

DEEPER LEARNING

For Every Student Every Day



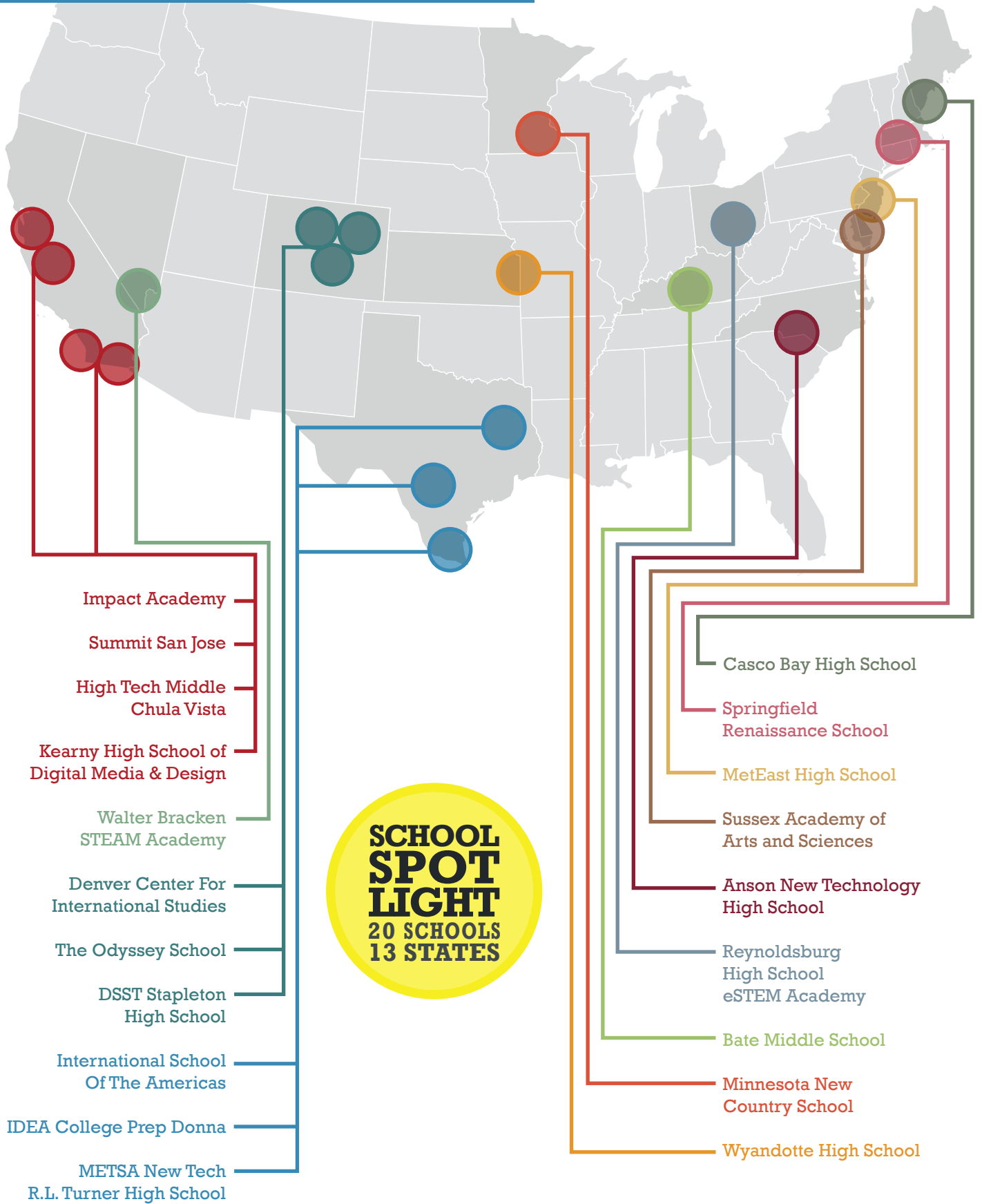
Executive Summary

Authors:

Tom Vander Ark
Carri Schneider



Map of Deeper Learning Profile Schools



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A [survey of chief executives](#) conducted by the [The Business Council](#) and [The Conference Board](#) makes clear the priority on work skills.¹ Work ethic is the clear winner. The next four priorities describe the demands of the new workplace—teamwork, decision-making, critical thinking and computer literacy. The “3 Rs” come next on the priority list.

As Tony Wagner notes in his most recent book, *Creating Innovators*, there is often a mismatch between what is taught and tested and what is required by the new economy. Wagner suggests the skills required for work, learning, and citizenship are converging. “Schools aren’t failing and don’t need reform.” Instead, says Wagner, “we need to reinvent, re-imagine our schools.”²

About twenty years ago, hundreds of people began that re-imagining—they launched new schools and networks. Ten of those school developers, profiled in this paper, continue to support the progression of schools where students graduate with the skills and dispositions that college admission boards and CEOs seek.

While the need for career and citizenship preparation grows as the economy becomes more demanding and our country becomes more diverse, this decade represents an opportunity to significantly improve the preparation of American students. The implementation of common college- and career-ready standards, the shift to next-generation assessments and the prevalence of affordable personal digital devices create the conditions for a national shift to personalized learning. The development and adoption of new tools and school models that blend the best of face-to-face learning and personalized online learning represents a historic opportunity for improvement and reconsideration of priorities.

In many cases, a decade of standards-based reform lifted expectations and improved options, but had the unintended consequence of narrowing the curriculum. Compared to current states standards, the [Common Core State Standards](#) (CCSS) adopted by most states incorporate critical thinking, effective communication, and working collaboratively. The new common standards don’t imply or require complete standardization. Rather, they create the opportunity to develop engaging and personalized learning experiences for every student, every day.

Implementing new standards and digital learning models represents a significant challenge, but it also represents an opportunity to create schools that work better for students and teachers—and society as a whole. More broadly, there is an opportunity to create systems of schools that empower social mobility and prepare young people for civic contribution. Taking full advantage of the historic shifts underway requires a reconsideration of learning goals, pedagogical models and the basic structure of our learning institutions.

It is no longer a question of academic success or work preparation or civic contribution, but rather a combination of all of these. We need to create engaging opportunities for all young people to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to thrive in the information economy and in diverse communities.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation explains, “Deeper Learning is an umbrella term for the skills and knowledge that students must possess to succeed in 21st century jobs and civic life. At its heart is a set of competencies students must master in order to develop a keen understanding of academic content and apply their knowledge to problems in the classroom and on the job.”³



Six Deeper Learning Competencies:

Master Core
Academic
Content

Think
Critically and
Solve Complex
Problems

Work
Collaboratively

Communicate
Effectively

Learn How to
Learn

Develop
Academic
Mindsets

In an effort to better define Deeper Learning, the Hewlett Foundation has identified six Deeper Learning competencies that are essential to prepare students to achieve at high levels and succeed in college, career and civic life:

1. **Master core academic content.** Students develop and draw from a baseline understanding of knowledge in an academic discipline and are able to transfer knowledge to other situations.
2. **Think critically and solve complex problems.** Students apply tools and techniques gleaned from core subjects to formulate and solve problems. These tools include data analysis, statistical reasoning, and scientific inquiry as well as creative problem solving, nonlinear thinking and persistence.
3. **Work collaboratively.** Students cooperate to identify and create solutions to academic, social, vocational and personal challenges.
4. **Communicate effectively.** Students clearly organize their data, findings and thoughts in both written and oral communication.
5. **Learn how to learn.** Students monitor and direct their own learning.
6. **Develop academic mindsets.** Students develop positive attitudes and beliefs about themselves as learners that increase their academic perseverance and prompt them to engage in productive academic behaviors. Students are committed to seeing work through to completion, meeting their goals and doing quality work, and thus search for solutions to overcome obstacles.

PROFILED SCHOOLS.

In the summer of 2013, American schools had the opportunity to nominate themselves or others for consideration as a Deeper Learning School. Responses from dozens of schools exhibited strong alignment with the Hewlett Foundation's Deeper Learning competencies. School leaders filled out detailed questionnaires and the Getting Smart team conducted interviews to gather additional information such as classroom examples and student success stories.⁴

Twenty schools were selected with the goal of presenting a diverse national distribution of new and improved schools, rural and urban schools, district and charter schools and schools that debunked common myths about Deeper Learning. While the schools are diverse in their composition, they share a common purpose—to give all students the opportunity to learn in a Deeper Learning environment.

These schools systematically engage young people as scientists, writers, producers, inventors, collaborators and problem solvers in ways that provoke inspired learning and valuable preparation. Most are high schools—where Deeper Learning has most often been lost to courses and credits, uninspiring experiences, and multiple-choice tests.

PURPOSE & OUTLINE.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how each of these schools is working to promote Deeper Learning. Examples illustrate how these schools are leading the way.⁵ Personalized, blended and Project-Based Learning are key strategies for promoting Deeper Learning.

The second half of this paper takes on common myths about these goals—namely that Deeper Learning costs more, requires superstar teachers and is only for high performing schools and communities with a history of high rates of college attendance.

In addition to the paper, Appendix A offers two-page profiles of each school we selected for inclusion in the Deeper Learning school project that act as complementary resources to the report's findings. Appendix B offers the Hewlett Foundation's profiles of its Deeper Learning Networks. Appendix C contains a document produced by the Hewlett Foundation that describes in detail the Deeper Learning competencies and includes student demonstrations to explain each.

We hope that this project is seen as another step in bringing Deeper Learning to every student. We hope that reading about these schools and their success will challenge misconceptions and inspire action. We hope that we can find ways to continue to learn from one another. We hope that you will share your success stories with us.

We also hope that this paper offers something for policymakers who are looking to create space for Deeper Learning to thrive. It is important for schools, districts and networks to acknowledge the role of local, state and federal policies in the implementation of Deeper Learning. It is equally important for policymakers and influencers to acknowledge the impact of policy decisions on schools.

CONCLUSIONS.

Bringing Deeper Learning to every student will necessitate shifts in policies related to student assessment, staffing, school funding, teacher preparation and professional development and more. Often, it is the elimination of existing policy barriers that can create the necessary policy space for educational innovation to thrive. For example, Deeper Learning can more easily be catalyzed with the elimination of policy barriers around notions of age cohorts fulfilling seat time requirements while accumulating required credits.

"Towards A New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning" co-authors Michael Fullan and Maria Langworthy identify four fundamental barriers that stand between the theory and practice of Deeper Learning, including inadequate development of the following:⁶

1. Policies and system-level strategies that enable diffusion;
2. Accepted ways of measuring deep learning;
3. Adoption of new pedagogical models that foster deep learning; and
4. Knowledge of how students adopt deep learning practices.

In order to keep us moving toward the goal of Deeper Learning for all, we need to fill these knowledge gaps. We can do so by collecting and disseminating examples of promising practices, creating opportunities to learn from one another, challenging misconceptions about Deeper Learning and then creating the conditions for success in our own communities.

The transition to CCSS and personalized digital learning create a historic opportunity to consider ways to improve educational equity and graduate students who are better equipped for college and career. We found twenty schools that provide a good starting point for a system-wide evolution to Deeper Learning.

10 Practices that Promote Deeper Learning

**GOOD GOALS.
EQUITY FOCUS.
POWERFUL DESIGNS.
TEACHER SUPPORT.
SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW.
STRONG CULTURE.
GOOD HABITS.
SENSE OF PLACE.
POWERFUL PROJECTS.
GREAT QUESTIONS.**

GOOD GOALS.

Schools that promote Deeper Learning competencies have thoughtful goals; they personalize learning and align supports, staffing and schedule. [Danville Schools in Kentucky](#) is a great example. Their goals focus on powerful learning experiences, growth, global preparedness, communication and community. Engaging all students in Deeper Learning starts with making it a priority.

EQUITY FOCUS.

Schools that promote Deeper Learning engage all students—not just honor students and highly supported students—in experiences that help them master content, develop academic mindsets, promote collaboration and critical thinking and develop communication skills. According to principal Stephen Mahoney, “The accomplishments of [Springfield Renaissance School’s](#) students prove that a child’s ZIP code does not determine his or her destiny.”

POWERFUL DESIGNS.

Deeper Learning schools are designed so that everything—structure, staffing, schedules and supportive technology—works together for students and teachers. It’s always a dynamic process, especially for leaders inheriting a school rather than designing from scratch.

TEACHER SUPPORT.

The districts and networks studied provide a web of teacher support. They make it increasingly possible for all of their teachers to achieve great results with Deeper Learning goals, common instructional frameworks, learning platforms, and strong development systems for adult learners.

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW.

Profiled schools are competency-based, meaning that they ask students to “show what they know” in a variety of ways, including publicly presenting what they have learned. Students progress based on demonstrated mastery.

STRONG CULTURE.

All of the schools have a powerful intentional culture. “We’re a values-first organization,” said [Bill Kurtz, CEO of DSST Public Schools](#), an example of a network with a strong culture where students receive regular feedback on attributes of character development. “Each human being strives to be fully known and affirmed for who they are and to contribute something significant to the human story,” said Kurtz.

GOOD HABITS.

Deeper Learning schools help students build “habits of mind” including building perspective, asking questions and making connections. Some, like [Springfield Renaissance](#), complement these with habits of work: readiness to learn, active participation, assessing and revising, contributing to group work and completing homework.

SENSE OF PLACE.

Deeper Learning schools extend the learning day, invite resources in, leverage community assets, encourage service learning and take students on learning trips.

POWERFUL PROJECTS.

Profiled schools make good use of [Project-Based Learning](#). Project goals, often derived from student interest, always incorporate standards-based assessment, and periodically result in public demonstrations of students’ work. Some schools frame projects as civic- or work-connected challenges, but they also conclude in rigorously scored assessments.

GREAT QUESTIONS.

“We want people to be perplexed—to embrace the paradox of starting new schools,” said High Tech High founder Larry Rosenstock. Deeper Learning schools incorporate some of this “perplexity” into the curriculum by integrating subjects, assigning projects, hosting science fairs and creating demanding writing prompts.

Endnotes

- ¹ **The Business Council.** “CEO Survey Results.” February 2013.
http://www.thebusinesscouncil.org/assets/TCB_BCS_FEB_2013.pdf
- ² **Vander Ark, T.** “CEOs Want Hard-Working Decision-Making Team Players.” Getting Smart blog. May 2013.
<http://gettingsmart.com/2013/05/ceos-want-hard-working-decision-making-team-players/>
- ³ **ibid.**
- ⁴ Quotes from school leaders and staff members are based on personal communication by phone, email or in-person conversation unless otherwise cited.
- ⁵ This report also brings together numerous blog posts from <http://www.GettingSmart.com> and http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/on_innovation/ that have been updated and repurposed for inclusion herein.
- ⁶ **Fullan, M and Langworthy, M.** “Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning.” June 2013.
<http://www.newpedagogies.org/>