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, 2016
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.
Los Arboles Middle School

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District had identified a need around high school redesign. The district approached Pivot Learning to support the articulation of a comprehensive 6-12 grade continuum that would effectively support students to navigate the transition from middle to high school and be successful in college and career.

Pivot worked with Los Arboles Middle School to plan and implement project-based learning that was connected to community and industry partners. The goal was to increase the relevance for students and prepare them for the college and career aligned pathways at Marina High School. Based on the needs and interests of Los Arboles, Pivot’s work also had a particular focus on school culture.

The design team united Los Arboles Middle School to facilitate vertical articulation among school staff and community members. This team created complementary mission statements, values, and design principles for further coherence between schools.

Los Arboles focused on structural changes that have a major effect on positive school culture; for example, walls were removed to unite classrooms and foster further collaboration.

In the 2018-19 school year, Los Arboles is piloting project-based learning and team teaching in 6th and 7th grades with a plan to roll out schoolwide. They are also working on improvements to school culture among both adults and students.

Pathways
A sustainability theme weaves together an interdisciplinary sixth grade curriculum and expands into key upper middle grade areas.

Partnerships
- Monterey Peninsula College
- Linked Learning Alliance

"Los Arboles Middle School and Marina High School are on the verge of creating a 6-12 Linked Learning pathway and connecting projects across middle and high school grades. The result will be a vanishing learning divide between 8th and 9th grades that eases the pitfalls associated with high school transition."

-Design Team Member
Los Arboles Middle School serves 628 6th-8th grade students in Marina, California, near Monterey. Los Arboles has fostered a culture that promotes equity and student engagement. With new school leadership, Los Arboles recently adopted the Linked Learning model and continues to empower students through Early College and Career exploration.

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.