
Indicators of Digital Readiness

Indicator	Authentic Learning
Theme	Education and Classroom Practice
Priority Level	P1
Organizational Level	School

Description of Indicator

Authentic learning experiences provide students with the opportunity to engage in real world problem solving and real-life work contexts. While immersed in authentic learning opportunities including internships, entrepreneurship education, service-learning projects, community partnerships, and citizen science endeavors, students gain applicable lifelong skills. These artifacts should have value outside the walls of their school and demonstrate the students' ability to collaborate and solve real-world, unpredictable scenarios.

Why is this action important?

The ability to apply skills and knowledge to real-world, unpredictable and predictable situations is essential for the 21st century learner. Authentic learning provides opportunities for students to personalize and deepen their own understanding of core academic content and skills.

Indicator Rubric

<p>Insufficient Evidence of Implementation</p> <p>(0 Points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● School district has surveyed stakeholders to determine familiarity with Deeper Learning/21st Century skills and competencies
<p>Foundational Stage of Implementation</p> <p>(3 Points)</p>	<p>Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● School district team members meet with stakeholders to gain insights about their needs when considering making a commitment to providing learning● They identify concerns and work towards articulating an action plan related to physical spaces, technology, training, individual needs, and access to relevant curriculum materials and learning resources to best support a common vision for implementing the plan● Evidence is provided through curricular documents and/or student artifacts to demonstrate the use of the technology to solve authentic, real-world problems
<p>Achieving Success in Implementation</p> <p>(6 Points)</p>	<p>Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● School district has implemented action plan● School district has developed an organizational definition, including essential components and vision of what authentic learning looks like in the district● Opportunities are provided for students to engage in authentic self-designed learning opportunities that address deeper learning competencies and align with the district vision● Student-created projects should be relevant and serve a purpose to the local and/or global community
<p>Exemplary Success in Implementation</p> <p>(9 Points)</p>	<p>Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students across multiple grade levels and curricular areas are engaged in self-designed learning opportunities that address deeper learning competencies and align with the district vision● Student-created projects should be relevant and serve a purpose to the local and/or global community

Who in the school/district should lead and be involved with this action?

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Students
- Technology Coaches/Specialists
- Curriculum Leaders
- IT/Assistive Professionals/Leaders
- Board of Education Members
- Local business, Organizations, and Public Entities
- Colleges
- Training Providers and Technical Colleges

How to execute the action

Successful execution can be documented by:

- modifying or creating a district-wide model for implementing authentic learning experiences
- providing scheduling and curriculum opportunities for such learning to take place during the school day on a regular basis
- submitting evidence of student learning, such as reflective digital artifacts like videos and student portfolios
- Consider using Problem-Based Learning models, Makerspaces, or personalized learning initiatives.
- Identify and recruit organizations and businesses that will partner with the school district on authentic learning experiences.
- Design lessons and projects that target the needs of the selected partner
- Have students demonstrate their learning through public forums

Recommended evidence to support successful execution of this action

- **Evidence of student-created projects/learning opportunities (student project proposals, videos, photographs, student designed project materials, student portfolios, rubrics project proposals etc.)**
- Stakeholder surveys (students, teachers, community etc.)
- Action plan to address needs for supporting authentic learning specific to school district
 - Artifacts from PLCs, Faculty Meetings, and other professional development opportunities demonstrating time spent exploring and engaging in examples of authentic learning opportunities
- School / district vision of college and career readiness that incorporates 21st Century skills/deeper learning.
- Documentation of Successful Implementation via letters from the community, newspaper articles, videos,
- List of community partnerships

Resources schools can use to complete this action successfully

- [Alliance for Education Deeper Learning Network](#)
- [Deeper Learning - Hewlett Foundation](#)
- [NMC Horizon Report 2016 - Deeper Learning](#)
- <http://www.ernweb.com/educational-research-articles/the-four-characteristics-of-authentic-learning/>
- <http://www.schrockguide.net/authentic-learning.html>
- <http://authenticlearning.info/AuthenticLearning/Home.html>
- <http://www.authentictasks.uow.edu.au/framework.html>
- <http://jfmuelller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/>

Certified Schools Exemplars: See links for school evidence

1. [Thorne Middle School, Middletown Township Public Schools, 2018 Silver Certified](#)

Thorne Middle School, within the Middletown School District provides students in grade 6-8 the opportunity to be engaged in authentic learning experiences. Thorne Middle School houses a MakerSpace that is open to all students. The MakerSpace is open to them during before school, during lunch blocks, and can be used by students during a specific class block if setup with the teacher ahead of time. During their time in MakerSpace students can design, learn, collaborate, experiment, and explore. They can also practice their coding abilities with items such as Bloxels and the LEGO Mindstorm EV3. Students are also provided with time during their advisory block to work on personalized learning experiences. This advisory block takes place every other day for 60 minutes, during two of the four marking periods. Advisory allows students to move at their own pace and level of learning. Students are also provided the opportunity to work on something that drives them, something they are passionate about. This can be done via a SPARK project or other type of activity. During the advisory block students are provided with a "Student Personalized Learning Plan (SPLP)" this plan provides students a space to set goals and reflect on their personalized learning goals. Many students are working on projects that focus on global goals, pertaining to real world situation and giving back to the community.

2. [Borough School, Morris Plains School District, 2018 Silver Certified](#)

Students at Borough School have many opportunities to embrace authentic learning experiences. From the STEAM courses that all students, grades 3-8 cycle through where engineering and design challenges are employed on a daily basis to present student with real world problem solving to the immersive experiences in the VR Lab, students at Borough School are often tasked with unique and authentic learning. Students also take ownership of their learning through the 20-Time passion projects that students spend 1/2 of the school year pursuing. Students make global connections, build empathy and compassion, and partake in citizenship related activities on a routine basis all through authentic and meaningful learning.

3. [Northern Valley Old Tappan HS, Northern Valley Regional HS District, 2018 Silver Certified](#)

Authentic learning in NVOT looks like experiences that provide students the opportunity to self-design and personalize their learning, often through real-world and/or community-based experiences. In the past, these opportunities were made available primarily to seniors, through experiences such as the 12th grade Structured Learning Experience (still in place, and still incredibly rewarding for students to participate in). But as of 2017-18, additional opportunities were created and promoted that offer equally authentic experiences to students across grade levels -- including genius projects, CTE tracks that span multiple grade levels, independent research opportunities, opportunities to travel and learn abroad, and more.

4. [Hackensack High School, Hackensack School District, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)

Our students at Hackensack High School organized a rally against Gun Violence. They created posters honoring those

that died during school shootings. Also, our Drop-In Center provides a haven for teens to go to when they need any type of support whether it's emotional, mental, resource for their parents, and/or an outlet to share their feelings and thoughts. We listed workshops, a public forum, and field trips that were provided to the students to experience learning outside of the classroom. In addition, Personal Finance students created business plans.

5. **[Robertsville, Marlboro Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)**

We have worked to develop multiple authentic learning projects and opportunities for students. A few include the Marlboro Marketplace where students pitch their products/ideas to the community, 20% time and a focus on design challenges at all grade levels.

6. **[North Boulevard Elementary School, Pequannock Township School District, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)**

Students of North Boulevard School are actively engaged in a multitude of authentic learning experiences. Cross-curricular activities focus on real-world applications and inquiry-based problem-solving skills. Students select appropriate digital tools to complete activities that have a meaningful context beyond the walls of the classroom. The lessons and activities in the school are reinforced by the district mission statement, board policies and district Three-Year Technology Plan.

7. **[Pequannock Township High School, Pequannock Township School District, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)**

Authentic learning creates students who are motivated and interested in learning. At Pequannock Township High School our students engage in activities that include real-world and inquiry-based problem-solving skills. While immersed in authentic learning opportunities, including internships, entrepreneurship education, service-learning projects, and community partnerships, students gain applicable life-long skills. Our Structured Learning Experience (SLE) Program, Senior Capstone Program, and STEM Academy each provide an opportunity for eligible seniors to spend a portion of their last year in high school in professional internships with local companies or in-service learning experiences. A Senior Capstone Project is required for both our Senior Capstone students and STEM Academy students. The PTHS Operation Smile Club and Habitat for Humanity Club engage in community projects throughout the year that provide aide locally and across the world. Another example of our PTHS students connecting meaningful real-world experiences is when our Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) participated in the State and National Leadership Conference. Several video productions that documented their experiences were uploaded to YouTube. Lastly, several of our students drafted and submitted "Letters to the Editor" of the New York Times. All of these experiences have challenged our students to see the world in a bigger place, and understand their impact when they have a voice in the development of their learning experiences.

8. **[Holdrum Middle School, River Vale Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)**

River Vale clearly outlined our value setting process. In the end, we collectively agreed on what we valued most for our students, which was helping to develop independent learners capable of personal and professional success, and helping children find and develop their passions. In the 2016-2017 school-year, we worked to take those values and turn them into something identifiable – a Portrait of a Graduate. We specifically outlined how we are addressing imperative 21st Century Skills and how we are successfully implementing these in the classrooms. We gave evidence of professional development on authentic learning and our Portrait of a Graduate. This evidence included rubrics created by grade level bands. The learning progressions are being used as a point of discussion with our students.

In our continued effort for students to find their passions, recognize their achievement, and cultivate students who exhibit the knowledge, skill, character, and work ethic necessary for success in the global marketplace, Holdrum Middle School is piloting a program in which students will be able to complete credit in curricular classes, extracurricular activities, and special approved projects to attain successful completion of requirements in an Academy sequence.

The following Academies are currently in place at Holdrum and offered to classes of 2019, 2020 and 2021:

- The Academy of the Written and Visual Arts
- The Performing Arts Academy
- The Local to Global Community Academy
- The S.T.E.M. Academy

- The Academy of Wellness and Mindfulness
- Beyond the Classroom Academy

Lastly, we provided a link to our district website where we clearly illustrate example projects that are being completed per grade level that highlight critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

9. [Walnut Street Elementary School, Toms River Regional Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)

Each year, our students participate in our annual Maker's Day. Students in each grade level engage in unique projects which provide them with the opportunity to engage in authentic, hands on learning while following the principles of design to solve real world challenges. Authentic learning is a term we have been using and ascribing to across the curriculum for over a decade. We define authentic learning opportunities for students as those that reflect personal interests and experiences, address real problems with no easy "Google-able" solutions, and have real world meaning. We educate the public regularly on related initiatives, conduct community events and regional trainings modeling and advocating for authentic learning, and continually adapt our curriculum to reflect this mindset.

2017-2018 District Goal #1 on integrated authentic learning (drives all other goals and activities) TR Schools has a supervisor of Educational Technology responsible for training staff at each building to turnkey district-wide initiatives. Curriculum leaders work together for interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities. Media/Tech specialists at each building model best practices and tools, provide local support, and conduct building level training.

10. [Whitman Elementary School, Washington Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified](#)

We described a 3rd grade collaboration project with a local farm, as well as a scarecrow contest with the same farm (including photos of scarecrows). We also described various fundraising and community service projects and included photos and screenshots related to these. A description of the Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education program and photos were included. There were also descriptions and photos included of events where community members volunteer to come to the classrooms and work with students. There was also information and photos included from the guidance counselor's initiatives, including staff Autism Awareness shirts and Week of Respect.