CHAPTER 1

Extraordinary Experiences and Outcomes

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Key Points

- Students need to develop in a wide range of areas—cognitive, life skills, and physical and emotional well-being—to thrive in the 21st century.
- Experiences are the variety of activities and interactions that help learners develop. The Leaps for Equitable 21st Century Learning articulates the ten most important experiences for learners to thrive. Experiences are not solely a means to outcomes; they also matter as ends in themselves.
- To foster these outcomes and experiences, learning environments must evolve beyond industrial, one-size-fits-all approaches to schooling by applying the science of learning.



This chapter defines "extraordinary learning for all" by laying out a vision for the outcomes *and* experiences that young people most need to thrive and transform their worlds. First, we describe the outcomes that matter most for learners today. Next, we present a framework called the Leaps for Equitable 21st

Century Learning ("Leaps") that articulates these experiences—activities and interactions that allow students to acquire knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes. Experiences must change for schooling to move beyond a one-size-fits-all model toward a new paradigm for learning that can maximize every child's potential.

As we lay out this vision for outcomes and experiences, we describe insights from the science of learning and development that ground the Leaps. We also provide examples of these Leaps in action at real schools making significant progress. (These examples illustrate the Leaps but do not suggest that each school has achieved perfection).

EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOMES FOR ALL

In the education field, "student outcomes" is a widely understood concept. For many communities, the most prominent aims have typically been academic or easily quantifiable, such as grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores. Recently, it has become more widely accepted that schools must drive toward a more expansive set of outcomes to better attend to their students' needs and prepare them for the demands of our changing world. To build this more expansive set of outcomes, communities broaden the definition of a learner's skillset. Districts and schools have many different names for the idea—"Portrait of a Graduate," "Portrait of a Learner," or "21st-Century Skills." At the core, these outcomes refer to the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes that learners develop as a result of educational experiences.

Graduate Aims are also important because in the work of school design, they determine the rest of the learning environment. Many organizations have done the exceptional work of creating frameworks to broaden our understanding of the outcomes that matter most for learners in this century.[1] We have synthesized a review of more than thirty frameworks from across the field that describe these learning outcomes and organized three areas of focus that provide a set of Graduate Aims that describes the most important outcomes: intellectual prowess, wayfinding, and well-being.

Intellectual Prowess

Schools play a foundational role in fostering cognitive development throughout a learner's life. Educators and caregivers alike have known that key skill development must be built on a foundation of reading, writing, and arithmetic—which is necessary but insufficient for the kinds of skills and knowledge that young people need today.

Intellectual prowess includes the key skills listed previously but also includes the knowledge and skills needed to understand, analyze, and apply

ideas from various disciplines and cultures. It includes artistic knowledge and skills as well as an appreciation of the visual and performing arts; critical thinking, problem-solving, generating ideas or forming and expressing arguments; and content-specific learning, including math, science, and social studies. In this new century, it's also imperative that young people possess computing knowledge such as programming or artificial intelligence (AI) literacy.

At Northern Cass High School in Hunter, North Dakota, the community is undergoing a community design process to migrate from a standards-based system to a competency-based one, where learners are assessed on what they *know* and *can do*, rather than on what they've completed. One of their Graduate Aims is "Problem-Solving and Design." The community aims for students to be knowledgeable about how to define and frame problems, create an approach, and tinker toward solutions. Their Studio high school model is a self-directed, interdisciplinary, project-based learning module that spans six weeks within a semester. As part of Studio two students are working together to construct "Quiet Pods" on campus, where classmates who have attention issues or need peace and quiet can retreat during the hectic school day. The Quiet Pods are the result of this student-designed and -constructed solution. This is one of many examples of students cultivating intellectual prowess through relevant, hands-on learning.

Wayfinding

The role of school in developing young people's cognitive abilities is widely recognized. Yet, caregivers and young people themselves frequently report that school didn't do enough to give them "life skills" such as how to manage their finances and maintain good credit. Schools that aim to develop the whole child know that "wayfinding," described as the ability and assets needed to plan for, manage, and follow through on key decisions about one's life path, has become increasingly important to help young people navigate the vicissitudes of college and career.

Intrinsic Public Schools in Chicago, Illinois, has articulated their Graduate Aims in two dimensions: academic and agency outcomes. Intrinsic's agency outcomes are to develop learners who are independent and persevering—they have the ability to set goals and chart a path toward those goals. To achieve these outcomes, Intrinsic developed an experience for juniors and seniors called "Seminar," a two-year program that prepares students for the world they face after graduation. Learners complete projects where they compare the cost of attendance for various collegiate institutions. They learn financial literacy by pretending to open credit card accounts and evaluate various offers and rates. Students engage in "Networking Night," where they practice talking about their skills and interests with local business leaders and community

members in Chicago. All of these experiences help cultivate skills like adaptability, self-direction, and knowledge of the post-secondary landscape to plan, manage, and follow through with their own best life path.

Well-Being

Students today report higher levels of stress and anxiety than ever before.[2]

To meet the social and emotional needs of young people, learning environments that strive to move beyond the limitations of traditional, industrial-era learning aim for well-being outcomes, including the beliefs and behaviors that support one's mental, emotional, and physical wellness.

For instance, at Van Ness Elementary School in Washington DC, compassion is a key Graduate Aim. Students build compassion by taking time to notice when they observe it and identifying ways that they can care for their class community. For example, during their morning routine, students are often invited to share and celebrate examples from the previous day when a classmate showed compassion. This builds their awareness of what compassion looks like in action and helps them identify strategies they can use to show compassion to themselves and others throughout the day.

But building extraordinary learning environments for all requires something else. Not only do these environments attend to the *outcomes* that students will achieve, but they also think about the *experiences* of learning, both inside and outside the classroom. Too often in our field, we focus singularly on outcomes, and even more singularly on outcomes that are easy to measure and quantify. Rarely are schools and systems thinking about the activities and interactions that characterize learning.

Experiences are not merely a means to better outcomes. Experiences are meaningful in their own right. In the next section, we will lay out our approach to experiences in the Leaps for Equitable 21st Century Learning framework.

EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES FOR ALL

Learning experiences are the variety of activities and interactions that allow people to acquire new knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes. When you think about the best learning experiences you've ever had, likely they had some features in common: perhaps they were multisensory, requiring movement or tactile objects, or maybe these experiences made you feel confident because they built on your knowledge and skills. These profound moments have likely occurred when the outcomes are meaningful and the experiences attend to our heart, mind, and body.

Experiences are often framed as a path to the outcome—you do the hands-on science activity to pass the test. **But we have seen that experiences in and of themselves are critical for learners, and we must take them seriously as we design the learning environments of the future.** The following are the ten key experiences that define traditional, industrial-era learning, as well as the ten Leaps that can help us reimagine how we educate young people.

We narrate each Leap by defining it, explaining why it matters for learning, and giving examples of how the Leap shows up in some of the most innovative and extraordinary learning environments across the country. These Leaps work together to support the holistic development of intellectual prowess, wayfinding, and well-being.



1. High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities

The science of learning and development suggests that experiencing high expectations can boost students' confidence in their ability to succeed.[3] It can also help mediate against identity threats young people may feel due to stereotypes and bias. In addition, having a broad range of learning opportunities helps students build a deeper understanding of themselves and their purpose and passion. When all young people are held to high expectations and have a wide variety of opportunities to learn, they are able to make more progress and succeed.[4] This in turn helps ensure that all learners are prepared for college, career, and beyond.

To achieve outcomes that are not determined by birth or class, all learners must experience a belief that they are capable, are worthy, and have unlimited potential to progress toward their aspirations.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

DaVinci RISE[5] does not compromise on its high expectations of youth who are navigating foster care, housing instability, probation, and/or other circumstances that have caused disruptions in their academic journeys. To uphold high expectations while also attending to the additional responsibilities students have, RISE provides various flexibilities and supports that enable students to meet those expectations:

- **Colocation Model with Nonprofit Organizations:** In-person learning occurs across three "learning sites," allowing RISE students to master RISE's curriculum in the places that work best for them. Each site is located within a well-resourced social service provider where students access counseling, case management, tutoring, job readiness training, career pathways, internships, extracurricular opportunities, leadership development, and more.
- **Independent Studies Hybrid Model:** RISE has developed a hybrid curriculum inclusive of hands-on project-based learning, career exploration, and adaptive learning technologies. Students digitally access coursework that supports the in-person instruction and project work time they receive on campus. This provides students with additional flexibility in terms of when and where they learn as well as 24/7 access to learning materials in case they need to spend more time with them or would like to accelerate their learning.
- **Flexible Schedule:** Students are able to customize their schedule to meet their unique life circumstances. It is mandatory that students attend in-person courses at least two days per week. However, students can mix

and match course schedules to meet this requirement. When extenuating circumstances prevent students from attending in-person courses, there are added layers of flexibility to complete coursework virtually.

2. Whole-Child Focus

The science of learning and development suggests that learning is a complex process influenced not only by how we cognitively process information but also by how we feel physically and emotionally, our knowledge of ourselves, and our skills and mindsets. For example, destructive emotions stemming from loneliness, anxiety, or insecurity, as well as physical discomfort stemming from hunger or illness, can make it hard to focus on, manage, and make meaning of learning. Nurturing students' social, emotional, and physical selves helps buffer against this and places students in a state conducive to deeper, more lasting learning. For more information, you can use this QR code to delve into Transcend's Designing for Learning Primer:



In addition, a whole-child focus builds knowledge, skills, and mindsets critical for successfully navigating one's professional pathways, personal relations, and health. This is especially relevant given trends like the rising prevalence of mental health challenges[6] and employers' increasing interest in skills like self-direction and collaboration.[7] We know from these examples that so much more matters for the development of human beings. We have social, emotional, and physical selves. While the cognitive and academic dimensions of learning remain foundational, for all young people to truly thrive in and transform the world, school must increasingly nurture the *whole* child. This includes the totality of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical factors that impact their learning, development, character, and overall health and well-being.[8]

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

Van Ness Elementary School in DC Public Schools,[9] which you will read about more in Part 2 of this book, serves an intentionally diverse group of

young people ranging from ages three to eleven. The community supports learners in becoming compassionate, creative, critical thinkers who are constantly working to be positive, contributing members of a cross-cultural community. Van Ness believes that, to achieve these goals, the school must take a whole-child approach, which entails a variety of practices:

- **Strong Start:** To begin each day, students engage in a set of routines that foster safety and connection and that give them practice with strategies to disengage stress. These routines include being greeted by a staff member upon arrival and then receiving a personalized greeting from their teacher at their classroom door to help kids feel connected to at least one adult. Students eat breakfast in their classroom and engage in activities aimed to foster social connection with their peers. Then, students participate in activities that build awareness of how they are feeling and learn strategies for coping with stress. Finally, they set a commitment for how they will contribute to the community that day.
- **Centering Place:** Each classroom has a "centering place" where students can go during the day to regain focus or a sense of calm. In these areas students have a menu of activities that build deeper awareness of what they are thinking and feeling and self-regulate.
- **Multi-Tiered Supports:** The previous two practices are available to all students. Students who need more support also have access to customized interventions and mental health supports that promote appropriate participation. For example, a sensory-motor room allows students to meet sensory and motor needs, facilitating their appropriate participation throughout the day.

3. Rigorous Learning

Rigorous, higher-order thinking promotes deeper, longer-lasting learning because it involves analyzing, synthesizing, and applying.[10] All this helps embed it into long-term memory. While there's a place for memorization, rigorous learning activities are often more interesting than rote activities. As a result, learners see more value and are more motivated and engaged.

Rigor also prepares learners for changing workforce demands. Employers now expect new hires to have a broader range of skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills.[11] As a result, expanding the use of higher-order thinking skills can improve the chances of career and college success for all children and prepare learners to solve the increasingly complex challenges our society faces. By making rigorous learning accessible to every child, we can improve the quality and impact of education for all young people.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

Long-View[12] is a micro school in Austin, Texas, that serves roughly eighty students from second to eighth grades. They believe learning is meaningful and transformative when young people are producers with chances to create, make, build, and do instead of being passive consumers of knowledge. They design experiences that foster critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity—all of which are oriented toward the "long view" to prepare young people to be lifelong learners. Key parts of the Long-View experience include:

- **Learning Blocks:** Academic blocks are typically two hours, which enable deep exploration.
  - The Math Block follows the Number Lab's Generative Framework, which is grounded in supporting learners to construct concepts through connective ideas that fuse arithmetic and algebra. (The Number Lab and Long-View Micro School share the same founders.) Long-View learners engage in the work of deeply understanding mathematical ideas and have the opportunity to interact with each other in many of the ways that professional mathematicians do, exploring mathematical concepts, creating proofs, making critical observations of the work of their peers, and productively arguing as they make sense of the math before them.
  - In Computer Science Blocks, the curriculum is focused on computational thinking and problem-solving. According to Long-View, "Computer Science prepares kids for something we know will be required in nearly every profession they may one day choose: the ability to look at problems or systems in a way that considers how computers could be used to help solve or model the problem."
- **Build Week Challenges:** Several times a year, learners engage in week-long experiences where they tackle a complex challenge as a team, problem-solve, and make connections across disciplines. For example, one Build Week Challenge was to design an inclusive playground to meet the needs of a specific community. In the lead-up, learners observed a local playground, learned about design principles that architects often employ, and researched playgrounds around the world. During the week, learners mocked up scale renderings on paper, modeled using computer-aided design (CAD) software and other tools, and refined a narrative explaining the story of their concept and its viability. They ultimately presented their playscape concepts to their peers and guest critics.

4. Relevance

Relevance supports learning and development by increasing student motivation; learners see more value in learning about topics connected to their interests and goals and, as a result, will be more engaged and invested.[13] In addition, relevance makes what is learned more memorable because young people can connect new ideas to prior knowledge and experiences. Relevance also helps learners feel a sense of belonging and connection, which promotes mindsets that are conducive to learning. When school is relevant to all learners and leverages a high-value, balanced curriculum, then every young person has a greater opportunity to thrive.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

Gibson Ek[14] is a public choice high school located in Issaquah, Washington, open to all district eighth graders. Their mission is to personalize learning for each student, guiding them as they engage in authentic project work to find and develop their passions and purpose to make a difference in the world. They adopted the Big Picture Learning Model,[15] which is designed to create student-driven, real-world learning. Students work with their teachers to create custom learning plans, pursue internships based on their unique interests, and demonstrate their learning through exhibitions.

- **Independent Projects:** Students earn academic credit through independent projects based on their interests and goals rather than teacher assignments. Their assessment approach enables interest-driven learning. Rather than earning grades and credits, students demonstrate mastery of competencies. Students are assessed through public displays of learning that track their growth and progress in their areas of interest. Assessments and evaluations are personalized to the real-world criteria of the work.
- **Internships:** Two days per week, students travel to internships at local businesses or organizations in fields like social work, video production, real estate, mechanics, and more. Students often work on Independent Projects at their internship sites in three ways: a) Authentic Projects where students create something in the business or organization, b) Parallel Projects where the student imitates the project their mentor is working on, and c) Preparatory Projects where the student researches a specific topic or field related to their internship.
- **Design Labs:** Young people can apply the skills they learn to their independent projects and internships through the Design Thinking in Design Labs (D-Labs) curriculum. D-Labs brings together small groups of students for four-and-a-half hours spread over the course of six weeks.

Students choose from an array of interdisciplinary, real-world problems to explore in areas like forest restoration, stage combat, forensic science, and more.

5. Affirmation of Self and Others

To maximize the potential of all children, schools can acknowledge, celebrate, and nurture the diverse identities of all students in meaningful ways; help each learner develop a unique, positive sense of self; and support learners to have respect for the identities and perspectives of others. When schools affirm each learner's unique identity, they promote the success of all learners.[16] Seeing one's community, values, beliefs, traditions, stories, and language reflected in the learning environment promotes a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. When young people feel confident in their ability to succeed and feel like they belong, they are more likely to see value in coming to school and are better able to learn when there. Additionally, when schools truly view students' identities as a valuable source of prior knowledge and connect learning to these identities, schools can deepen learning and make it more long-lasting. Doing this work helps all students recognize that worthiness, beauty, and brilliance come from every corner and cultural background.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

A growing number of middle and high schools across the country are implementing nXu's CASEL-aligned Purpose SEL and College & Career Readiness curriculum[17] through which students are experiencing measurable growth in their sense of purpose and associated social-emotional constructs. Through identity exploration, social-emotional learning (SEL), social capital development, and community building, nXu catalyzes students and educators to develop their purpose, invest in their career-related futures, and live thriving lives. According to nXu, purpose is a fundamental human motive at the root of major markers of success throughout one's life.

Their Purpose SEL and College & Career Readiness curriculum has integrated key developmental constructs so that students (and educators) can develop their purpose, foster critical SEL skills, explore a range of career pathways that align with their sense of self, and be ultimately well-positioned to live thriving lives. Highlights of nXu's curriculum include:

- Students reflect on memorable life experiences and how they impacted who they are today. They also learn about the intersections of identity and engage in discussions around how their intersecting identities shape their experiences in the world. With each exploration, students learn to own

and celebrate their sense of self. They explore the need for belonging, and they delve into the topic of peer pressure, provoking dialogue on fitting in versus maintaining one's sense of self, all the while simultaneously practicing critical social skills including effective communication.

- Opportunities for relationship building and social capital development are embedded throughout the model. To build relationships, every nXu lesson begins with Connect—a ritual where students respond to a series of prompts that allow students to form and sustain relationships, establish points of connection, and practice vulnerability. nXu offers both middle and high school lessons designed to aid students in exploring the value of developing positive relationships while expanding their social networks—they explore how to make personal and professional connections and brainstorm actionable strategies to reinforce relationships.
- Through a network mapping project focused on social capital development, students take stock of their personal and professional connections and organize them into relationship groups using categories like family/family acquaintances, peers/near peers, employment/service/internships, and more. Students create a networking map by placing themselves in the center of the map and then drawing lines of connection to community members, taking note of those with whom they have strong ties.

6. Social Responsibility and Action

Ensuring learners have opportunities to tackle adversity can foster feelings of empowerment and motivation. These opportunities are relevant to learners' lives and, as a result, bring value to learning. They also provide learners with an authentic opportunity to impact change and, in doing this, foster agency or a sense of control. For learners who have personally experienced adversity or injustice, this can be especially empowering and may bring even greater meaning to learning. In addition, at a time when our society can seem more and more polarized, it is critical for every young person to learn how to act against injustice in ways that are grounded in their own values and the values of their communities.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

RevX[18] encourages learners, especially those from under-resourced communities, to identify and tackle local issues—over time, helping them grow into our next generation of changemakers and leaders. At the heart is the Discover, Examine, Engineer, Do, and Share (DEEDS) Instructional Framework, a five-phase journey that equips learners with a process for engaging with the world. Through these phases, young people embark on a learning

journey that integrates academic rigor with real-life application and further asks learners to explore their identities.

RevX students at Concourse Village Elementary in the South Bronx were challenged by the Office of Sustainability to help reduce reliance on fossil fuels in schools. They explored how much energy was used in the school (Discover); assessed local energy needs, causes, effects, and renewable energy solutions (Examine); created renewable energy devices for school to replace current electrical sources (Engineer); implemented these systems to power their school and collected data on the effectiveness (Do); and educated their community about sustainable practices, reflecting on their contributions to environmental preservation and community resilience (Share).

The model is influenced by several research-based approaches to learning but at its core is project-based learning (PBL), proven to boost engagement and standardized test performance while aligning closely with future workforce needs. It supports social responsibility and action in three ways:

- **Community Solutions:** Supports young people in developing solutions to their own challenges within their communities by providing resources, networks, and opportunities for problem-solving. This is reflected in the challenge-based curriculum and the requirement for young people to implement their solutions in the real world.
- **Personal Development:** Integrates personal development work one-on-one and group coaching, as well as reflections on data and feedback from others and the community.
- **Professional Skills Development:** Prioritizes equipping young individuals with professional skills essential for success in the broader world.

7. Connection and Community

School experiences that build connection and community in all directions prepare young people to thrive.[19] From these actions students can be known and respected by a variety of adults and peers, collaborate closely with one another, and form meaningful relationships across lines of difference that nurture empathy, support inclusion, and build social capital.

Developmentally supportive relationships and a sense of belonging can flourish in environments that prioritize connection and community for all learners. This helps learners explore their diverse identities, buffers against stress and trauma, and contributes to positive emotions and mindsets. It also helps young people see value in the experiences they have at school, provides a critical scaffold that makes learning more manageable, creates opportunities for discussion and higher-order meaning making, and allows learners to give and receive feedback from one another. Learning environments that prioritize

connection and a sense of community also build skills and mindsets—such as collaboration, empathy, and communication—that are critical for the emotional and economic well-being of all learners. These skills and mindsets enable learners to thrive in a diverse, globally connected society where the employment landscape increasingly requires the ability to build and maintain personal relationships.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

St. Benedict's Prep[20] is a K–12 school located in Newark, New Jersey, and operated by the Benedictine monks of Newark Abbey to support students who have faced significant challenges related to chronic poverty and racism. Building community is at the core of St. Benedict's approach to helping its students fulfill their potential. When young people enroll at St. Benedict's, they join a lifelong community. Guided by the motto "Whatever hurts my brother or sister hurts me; whatever helps my brother or sister helps me," students and staff strive to grow in mutual respect, to work and pray together, and to take responsibility for one another. St. Benedict's focus on building community is reflected in a number of their core practices:

- **The Group System:** St. Benedict's middle and high school students are divided into multi-age groups named after a St. Benedict's alumnus or a prominent figure from the school's history. The groups become an important part of students' academic and social lives. They meet for thirty-five minutes each day, compete in events, and work together to run the school. Each group elects a group leader who is responsible for knowing about the whereabouts and well-being of all group members, oversees group activities, and represents the group in leadership meetings.
- **Convocation:** Each school day begins with "Convo," where all students, faculty, and staff gather as a community for forty-five minutes. Convo includes time for group leaders to stand up and account for any members of their group who are not in attendance that day and, if possible, provide a reason why. This is followed by time for prayer, announcements from students or faculty, and sometimes a message from the school's leader, Fr. Edwin. Convo enables students to build intentional brotherhood and accountability for every student in their group.
- **Overnight:** All incoming students attend this intense, five-day orientation during the first week of school. The purpose of the Overnight is to teach incoming students about St. Benedict's history, logistics, school songs, and aspects of what it means to be a Gray Bee, and induct them into the community. At the conclusion of the Overnight, alumni, faculty, and older students administer oral exams to individual students. Passing this test is a rite of passage.

- **Trail:** At the end of freshman year, students complete a 55-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail in groups of approximately eight students. The purpose of the trail is to foster leadership and a sense of collaboration among students, who are expected to stay together throughout the entirety of the trail. Students prepare for the hike for almost a full month through practice hikes and classes on topics like cooking, camping, leadership, and first aid. It is largely older students, not faculty, who make the hike possible. The older students work as instructors before the hike and play coordination and support roles during the hike itself.

8. Customization

Customizing young people's learning experiences in response to the ways they vary can nurture their identities, fuel motivation, and support learning.[21] In fact, for these experiences to be truly relevant to and intellectually challenging for every learner, at least some degree of personalization is essential. Technological advances can enable this like never before. By increasing customization in all learning environments, more learners can receive personalized academic and social experiences that support their developmental needs, educators can become masterful interventionists and relay just-in-time support to every child, and classrooms can promote continuous progress while also fostering a respect for differences. By personalizing learning in response to these differences and by ensuring learners who need something more or something different receive it, our education system can become more effective for all.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (the Met)[22] is a network of six schools located in Providence and Newport, Rhode Island. The Met's mission is to educate and empower youth through relentless commitment to student-centered learning and personal growth. The Met aims for all students to graduate as skilled and responsible, diverse thinkers and civically active citizens who gain fulfillment in their life and work. The school's approach is highly personalized, based on students' interests and needs:

- **Personalized Curriculum:** Students' interests are honored with a personalized curriculum designed by the student, advisor, mentors, and parents. Professionals from the community help students pursue those interests through real-world projects completed on-site with the professionals who become mentors to the students. The projects provide opportunities for the students to explore and master the content and skills outlined in their personalized curricula.

- **Learning Through Interests and Internships:** Through real-world projects, each student works with a mentor who is an expert in a field the student is interested in. The student and mentor work together to engage in project-based work that addresses authentic problems and works toward real goals. The projects are a major driver of students' academic growth but also benefit mentors and the larger community or sector.
- **Individual Learning Plans:** Each student has an individualized Learning Plan. Plans are created and updated each marking period with the student's learning team, which includes the student, a family member, the student's advisor, and, whenever possible, the student's mentor. Learning plans are built around a student's interests, talents, and needs.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** The Met encourages students to explore their interests outside of traditional school hours and awards credit for doing so. In addition, students are grouped flexibly; they engage in one-on-one and small-group work around their interests and needs, and these groupings evolve regularly.

9. Active Self-Direction

Research shows that when students direct their own learning, it drives motivation and deepens learning.[23] This is because they have a sense of control and are able to shape learning to be relevant to their interests, needs, and goals. In addition, active learning helps to more meaningfully encode knowledge, skills, and mindsets into long-term memory, which makes learning more long-lasting. Ensuring young people are active participants in the learning process also prepares them for postsecondary success, whether this means college or immediate entry into a fulfilling career. If current trends persist, like the rise of automation and the rate of scientific advancement, our learners will need a different set of skills that enable them to be self-driven, autonomous, lifelong learners who are able to make decisions that fit their unique needs and goals.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

One Stone is a student-led and directed nonprofit organization based in Boise, Idaho, with an independent lab high school and robust after-school and summer school programming for K–12 students throughout the Treasure Valley. One Stone's high school, Lab51, recognizes that each student brings a unique background, skillset, and passion to the learning environment. Students have many different learning opportunities, all aimed at growing durable skills such as collaboration, communication, empathy, problem-solving, and critical thinking, as well as practicing ownership and agency via real-world opportunities that give them a "toolkit for life."

- **Design Thinking Labs:** Based on experience, Lab51 offers three labs, (X), (D), and (Y), that use human-centered design thinking to solve challenging problems. Design labs partner students with local community partners to understand, empathize, ideate, and solve challenging problems collaboratively. Each lab is designed and implemented in collaboration between learners and coaches.
- **Experiences and Immersions:** Experiences and immersions are multidisciplinary project-based learning opportunities designed with students, creating opportunities for them to explore their interests and practice their skills. They range from eight-to-ten-week experiences or three-to-four-week immersions where learners can pursue personal learning goals. Students can opt into experiences and immersions or codesign one aligned to a personal interest with a coach. Themes and topics integrate mathematics, humanities, science, and technology studies in hands-on, real-world environments.
- **Living in Beta:** The Living in Beta program empowers students to explore their interests, curiosities, and passions and uncover their purpose. Using a personalized, immersive process, students discover their purpose while developing the tools to live, learn, and practice with intention. Through engagement in scaffolded wayfinding activities in groups and one-on-one work with their mentor, students use their Living in Beta insights to design experiences relevant to their learning. Students develop a greater sense of identity, belonging, and purpose as they unpack their passions, identify their values, and create a personalized and meaningful "why" statement.

10. Anytime, Anywhere Learning

"Learning" has been largely confined to schools—physical spaces with a fixed schedule. Imperfect but viable experiments in anytime, anywhere learning happened during the pandemic closures. Some communities partnered with local museums, libraries, and other schools, or even connected with working professionals volunteering their time. These kinds of learning experiences go a long way toward breaking down the barriers between school and life that are so entrenched in our thinking.

Anytime, anywhere learning can help meet the unique needs of learners.[24] It means that learners who need or want to dedicate additional time to a task are able to do so. It also means learners can choose to work at times or in places where they can be most engaged, receive additional support, or easily attend to personal responsibilities.

Anytime, anywhere learning also reflects changes taking place in the workplace, including an increase in remote work and gig work. These changes

stem from a shifting economy and technological advances for which schools must prepare young people. In many ways, anytime, anywhere learning helps prepare young people for life beyond graduation by allowing them to acquire and apply a range of skills and knowledge in real-world contexts.

What This Leap Can Look Like in Action

With two campuses in the Greater Yellowstone area, Jackson, Wyoming, and Teton Valley, Idaho, Teton Science Schools (TSS)[25] leverages the power of place and connects learners to communities and the world around them. According to TSS, "Place-based education is an approach that connects learners and communities to increase student engagement, boost learning outcomes, impact communities and promote understanding of the world around us." TSS views place through the lens of a community's ecological, cultural, and economic perspective. Key practices include:

- **Community as Classroom:** Community as classroom expands the definition of the classroom beyond the four walls to include community experts, experiences, and places. Community as classroom can be carried out in three venues for learning: a) bringing the community into the classroom through guest speakers and content, b) bringing the students into the community on learning journeys, and c) simply going outside the classroom to do something you could have just done inside. These venues develop strong relationships between students and their community. Breaking down barriers between the classroom and community enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, as well as their interest in engaging in improving both community vitality and environmental quality. Emphasizing hands-on learning grounded in community increases academic achievement, develops stronger student commitment to community, and encourages the development of active, contributing citizens.
- **Community Impact:** Place-based education goes beyond surface exchanges between learners and the world around them; instead, through inquiry, design thinking, and project-based learning, students ask questions, codesign solutions to real problems, and execute projects that have an authentic audience and practical application. The connections developed in Community as Classroom evolve into community impact projects. Teachers guide learners to identify problems or needs, help students co-design solutions with their users, and facilitate locally relevant projects designed to lead to learners' mastery of outcomes, ideally from multiple domains. Learners and teachers actively contribute to their community's vitality, and the school helps the community to be more ecologically resilient, economically vibrant, and culturally inclusive.

In a new paradigm for school, outcomes focused on intellectual prowess, wayfinding, and well-being better align with the world learners navigate daily. By incorporating experiences and Leaps grounded in the science of learning and development, we can redesign schools where young people flourish.

The solution is not to create a one-size-fits-all new model to replace the outdated one. Rather, every community that desires it can go on a community design process, bringing together educators, young people themselves, experts, administrators, and community stakeholders around a common table to collaboratively design better learning experiences *and* outcomes.

This work doesn't happen overnight. In the next chapter, we define the community-based design process.