learning and the need for change**
- **Gain a working knowledge of the planning and change management processes**
- **Plan and design a framework for next generation learning**
- **Understand how to ensure quality and continuous improvement for your design**

The changing demands of the 21st century—and the students growing up in it—are generating fundamental challenges to our historical assumptions about what education looks like. The challenge today is to provide a deeper level of personalized learning to each and every student so that all can achieve mastery of the Common Core standards and other skills and dispositions. What does that kind of learning look like? From the 21st-century student's point of view, they look something like the attributes presented in the sidebar on this page.

Collectively, the attributes are a declaration of the learning experiences students need in order to succeed after high school. They are also a tall order. What do you need to know in order to manage this kind of change, to design new learning models, and to implement them successfully? What do those models look like? How do you even start the discussion so that consensus builds quickly and the work can get started?

Because the field of next generation learning is still nascent, practitioner-created tools and resources are sparse—and those that do exist are not validated. This toolkit organizes the most helpful resources *currently* available on pathways for district, charter, and school leaders to use during the first stages of research and deliberation on how to proceed. It will help you better understand what questions to ask and how to begin thinking through your next generation learning design. The toolkit doesn't specify a prescriptive model to follow, but will serve as a decision-making guide as you conceptualize, design, and develop next generation learning in your school, district, or CMO. It will streamline the process for planning and engaging other stakeholders to design learning that will effectively and efficiently lead to improved outcomes for students. The following graphic charts the key decisions that you will need to make throughout the process and provides an outline for the toolkit.

Attributes of Next Generation Learning from a Student's Point of View

Personalized to my needs and learning goals

Flexible so that I can try different ways to learn

Interactive and engaging to draw me in

Relevant to the life I'd like to lead

Paced by my own progress and measured against goals I understand

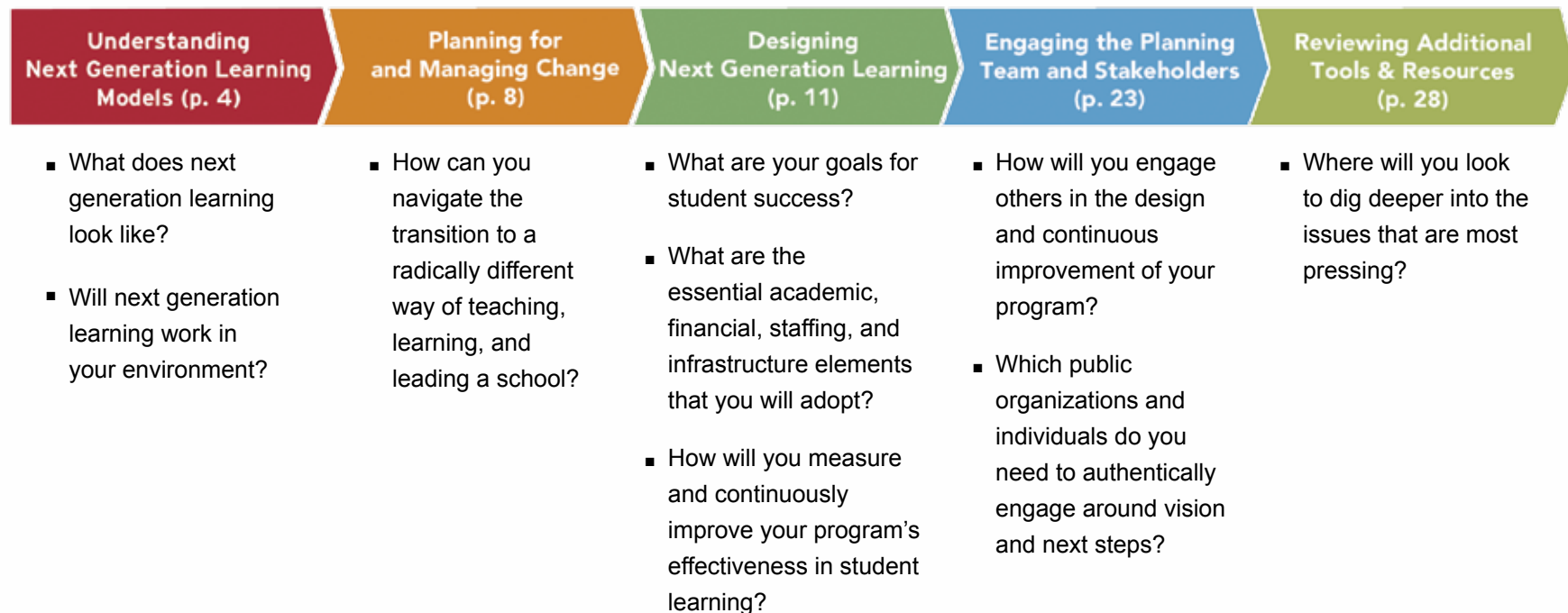
Constantly informed by different ways of demonstrating and measuring my progress

Collaborative with faculty, peers, and others; not limited by proximity

Responsive and supportive when I need extra help

Challenging but achievable, with opportunities to become an expert in an area of interest

Available to me as much as it is to every other student



Each section of the toolkit has four components. The first is an **Introduction** to the topic. The second is a set of **Guiding Questions** that you can use with a planning team to begin to apply next generation learning approaches to your learning environment and consider how you might design a model that works for your community. These questions will help you focus on the most critical decisions you will need to make. The final components are a set of **Resources** and a handful of **Tools** that you can use to further explore topics related to the Guiding Questions.

Understanding Next Generation Learning Models

The goal of next generation learning is to provide your students with more personalized (student-centric) learning experiences and environments that allow for dramatic changes in student outcomes. This personalization results in learning experiences that are:

- **Student-centered and student-owned.** Next generation learning meets the diverse learning needs of each student every day and empowers students with skills, information, and tools they need to manage their own learning.
- **Competency-based.** Next generation learning enables students to move at their own optimal pace and receive credit when they can demonstrate mastery of high-level material.
- **Blended.** Next generation learning optimizes the mix of teacher- and technology-facilitated learning in group and individual work.

Next generation learning has the potential to loosen the resource constraints of traditional programs—time, human capital, and space. This flexibility allows differentiated approaches to the challenges of content, assessment, pacing, and learning styles. But next generation learning is challenging to implement. It is not a panacea to all problems faced in K–12 education today, and it is not without problems of its own. Clearly defining the instructional problems you are trying to solve—especially the ones that cannot be easily solved by traditional approaches—will set this effort apart from other “reforms” that are short-lived and ineffective. It will keep everyone involved motivated to continue moving forward when faced with the challenges that next generation learning presents. When preparing for this exciting endeavor, building a network of experts and practitioners is key to ensuring you have the support you will need. See the resources in “Build Your Network” to help you get started.



“Join a community of practitioners doing similar work. Learn from what they’re learning, even if your model is completely different from theirs.” - Liz Arney, Aspire Public Schools

Understanding Next Generation Learning Models

Build Your Network

Begin connecting with like-minded experts, practitioners, and learners to dive deeper into next generation learning design, planning, and implementation.



Websites and Blogs

Connect with these sites that are helping to create communities of practice in next generation learning.

[BlendMyLearning](#)

[BlendedLearningNow](#)

[CompetencyWorks](#)

[EdSurge](#)

[Innovation Lab Network](#)

[Getting Smart](#)

[Mind/Shift](#)

[Maximize Potential](#)

[iNACOL: New Learning Models](#)

[Next Generation Learning Challenges](#)

[Maine Center for Best Practice](#)



Twitter

Follow these accounts and hashtag conversations to stay up-to-date with the latest news, events, and issues regarding next generation learning practice.

@briangreenberg

@CEEtrust

@ChristensenInst

@CompetencyWorks

@edsurge

@michaelbhorn

@MindShiftKQED

@nacol

@NextGenLC

@scott_e_benson

@susandpatrick

@thinkschools

@tvanderark

#blendedlearning

#competency

#cworks

#deeperlearning

#edchat

#edtech

#NextGenLC



Understanding Next Generation Learning Models

Guiding Questions

- What are the specific challenges facing your district or school that a next generational learning program might help you solve? Consider political, financial, cultural, regional, and workforce challenges as well as instructional and learning challenges.
- Who are your students, and what do they need in their learning process?
- What factors are driving change in your school, district, or CMO toward next generation learning, and how might they be strengthened? What factors are pushing against next generation learning, and how might they be weakened? (*Note: Consider using the force field analysis template referenced in the [Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders](#) section of the toolkit.*)
- What excites you the most about the potential of blended, competency-based, personalized learning programs? What are your primary concerns?
- Which of the blended, competency-based, personalized learning models presented in the *Resources* might work in your environment for your students? How might you stretch some of the design thinking in these models even further? What would you want to do differently?
- What questions do you still have about these learning programs? How will you find the answers you need?

"While we're still in the design phase, we've learned important lessons from the NGLC community: First, people are absolutely key. Building out a solid team early on is crucial to our success. Prioritization is also key: we can't do everything in year one, so we need to really hone in on the top priorities."
- Micki O'Neil,
Foundations College Prep

Understanding Next Generation Learning Models

Resources

[*Blended Learning*](#). **Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation**. From this website you can access three key resources to better understand the different types of blended learning models (e.g., Rotation, Flex, A La Carte, and Enriched Virtual). You can also examine [detailed descriptions](#) defining the model types, explore the [Blended Learning Universe](#) database of programs and submit your own profile, and read the [Classifying K–12 Blended Learning](#) white paper.

[*Making Mastery Work: A Close-Up View of Competency Education*](#). **Nora Priest, Antonia Rudenstine, and Ephraim Weisstein, with Carol Gerwin**. This report from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation examines the work of 10 schools participating in the Proficiency-Based Pathways Project. Use this resource to examine what mastery-based approaches to teaching and learning look like when implemented.

[*Breakthrough Models for College Readiness*](#). **Next Generation Learning Challenges**. This resource provides practical details of 20 school models funded by NGLC and is focused on their various academic and financial approaches and the technology tools used. These brief profiles can be used as case studies to better understand different design options for next generation learning.



Leading Change in Next Generation Learning

This section will help you focus your strategic planning on key issues in designing next generation learning and provides some tools for you to navigate the transition to a radically different way of teaching, learning, and leading a school. You'll find process-oriented materials focused on the kind of school redesign that has the potential to dramatically improve outcomes for more students in more cost-effective ways.

Guiding Questions

- Will you be starting a new school or program, or will you be redesigning all or part of an existing program? What are the pros and cons to consider for each approach?
- How will you roll out next generation learning in your school, district, or CMO? Will you use a [phased approach](#), a [full-scale change approach](#), or a [pilot approach](#)? What are the pros and cons of each approach to consider?
- What is your month-by-month strategy, and what are key benchmarks along the way (e.g., board approval meeting, charter application deadline, student and teacher recruitment, grant funding deadlines) to get you to the first day of pilot/implementation? (Note: Consider using the [Breakthrough Model Planning Timeline](#) referenced in the Tools.)
- Who needs to be on your planning team? Who are key stakeholders that need to stay informed and be involved at key points in the planning?

“Engage a wide team of participants, frame the model as deeply as you can and be willing to be nimble. At the same time, know what you need to hold sacred as non-negotiable elements and establish a strong system of accountability and reflection to ensure the model moves forward as you implement.”
– Stefanie Blouin, Franklin
Central Supervisory Union

Leading Change in Next Generation Learning

Guiding Questions (continued)

- What are the likely “sticky” issues that will raise concerns and be met with resistance (e.g., that technology will replace teachers, fairness in recruiting students, etc.)? How will your planning process address these concerns?
- What are the state policies and district requirements that will impact your program design? Are there possibilities for waivers when a policy conflicts with your design? Which state policies and district requirements support innovation and next generation learning programs?

Resources

[Change Management: Key Theories to Consider When Extending Reach](#). **Public Impact**. This briefing paper from OpportunityCulture.org details the eight major strands of change management in education. This paper can be used to help you understand the key theories of organizational change management and help your schools that are working in different contexts make successful and significant changes for both students and teachers.

[Next Generation Learning: The Pathway to Possibility](#). **Andrew Calkins and Kristen Vogt**. This white paper provides an in-depth overview of what next generation learning requires based on the 10 attributes from a student's point of view. Pay close attention to the framework, which lays out the six dimensions of next generation learning and illustrates how the impact and efficacy of each dimension work together to ensure more effective design/redesign.

[Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills—A State Policymakers Guide to Competency Education](#). **Chris Sturgis and Susan Patrick**. This issue brief from CompetencyWorks details the different approaches that states are taking to introduce mastery-based practices and the mechanisms of support they are putting into place for educators. You can use this resource to get a sense of the big picture issues, including policies that will shape your own approach to competency-based, next generation learning.

Leading Change in Next Generation Learning

Resources

[Strategic Planning Tools. National School Boards Association.](#) **National School Boards Association.**

This set of tools will help involve your team and community in order to build capacity for ongoing change.

[Learning Futures: A Helpful Guide.](#) **Innovation Unit.** This guide describes a full suite of tools and resources to help teachers and schools increase student engagement in learning through project-based learning and extending learning beyond the school walls. Use the whole-school resources in particular to plan for the organizational conditions needed for change to be successful.

Tools

[Resource Check Tool.](#) **Education Resource Strategies.** Use this questionnaire to identify how well the resources in your district/CMO are aligned to support next generation learning strategies.

[Breakthrough Model Planning Timeline.](#) **iNACOL, NGLC, and the Donnell-Kay Foundation.** This timeline traces the primary tasks for starting a personalized, blended, competency-based learning program from initial strategic planning and model design to program start. It is a living document that will continuously be updated. Use this timeline to map when you will need to address each task's objective and the associated key questions and then offer recommendations to improve this resource for future users.

*"Most things will take twice
as long as you think."*

**- Joan Massey,
Touchstone Education**



Designing Next Generation Learning

There are three major components to designing next generation learning: setting goals; crafting the design with respect to the academic, staffing, financial, technology and infrastructure models; and assuring assessment, quality, and continuous improvement. The questions, resources, and tools in this section are organized by these three components.

1. Setting Goals

Clearly defining student outcomes will shape the new program design. Schools can use the tools and resources below to map learning outcomes and carefully examine and define goals for learner success. We encourage you to set goals that are attainable and sustainable and define specifics such as number of students to be served, increases in proficiency, and graduation rate.

Guiding Questions

- How are you preparing students for college and career readiness? How are you defining student success? (For example, success may mean that the student becomes an informed citizen, a college graduate, or an employee prepared for a particular career field.)
- What are the most essential learning objectives for your students? How do these objectives translate into a set of explicit and measurable competencies?
- How will you know your students are successful, and how will you measure progress toward specific competencies as well as overall student success outcomes?
- What implications will your student success goals and learning objectives have on your program's design?

Designing Next Generation Learning

Resources

[*A Complete Definition of College and Career Readiness*](#). **David Conley (EPIC)**. This actionable paper describes what your students should know and be able to do for college and career readiness. Use this paper to help guide goal setting for college and career readiness that can then be defined and addressed with increasing detail and measured through multiple, appropriately complex measures.

[*Opportunity by Design: New High School Models for Student Success*](#). **Leah Hamilton and Anne Mackinnon**. This report from the Carnegie Corporation can be used to help you realize the full power of the Common Core and consider principles for redesigning and reshaping schools to support teachers and maximize key resources, rather than implementing partial solutions.

[*The Art and Science of Designing Competencies*](#). **Chris Sturgis**. In this CompetencyWorks paper, innovators share their lessons learned to help you understand how to build powerful competencies, engage teachers, and integrate lifelong learning competencies. You can also use the companion wiki to engage stakeholders.

2. Crafting a Next Generation Learning Design

Driven by the learning outcomes that you define, your design will incorporate two components: the learning design itself (personalized, competency-based, blended) and the learner support structures of the design (academic, technological). You may want to revisit [*Understanding Next Generation Learning Models*](#) for examples of blended, personalized, competency-based programs as you consider the specific features of your own program. Successful implementation will revolve around reinventing traditional structures in the following areas:

- A. [*Academic Model*](#) (content, delivery, learner support)
- B. [*Financial Model*](#) (funding models, policy implications)
- C. [*Staffing Model*](#) (role definition, professional development)
- D. [*Technology and Infrastructure Model*](#) (resource allocation, technical support)

Designing Next Generation Learning

A. Academic Models

Academic models include the context, culture, and learning environments that advance and deepen student learning. Imagine creating a school culture that maximizes student learning time by “rethinking” what the traditional school day looks like. You will need to make choices among the many different approaches to enable next generation learning. Choosing how you organize learning opportunities and interactions among teachers, students, content, and assessment will determine your academic model. Good academic, social, and personal supports for students are interwoven into the design of courses and curricula, platforms, staffing models, pricing structures, and tech-enabled tools.

“Over the course of last semester we got much clearer about the degree of support that the students need and how to make that happen so that they were also becoming more independent learners.”

- Louise Waters,
Leadership Public Schools

Guiding Questions

- Which academic models can generate better learning outcomes for your students? Does it make more sense for your school, district, or CMO to use a model that’s already complete (for speed and consistency) or piece together portions of a number of models, creating a combination that might work better for your context (for flexibility and customization)?
- How will your model integrate online and face-to-face learning? How does your model operationalize mastery-based progression? What forms of active and inquiry-based learning are incorporated into your design? How will you ensure that students learn collaboratively when they are moving at their own pace?
- What is your philosophy toward student support? How does your model support students academically, socially, and emotionally? How will you meet the needs of all students while providing targeted support to those who need it most?

Designing Next Generation Learning

Guiding Questions (continued)

- What policies, paradigms, and resource structures must change in order for these designs to be implemented effectively?
- What are the nonnegotiables in your new learning design? Does the policy environment within your school, district, and state support them?

Resources

[*How Digital Learning Contributes to Deeper Learning*](#). **Carri Schneider and Tom Vander Ark**. This briefing paper from Getting Smart identifies three primary ways that digital learning promotes deeper learning and provides tools and resources for new academic models. Your team can consult this document to explore how you might utilize technology to personalize skill building to better prepare students for deeper learning activities; to foster deeper learning through simulation, collaboration, and creating high-quality work products; and to expand access to quality courses and effective teachers.

[*Project 24—Curriculum and Instruction*](#). **Alliance for Excellent Education**. This web-based resource can help school leaders map out new academic content designs. Your team can review the publications and practice examples catalogued on this site to identify the key elements of deeper, blended, and personalized learning models you will adopt and adapt.

[*Project 24—Use of Time*](#). **Alliance for Excellent Education**. This web resource discusses varying academic models and how they use varying schedules to construct the learning environment. Use the specific case studies to plan for new scheduling models in your school(s).

Designing Next Generation Learning

Tools

[Ed Tech Map](#). **New Schools Venture Fund**. This web-based tool identifies existing tech products for next generation learning in terms of curricula, talent management, instructional systems, and data systems that can help you think about the options for your model design.

B. Financial Models

Next generation learning financial plans redefine how funds are traditionally allocated. Although there are a handful of existing innovative approaches to resource allocation strategies, none currently exist at scale. This section will provide you with a starting point for considering new creative options.



Guiding Questions

- What are the financial implications of your academic model? If it is not sustainable on public funds, how might you reconsider your model's use of resources?
- How does the use of technology in your model increase costs? In what ways does the use of technology in your model decrease costs?
- How will your approach to implementation (phased approach, full-scale change, pilot approach) affect your financial model in the short- and long-term?

Designing Next Generation Learning

Resources

[*Funding Students, Options, and Achievement*](#). **John Bailey, Carri Schneider, and Tom Vander Ark.** This report from Digital Learning Now! offers four design principles of a student-based funding system: Weighted, Flexible, Portable, and Performance-Based. This report can help you identify opportunities for rethinking how next generation learning should be funded as well as consider the ways in which existing state and district finance systems will support or hinder your next generation financial model design.

[*Financial Planning Summary*](#). **Public Impact (Opportunity Culture).** This document describes the expected savings and costs of implementing new design models. This can be used to help you look at cost analysis across the varying model designs presented in the document. Financial planning tools for specific staffing models may be found at OpportunityCulture.org.

[*Getting Down to Dollars and Cents: What Do School Districts Spend to Deliver Student-Centered Learning?*](#) **Center for Reinventing Public Education.** This report describes funding issues related to student-centered learning approaches: authentic instruction, mastery-based assessment, and real-life learning experiences outside the school walls or school day. You can use this to guide discussion and decision making around financial implications for your particular learning environment.

Tools

[*DREAM*](#). **Education Resource Strategies.** Dream uses NCES Common Core Data (CCD) to generate cost models for districts. This tool allows you to adjust key cost levers in your district to see the impact to budget and other areas.

[*Financial Planning Template*](#). **Afton Partners.** This NGLC Breakthrough Business Model template can be used to help you develop a yearly planning budget for your next generation learning program.

Designing Next Generation Learning

C. Staffing Models

At the same time that new academic models transform the nature of education, breakthrough models embrace the principle that rethinking resource allocations and staffing models will allow dramatically improved outcomes to be achieved. Thinking through what the new role of the teacher will be and planning for human resource capacity in your models are key to successful next generation program design. The professional development needs of teachers and staff will be as unique as the staffing model you design, and the success of next generation learning in your school, district, or CMO is tied to how effective the professional development is. Professional learning communities as a powerful form of professional development in next generation planning and design are discussed in greater detail in [*Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders*](#).



Guiding Questions

- Do you currently have the human resource capacity to support the academic model of your next generation learning design? How will you realign teaching schedules and extend the learning day if needed?
- How will you maximize student time with master teachers? How might you make use of tutors and counselors, adopt co-teaching strategies, and incorporate technology-based content to allow teachers to focus on deeper learning strategies and attend to the needs of students who struggle the most?
- Which policies, regulations, and contracts need to be considered when designing your staffing model?
- What is your philosophy of professional development? What training will staff need to have in order to effectively implement your new program? How will you ensure that staff members have time during the school day to work together and learn from each other?

Designing Next Generation Learning

Resources

[Staffing Model Details](#). **Public Impact (Opportunity Culture)**. On this webpage, you will find detailed descriptions of school models that are designed to allow your teachers to achieve the best student outcomes to reach more students and help peer teachers produce excellent results, too. You can use this resource to consider how different staffing models and various blended learning schedules might work in your school.

[Tailoring Models to Fit Your School](#). **Public Impact (Opportunity Culture)**. This webpage can help your planning team adapt staffing models to better match your school and your students and teachers. It identifies key factors to consider such as values-alignment, constraints, and what defines an “excellent teacher.”

[Next-Gen Models Break New Ground. Promote System Redesign](#). **Tom Vander Ark**. This blog post draws out some new ideas in staffing models from four NGLC grantees. Engage your teams in conversation by using this article to learn what practices may be feasible for your school or district.

[Teacher & Staff Selection, Development & Evaluation Toolkit](#). **Public Impact (Opportunity Culture)**. This resource includes job descriptions, competencies, and companion tools that may be used within the processes you use for your teachers and staff for selection, evaluation, and individual professional development.

D. Technology and Infrastructure Model

Your academic, financial, and staffing models will require specific technological infrastructure—data systems, bandwidth, and equipment—as well as technical support and facilities usage. The technology exists today to accomplish many of the design features of next generation learning, but the tools for the most advanced and sophisticated technology needs are not “there” yet. Many schools have created workarounds and are manually handling processes that should be automated or are working closely with technology providers to create the tools they need.

Designing Next Generation Learning

Guiding Questions

- Do you have adequate facilities, equipment, and bandwidth to support this design/redesign?
- What resources are needed so that technical support is proactive, responds to requests in a timely manner, and is agile enough to adapt to changing needs? Will you need a full- or part-time IT position at your school?
- Are you prepared to be innovative in finding solutions to tech-based challenges? Are you willing to perhaps create your own technical solutions and/or platforms to support next generation learning?

Resources

[*What Are the Technologies, Curricular Resources, and Educator Supports Needed to Support Personalized Learning?*](#) **Innovate to Educate: Personalized Learning Symposium.** Use this quick three-minute video from practitioners in the field to gain insight into the infrastructure and educator support needed for personalized learning models.

[*Blended Learning Implementation Guide*](#). **Digital Learning Now!** Starting on page 26, this guide gives you a comprehensive look at the infrastructure and support systems needed for blended learning. It can be used as a planning guide for your team.

[*Re-Engineering Information Technology: Design Considerations for Competency Education*](#). **Liz Glowa.** This issue brief from CompetencyWorks examines components and elements of effective competency-based information systems. Because most systems were developed for course-based models and no perfect competency-based information system currently exists, you can use this resource to identify core functional capabilities, data standards, and interoperability standards required to meet the needs of your next generation learning design as well as observe current practices of early innovators in competency-based education.

Designing Next Generation Learning

3. Assessment, Quality, and Continuous Improvement

New approaches to learning and revised definitions of success—including those established by the Common Core State Standards and a growing emphasis on deeper learning—demand new ways to measure both the process and the outcome of learning. New technologies allow formative assessment of learning to become a daily function to guide next steps in learning. Next generation learning helps students progress to higher levels of learning by harnessing the data emerging from online content to help teachers and administrators make immediate decisions about instruction and support for individual students. At the same time, new models require new ways to determine their effectiveness.

Guiding Questions

- What indicators will you use to determine if your initiative is effective in helping students reach the outcomes you have identified? What other Common Core-aligned indicators are necessary for accountability purposes? How will you measure progress toward your goals?
- How will you assess individual student learning and achievement of mastery? What concerns for equity might need to be addressed?
- How will you provide real-time data and learner analytics to your teachers and students to inform instruction and learning? How will you help staff determine which interventions and instruction to provide based on individual student and classroom-level data? In general, how will you help educators learn to be effective users, interpreters, and integrators of data?
- Does your current data system have the capacity to deliver these data? Does it have the ability to deliver data in a format that has meaning for staff and students? Does it integrate data from multiple sources?

Designing Next Generation Learning

Resources

[*Measuring Quality From Inputs to Outcomes: Student Learning Performance Metrics and Quality Assurance for Online Schools.*](#) **iNACOL.**

This report provides you and your leadership team with a set of indicators for demonstrating overall system performance. It examines measures for proficiency, individual student growth, graduation rate, college and career readiness, and closing the achievement gap that make sense in blended and online environments. You can use this resource to develop specific metrics for measuring quality in your program.

[*Creating a Transparent Mastery and Assessment System.*](#) **iNACOL.** This webinar will help you learn how to build out a competency-based assessment system. Strategies to engage students and teachers in assessment include offering ongoing professional development, identifying clearly understood learning targets, and using assessments that incorporate “real” work.

[*On the Road to Assessing Deeper Learning: The Status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia.*](#) **Joan Herman and Robert Linn.** Results from a study by UCLA’s National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing indicate that the two consortia developing assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards are likely to produce tests that support goals for deeper learning, especially complex thinking, communication, and problem solving. Your team can use this report to consider how you might make use of these assessments in your efforts to measure students’ deeper learning.

Designing Next Generation Learning

Tools

[*Project Overview*](#). **Buck Institute for Education**. Use this tool to design projects that assess deeper learning by embedding formative and summative assessment activities within project-based learning (PBL) experiences.

[*Transition Planning for Next Generation Assessments*](#). **Pearson Online Testing**. Although geared toward state-level decision making, this planning tool can help you conduct a needs analysis and think through a strategic plan for implementing next generation online assessments like the Common Core-aligned assessments from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium.



Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders

Creating a Professional Learning Community

A professional learning community (PLC) is defined as an “extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular work environment or field” (*Wikipedia* 2011). It is often used in schools as a way to organize teachers into working groups and may be particularly useful for implementing next generation learning. A PLC is an action-oriented, ongoing, embedded professional development framework. It moves beyond discussion toward solutions that are evidence-based. Participants share challenges, ideas, and practices; examine student work, their teaching practice, and outcomes data; brainstorm potential interventions and responses; and work together to create new solutions and test them out. A community may be organized within a school or across schools around similar roles (e.g., principals, teachers, counselors) or specific issues (e.g., 6th grade transitions, English/language arts content, assessment of deeper learning). You may want to consider your planning team as a PLC—one that starts with design and start-up and evolves into a learning community focused on implementation of, fidelity to, and reiterative improvement of the next generation learning design.

Guiding Questions

- Do you currently have a PLC structure in place that you can utilize? If not, how can you establish a PLC? Who will be involved? How will it be structured?

“Before launch, I wish I had established a stronger system of ongoing professional development to support the reflective practice and continuation of learning for the teachers. We had set aside periods of time for collaborating—3 per week—but these occurred during the school day and other issues (students, management, etc.) cropped up. The team then got into the practice of dealing with crisis management versus professional discussion, reflection, and learning.”
- Stefanie Blouin, Franklin Central Supervisory Union

Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders

Guiding Questions (continued)

- What are the key “problems of practice” related to next generation learning that your PLC should focus on?
- How will PLC members be supported to move from discussion to action?
- How can the PLC leverage technology to plan, implement, evaluate, and revise your design?

Resources

[Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement](#). **Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker**. This research-based resource guides you through recommendations drawn from the best practices found today in schools across the nation for continuously improving school performance.

[EPIC-Ed](#). **U.S. Department of Education Connected Educators Project**. This online environment for educators allows you to collaborate, share expertise, and access resources to strengthen your ability to plan, implement, and sustain technology-enabled learning initiatives.

Tools

[PLC Tools and Resources](#). **AllThings PLC**. This site provides proven tools educators can use to establish their schools' baseline performance, set goals, plan future initiatives, and evaluate efforts toward collaboration and joint decision making.

“We found that the most effective strategy through which to garner district-level support, ensure clarity about the work, and scale the work quickly was to set up structured learning time both for district staff and for school staff. Our key lesson to date is to remember that everyone throughout the system is a learner, and our learning community is much larger than Whittemore Park Middle School.”
- Judy Beard and Beth Havens, Whittemore Park Middle School

Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders

Hosting A Kickoff Event

Involving stakeholders in the planning and design of your new initiative will improve the likelihood of a successful implementation. It is as important to identify all of the key stakeholder organizations and individuals in the community as it is to figure out true public engagement in each step of the planning and design process. Consider how you will communicate with and involve students, family, community, educators, after-school programs, community-based organizations, social services, early childhood programs, businesses, and chambers of commerce.

A particular challenge when first engaging these stakeholders, however, is that it is difficult to imagine what next generation learning will look like without a familiar context or examples. The resources in this section can help you develop a kickoff event for stakeholders to help them visualize what next generation learning is and what it might look like in your school, district, or CMO. The event is structured so that stakeholders can be active contributors to your next generation learning design, providing important feedback and creative ideas from their unique perspectives.

First, we suggest you review [Convening Rhode Island Around Digital Learning](#) by Meg Evans of Innosight Institute (now the Christensen Institute). As a case study that describes the planning, agenda, and sessions of the “Innovation Powered by Technology” conference hosted by the Rhode Island Department of Education for school leaders, teachers, legislators, field experts, parents, and students, it is a good example of this kind of kickoff event. You can follow the progress of the project since the kickoff with this [interim report](#) and [website](#).

Pre-Event Inspiration

Ask participants to read and view one or more of the following resources in order to gain a better understanding of next generation learning. These resources will help get them excited about what this new approach to learning can offer.

[NGLC Breakthrough Models for College Readiness](#). **Next Generation Learning Challenges**. This slideshow presents a snapshot of 20 NGLC-funded, breakthrough model schools. Have stakeholders view this to gain an understanding of what models currently exist and imagine what your program might look like.

Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders

[Assessment All The Time?](#) **iNACOL**. This CompetencyWorks.org blog post from Bill Zima paints a vivid picture of what role assessment should play in new learning models. Your stakeholders can use this resource to discern what is integral to good assessment.

[When Success is the Only Option: Designing Competency-Based Pathways for Next Generation Learning](#). **iNACOL**. Stakeholders can review this white paper to gain a comprehensive overview of what competency-based education looks like and how to move from a time-based system to a mastery-based system.

Have participants begin to discuss the following questions as they review the material:

- What did you like about the models presented? What did you dislike?
- What do you believe are the instructional problems that these models are trying to solve? Does your school, district, or CMO face similar challenges?
- How will a shift to next generation learning affect you?
- What do you need to know more about?

Opening Session

Select a few videos from this collection to show to participants as a way to kick off discussion about the opportunities that next generation learning may offer your school, district, or CMO.

[Blended School Videos by Model Type](#). **BlendMyLearning.com**. These videos are organized by the schools' blended learning model: Flex, Station-Rotation, Individual Rotation, and Lab Rotation.

Engaging the Planning Team and Stakeholders

Breakout Session: Force Field Analysis

Group the participants into teams and have them conduct a force field analysis exercise. The feedback from this exercise will be helpful in ensuring all issues have been brought forth as you move toward design planning.

[Force Field Analysis: Analyzing the Pressures For and Against Change](#). **MindTools**. This website explains the idea of force field analysis and also provides a free “worksheet” that will help you brainstorm drivers and barriers to implementing change through next generation learning approaches.

Teams should identify the top-five drivers and barriers to implementation for next generation learning within the school, district, or CMO. Next, have teams ask themselves how the drivers and barriers might shape a new approach to teaching and learning.

Each team will report out to the full group their top drivers and barriers and their initial thoughts on new approaches to teaching and learning. Allow the large group to vote for the top-three drivers and the top-three barriers.

Breakout Session: Issues Discussion

In this breakout session, create four teams, with each focused on a specific model element—academic, financial, staffing, and infrastructure. Have each team consider their model element in light of the top-three drivers and barriers and new approaches that the large group catalogued. Each team should develop a list of challenges and opportunities as well as issues they want to learn more about.

If time allows, have each team also respond to the *Guiding Questions* in this toolkit that relate to their model element.

Closing Activity

Have one member from each team report the highlights of their breakout discussion to the full group of participants. Record the issues for later use in ongoing planning and design meetings. Have the full group agree on next steps for after the event.

Reviewing Additional Tools & Resources

Online and Blended Learning

[Starting an Online or Blended Learning Program](#). **iNACOL**. This webinar on starting your own online or blended learning program will guide you through the critical components of a successful program implementation.

[Digital Learning in Class and Beyond](#). **iNACOL**. This webinar on various blended learning models, led by Education Elements, provides a best practice from Alliance Public Schools.

[How to Implement Blended Learning](#). **Digital Learning Now!** This infographic on implementing blended learning can assist you in understanding the process of implementation of new learning models.

[Planning for Quality within Keeping Pace with K–12 Online & Blended Learning 2012: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice](#). **Evergreen Education Group**. Starting on page 44, consider the major strategic planning questions presented within four key categories: Content, Teaching, Technology, and Operations.

Competency-Based Education

[Aligning Competencies with the Common Core: A Making Mastery Work Webinar](#). **iNACOL**. This webinar provides an overview of Boston Day and Evening Academy's transition to competency-based education and how they worked to align competencies to the Common Core.

[The Learning Edge: Supporting Student Success in a Competency-Based Learning Environment](#). **iNACOL**. This paper provides an exploration into what it means to provide support for the individual learning needs of students. It will help you generate reflection, analysis, and feedback.

[Strengthening High School Teaching and Learning in New Hampshire's Competency-Based System](#). **Alliance for Excellent Education**. This report will help you understand how two New Hampshire high schools have transitioned to a competency-based system.

Reviewing Additional Tools & Resources

Personalized Learning

[Innovate to Educate: System \[Re\]Design for Personalized Learning](#). **Mary Ann Wolf**. Explore the definition of personalization and school models and practices found in this report from the 2010 symposium hosted by the Software & Information Industry Association, ASCD, and the Council of Chief State School Officers which outlines five essential elements and five policy enablers of personalized learning.

Assessment

[Getting Ready for Online Assessments](#). **Digital Learning Now!** This is the third paper in a series of interactive papers that provides specific guidance regarding the adoption of Common Core State Standards and the shift to personal digital learning.

[Project 24—Data Systems and Online Assessment](#). **Digital Learning Day/AEE**. This webpage of resources will help you understand the role of assessment and data-driven decisions in digital learning.

[Teaching and Assessing for Transfer](#). **National Research Council**. Review this chapter in *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century* to ground your assessment of deeper learning in the research base for assessing students' development of transferable cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies and to consider how formative assessment may in itself promote deeper learning.

Student Support

[Ready for College: Student Support in High Expectations/High Need Schools](#). **Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation**. This toolkit was developed to provide you with principles of practice for student support in high-expectations/high-need schools.

[The After-School Corporation \(TASC\)](#). **ExpandedED Schools**. This website focuses on expanding the school day for all kids. The ExpandedED Schools network provides public elementary and middle school students a longer school day with more opportunities for learning.

Reviewing Additional Tools & Resources

Technology

[Project 24—Technology and Infrastructure](#). **Alliance for Excellent Education**. This website provides an overview as well as resources and testimonials for technology and infrastructure in action. This resource can be used to demonstrate what BYOT (bring your own technology), mobile learning, and other technology initiatives could look like in your district.

Policy

[Digital Learning and Technology: Federal Policy Recommendations to Seize the Opportunity—and Promising Practices That Inspire Them](#).

Alliance for Excellent Education. This policy brief outlines high-level policy considerations for helping you remove barriers to digital learning implementation.

[Policy and System Enablers](#). **Deborah Delisle, Susan Patrick, Mark Schneiderman, and Roberta Selleck**. This discussion with leading education reformers about the public policies, systemic structures, and educational culture helps you understand key factors in implementing and supporting the redesign of education around personalized learning.

[Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions](#). **Council of Chief State School Officers**. You can use this framework, which was developed by the Innovation Lab Network states, for defining college, career, and citizenship readiness for all students as a compass for your own next generation learning design.

Reviewing Additional Tools & Resources

Reading Compelling Books

Consider reading and discussing one or more of these books with your planning team for inspiration and motivation to RETHINK learning in K–12 education today:

- [*How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*](#) by Paul Tough
- [*Getting Smart: How Digital Learning is Changing the World*](#) by Tom Vander Ark
- [*Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*](#) by Chip Heath and Dan Heath
- [*Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*](#) by Clayton M. Christensen, Michael B. Horn, and Curtis W. Johnson
- [*How Lincoln Learned to Read: Twelve Great Americans and the Educations that Made Them*](#) by Daniel Wolff
- [*21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn*](#) by James Bellanca and Ron Brandt
- [*The One World Schoolhouse: Education Reimagined*](#) by Salman Kahn
- [*No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*](#) by Samuel Casey Carter
- [*Delivering on the Promise: The Education Revolution*](#) by Richard A. DeLorenzo, Wendy J. Battino, Richard M. Schreiber, and Barbara B. Gaddy Carrio
- [*Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools*](#) by Steven Brill

About the Writer

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Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) accelerates educational innovation through applied technology to dramatically improve college readiness and completion in the United States. NGLC is a partnership led by EDUCAUSE and includes the League for Innovation in the Community College, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Funding is provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Washington, D.C. With more than 4,400 members, iNACOL represents a diverse cross-section of pioneers at the forefront of K–12 education, including teachers, charter schools, school districts, state education agencies, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, research institutions, and content and technology providers.

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