Thirty-five percent of New Tech schools are in the first three years of implementation. For many schools, this is an intense period of professional learning for students and educators alike. This includes developing a clear set of student learning outcomes consistent with skills required to succeed in college, career or civic life. Content mastery is tied to state standards and projects include collaboration, critical thinking and oral and written communication skill development. Schools work towards courses that demonstrate rigorous and relevant project based learning (PBL) to amplify deeper learning while engaging students in the classroom.

The El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) wants every student to graduate as a knowledgeable and engaged citizen, ready to innovate and drive the area’s robust, bicultural economy. Superintendent Juan Cabrera recognized that for students to reach their potential and face a post-secondary life with the knowledge, skills and competencies to be successful in college or career paths, the EPISD schools needed more than incremental improvements — the entire district needed to commit to a comprehensive approach that put learners firmly at the center.

In 2016, El Paso opened six New Tech middle and high schools. Each school has a specific theme and serves a diverse student population. While the work in EPISD is early, changes are evident in school culture and engagement across the schools.

In 2017, El Paso ISD opened the Young Women’s STEAM Research and Preparatory Academy and Grizzly New Tech at Guillen Middle School.

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**Cougar NT @ Franklin High School**

Cougar NT teachers are taking ownership of their professional learning communities. They are intentionally placing an emphasis on strengthening their adult culture to positively impact student learning.
Canyon Hills is listed in the top 25% of similar schools in Texas in closing the achievement gap of its students. Proving that learning can also be fun, students are experiencing interesting and engaging projects. In the role of archaeologists, they are creating a museum of artifacts from around the world.

Service pathways are a focus at Panther New Tech where fire, EMT, police and judicial electives bring real-life application to classes. Attendance is high (over 90%) at Panther New Tech, according to director Blanchie Genano.

"We are pleased with our New Tech Network partnership; together we are creating powerful and engaging learning opportunities for middle and high school students throughout the district. The EPISD New Tech schools serve as great examples of community engagement, relevant project based learning and exemplify the vision of the EPISD 2020 Plan."

– Superintendent Juan Cabrera
El Paso Independent Schools District
New Tech students are working as business owners who are designing and furnishing hotel rooms as they learn about budgeting, ratios and percentages. They also take classes that are integrated into unique combinations (Words of the World, Art of Science) to expand and enhance their holistic understanding of education. Projects are focused on real-world applications.

At Rocket New Tech, students dive deeply into classes focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Integrated classes like English and history combine to create World Studies where students see how ideas are connected. Teaching in such a contextual manner promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and knowledge retention.

Teachers and leaders at Oso New Tech are working to deeply strengthen literacy at this predominantly Spanish-speaking school. Through engaging projects, including the first Oso Filmfest, teachers are working to close the opportunity gap.
NT Academy @ Alice Robertson Junior High School (7th and 8th grades) focuses on continuous learning for its students and teachers.

The Academy was founded three years ago through a joint partnership between the Muskogee School District and the Muskogee Creek Nation. The tribe saw the benefit of project based learning (which supports and encourages meeting the needs of individual students) for the Native American students, as well as the community and district overall.

Maintaining, promoting and celebrating the special culture of the school population is a primary goal of the Alice Robertson teachers and staff. Projects, designed to honor the Native American population, are shared throughout the Creek Nation.

A Year of Learning

In their first year team-teaching American Story, a combination English and History class, Claudia Garde and Melissa Million rolled out multi-faceted projects that focused on skills like communication, agency and oral and written communication, partnered with a deep understanding of content knowledge. The duo exercised adult agency to roll out successful and engaging student projects. Westward Expansion was the first project they worked on as team teachers.

Mrs. Garde started as a New Tech teacher at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, and Mrs. Million joined in January of 2017. According to the duo, there was very little time to prepare to teach together. By jumping straight into this project, they developed ways to communicate with one another and created a vision of what they could do in future projects to ensure students were learning at a deep level.

“We have already begun to look towards the next school year and to take our projects to the next level,” said Garde and Million.”It was amazing to see the level of engagement in our students. They were present and excited almost every step of the way. We know that community partners are a valuable resource that we plan on utilizing. We can see multiple ways to include the Creek Nation Tribe and surrounding community in all of our projects.”

Driving Question at Project Launch:

How can we as historians gain a deeper appreciation of history by exploring multiple perspectives of Westward Expansion in the United States and the idea of Manifest Destiny?

The Indian Education Department brought in several members of different tribes, including the Creek Nation, for a Cultural Day during the project that dealt with Westward Expansion and discussions about the Trail of Tears.
Project Snapshot

In this junior high project, students confronted historical perspective of the Westward Expansion and developed deep critical thinking skills as they compared various accounts in order to discover historical cultural bias. For example, the Indian Removal Act could be shown from the perspective of a Native American, the perspective of an African American, or other religious perspective and then be compared to the perspective of the U.S. Government.

Student Outcomes

New Tech Learning Outcomes (NTLOs) are a set of research-based outcomes aimed at preparing all students for post-secondary success. These outcomes reflect the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed for lifelong academic and social success. NTN students learn disciplinary knowledge and skills to conduct inquiry and solve real-world problems. Throughout a project, they collaborate with peers, facilitators, and experts in the field. Students demonstrate their learning through oral and written communication for authentic audiences. Ownership of their learning experience and engagement in relevant and challenging tasks helps students develop a sense of agency, a skill essential to success in college, career and civic life.

In this project, students were encouraged to learn about historical events through photos; they also were asked to see how the photographer may have embedded a deep sense of cultural perspective through a photo. Students were instructed to think critically as they researched their chosen perspective. In this way, students learned agency or the ability to demonstrate ownership over one’s learning.

Student Outputs

Students strengthened digital literacy using various media to create display boards, websites, graphic novels, infographics and video stories while developing oral communication to best present their chosen historical perspectives. Presentations included the Gold Rush, the Trail of Tears, the Indian Removal Act and more. For some of the presentations, students talked to experts or brought in guests. One group interviewed a judge about Plessy v. Ferguson.
Early New Tech schools form a design cohort

Our work with elementary schools is a natural extension of our work with middle and high schools throughout the country. Recognizing that literacy development is critical in the early school years, New Tech Network has relied on research and the expertise of elementary school practitioners to create an Elementary Spectrum of School Development that outlines what makes New Tech elementary schools unique and how they develop over time into thriving, sustainable learning environments that meet the needs of all students. A few schools meet periodically as a cohort to reflect on the Spectrum and give the Network feedback on its accuracy and feasibility.

NTN invited three elementary schools to become a design cohort to provide input into the school development framework, to share best practices and to collaborate on powerful PBL. The elementary cohort has focused on the areas of student and adult culture and on building positive, sustainable, and outcome-focused school environments. During the academic year, they shared bright spots of key strategies that had helped improve their school’s culture in a positive direction.

Katherine Smith Elementary

San Jose, CA | @KSmithSchool

Bright Spot: Circle of Trust

Purpose:
Establish a safe environment so that students and adults feel a sense of equality, safety, trust, responsibility, connection to each other, and ownership to support social emotional growth. The goal is to be a school community that is empathetic and responsive to the deeper issues we face.

How:
Step 1: Establish circle norms
Step 2: State questions or response topics
Step 3: Use the talking piece to either sequentially or non-sequentially share ideas, reflections, feelings, solutions, questions, etc. to participate in the conversation
Step 4: Adjust purpose of the circle as needed — opportunity to be responsive
**Bright Spot: Building Leadership Capacity**

**Purpose:**
To build leadership to ensure sustainability of the work and school model and to build a system of action-research, driven by interests and needs of staff which will enhance teachers’ knowledge, voice and confidence in facilitation skills.

**How:**
- Define top 2-3 needs and divides staff to serve on a committee that addresses one of the needs.
- Committees are facilitated by school leaders who understand the dual purpose of each committee — deepen knowledge and build leadership. The committees meet regularly to define specific needs and plan a professional learning activity for staff. Each committee takes responsibility for a specific Professional Learning (PL) and plans accordingly.
- On the day of the PL, the entire committee has a shared responsibility in leading the training. The committee members then play a key role on their grade level team for applying and extending the PL.

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**Bright Spot: Building Capacity in Support Teachers**

**Purpose:**
To build a unified culture that celebrates the professionalism and value-added benefits of all staff members including a focus on educator agency and dedicated time for professional development.

**How:**
- Regular time to meet with aides
- Survey to identify needs-based learning of team
- Time for classified staff to meet with NTN coach to build background knowledge and connection to the Network
- Shift of language to “support teachers” instead of “aides” or “classified staff”
- Evolution of meetings from feedback/listening to active learning and problem solving
- Shift to give ownership of their own role and schedule to support student needs
The NTN Assessment Improvement Community

Mature New Tech high schools in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan joined together to focus on improving their student assessment efforts. Facilitated by NTN, the leadership teams from eight schools met regularly and employed improvement science methodology to develop more effective assessment practices.

Calling themselves the NTN Assessment Improvement Community (AiC), participants reported stronger local professional development efforts, more powerful formative assessment practices embedded inside project based learning, and increased interest in graduation defense programs to support college and career readiness for all students. The results of this regional approach to learning together shows great promise, and NTN plans to expand these efforts with other focus areas across the country.

New Tech Academy @ Wayne High School

Wayne has used their participation in the AiC to explore a robust student portfolio and defense as part of their model. They visited an Envision Design Studio this May and plan to roll out their new process this coming year.

Belleville New Tech

Belleville has pursued staff-wide learning around formative assessment using insight and resources from the community. They have also made strong use of improvement processes by developing some of their formative assessment practices in a “lab classroom” before scaling them to additional classrooms.

“Like every school, academic growth is important to us. However, even more important, is the responsibility we have to foster a civic-awareness in our learners. Helping them transition from young adults to professionals with integrity is something our community and world needs. What I like most about the iCard system is how it encourages students to consider their actions. It also requires them to find people who can testify on their behalf when they wish to advance in responsibilities earned. In fact, to move to the top level, learners must speak to our entire student body about an element of integrity, the importance of that element, and how they demonstrate the quality. Our learners have become proud to speak about their integrity which is an amazing thing to see.”

– Jerry Holtgren, Niles New Tech Entrepreneurial Academy
NNT has developed an exciting student integrity program featuring student Ignite talks, community connections and scholarships, and levels of achievement for students to recognize their growth in personal integrity.

Weidner School of Inquiry @ PHS

WSI has used their work in the AiC to explore a personalized approach to staff professional development while staying connected to focus areas for improvement.

New Tech Institute

NTI has been intentional about using the AiC as a way to elevate the work of their leadership team and to create an improvement focus for their internal work and learning.

“Taking part in the AiC has provided a focus on our organizational learning for the year. We are putting as much effort into personalized adult learning as we are in student learning.

We believe in order to model the importance of voice and choice and ownership of one’s learning, we must design our adult learning around these important pillars of growth.”

– Jennifer Felke, Co-Director
Weidner School of Inquiry @ PHS
PROVIDING DISTRICT PATHWAYS

Historically, we have supported the school as the key system and unit of change in public districts. Starting four years ago, district leaders began approaching NTN to consider ways to support spreading New Tech practices across more schools within their districts. This began organically with districts where we had established a successful New Tech school and district leaders who wanted to expand deeper learning opportunities to more students. Today, we are engaged with more than a dozen districts to re-imagine teaching and learning across entire systems. Together, through these district engagements, we are learning how to re-shape and innovate a broad ecosystem. This is enabling us to help create more favorable conditions for our schools and to better support district-level capacity building and district-wide learning and improvement. We see district-based engagements as increasingly common and believe this will lead to a dramatic increase in the number of students accessing deeper learning.
WORKING TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

AS A LEADING DESIGN PARTNER FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL CHANGE, NEW TECH NETWORK, A NATIONAL NON-PROFIT, WORKS CLOSELY WITH NEARLY 200 DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS.

126 HIGH SCHOOLS
41 MIDDLE SCHOOLS
23 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
4,400 TEACHERS
72,000 STUDENTS
118 DISTRICTS

2015-16 School Data
West Des Moines Community Schools (WDMCS) became the first district in Iowa to partner with New Tech Network (NTN) in 2015. A key reason for engaging NTN was Iowa’s Universal Constructs, part of a newly adopted state policy which identified essential competencies and habits of mind needed for students to succeed in college, career, and life. These skills and dispositions align perfectly with the New Tech school model learning outcomes — Knowledge & Thinking, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Collaboration, and Agency. The professional development, content, tools and community provided by NTN were instrumental in supporting the district’s mission to prepare all WDMCS’ students for success.

WDMCS’ unwavering commitment to its students initially led to the launch of four New Tech partner schools in 2015 and the adoption of a district strategy that featured opening New Tech model elementary, middle and high schools. These first four schools included full implementation at two elementary schools — Clive Learning Academy and Crestview School of Inquiry — and grade level team adoption at two junior high schools — Indian Hills and Stilwell — which immediately offered families a K-8 pathway within WDMCS and created a cohort of engaged adult learners working toward a common aim.

In addition to the multi-school launch, which enabled cohort learning and support, district leadership smartly invested in the district’s capacity to coach and sustain the innovation by creating two positions, a New Tech Professional Learning Development Coach and a Business Liaison. The coach position serves to lead the learning of and provide a voice for those engaged in WDMCS’ network of New Tech schools. The Business Liaison’s goal is to embed authentic experiences into the curriculum by connecting area business and community partners to student projects through authentic community challenges.

In the fall of 2017, the district partnered with NTN to bring the New Tech school model to 9th graders for the first time in Woods Academy at Valley Southwoods Freshman High School. In 2018-19, WDMCS will partner with New Tech to implement the model in grades 10-12 at Valley High School; this is the final piece of the district’s K-12 pathway to student success on Iowa’s Universal Constructs.

Teachers at West Des Moines designed a prototype of a satellite deployment system for NASA. Their proposal was one of only 12 student-derived designs in the nation to be selected by NASA for testing. 28% of the schools in the New Tech Network are STEM-themed schools.
COLLETON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA: A TURNING POINT

When Colleton County Schools in South Carolina first considered adopting the New Tech school model in 2011, they were searching for ways to address particular challenges of the high needs, low performing high school students in their economically underdeveloped and largely rural community. With a county history of poor performing schools in a region along the South Carolina I-95 “Corridor of Shame,” district leaders knew they were compelled to do something different to better position students for success in college and in the STEM-driven economy of their state.

Supported by a five-year United States Department of Education grant, Colleton County High School and one other nearby high school were selected to implement the New Tech school model as a new initiative to turn around these two low-performing schools. This proved to be a turning point for a generation of graduates.

In 2013, Josh Cable, a founding teacher at Cougar New Tech (CNT), an academy at Colleton County High School, believed CNT could play “a major role in changing the Corridor of Shame into a Corridor of Innovation.” With its first New Tech students graduating in 2017, there is ample evidence that this aspiration has been realized. Cougar New Tech is a National Demonstration Site and annually hosts hundreds of local, state, and national visitors seeking innovative ideas in education.

Going forward, the Colleton County school district is expanding its New Tech efforts. In the fall of 2017, the Health Careers Academy at Colleton County High School and Bells Elementary implemented the New Tech model.

As Cougar New Tech students turned their tassels, the district and state began preparations to accelerate implementation of proven practices that are helping them move from a Corridor of Shame to a Corridor of Innovation.

“After five years, there is clear evidence that the approach works. I am excited to tap into the power of being part of this network,” stated Superintendent Franklin Foster. CNT graduates are truly ready for success in college, career, and life; they are the turning point for this generation.