



NEXT GENERATION LEARNING

Policy Summary

ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2019

Each student deserves a high-quality education that meets their needs. Next generation learning policies encourage and enable innovative, student-centered strategies—such as personalized learning and mastery-based education—to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

WHAT IS NEXT GENERATION LEARNING?

Next generation learning reimagines learning for the 21st century by providing innovative educators flexibility and support to meet the needs of all students. States throughout the nation are exploring opportunities to provide schools with the flexibility and support needed to ensure students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary for college or career. These innovative, more student-centered strategies and approaches include personalized learning and mastery-based education.



The Challenge

The conventional, one-size-fits-all system of education leaves too many students behind.



The Solution

Next generation learning prioritizes innovation, student-centered practices to ensure every student succeeds.

HOW CAN STATES PROMOTE NEXT GENERATION LEARNING?

“It’s not an easy thing to do. But it’s being done, and it’s being done with good results. And I think we should move as fast as we can ... changing policy state by state to make sure that it happens in an effective way and doesn’t create chaos.”

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush

Step 1: Launch Innovation or Pilot Programs

Pilot programs encourage schools to develop a specific innovative learning model within state-established parameters. General innovation programs, in contrast, are typically broader in scope and can take many forms. States may create innovation zones, provide innovation-focused grants or offer official innovation school/district designations.

These approaches allow for new models to develop and thrive in the state. Further, these programs empower districts and schools to apply for flexibility from state statutes or regulations that may impede implementation. The best approach depends on individual circumstances in a state. Where innovative schools are already thriving, states can create a formal in-state network for leaders to collaborate and share resources and lessons learned.

State Spotlight: Colorado

Colorado’s “[Innovation Schools Act](#)” of 2008 provides specific guidelines for schools to develop innovation plans and request flexibility. (See Section 22-32.5-101 through 22-32.5-111.)



Why Are Innovation and Pilot Programs Necessary?

1. **They signal support for innovation.** State innovation and pilot programs support the incubation and scaling of alternative education models and practices aligned to 21st century demands. A strong program should be anchored by a [new vision for graduates](#) with support not only from district teachers and leaders but also from local communities, business, industry and higher education leaders.
2. **They provide a mechanism for flexibility.** State policies often create obstacles to innovation at the school level—such as funding, assessment and reporting requirements that restrain schools in traditional paradigms. Some states are successfully using innovation programs to provide the flexibility and support schools need for new, student-centered learning models and practices.

Step 2: Remove Unnecessary Policy Obstacles

Through flexibility requests and waivers, a state’s innovation pilots and programs will naturally identify policy obstacles. Policymakers can take steps to clear these barriers to innovation. Examples include:

1. **Align higher education requirements.** Nontraditional report cards and transcripts can place high school graduates at a disadvantage when applying for college admission, financial aid and scholarships. States can amend higher education policies to accommodate innovative models. They also can design appropriate accommodations for state data system requirements. [Learn more.](#)
2. **Provide assessment flexibility.** Once-a-year evaluation of student proficiency on grade-level standards conflicts with the desire to break free of the traditional paradigms of time, place and pace. States can explore opportunities to implement flexible testing windows and maximize flexibility provided under federal law. [Learn more.](#)
3. **Dismantle outdated seat-time requirements.** States can begin with a review of approved flexibility requests and/or waivers of seat-time to examine the replacement proposals and their success. Policymakers can also conduct a thorough statutory and regulatory audit to determine the many implications of time-based policies. [Learn more.](#)

State Spotlight: Idaho

Idaho state law outlines steps for transitioning to mastery-based education through a [mastery-based incubator process](#). (See section 33-1632.)

Step 3: Join ExcelinEd’s Network of State Innovation Partners

ExcelinEd has assembled a network of states committed to ensuring that schools have the support and flexibility to develop next generation models of learning. The Network of State Innovation Partners focuses on issues that are common to all states, and the cohort of states represents a diverse set of programs at varying stages of implementation. ExcelinEd facilitates network convenings and provides state and national resources to support the Network’s activities.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

- [Policy, Pilots, and the Path to Competency-Based Education: National Landscape Report.](#)
- [Tale of Three States.](#)
- [The Path to Personalized Learning: The Next Chapter in the Tale of Three States.](#)
- [5 Policy Briefs for States Transitioning to Student-Centered Learning](#)