

## CASE STUDY BRIEF

Since 2013, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) has annually designated 21st Century Learning Exemplars based upon exceptional implementation of the [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#).

Each year, P21 has highlighted a cohort of early learning centers, K–12 schools, school districts, and beyond school programs in the U.S. as 21st Century Learning Exemplars. Now that P21 is a network of Battelle for Kids, we are leading together in celebrating the current year of 21st Century Learning Exemplars.

As part of celebrating these awardees, Battelle for Kids and its P21 network provide ways for their stories and impactful practices to be shared with others. This case study brief and those for the other awardees provide powerful insights to guide other school districts, schools, and programs so that every child can experience the best of 21st century learning experiences.

**KENSINGTON**  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### Kensington Elementary School Waxhaw, NC

With a focus on creating globally competitive students and engaged leaders of tomorrow, Kensington Elementary School incorporates a robust climate of achievement and academic excellence with a culture of kindness and respect for self and others.

---

**Grades Served:** PreK–5

**Enrollment:** 830 Students

Founded in 2005

[Website](#)

Rated A+ school on the most recent report card by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

# Kensington Elementary School

## Waxhaw, NC

### Global Readiness

To support Kensington Elementary School's mission of "Creating Global Citizens Anchored in Academic Excellence," a school-wide approach to global competency and intercultural awareness has been taken. Each year, the school selects an annual theme that provides continuity across the grade levels and allows for a unifying focus on a singular overarching issue of international importance. Previous themes have included water and hunger. The 2018–2019 topic centers around natural resources.

Each grade level is assigned a continent, and individual classrooms and student projects focus on sub-areas related to the annual theme, such as deforestation. To support these efforts, staff members are provided not only project-based learning professional development, but also content area instruction related to the annual theme, plus additional planning time throughout the year for the development and implementation of the cross-curricular lessons and projects.

With a Mandarin immersion program that spans all grades, 80% of instruction is provided exclusively in Mandarin. Kensington has six full time staff members dedicated to the immersion program and two additional full-time English Language Literacy teachers on staff.

### Inclusive Learning Environment for All

One of the greatest strengths of Kensington Elementary School is the warm, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment with infectious energy and enthusiasm for the community.

Teachers and school leaders thoughtfully consider Individual learning styles and needs, and in large part thanks to these efforts, students of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds integrate and thrive within Kensington's culture.

Kensington has adopted the "Choose to Be Nice" program, whereby students sign a pledge to be kind to their teachers, families, and fellow students. Teachers celebrate random acts of kindness, and a monthly "Choose to be Nice" award is granted in each classroom. By providing school-wide expectations of kindness, empathy, and respect, students and teachers engage in increased collaboration and effective communication practices which provide fertile ground for further engagement.

The school also has a robust program dedicated to anti-bullying. This program includes an established protocol for staff





to follow when they witness or have bullying reported to them, and students are also given education on their options if they are party to or witness bullying at school.

Other specialized topics targeted to specific student needs include coping with divorce, anxiety management, conflict resolution, and how to make friends. Kensington also has an informal buddy system with older students mentoring their younger counterparts and bolstering their reading skills.

### **Distributed Leadership and Student Agency**

Trained in the Facilitative Leadership Model, Kensington's principal provides weekly opportunities for teachers and staff to assume leadership positions on projects, deliver informal professional development to fellow teachers or parents, or assume more formal leadership roles on school-level teams.

Teachers are also responsible for creation of the schoolwide instructional schedule each year. Each grade level has a facilitator who runs professional learning community meetings, and exploratory teacher-led projects and pilots are not only allowed, but encouraged.

Similarly, teachers act more as mentors and coaches rather than assuming the role of lecturer, and the school's inquiry-based learning style is enhanced with interactive utilization of technology with students and teachers exploring the world together through confident and creative use of tools and aids.



---

## 2019 21ST CENTURY LEARNING EXEMPLARS

Each of the following earned this year's award for its outstanding practices in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge for success in college, career, and life:

### Early Learning

The Goddard School Located in Broadview Heights  
(Broadview, OH)  
The Goddard School Located in Simpsonville  
(Simpsonville, SC)

### K-12 Schools

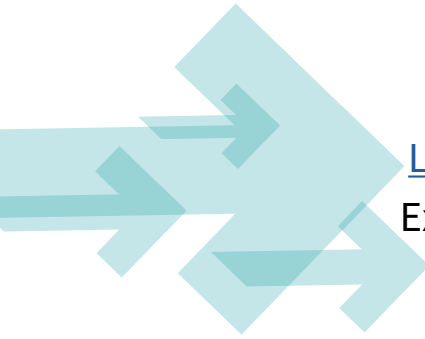
Canyon Crest Elementary School (Fontana, CA)  
Elon Elementary School (Elon, NC)  
EVSC New Tech Institute (Evansville, IN)  
Henry Ford Academy: Alameda School for Art + Design  
(San Antonio, TX)  
Kairos Public School Vacaville Academy (Vacaville, CA)  
Kensington Elementary School (Waxhaw, NC)  
Moreno Valley High School (Moreno Valley, CA)  
Saint Ambrose School (Brunswick, OH)  
Santiago Charter Middle School (Orange, CA)  
Valley View High School (Moreno Valley, CA)  
Vineyard STEM Magnet (Ontario, CA)  
Vista Heights Middle School (Moreno Valley, CA)  
Wolf Springs Elementary School (Overland Park, KS)

### Districts

Lennox School District (Lennox, CA)  
Vicksburg Warren School District (Vicksburg, MS)

### Beyond School Programs

Camp Champions (Marble Falls, TX)



[Learn more](#) about the 21st Century Learning  
Exemplars at: [bfk.me/p21\\_ExemplarProgram](https://bfk.me/p21_ExemplarProgram)