About Beyond High School

Far too many schools in California and across the nation fail to prepare their students for success in college and career. With national graduation rates hovering around 84 percent, and only 40 percent of students who graduate prepared for postsecondary success, the traditional school model is not addressing the needs of our future workforce.

Over the past two years, Pivot Learning’s Beyond High School Initiative has been working with a group of six secondary schools in California and Massachusetts to redesign them, through a community-based user-centered design process, to ensure that all students graduate prepared to succeed in college and career. Using the research-based principles of Linked Learning—rigorous academics integrated with (1) college-ready standards, (2) sequenced career-technical education, (3) work-based learning, and (4) personalized student supports for stronger academic and social-emotional outcomes—Beyond High School is changing the trajectory for nearly 6,000 students so far. The Beyond High School process engages a “design team” to uncover solutions to their strategic improvement challenges.

Studies show that this approach leads to better student outcomes—graduation rates, student achievement in English language arts (ELA) and math, social-emotional skills, and college and career readiness—over the traditional secondary school model.

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1 National high school graduation rate. NCES, 2015-16
2 College students who take remedial courses in 4-year institutions. 2004-09 longitudinal study. NCES 2016 report
3 This process was adapted from IDEO, Stanford d.school, and the Henry Ford Learning Institute.
4 SII International, 2015
These schools have been reimagining their classes, master schedule, and student interactions. All aspects of the schools have been evaluated in the design process, including:

- Instruction and assessment,
- teacher and student collaboration on thematic, interdisciplinary projects,
- professional development, and
- school culture.

The pilot Beyond High School sites are implementing their redesign prototypes. New partner schools will join the process to make transformational changes to improve their students’ learning. With a goal of more personalized, authentic learning experiences for greater student success beyond high school, the road that lies ahead is rife with opportunities.

How Beyond High School Works

First, Beyond High School sites create multi-disciplinary design teams. The design teams are comprised of education leaders, teachers, students, families, community members, industry partners, and community colleges. They work together to define their school vision and go through the Change Design steps of Discover, Interpret, Ideate, Prototype, Feedback, and Refine.

Beyond High School has shifted adult culture in all the sites, as indicated by increased teacher satisfaction levels and improved collaboration across subject areas and grade levels, closely followed by increased student attendance and engagement. Beyond High School’s comprehensive approach has helped school teams transform their practices for improved student learning, while making the cultural and adaptive shifts that are necessary to sustain lasting change.

Our Design Cycle

- Discover
- Interpret
- Ideate
- Prototype
- Feedback
- Refine

pivotlearning.org | 510.250.2543 | learnmore@pivotlearning.org
Two Oakland Aspire charter schools—Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy and Golden State College Preparatory Academy—had an opportunity to partner with the city of Oakland to implement Linked Learning pathways through Measure N. Golden State had a successful elective program, but it was not part of a coherent Linked Learning pathway.

**Golden State has cultivated an entrepreneurial or “builder spirit” culture, which is inherent to, and evident in, all aspects of the student experience.**

With Pivot’s support, the Golden State certificated and classified staff embraced a growth mindset and built their elective program out to incorporate college and career readiness. Pivot helped Golden State expand their partnership with Project BUILD to create a Linked Learning pathway around Entrepreneurship. Pivot supported Golden State to understand Linked Learning and create a comprehensive pathway integrating college prep coursework, work-based learning, and a sequence of CTE entrepreneurship courses.

As a result of this work, Golden State was awarded full funding through Measure N to build out their pathway, and they are implementing it in the 2018-19 school year.

The design team identified a need to re-configure end-of-year student exhibitions to better integrate project- and work-based learning experiences.

**Pathways**

Entrepreneurship (community activism theme)

**Partnerships**

- BUILD
- Peralta Community Colleges
- Linked Learning Alliance

Twelfth grade students at Golden State will complete a senior capstone research project which will incorporate the six entrepreneurial core competencies: innovation, critical literacy, fortitude, risk taking, reflection, and initiative.

**“Being part of the Design Team has added dimension and joy to my work at Golden State. Thank you for all you have done to facilitate and hold space for our work.”**

- Design Team Member

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Golden State College Preparatory Academy is a 6th-12th grade Aspire Public School charter serving 609 students in East Oakland, California. As a "College for Certain" school, all students are required to meet University of California/California State University course requirements and be accepted to a four-year university in order to graduate. Golden State's vision is that all graduates are prepared to enter the world and contribute positively to their community.

About Pivot Learning
Founded in 1995, Pivot Learning is a nonprofit organization of K-12 education experts who work directly with districts to address their biggest challenges, including raising student achievement and closing unconscionably large achievement gaps. Our mission is to partner with educators to design and implement solutions to their greatest challenges in achieving educational justice. We envision a future where our public schools provide our most underserved students with an outstanding education. In 2017, Pivot acquired the Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education (CORE), which expanded our reach and our capacity to support research-based intervention in literacy and math.