
Indicators of Digital Readiness

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| Indicator | A Culture of Innovation, Collaboration, and Empowerment |
| Theme | Leadership |
| Priority Level | P1 |
| Organizational Level | District |

Description of Indicator

Innovation in schools reflects a collaborative learning environment that cultivates and nurtures new thinking and approaches to teaching and learning. Staff should be empowered, encouraged, and given flexibility to experiment with different and novel pedagogical approaches to improve their practice and the student experience. An innovative environment is one that is receptive to change and new approaches, and a successful innovative school is one that is able to effectively spread new innovative ideas to other parts of the school and district.

Why is this action important?

A culture that promotes innovation is an essential component of a Digital School. For innovation to become part of the fabric of a school culture, trust and respect must be established. If schools are to continue to prepare students for newly developed skills and jobs that may not exist today, they must be willing to investigate, implement, and experiment with new ways of teaching and learning.

A culture of innovation involves trust. Trust in allowing trial and error and for stakeholders to think outside the box starts with support from positions of leadership (central office, building principals, and supervisors). It should be an organic, collaborative process with the people most involved--teachers--taking the lead. But it can't stop at the teacher level. Teachers must also support and promote students' thoughts and creativity, giving them opportunities to take ownership of their own learning, especially with how they will learn. Effective leadership is essential at all levels.

Indicator Rubric

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| Insufficient Evidence of Implementation (0 Points) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No District Vision Statement● No Technology Plan● No District Strategic plan● No Professional Development Plans |
| Foundational Stage of Implementation (3 Points) | The district has two or more plans available that reflect Innovation, Collaboration and Empowerment, which can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● District Vision Statement● Technology Plan● District Strategic plan● Professional Development Plan |
| Achieving Success in Implementation (6 Points) | Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Vision statement is evident thought district handout, meeting agenda, website, etc. and reflects Innovation, Collaboration and Empowerment● Technology Plan has been infused into District Strategic Plan and is no longer a separate document● District provides ongoing professional learning opportunities that reflect Innovation, Collaboration and Empowerment |
| Exemplary Success in Implementation (9 Points) | Evidence is provided for all previous rubric levels, as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Survey data is reviewed and action plans are developed to increase Innovation, Collaboration and Empowerment● Technology plan and/or Professional Development plans are revised based on analyzing survey data and included within District Strategic Plan/ Goal.● Evidence of committee meetings that reflect Innovation, Collaboration and Empowerment |

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

All stakeholders. A culture of innovation starts with the board of education working in tandem with the superintendent to achieve buy-in from the teachers, the parents, and the community at large. At the school level, the principal and technology staff should act as mentors and coaches. Innovation extends to developing potential integrated technology leadership among parents and students, as well as school staff, with the goal of the whole school community taking ownership for the change process.

How to execute the action

- Establish a mechanism to study the current school culture
- Conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment--including surveys, interviews, and related artifacts; use data to establish a narrative of the current organizational culture
- Formulate action items to be employed that will serve to foster a culture of empowerment to promote innovative professional practice and student learning
- Disseminate resulting data and related action items for review/feedback
- Obtain BOE support, as necessary
- Implement action items
- Conduct formative assessment/evaluation

Recommended evidence to support successful execution of this action

- Vision and mission statement (and related efforts to promote/make visible)
- Strategic plan includes a technology plan that promotes a culture of innovative practices (at all levels)
- Professional Development Plans, Professional Learning Communities, Common Planning Time, and Faculty meetings that provide opportunities for professional collaboration, distributed leadership, creativity and innovation, taking ownership of aspects of professional learning, and the encouragement of experimentation that have high potential to advance the vision.
- Lesson Plans/Curricula that reflect opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning and provide opportunities for experimentation that have high potential to advance the vision.
- BOE meeting agendas/minutes
- Tangible outcomes/products representative of empowerment efforts (i.e., curricula, programmatic initiatives, innovative projects, etc.)

Resources schools can use to complete this action successfully

- [So You Think You Want To Innovate](#)
- [Seven steps to create professional development plan](#)
- [5 Things Innovative Schools Do Differently](#)
- [NJ Digital Learning and Assessment Portal](#)

Certified Schools Exemplars: See links for school evidence

1. Bayview Elementary, Middletown Township Public Schools, 2018 Silver Certified

Middletown Township Public School's prioritizes cultivating a culture of innovation, collaboration, and empowerment. We feel it is essential to create continuous opportunities for teachers and students to foster their curiosities and creative thinking. Personalized learning is at the heart of Middletown's district's vision and goals and it is evident in the priorities of district and building leadership. Educational Technology Specialists are present in each building to continuously support innovative teaching and learning practices. Opportunities such as choice professional development days, building innovation team meetings, and our district innovation fair help promote collaboration and empowerment of staff and students.

2. Borough School, Morris Plains School District, 2018 Silver Certified

MPSD prides itself on having an astounding culture that promotes innovation, collaboration, and empowerment. MPSD recognizes the importance of having this culture expand to not just the students, but to the staff and the larger school community as well. Several years ago, there was a lack of innovation and collaboration occurring throughout the district and through surveys, formal/informal conversations and case studies, and the development of a strategic plan that, over the course of the five years of implementation, would ultimately lead to the collaborative development of a new culture, the current state of MPSD was born. MPSD strives to empower staff to be innovative and collaborative through numerous opportunities including, but not limited to, the RISE Coaching Model, Personalized PD, staff retreats, numerous committees, etc. Many of these practices are with the support of the BOE who plays an active role in establishing and supporting the culture of the schools. The same holds true for MPSD students, where through programs like 20Time, Advisory, Enriching Minds, and our approach to student led instruction, students are given the opportunity to be creative, innovative, work in collaboration, and feel empowered along the way. By opening the doors to the community, MPSD strives to ensure a collaborative relationship with the school community organizations, all of whom help to support the innovative practices of the district, both financially and holistically. The innovative practices of the district are constantly being assessed and modified to provide students and staff with a current and relevant experience.

3. Northern Valley Demarest, Northern Valley Regional HS District, 2018 Silver Certified

NVRHS was able to achieve exemplar level status in this indicator by empowering teachers, supporting meaningful initiatives that grew in organic ways, and fostering an innovative mindset across district leaders. At the time of our submission, this included local and district level professional development committees, learning community-based delayed opening days for professional growth, open classroom and learning walk initiatives, instructional coaches and technology mentors (teacher leaders), and a number of high level plans (district PD plan, 1:1 learning technology plan) developed collaboratively across stakeholder groups.

4. Hackensack High School, Hackensack School District, 2018 Bronze Certified

The school conducted multiple surveys requiring the HHS faculty to self-assess their knowledge & comfort with educational technology in the classroom. The results of the survey allowed the school to lead multi-tiered professional development opportunities according to the needs of the faculty in order that they incorporate student-driven learning in their classrooms effectively utilizing technology in the classroom. Some of the professional development offered by the school were Google Classroom, Google Docs, Google Sheets, Edulastic, Nearpod and Flipgrid. In addition, our school uses a "pineapple" chart. Staff post on the chart when they have a lesson to share with colleagues. Everyone is welcome to come into the class to learn something new.

5. Hazlet Middle School, Hazlet Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified

Hazlet school district's mission is "Educating our students...to achieve their maximum potential." Doing this requires a shared culture of innovation, collaboration and empowerment, which are evidenced by our Middle States strategic plan to

increase enrollment in advanced academic classes and support all levels of learners; our innovative PD options which allow for teacher personalization and common prep time to collaborate; Teacher-led district-wide PD, and our Twitter Professional Learning Networks, connected through our hashtags #hmstlc and #HazletProud.

6. Middle Road School, Hazlet Township Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified

We achieved exemplar in this category by providing evidence that promote innovation in our school culture. For example, we provided lists documenting staff professional development, dates, times and topics. Teachers in our district plan professional development opportunities for their colleagues. We also included photos, and sign-up sheets indicating various forms of technology accessible to students and staff on a regular basis in our school. Staff Twitter accounts and other social media like Instagram were also documented to showcase efficient ways to collaborate and share ideas among colleagues.

7. Linden High School, Linden Public Schools, 2018 Bronze Certified

Linden Public Schools' District Vision Statement, 5-year strategic plan, and district goals that include professional development opportunities for all staff, and technology goals, have all demonstrated exemplary status in the Culture of Innovation, Collaboration, and Empowerment indicator. Along with that, Linden High School's culture has enabled its staff to provide teacher-driven, daily informal opportunities for collaboration and observation with the use of a centrally-located Pineapple Chart. Linden High School also includes a school-wide technology goal every year for individual teacher professional development plans (PDP). The PDP goal for 2017 was for the entire teaching staff at Linden High School to become Apple Certified, which was achieved. The Media Center at Linden High School holds peer-led workshops on best practice for utilizing technology in instruction, such as participation in Digital Learning Day in February. Finally, Linden High School has an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), consisting of teacher leaders, that regularly meets to discuss and identify best instructional practices, including integrating technology, student assessment data, and how to best turn-key that information to staff.

8. North Boulevard Elementary School, Pequannock Township School District, 2018 Bronze Certified

Pequannock Township reflects a collaborative learning environment that cultivates an innovative culture. As a district, we empower staff to take instructional risks that support and enhance their own learning and student learning. An innovative environment is one that is receptive to change and new approaches, and a successful innovative school is one that is able to effectively spread new innovative ideas to other parts of the school and district.

9. Point Pleasant Beach High School, Point Pleasant Beach, 2018 Bronze Certified

Since 2015, the comprehensive plan we assembled for our Middle States accreditation has served as our Strategic Plan. This comprehensive document was based on comprehensive, wide-ranging stakeholder feedback, and provides the skeletal foundation of our district's vision for the future. That document is considered "living," and is updated several times annually, as goals are refined, redirected, achieved, etc....

Each year, the school's ScIP team gathers with the district's DEAC to review observation data and share feedback from staff about areas of required/requested growth. Our ScIP committee is empowered to gather data from staff members about what professional development needs they have and what goals would be valuable to them for the school and district to pursue. In addition, the superintendent conducts an additional goals/needs survey of staff in each building as part of a faculty meeting. All of the data gathered becomes part of an integrated strategy to advance the district's professional aims. Identified areas for growth become integrated into district goals. Those goals feed school goals, teacher goals, and later weave themselves into SGO statements that coordinate individual students' needs with the district's.

Over the past few years, technology skill-acquisition has been a topic in high demand. We responded to our classroom teachers' requests to move to GAFE, and provided the necessary training to implement those applications promptly and effectively. Further, feedback gleaned on bandwidth support and device availability prompted the district to make additional investments in both areas, now extending its 1:1 reach K-12. The goals have become embedded in our Middle States planning documents, annual district goals, and annual building goals.