



Making 21st Century Education a Reality for Every Student

A Conversation & Action Guide
for 21st Century Education Systems

Battellefor**Kids**

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responses with other school system leaders at:

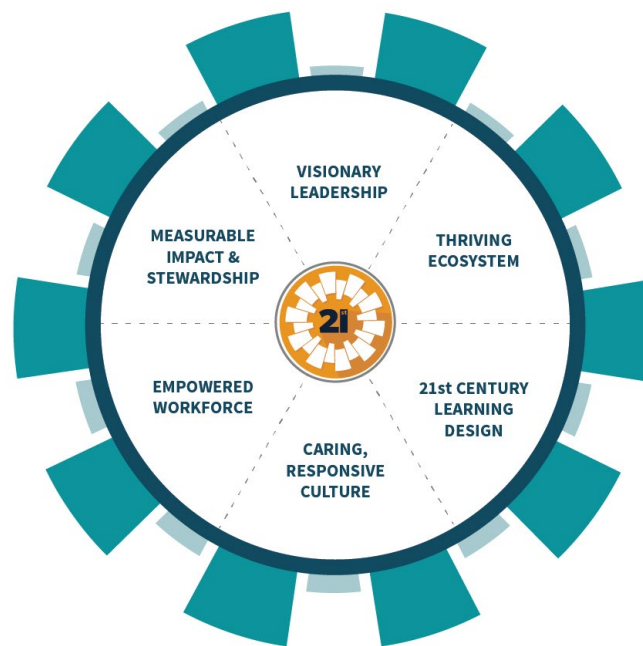
bfk.me/OnlineActionGuide



The Future of Education Systems

School systems across the country are navigating a new normal in response to both the COVID-19 crisis and the pursuit of social justice. These seismic landscape shifts continue to impact all relationships, institutions, and systems fundamental to our society, not the least of which are our education systems. While we don't have all the answers to how school systems should emerge and respond in this moment, we do believe a systems approach is necessary to ensure every component part of the system is aligned to ensure equitable student outcomes and enduring transformation.

To assist school systems in shaping a renewed 21st century system, we've developed discussion questions for education leaders to guide action planning. This Conversation and Action Guide—organized by our Portrait of a 21st Century Education System—can help shape your plan.

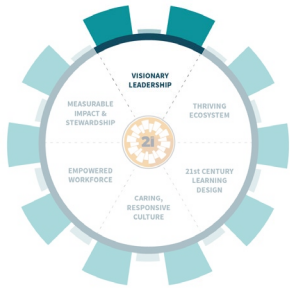


Portrait of a System
by Battelle for Kids

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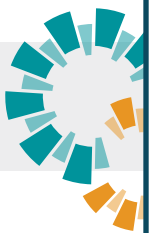


Visionary Leadership

Establishes a unifying and enduring vision for the community’s shared aspirations for all students—a vision that is locally developed, but globally positioned.

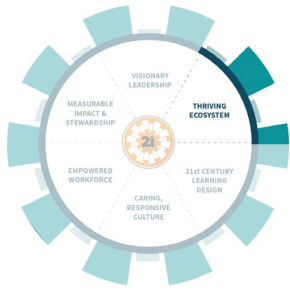
1. How can we meaningfully engage the larger educational ecosystem—educators, students, elected officials, community members, families—to proactively shape a renewed education system, responsive to the complex, changing world and the unique needs of today’s 21st century learner?
2. How do we capture and continue the learning and ingenuity that have surfaced during this time of a global pandemic and social unrest?
3. How do we ensure that our system’s vision becomes a reality for every student, without exception?
4. Times of crisis require a concentrated focus on the vision to ensure the system does not revert to a familiar, but antiquated, model of education. How are we ensuring that leaders at every level remain focused on the vision as they deal with the pressures of the day to day?
5. Does our existing strategic plan include the right moves that result in the development of a coherent system, where all aspects of the organization are aligned to actualize our vision?

Every individual deserves to live in a society that is caring and just, where dignity, respect, and love prevail for all. The district’s vision must be anchored with unrelenting leadership and assurances for equitable practices and outcomes by cultivating collective ownership of the stated 21st century vision for learning for every student.



“Our circumstances (COVID19) made it necessary for us to shift into crisis management mode. Now, we must lift ourselves up and focus forward, once again, on visionary leadership. This shift is critical to advancing our collective commitment to fostering 21st Century designers, learners, and innovators.”
—Superintendent (OH)





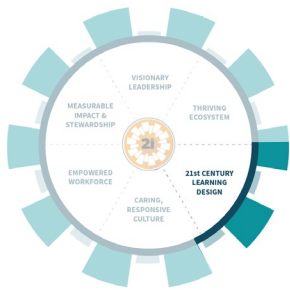
Thriving Ecosystem

Purposefully fosters a high functioning, interdependent system, inclusive of the broader community and aligned to the district vision that leverages assets and supports to ensure equity in deeper 21st century learning experiences for all.

1. As a result of this time of significant unrest and change, what shifts are we seeing in community perspectives about the purpose, nature, and value of education?
2. How do we strengthen home, school, and community relations and communications as we adapt new learning experiences for a variety of contexts, structures, and environments?
3. In response to student needs, have we developed an internal and communitywide asset inventory to mobilize every resource available across the broader community?
4. As the context has shifted, do we have an articulated plan to differentiate resources and supports, resulting in equitable practices, resources, and outcomes for every school and every learner?
5. Are we contributing to a network, alongside other innovative school system leaders, to accelerate our learning about innovative practices and strategies activated across the country in response to these unprecedented times?

“Some schools are struggling with the urge to take the current model and shove it into the new environment. We need to keep our focus on what we wish we could do, instead of mourning the loss of what we were doing. This is a great opportunity to move the work forward.”

—Superintendent (WA)



21st Century Learning Design

Purposefully integrates rigorous academic content with experiences that intentionally cultivate skills, mindsets, and literacies essential for all students to be lifelong learners and contributors in the 21st century.

1. In 2020, educators had to pivot abruptly to become innovative, remote learning designers. What shifts in student and teacher roles and relationships are we observing -that are also resulting in deeper learning outcomes—and what insights should serve to influence learning design and supports into the future?
2. Now more than ever, time between students and educators may be limited; thus, traditional approaches to “content coverage” will likely exacerbate achievement gaps in learning. Do district curriculum documents provide clarity and focus to educators by appropriately narrowing learning priorities to relevant, deeper, 21st century academic content and skills?
3. Are both in-person and remote learning experiences designed to empower students to demonstrate deeper learning by applying their learning in new and novel situations? – And by building learner agency and inclusivity through voice and choice?
4. As a result of the dramatic shift in learning opportunities and modalities, have we identified the unique learning needs of each student, and developed response strategies across the system, with emphasis on students whose learning must be accelerated?
5. As technology has become a primary tool for accessing learning, how are we intentionally utilizing technology to design, deliver, and enhance deeper learning experiences, rather than simply automating traditional models of learning?

Education is the critical foundation for cultivating, promoting, and accelerating equity and inclusivity in society. Leaders have the responsibility to advance deeper, 21st century learning, equipping each student to thrive in this ever changing, complex world.

“Our skill set for being able to work in a digital environment has grown dramatically. What would have taken years has happened in a few weeks. We are helping our graduates to see how important 21st century skills and mindsets are.”
—Superintendent (VT)



Caring, Responsive Culture

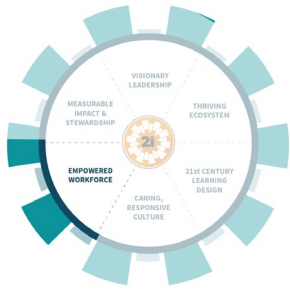
Nurtures a responsive and inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives and cultivates engagement of all within an emotionally and physically safe learning environment.

1. What are our commitments and plans to address inequities, so that all students experience deeper learning that empowers them to thrive and lead in this complex, ever-changing world?
2. How are we surfacing and eradicating discriminatory beliefs, biases, practices, and policies that cause inequities to exist and persist?
3. How do we foster student, educator, and community well-being, belonging, empathy, and resilience in a time of significant, sustained uncertainty?
4. What new and innovative strategies are we using to elicit and elevate diverse voices and perspectives to both inform our response and to shape the future direction of the school system and the community?
5. As we have accelerated new approaches to learning, how do we best communicate and inspire educators and students to be courageous learners as we promote innovation and develop trusting relationships throughout all levels of the system and broader community?

This pandemic has given rise to, and even exacerbated, persistent inequities in our school systems and society at large. Further, heightened unrest due to social injustice across the country demands an urgent response to these inequities.

“This is a perfect platform to talk about why this work is so important. We all have an opportunity to be very vulnerable right now. We are seeing that parents have a lot more admiration for the teachers at the end of this. That could be the silver lining on the dark cloud.”



—Superintendent (TX)



Empowered Workforce

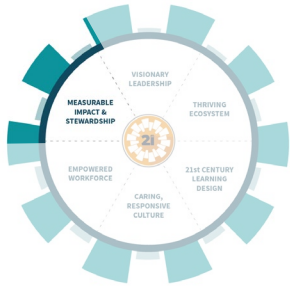
In service of students, elevates all staff with human capital systems that attract, grow, and retain diverse, innovative, and highly engaged talent.

1. How are we intentionally fostering a culturally responsive, caring school system and workplace where each person is valued and respected?
2. What do our employees need to be safe, healthy, and successful, and how do we create these supportive conditions both in the workplace and in remote environments?
3. How do we best equip our educators through ongoing, high-quality professional learning as they purposefully design and implement 21st century learning, both in-person and through remote experiences?
4. In this new and evolving context, how are we engaging in innovative human capital practices that attract and retain a diverse workforce, elevate the voice of every employee, and build collective efficacy?
5. As leaders, have we engaged our educators to collectively identify and define the competencies—often referred to as a Portrait of an Educator—and commensurate supports needed by educators to actualize our 21st century vision for every student?



“Resistance to change was averted by the imminent need of our children to persist through this unparalleled time. In retrospect, our children taught us to be brave and to take risks. Our Portrait of a Graduate took on new meaning as we built remote classrooms while modeling empathy, problem solving, and critical thinking. We had no choice but to become 21st century learners!”

—Superintendent (OH)



Impact and Stewardship

Leverages evidence to elevate confidence in and attest to impact of the system in preparing graduates as lifelong learners and contributors in the 21st century.

1. As we navigate turbulent economic times, are we engaging in a comprehensive, structured process to evaluate and revisit priorities to address pressing demands, while maintaining our focus on the vision of 21st century learning for every student?
2. How are we prioritizing the allocation of fiscal resources and supports to respond aggressively to gaps in deeper learning experiences and outcomes?
3. How do we use this disruption in learning, assessment and accountability systems to redefine our definition of success for students and schools, as well as shape new, more relevant systems of state and local accountability?
4. How will we capture and share evidence of our impact and overall success that is both adaptive to today's new challenges and aligned to our district's 21st century vision?
5. What evidence will we collect and share that attests to equitable, deeper learning outcomes for every student?

“This whole thing has been wrapped very nicely into our Portrait of a Graduate. It has freed up time for us to focus on the things that our parents care about which is our Portrait competencies.”

—Superintendent (IN)