

# How Districts Can Organize High Schools Toward a New Vision for Student Learning

Calling for high school redesign is nothing new. For decades, reformers have been proclaiming that America's industrial model of high schools is defunct. They argue that it's not working to have schools organized to sort students through grades, courses and lock-step schedules, where individual attention and support comes mostly through extra-curricular activities.<sup>i, ii, iii</sup> Though these reformers' efforts have created boutique high school models, like [Big Picture across the U.S.](#), and some notably high performing and small high schools in New York City, high school structures generally remain frustratingly unchanged.<sup>iv</sup> **Post-pandemic, however, the nation has reached a now or never inflection point, in which the need for change is urgent. It's an opportune time, since advances in the field now give us all the puzzle pieces that must come together for lasting redesign that will truly enable the outcomes and experiences that all high school students need to thrive in the future.**

The pandemic brought new attention to the challenges our high schools face, and, concurrently, communities are raising their expectations for graduates. More students are off-track to reach the number of credits they need to graduate, and districts report increasing disparity in learning outcomes.<sup>v, vi, vii</sup> At the same time, we've seen an increase in chronic absenteeism and growing alarm over the mental health of teenagers.<sup>viii, ix, x</sup> In this challenging context, districts across the country are defining ambitious goals that include higher standards for their high school graduates and an expanded vision for the knowledge and skills the high school experience should support. Common goals include critical thinking, creativity, citizenship, collaboration, literacy, flexibility and the skills and passion to become lifelong learners.<sup>xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi</sup> Communities are demanding that high schools set students up to succeed and persist with college and career. A growing number of states are holding high schools accountable for postsecondary outcomes, such as college persistence.<sup>xvii, xviii, xix</sup>

We see districts across the country trying to deliver against these challenges by adding courses, programs, and staff; but they're operating in an antiquated high school structure, and leaders are changing very little about the instruction and/or curricula through which students engage. Further impediments to success, students' learning is still measured through courses completed, teachers are still responsible for more than 100 students' success in core subjects, and extra time and attention to help students stay on track usually only comes after failure. And, because the efforts layered on top of existing structures address the challenges in piece-meal ways, the solutions sometimes conflict with



each other and have unintended consequences that make the overarching goals harder to accomplish. For example, we are finding that the way schools are typically adding career-course pathways often crowds out time and instructional resources for students to build foundational skills, access advising and mentorship, catch up when they fall behind, and/or take advanced course-work in core subject areas.

While districts are creating inspiring visions for high school graduates and aspirational descriptions of the experiences they want their students to have, they're not identifying a coherent set of strategies to reach these goals or addressing the changes in high school organization that must accompany them. In this brief, we explore the six shifts in the organization of resources necessary to achieve these ambitious objectives and to build toward an integrated vision of high schools, actually organized in ways that enable the strategies required to reach it. We also share how school systems can pay for these shifts and how they can structure the broader system roles that are required for sustainability and scale. We conclude with thoughts on how district leaders can get started now with moves that build toward these bigger shifts.



## A New Vision for High Schools

Over many years of research and practice, we've seen "break-the-mold" schools **focus on six shifts in the way high school is organized**. These moves support the types of learning experiences and outcomes we see communities focused on creating for their graduates. They include:

- Targeted and Flexible Time and Attention
- High-Quality, Results-Oriented, and Student-Centered Curricula and Learning Sequences
- Partnerships and Technology to Expand Learning and Wellness Opportunities
- Relationship Building and Advising Support
- Diverse, Collaborative, and Supported Teacher Teams
- Transformational School Leadership

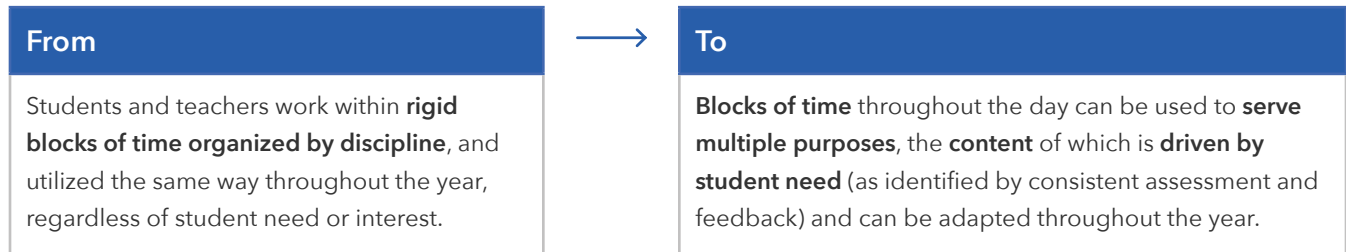
While these ways of organizing are in many cases not novel, this moment presents a unique opportunity for school systems to begin to work toward them at a far greater scale. The pandemic disruption, and the innovations developed in response to it, have created a new openness and opportunity to pursue some of the necessary changes in a widespread manner; these include altering teachers' roles, leveraging external partners, and moving to more flexible schedules.

In addition, learning resources are continuing to evolve to better support these new ways of organizing. For example, high-quality instructional materials, and our understanding of how to adapt instruction to support students in reaching the high standards embedded in them, have expanded dramatically over the last decade.<sup>xx, xxi</sup> And technology is enabling course sharing across schools and the leveraging of state-of-the-art instruction and curricular materials for core and supplementary courses. Finally, the growing availability of ways to organize content based on competencies rather than disciplines, and to measure mastery of skills and content will enable much more strategic use of student and teacher time.

In this context, schools and systems have a unique opportunity to begin to move toward more strategic ways of organizing. Each of the six shifts needed to do so is described in detail in the following pages.

## SHIFT #1

### Targeted and Flexible Time and Attention



For over a hundred years, time and groupings in high schools across the country have been organized in similar ways. Students and teachers work within rigid blocks of time and standard group sizes of 25-35 students, organized by discipline, and utilized the same way throughout the year, regardless of student need or interest. This outdated one-size-fits-all approach is causing students to fall behind at alarming rates.

We've seen that high-performing high schools use a variety of strategies to organize time and attention far more flexibly, so that they can better address students' individualized needs and interests.

One simple and common strategy is to **extend blocks of time in certain disciplines or grades** where more time is consistently needed. This can be paired with an interdisciplinary approach that integrates two or more traditional subjects (like English and social studies) into one instructional block, so that teachers have more agency to allocate time to different pieces of content as needed.

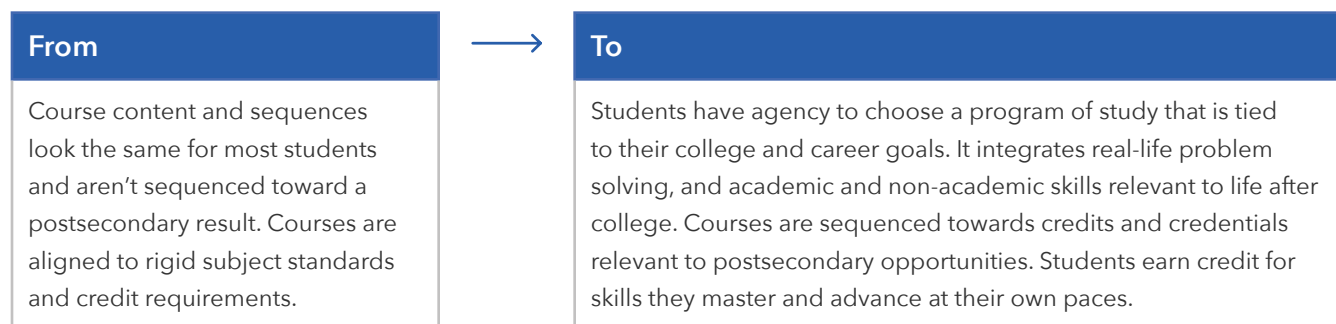
A more complex move is **to set aside deliberately flexible time in the schedule**—daily, weekly, or even just a few times a year—which can be adjusted according to student need. In one high school we recently studied, the entire afternoon was set aside for a combination of student support, clubs, and project-based learning time; schedules varied significantly from student to student and week to week. [Lawrence Public Schools achieved notable results](#) using a different approach: They designed an "Acceleration Academy" that delivers targeted support to struggling students three times a year through week-long academies.<sup>xxii</sup>

We've learned that there's no one right way to organize a more flexible model. That said, we've seen that any successful approach **uses detailed data to measure the mastery** of student knowledge and skills, and then differentiates pacing and resources in response. **Students who need more support get more time, smaller group sizes, and support from expert teachers**, who know them well, to grapple with rigorous content in the areas in which they're struggling. We've also seen that **a team-based approach** that enables educators to be more easily organized by student need and teacher expertise often underlies these flexible approaches.



## SHIFT #2

### High-Quality, Results-Oriented, and Student-Centered Curricula and Learning Sequences



Students increasingly report that their high school experiences don't seem relevant to their future goals and aspirations; this is one factor contributing to high rates of chronic absenteeism.<sup>xxiii, xxiv</sup> These perceptions are validated by labor market data. Today's in-demand jobs require some form of postsecondary learning, but few high schools are organized to help the majority of their students take meaningful steps towards college-level credits or other credentials that meet that demand. What's more, sought-after professions demand skills—like creative and analytical thinking, and digital literacy—that are largely ignored in the common rigid frame of subject-specific instruction.<sup>xxv</sup>

Schools and districts across the country are working hard to address these issues. Those making the most progress are focusing on deliberately organizing so that ALL students—not just “high-flyer” groups—have learning options that move them toward their postsecondary goals.

To start, school and district leaders are designing a **variety of programs of study (sequences of courses and learning experiences) from which students can choose**, and that all lead to concrete outcomes, like credits and credentials that are applicable to post-graduation opportunities. Cities, like New York, and states, like Tennessee and Delaware, have done significant work on this in recent years and provide strong examples of successful rollouts.<sup>xxvi, xxvii, xxviii</sup>

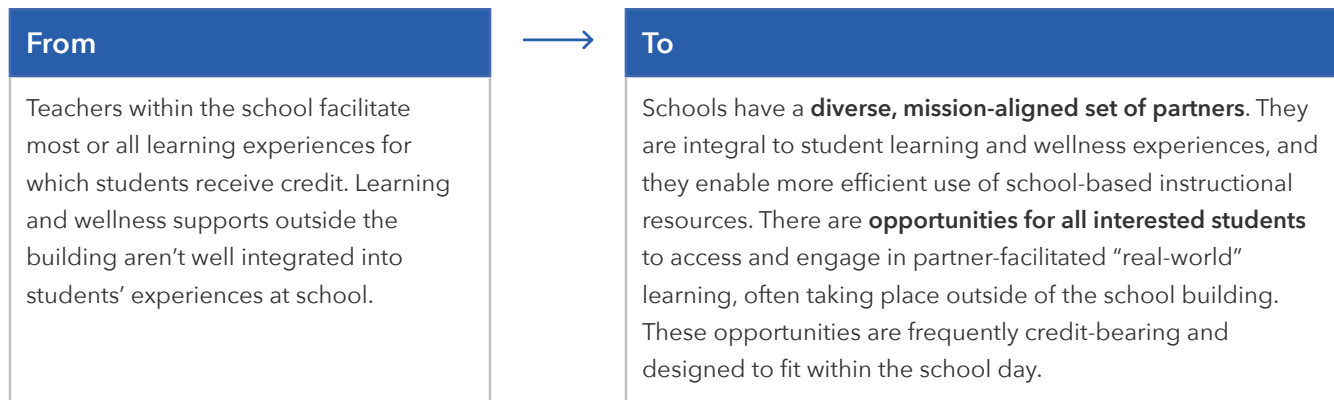
In addition, within these programs of study, leading schools and districts **are integrating more opportunities for students to engage in “real-world” learning experiences** outside of the classroom. These might include internships that build skills directly relevant to future careers, project-based courses that source projects from local business, or dual enrollment courses that provide a preliminary college experience. Programs like these, more directly tied to life after high school, engage students more deeply and help them explore college and career options while building the skills they'll need to pursue them.

Finally, some schools and districts are beginning to support these more student-centered and real-life progressions of learning with **competency-based systems** that enable learning standards to be packaged and paced differently for different students, and give students options to provide evidence of learning in a variety of ways.<sup>xxix</sup>



### SHIFT #3

## Partnerships and Technology to Expand Learning and Wellness Opportunities



Shifts to include a greater breadth of options and additional "real-world" experiences require a more expansive view of where and how learning can happen—and who can provide it. Local communities are full of resources to meet students' desire for authentic learning and alignment to their individual interests and goals. The growing power of technology, too, is a key tool. Many schools are beginning to integrate this broader view of learning resources into their approach. But these opportunities often are more ad hoc, designed for small groups of students or targeted areas of content. This limits their impact on student learning and makes it hard to clear barriers around scheduling, transportation, and other logistics. It also makes it hard to create sustainable models because only a few students drop existing school-based offerings, resulting in limited opportunities for resource reallocation.

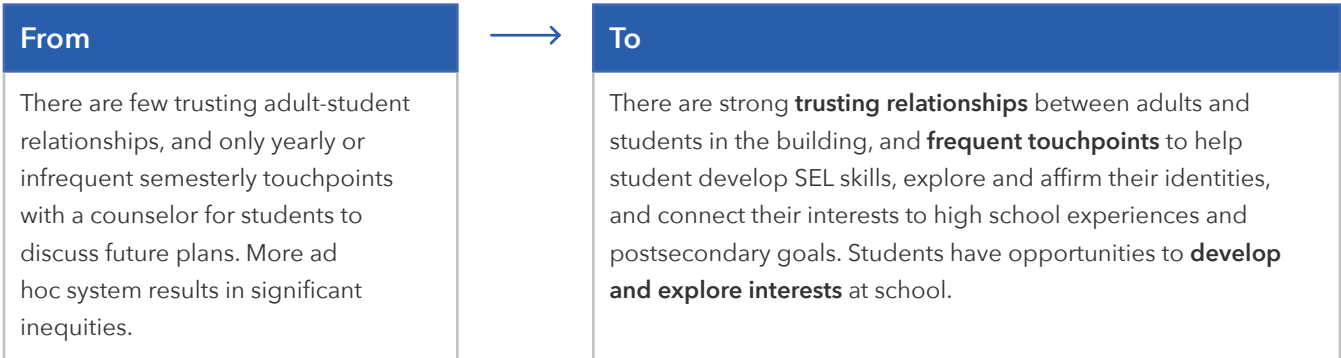
What does it look like when schools are fully harnessing the power of learning resources outside school walls? They organize deliberately to integrate learning technology and partnerships as a part of the school experience for most or all students. Opportunities like dual enrollment, work-based learning, and hybrid providers are **integrated into programs of study** that create a coherent program, no matter where the learning happens. **Consistent schedules** enable these partnerships to occur in predictable ways and support students' direct engagement with industry professionals and partners during the school day.<sup>xxx</sup> **Deep investment in a narrow set of "primary partner" relationships** eases logistical constraints and enables deeper integration. And **deliberate structures and routines**—shared data systems, community advisory bodies, dedicated coordinator staff, and explicit collaboration structures—facilitate shared work across the school and its partners.

Finally, schools that expand partner-driven learning opportunities to broader groups of students put an **explicit focus on ensuring equitable access**. This can include ensuring compensation for students' work-based learning, providing transportation, and defining clear expectations for, and supporting access to, prerequisite requirements.



# SHIFT #4

## Relationship Building and Advising Support



Research shows that students who have caring relationships with adults at school are more likely to succeed.<sup>xxxii</sup> Such strong and supportive relationships with adults are a critical part of student belonging, which is also foundational to students' success.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Further, adults who know students deeply play a critical role in helping them explore their interests, set postsecondary goals, and shape a more diverse set of options for well-aligned experiences at school.

While many of the nation's former students can tell a story about a caring adult who shaped their life path in high school, our schools aren't set up to ensure that each student experiences this critical support with equity and excellence. High school teachers typically teach ~150 students, and there's little time or space for them to focus on individual needs or develop meaningful relationships. Counselors—also at the center of student relationships and support toward postsecondary goals—have even higher loads, averaging ~385 students per year in 2024.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

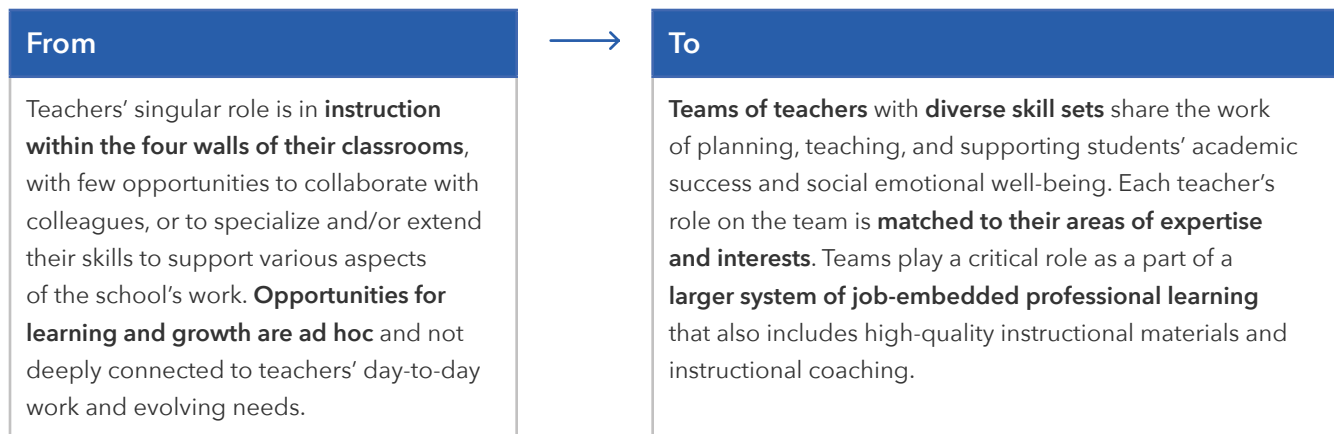
Many leading-edge schools have structured themselves differently to much more systematically ensure student-teacher relationships and advising supports. First, they **organize their staffing models and schedules with student-teacher relationships in mind**. In larger high schools, students in each grade are often grouped into smaller cohorts that share a set of core teachers; these teachers then get time to regularly meet about their shared students, review progress, and problem-solve, so that all stay on track for postsecondary success. To give teachers bandwidth to focus more deeply on their pupils, school leaders organize schedules so that teachers are responsible for fewer unique students. Schools can do this without adding cost by organizing interdisciplinary courses or reducing the number of courses students take at any one time.

Second, schools often adopt an **advising model** to create a dedicated structure for relationship building, social-emotional support and skill development, and postsecondary planning. Each staff member is assigned a small group of students to meet with regularly to work toward these goals, supported by a high-quality curriculum.

In addition to—or embedded within—time spent on advising, many schools dedicate student time to **supporting college and career planning at key transition points**. This might mean a freshman course dedicated to career exploration, goal setting, and pathway selection, or it could mean additional supports for juniors and seniors through the college or job application process.

## SHIFT #5

### Diverse, Collaborative, and Supported Teacher Teams



Nothing is more integral to students' experiences and success at [school than their teachers](#).<sup>xxxiv</sup> Yet, just as today's high schools are not set up to support students, they're also not structured to support teachers. With little help, educators are expected to support well over a hundred students, with varying needs and abilities, and to offer support beyond just academics. At the high school level, they juggle multiple classes with little time to grade, review data, create curricula, and lesson plan. The job's demands and its isolation have worsened since the pandemic, and, unsurprisingly, teacher satisfaction has plummeted.<sup>xxxv, xxxvi</sup>

Schools that organize the teaching job in ways that better support students, while also creating a doable, inspiring, and fun job for teachers, approach the work of teaching as a team enterprise, not an individual one. Namely, teams of teachers share ownership of and accountability for instruction. This can mean a shared content team splits accountability for student growth in a particular subject area across a range of grades, or it can mean a team of teachers that shares students collectively owns monitoring and responding to their progress.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

School leaders deliberately give these teams the resources they need to thrive:

- Teams are organized in ways that **balance diverse skillsets** and include relevant instructional expertise.
- Each team member's **role is specialized** to match their skills, interests, and career goals.
- Teachers on each team have **frequent dedicated time** together to plan instruction and respond to students' needs.
- **High-quality instructional materials** create a strong foundation for learning and collaboration that happens in teams and through connected coaching, supported by content experts.

## SHIFT #6

### Transformational School Leadership

From	→	To
A <b>vision for high school</b> is held by few individuals at the school, is <b>not tied to a comprehensive plan</b> , and is unfamiliar to most teachers and students. <b>Teachers and students are not involved</b> in school decision-making.		<b>All students and adults</b> in the building embrace a <b>vision and set of core values</b> for high school transformation. Responsibility for achieving this vision is <b>shared</b> among all levels of staff, with leaders ensuring that school <b>initiatives are connected</b> to the vision and <b>continuously monitored</b> for improvement.

Making the shifts we've described above requires sweeping transformational change.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Yet, too often, leaders approach efforts to reorganize high school in an incremental manner—whether within very small groups of people that they ask to work against the existing system, or isolated to a series of smaller initiatives that may actually conflict with implicit aspects of the existing culture. As a result, changes might flame out quickly, often leaving stakeholders with a feeling of “change fatigue.”

School leaders that successfully drive transformational change lead differently, organizing change efforts intentionally, and in ways that are highly consistent with change management research. Specifically, they first engage a broad set of students, staff, and families to develop **a shared vision** that articulates how the high school is changing, and why. Second, they dedicate significant resources toward **changing the culture** amongst students and staff to better support the vision for change. This might mean spending 10 minutes each day in a school-wide community meeting focused on culture or investing a part of a staff member's time in culture work.<sup>xxxix</sup>

To ensure that movement toward the vision stays on track, transformational leaders **make managing and monitoring change someone's explicit job**, appointing a staff member (or a group of staff) to own the redesign process and lead a coalition tackling the change work. These leaders of change, however, don't work alone; a part of their focus is **diffusing change work through other core teams** at the school. For example, the existing instructional leadership team may serve as a decision-making body for the change work, parent or community groups might serve as advisory bodies, and grade-level teams may take ownership over efforts to manage and monitor school culture.<sup>xl</sup>

Finally, leaders recognize that transformational change doesn't happen overnight. Rather, it takes years and is a combination of short-term wins and larger scale shifts that capitalize on those wins. Strategic efforts **organize to monitor change with deliberate routines**, and, in response, evolve and improve efforts in pursuit of the ultimate shared vision.





# Redesigning with Financial Sustainability in Mind

Moving toward redesign will require more spending in some areas. This may include curricula, teacher training, and new types of staff aligned to the new design. *However, over the long term, these new ways of organizing can be cost neutral when administrators use the strategic resource shifts suggested above and no longer need to budget for more traditional—and often less effective—ways of organizing.*

Therefore, while long-term redesign spending patterns will necessarily look different, redesigned schools often do not need to cost more. For example, in a redesigned high school we may see more teachers in the 9th and 10th grades to invest in individualized support during those crucial years. But this new spending can be offset over time through less spending on low-enrollment course offerings, as upper-grades courses are better organized into deliberate sequences integrating partner-led experiences. The table below summarizes how more strategic ways of organizing commonly unlock spending shifts.



## COMMON LONG-TERM SPENDING SHIFTS

If we organize for:	We can free resources by:
Measuring and engaging students in reaching learning outcomes based on demonstrated proficiency.	Optimizing student time, engagement, and agency
Deliberate course offering and sequences that integrate learning standards across subjects and outside experiences	Lowering the amount of time students spend in traditional teacher-directed classrooms and siloed learning
More flexible allocation of student time matched to need.	Reducing spending on remediation and “box-checking” credit recovery
Small, flexible group sizes targeted to need and lower student loads in core courses.	Strategically raising class sizes for certain subjects and grades
Engaging instruction, student/teacher relationships and strong connections with outside expert support	Reducing spending on behavior specialists, attendance deans, and some wellness supports
Expanding course offerings through cross-school collaboration, community college partnerships and online courses	Reducing low enrollment course offerings and extra spending on small high schools

Transformational change—and a return to pre-redesign expenditure level—is gradual. Typically, it takes three to five years to free resources from the old ways of organizing, so that they’re available to fund the school’s new needs. Appendix B shows how investments in redesign evolve over time.



## The Role of Systems

Many high schools effectively redesign in spite of, rather than because of, the systems that support them. But it's hard to maintain and pay for the reorganization of schools within systems that are designed to reinforce-or even require- the status quo. School successes within such structures are the exception, not the rule. In almost all cases, for redesign efforts to sustain and scale, system leaders need to take calculated steps to catalyze change and create new and improved surrounding structures, systems, and supports.<sup>xli</sup>

Leaders must take the four following steps to support effective, sustainable, and scaled redesign:

1. **Set the stage for transformation:** Co-create and socialize a **district-wide theory of action for redesign**, and clear priorities for focus
2. **Rethink the rules, including clearing existing barriers:** Develop a supportive **policy context that allows for key areas of flexibility** but also maintains **guardrails for rigor**
3. **Support schools in their transformation:**
  - Provide high-quality, **differentiated school design support** to help school leaders implement strategic high school redesign efforts
  - **Build the bench of providers**, designing human capital and community partner infrastructure that align to the needs of new designs
  - Provide **curricular resources, assessments, and learning sequences** that enable students to master competencies at different paces and in different places, integrated with projects
4. **Sustain ongoing transformation by allocating system-wide resources:**
  - **Design a portfolio strategy** in a budget-friendly way that ensures students can access a variety of experiences aligned to their interests
  - **Implement equitable and design-aligned funding models/policies** and other funding support (e.g. start-up funds)

## The Path Forward: A “Do Now, Build Toward” Approach

The reorganization of high schools is urgent and important. But like much change, it's also hard and multifaceted. Further, this overhaul presents a unique challenge: it will require that the educators steering it break away from the way that they themselves experienced school.

The leaders we've learned from have been successful in these large-scale change efforts by taking a “Do Now, Build Toward” approach. Specifically, first, they've chosen an entry point that uniquely catalyzes change; it's focused on and responding directly to student needs, while also enabling these leaders to address many aspects of their current structures simultaneously. Second, they don't tackle everything at once, but start small, with a set of “Do Now” moves that build toward the broader vision of how their high schools will change. Critically, they organize to learn from these initial moves as a part of a continuous improvement cycle that keeps the bigger picture vision in mind and consolidates learning as a part of an evolution toward larger-scale changes.

Finally, they deliberately plan for and relentlessly work toward sustainability and scale. They incorporate financial sustainability from the beginning, planning deliberately for how resources might need to shift in the short and long term to enable and sustain new ways of organizing. And, over time, they work to evolve the system in response to what they are learning works for schools; thus, the right change becomes the easy change rather than the hard-fought exception.

In the early 20th century, Albert Einstein said, “The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education.” This no longer has to be true. Over 100 years later, a global pandemic intensified ongoing demands from students, families, and communities to change high school, and brought more openness to the possibility that high schools could in fact change the way they are organized to deliver learning. With this new focus, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the way our nation's high schools are designed, and to restructure how systems and budgets sustain and scale these designs. With these shifts, we can make high schools places where students of many identities, backgrounds, interests, and goals come together not only to learn in the traditional school sense, but also to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to prepare for their unique futures.





# Appendix A

**Shift 1: Targeted and flexible time and attention:** More flexible use of time and staff to enable individualized student learning and support.

**From:** Students and teachers work within rigid blocks of time organized by discipline, and utilized the same way throughout the year, regardless of student need or interest.



**To:** Blocks of time throughout the day can be used to serve multiple purposes, the content of which is driven by student need (as identified by consistent assessment and feedback) and can be adapted throughout the year.

**Shift 2: High-quality, results-oriented, and student-centered curricula and learning sequences:** Student-driven sequences of learning experiences tied to postsecondary goals and supported by high-quality curricula and assessment tools.

**From:** Course content and sequences that look the same for most students and aren't sequenced toward a postsecondary result. Courses are aligned to rigid subject standards and credit requirements.



**To:** Students have agency to choose a program of study that is tied to their college and career goals. It integrates real-life problem solving, and academic and non-academic skills relevant to life after college. Courses are sequenced towards credits and credentials relevant to postsecondary opportunities. Students earn credit for skills they master and advance at their own pace.

**Shift 3: Partnerships and technology to expand learning and wellness opportunities:** Efficient and coherent use of technology and partners supports learning and wellness inside and outside the school building.

**From:** Teachers within the school facilitate most or all learning experiences for which students receive credit. Learning and wellness supports outside the building aren't well integrated into students' experiences at school.



**To:** Schools have a diverse, mission-aligned set of partners. They are integral to student learning and wellness experiences, and they enable more efficient use of school-based instructional resources. There are opportunities for all interested students to have access to and engage in partner-facilitated "real-world" learning, often taking place outside of the school building. These opportunities are frequently credit-bearing and designed to fit within the school day.

**Shift 4: Relationship building and advising support:** Time and roles are organized so that students have caring and trusted relationships with adults who support developing and navigating a personalized plans toward college/career success.

**From:** There are few trusting adult-student relationships, and only yearly or infrequent semesterly touchpoints with a counselor for students to discuss future plans. More ad hoc system results in significant inequities.



**To:** There are strong trusting relationships between adults and students in the building, and frequent touchpoints to help student develop SEL skills, explore and affirm their identities, and connect their interests to high school experiences and postsecondary goals. Students have opportunities to develop and explore those interests at school.

**Shift 5: Diverse, collaborative, and supported teaching teams:** The work of teaching happens in diverse and expert-led teaching teams with MUCH more time to collaborate on understanding students' needs, planning engaging instruction and student supports, and learning.

**From:** Teachers' singular role is in instruction within the four walls of their classrooms, with few opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, or to specialize and/or extend their skills to support various aspects of the school's work. Opportunities for learning and growth are ad hoc and not deeply connected to the teacher's day-to-day work and evolving needs.



**To:** Teams of teachers with diverse skillsets share the work of planning, teaching, and supporting students' academic success and social emotional well-being. Each teacher's role on the team is matched to their areas of expertise and interests. Teams play a critical role as a part of a larger system of job-embedded professional learning that also includes high-quality instructional materials and instructional coaching.

**Shift 6: Transformative school leadership:** New staff, structures, and routines that enable strong culture, leadership, and vision.

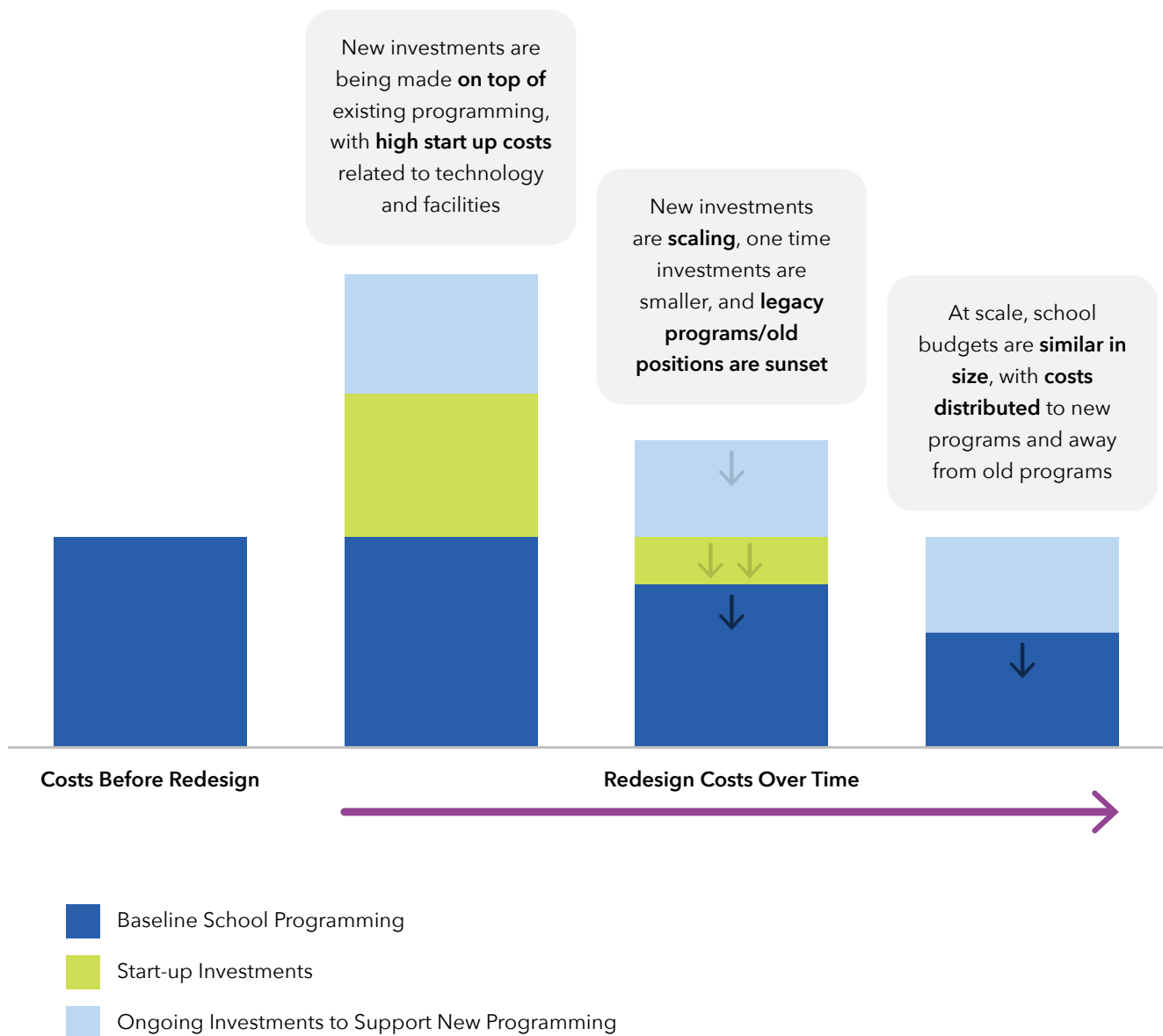
**From:** A vision for high school is held by few individuals at the school, is not tied to a comprehensive plan, and is unfamiliar to most teachers and students. Teachers and students are not involved in school decision-making.



**To:** All students and adults in the building embrace a vision and set of core values for high school transformation. Responsibility for achieving this vision is shared among all levels of staff, with leaders ensuring that school initiatives are connected to the vision and continuously monitored for improvement.



## Appendix B: How Redesign Costs Evolve Over Time



# Endnotes

- i. "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages: The Report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce," National Center on Education and the Economy, June 1990, <http://www.ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Americas-Choice-High-Skills-or-Low-Wages.pdf>.
- ii. Mary Ann Lachat, "Data-Driven High School Reform: The Breaking Ranks Model," Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Lab, 2001, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/ERIC-ED466042/pdf/ERIC-ED466042.pdf>.
- iii. "High Time for High School Reform: Early Findings from the Evaluation of the National School District and Network Grants Program," American Institutes for Research and SRI International, April 2003, [https://www.sri.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/High-Time-for-High-School-Reform\\_Small\\_schools\\_eval\\_2003.pdf](https://www.sri.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/High-Time-for-High-School-Reform_Small_schools_eval_2003.pdf).
- iv. Howard S Bloom, Saskia Levy Thompson, and Rebecca Unterman, "Transforming the High School Experience: How New York City's New Small Schools Are Boosting Student Achievement and Graduation Rates," MDRC, June 2010, [https://mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full\\_589.pdf](https://mdrc.org/sites/default/files/full_589.pdf).
- v. Morgan Polikoff, Daniel Silver, and Isabel Clay, "Beyond Test Scores: Broader Academic Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on American Students," Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), September 2023, [https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/CPReport\\_0923.pdf](https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/CPReport_0923.pdf).
- vi. Greg Toppo, "'Time Is Running Out': Covid-19 Set Back Older Students the Most, Study Finds," The 74, September 13, 2023, <https://www.the74million.org/article/crpe-state-of-american-student-learning-loss-high-school/>.
- vii. Douglas O Staiger, Sean F Reardon, Thomas J Kane, and Erin Fahle, "The First Year of Pandemic Recovery: A District-Level Analysis," Education Recovery Scorecard, January 2024, <https://educationrecoverycorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ERS-Report-Final-1.31.pdf>.
- viii. Robin Lake et al., "The State of the American Student," Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), 2023, <https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/The-State-of-the-American-Student-2023.pdf>.
- ix. Kalyn Belsha, "The Empty Gradebook: As Students Struggle with Remote Learning, Teachers Grapple with FS," Chalkbeat, December 7, 2020, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/12/7/22160183/students-struggle-with-remote-learning-teachers-grapple-with-failing-grades/>.
- x. Lorén Cox, Ross Wiener, and Francesca López, "A Crisis of Student Belonging," The Aspen Institute, June 2024, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/School-Belonging.pdf>.
- xi. "Long Beach Profile of a Graduate," Long Beach Public Schools - Curriculum & Instruction. Accessed August 9, 2024, [https://www.lbeach.org/Assets/District\\_Document/081921\\_Profile\\_of\\_a\\_Graduate\\_-\\_Long\\_Beach\\_Public\\_Schools\\_\(3\).pdf?t=637649761704870000](https://www.lbeach.org/Assets/District_Document/081921_Profile_of_a_Graduate_-_Long_Beach_Public_Schools_(3).pdf?t=637649761704870000).
- xii. "Profile of a CMSD Graduate," Cleveland Metropolitan School District, July 25, 2019, <https://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/cms/lib/OH01915844/Centricity/Domain/7465/resources/ProfileCMSDGraduate-7-25-19.pdf>.
- xiii. "PWCS Profile of a Graduate," Prince William County Public Schools. Accessed August 9, 2024, [https://www.pwcs.edu/about\\_us/strategic\\_plan/p\\_w\\_c\\_s\\_profile\\_of\\_a\\_graduate](https://www.pwcs.edu/about_us/strategic_plan/p_w_c_s_profile_of_a_graduate).
- xiv. "Students Leading The Way - Portrait of a Graduate," Columbus City Schools, 2021, <https://www.ccsok.us/cms/lib/OH01913306/Centricity/Domain/4332/CCS-Portrait-Plan-OnePager-2021.pdf>.
- xv. "Portrait of a Graduate," Hartford Public Schools. Accessed August 9, 2024, <https://www.hartfordschools.org/o/hps/page/portrait-of-a-graduate>.
- xvi. "XQ Learner Outcomes," XQ Institute, 2020, <https://xqsuperschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/XQ-Learner-Goals.pdf>.
- xvii. The College in High School Alliance (CHSA) and Level Up, "Unlocking Potential: A State Policy Roadmap for Equity and Quality in College in High School Programs," Education Strategy Group, 2019, <https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNLOCKING-POTENTIAL-A-State-Policy-Roadmap-for-Equity-and-Quality-in-College-in-High-School-Programs-1.pdf>.
- xviii. "Ready Graduate," Tennessee Department of Education. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://tdepublicschools.ondemand.sas.com/state/performance/ready>; "Ready Graduate FAQ," Tennessee Department of Education. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/data/acct/2023-24\\_Ready\\_Graduate\\_Appeals\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/data/acct/2023-24_Ready_Graduate_Appeals_FAQ.pdf).
- xix. Heather Justice, and Jamie Crowe, "HB 3 in 30: College, Career, or Military Readiness Outcomes Bonus and Exam Reimbursements," Texas Education Agency (TEA), August 8, 2019. <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/government-relations-and-legal/government-relations/hb3-video-series-ccmr-outcomes-bonus.pdf>.
- xx. The Availability and Use of Aligned Materials." June 2022. Edreports. <https://cdn.edreports.org/media/2022/05/EdReports-State-of-the-Instructional-Materials-Market-6.2022.pdf>
- xxi. "Early Literacy Playbook." Instruction Partners. <https://instructionpartners.org/early-literacy/>

- xxii. "The Golden Ticket: Learning from Lawrence Acceleration Academies," New Profit, Accessed August 9, 2024, <https://goldenticketlawrence.newprofit.org/>
- xxiii. Tim Hodges, "School Engagement Is More Than Just Talk," Gallup, October 25, 2018, <https://www.gallup.com/education/244022/school-engagement-talk.aspx>
- xxiv. "Tracking State Trends in Chronic Absenteeism," FutureEd, April 12, 2024, <https://www.future-ed.org/tracking-state-trends-in-chronic-absenteeism/>
- xxv. Victoria Masterson, "Future of jobs 2023: These are the most in-demand skills now - and beyond," World Economic Forum, May, 1, 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills>
- xxvi. Rachel Rosen et al., "P-TECH 9-14 Pathways to Success," MDRC, October 2023, <https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/p-tech-9-14-pathways-success>
- xxvii. "Delaware Pathways," Delaware Pathways, Accessed August 9, 2024, <https://delawarepathways.org/pathways-programs>
- xxviii. "TDOE Announces 21 School Districts Win Grants For Innovative High School Models," Tennessee Department of Education, May 17, 2021, <https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2021/5/17/tdoe-announces-21-school-districts-win-grants---for-innovative-high-school-models-.html>
- xxix. We derived this information from a forthcoming publication by Education Resources Strategies and the XQ Institute.
- xxx. Funding Expanded Early Postsecondary Opportunities." (2024, August 28). Education Resource Strategies. <https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/early-postsecondary-esser-guide/>
- xxxi. Elaine Allensworth and Nate Schwartz, "School Practices to Address Student Learning Loss," EdResearch for Recovery, June 2020, [https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch\\_for\\_Recovery\\_Brief\\_1.pdf](https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_1.pdf)
- xxxii. Dr. Francesca López, Ross Wiener, and Dr. Lorén Cox, "A Crisis of Student Belonging," The Aspen Institute, June 10, 2024, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/School-Belonging.pdf>
- xxxiii. Kathleen Rakestraw, "ASCA Releases Updated Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio Data," American School Counselor Association, February 6, 2024, [https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a7f42419-0e91-4166-8c15-84232e9a2eda/pr\\_ratios-22-23.pdf](https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a7f42419-0e91-4166-8c15-84232e9a2eda/pr_ratios-22-23.pdf)
- xxxiv. Isaac Opper, "Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement," RAND Education and Labor, December 4, 2019, <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/measuring-teacher-effectiveness/teachers-matter.html>
- xxxv. Luona Lin, Kim Parker, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, "What's It Like to Be a Teacher in America Today?" Pew Research Center, April 4, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2024/04/04/teachers-job-satisfaction/>
- xxxvi. Madeline Will, "Teacher Job Satisfaction Rebounds From Last Year's Low. But There's Still a Ways to Go," Education Week, May 15, 2023, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teacher-job-satisfaction-rebounds-from-last-years-low-but-theres-still-a-ways-to-go/2023/05>
- xxxvii. Reimagining the Teaching Job." (2022, November). Education Resource Strategies. <https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/reimagining-the-teaching-job/>
- xxxviii. "Leading Change." Dr. John Kotter. <https://www.kotterinc.com/methodology/8-steps/>
- xxxix. We derived this information from a forthcoming publication by Education Resources Strategies and the XQ Institute.
- xl. Ibid.
- xli. Adapted from forthcoming publication from Education Resources Strategies and the [XQ Institute](#).