Anytime, Anywhere Learning

With so many resources and supports available, there is more and more opportunity for learners to participate in anytime, anywhere learning—and for schools to incorporate such learning into their broad view of achievement. Finding ways to work with learners to accept and assess accomplishments that they demonstrate through learning experiences will help districts’ provisions seem pertinent to learners’ deeply connected lives and will help cultivate the orientation toward lifelong learning that seems increasingly necessary for success in our rapidly evolving world.

Alaska's Chugach School District

Based in Anchorage, Alaska, Chugach School District (CSD) consists of 214 students from preschool to age twenty-one scattered throughout 22,000 square miles of mostly isolated and remote areas of South Central Alaska. CSD is employing 24/7 learning to help span that distance and create a more amplified learning model. The district’s thirty faculty and staff members connect to, and develop partnerships with, parents, the community, and businesses to provide standards-based educational experiences at work, in the community, at home, and in school.

Businesses, communities, parents, students, and staff are all stakeholders in the students’ education. Every student at CSD has a customized Individual Learning Plan, and assessments go beyond recall and memory of arbitrary facts. CSD assessments include contextual (relevant to real life), analytical (ability to apply problem solving techniques to any situation), and skills-based assessments.

Such a distributed partnership model has the potential to help districts manage challenges beyond geographic ones as well as to pursue specific academic goals.

- 22,000 square miles
- 24/7 learning
- Amplified learning
- Distributed partnership model
- Customized Individual Learning Plans
Peer 2 Peer University

Peer 2 Peer University (P2PU) is a grassroots open education project that provides an online community where learners can self-organize around pursuing short, open university-level courses, thereby customizing their learning experiences. By leveraging the Internet and educational materials that are openly available online, P2PU enables high-quality, low-cost education opportunities that are both flexible and resilient.

With a community of about 1,000, P2PU has so far run three cycles (semesters) of courses, with the number of courses doubling each time. Organizers of P2PU courses are volunteers who submit their course ideas, connect with other members, and then receive guidance from a wide array of experts in the community to create a comprehensive syllabus of open materials and a social structure around them. Currently, P2PU is focusing on designing a community-supported mentoring system for organizers and participants. As a next step, it aims to partner with external organizations to cluster courses and create reputable schools of open learning with definitive career trajectories.

The Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation

The Anytime Anywhere Learning Foundation (AALF), a not-for-profit organization, believes that, in order to succeed, students must be digitally fluent lifelong learners and must be able to participate fully in every aspect of social and economic life. AALF is working with educators to ensure that all children have the opportunities and the tools to learn anytime and anywhere, ensuring a more resilient and amplified learning experience. To make such a learning experience possible, AALF contends that students must be granted an education that fosters their innate motivation to learn, encourages academic rigor through relevant application, and connects them with the world they will enter after their studies.

AALF’s focus lies in five areas: promoting the effective use of personal computers and associated technologies for learning; educating school leaders regarding excellent use of technology in learning; serving as an information clearinghouse for educators, policymakers, industry, and members of the media interested in one-to-one computing in education; and raising public awareness regarding the benefits of universal access to technology.
Deepening Connections with Community

In an increasingly connected world, schools have opportunity to consider deepening their connections with community. These connections move beyond traditional school-community relationships to represent a much more interrelated or interdependent arrangement, whereby organizational boundaries blur. With such blurring, the community becomes a resource for learning experiences and schools could become centers of resilience as communities struggle to deal with increasing challenges such as rising rates of chronic illness, financial difficulties, environmental challenges, and natural disasters.

The Strive Partnership

The Strive Partnership, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, has five overarching goals: to ensure that every child is prepared for school, to ensure that every child is supported inside and outside of school, to ensure that every child succeeds academically, to ensure that every child enrolls in some form of postsecondary education, and to ensure that every child graduates and enters a career. To achieve these goals for every child from cradle to career, Greater Cincinnati leaders at all levels of the education, nonprofit, community, civic, and philanthropic sectors are working together as part of the Strive Partnership. This community partnership helps support learners in all parts of their lives, not just inside schools and learning centers, resulting in a resilient educational model.

The Strive Partnership connects community providers by bringing them together to monitor progress toward commonly agreed-upon outcomes. It has rallied stakeholders in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky around seven priority outcomes: kindergarten readiness, fourth grade reading proficiency, eighth grade math proficiency, high school graduation rates, ACT scores, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary completion. The principles that guide The Strive Partnership’s work include a focus on early childhood development and learning, teacher and principal excellence, community support, advocacy to support innovation, and data driven decision making.
Troy Howard Middle School’s Garden Project

Troy Howard Middle School (THMS) in Belfast, Maine, uses its greenhouse, gardens, and other such assets to provide students with hands-on learning in social studies, science, math, and the humanities. The food grown by the students is used district-wide in the school lunch program; some of the food produced is also donated to local soup kitchens and food pantries, thereby teaching community responsibility and social awareness. The remaining produce is sold at the farmer’s market and the local food co-op, creating a small source of revenue to reinvest in the project.

THMS’s goal is to create a district-wide agricultural project that promotes healthy living while integrating the school and its land with the community. At the heart of the gardening program are the students, who are excited about making a real difference in their school and community. The Garden Project affords the students the opportunity to work collaboratively, gain practical work experience, and foster a strong sense of self-confidence while gaining an appreciation for the value of agriculture. This structure encourages a sense of community, connecting people through purposeful and authentic projects that are relevant to their particular situations. The program also provides educators with a framework and activities that integrate gardening within the curriculum. This integration is being achieved through teacher development workshops, school-community partnerships, and in-class teaching that facilitates inquiry-based student projects.

Studio H

- Hands-on learning
- Community responsibility and social awareness
- Collaboration
- Relevant experiences
- Authentic projects

Studio H, the core educational initiative of Project H Design -- a nonprofit design organization that connects the power of design to the people who need it most -- is a high school design curriculum offered to juniors in the Bertie County school district in North Carolina. Studio H provides students with college credit, a summer job, and hands-on opportunities to build real-world projects for the community, creating purposeful and authentic learning experiences. By learning design and construction skills, students develop creativity, critical thinking, and citizenship skills while building assets that the community needs to thrive. Using a design sensibility that values human- and context-driven research, students approach learning through creative problem solving. The development of relevant vocational skills results in workforce-ready youth who have a full understanding of how ideas become real.
Creating A World of Learning

Designing Customized, Relevant, and Authentic Learning Experiences

Moving toward a world of learning involves co-creating with learners more student-driven learning experiences, making greater use of competency-based assessments and new findings in neuroscience. The KnowledgeWorks’ 2020 Forecast highlights our increasing opportunity to create learning experiences that are relevant and authentic and which are customized to meet learners’ needs. Customization can occur at the level of program or approach, individual or institution or through a combination of learning experiences.

EdWorks

EdWorks, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, partners with schools, districts, and states to provide effective, long-term high school improvement solutions. EdWorks uses a model designed to ensure that schools integrate and sustain deep personalization for each student. This model implements four foundational components: establishing a rigorous curriculum and employing high pay-off instructional strategies; establishing a supportive climate and culture within the school; aligning the curriculum and instruction with a well-structured assessment plan; and establishing a comprehensive student support system. EdWorks ensures the quality of its implementation through a system of on-site professional development and on-site technical assistance professionals.

In the fall of 2010, EdWorks continued to develop its model by unveiling a series of school designs that move students firmly into the 21st century world of connected learning. These designs include “Becoming a Leader: Communication, Involvement and Impact”, “Global Connections”, and “Equity of Opportunity; Equity of Outcome.” Each of them aims to provide a rigorous college preparatory curriculum aligned with national standards. In addition, their courses will be taught in a very integrated way, organized annually around relevant “big ideas” or “themes.”
Ohio’s Flexible Credit Program

Credit flexibility is intended to support preparation and motivate learning by allowing access to more learning resources and promoting customization around individual student needs. The flexible credit program would allow students to earn units of high school credit based on a demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in combination with completing hours of classroom instruction.” This alternative would allow students the opportunity to demonstrate content knowledge, move on to content when they are ready, and learn subject matter for credit in ways not limited solely to time spent in a classroom.

This flexibility in earning high school credit would also make it possible for students to own and customize learning through increased opportunities for authentic, real-world experiences that are relevant to their interests and career aspirations. By requiring high schools to offer flexible credit to their students, Ohio is providing opportunities for learners to engage in authentic, relevant experiences by completing coursework; testing out of, or demonstrating mastery of, course content; or pursuing educational options such as distance learning, educational travel, independent study, internships, or community service.

Inverted Learning

The confines produced by our current educational structures (i.e. fixed class schedules, 50-minute bells, etc.) allow for only limited differentiated instruction. Inverted learning allows for more differentiated instruction by putting students in control of their learning process, while teachers act as guides. In this approach, students watch lecture videos outside the classroom, absorbing the material as homework, and then apply the lesson with the teacher in the classroom. By being able to practice what they have learned with help from the teacher, students are able to learn using their preferred learning styles. This method not only makes class time more productive for both teachers and students, but also caters to multiple forms of personalized learning and has been found to increase student engagement and achievement. By incorporating the inverted learning method, teachers create a more customized learning environment for their students, encouraging them to learn at their own pace, in their own way.
Proliferation of Learning Resources

Along with the proliferation of learning platforms, we are seeing a proliferation of learning resources. These resources range from digital textbooks to open-source curricula and education models and include uses of social technology to support learning. Together, they add up to an ever-rich learning commons from which schools and other learning providers, as well as learners, can draw in creating customized, relevant, and authentic learning experiences.

Beyond Textbooks

Virginia’s Beyond Textbooks initiative is exploring the potential of wireless technology and digital textbooks in the classroom. The pilot delivers iPads to fourth- and seventh-grade students, as a replacement for traditional history textbooks. Pearson, whose textbooks are widely used in Virginia, has created multiple iPad applications specifically for the program. The iPad program includes three components: an app with interactive learning games that introduce concepts to students through puzzles and challenges; eText, where students access the social studies curriculum and personalize their text through highlighting, bookmarking, and commenting; and personalized assessments with a remediation app for students to review and self-test.

As a resilient learning platform, the Beyond Textbooks initiative has the potential to bridge the divide between traditional pedagogy and the age of digital learning. Virginia schools hope that the technology introduced in the pilot program will advance their goals of customizing learning for every child and connecting with students who have been immersed in the digital world their entire lives.
MIT Open Courseware (OCW) is a free database of MIT course materials that reflects nearly every undergraduate and graduate course taught at MIT. In 2001, MIT announced that it would publish educational materials from all of its courses freely and openly on the Internet. To date, OCW has shared materials from more than 2000 courses with an estimated 100 million individuals worldwide. By 2021, it hopes to reach one billion people. MIT’s goal is to make available open educational resources such as these OCW tools that can bridge the global gap between human potential and opportunity so that motivated people everywhere can take control of their educations and improve their lives. In making use of such tools, learners can customize their learning experiences using a learning platform that is flexible to their needs and interests.

In 2009, fourteen colleges in Denmark piloted a new system of test-taking: they allowed pupils full access to the Internet during their end-of-year exams. On the morning of the exam, IT experts helped the students set up their laptops, and a teacher stood in front of the class and explained the rules: students could use the Internet to answer any of the four questions, and they could access any site they chose, but they could not message each other or anyone outside the classroom.

The Danish government chose to pilot the program under the belief that, since the Internet is so much a part of daily life, it should be included in the classroom and in examinations. The program aimed to promote relevance and modernity in the Danish school system. This move from traditional to modern schooling is highlighted in the shift from exams that ask students to regurgitate facts and figures to exams that emphasize students’ ability to sift through and analyze information.