



We Are the Virginia Is for Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Final Report

August 1, 2020

Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network Report

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28 school divisions.
156 school leaders.
State and national partners.
And a Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

We are the
**VIRGINIA IS FOR LEARNERS
INNOVATION NETWORK**

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“I’m Ken Robinson and I’d like to add my welcome to today’s important gathering of the Virginia Is for Learners Innovation Network. I particularly want to thank all the partners who have helped to form and sustain the network including, of course, James Lane and the team at the Virginia Department of Education. I especially want to thank the teams of educators who’ve been working over the past year across divisions of the state, 28 in all. This is a really important initiative that’s happening in Virginia. The work that I’ve been involved in for a long time has been focused on the need to think very differently not just about education but about children and their potential and how important it is to cultivate the broader range of their capabilities. Conventional forms of education have rarely touched children who have boundless capacities. They’re born with a wonderful range of possible capabilities.

Honestly, I’m thrilled that states like Virginia are seizing the opportunity to rethink not just how we do things now but the sort of education that we may need in the future. I think it has to be based on a deeper understanding of the conditions under which children learn; the conditions under which teachers give their very best. I also think we talk about innovation and it’s not always about what’s new -- it’s about what’s appropriate.”

Sir Ken Robinson, December 13, 2019

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I. Introduction

In 2015 the Virginia Standards of Learning Innovation Committee, members of whom were appointed by the Governor, recommended to the Virginia General Assembly that the Board of Education develop a new Profile of a Virginia Graduate and adjust the state's diploma requirements to conform with the profile. The 2016 General Assembly subsequently approved House Bill 895 and Senate Bill 336 in furtherance of this goal. In 2018 the Virginia Board of Education released its new Profile of a Virginia Graduate. The Profile emphasized the '5 Cs' of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship. The Board of Education also emphasized the development of core skill sets in the early years of high school and established multiple paths toward college and career readiness for students to follow in the later years of high school, including opportunities for internships, externships, and workforce credentialing.

The intent of the new Profile of a Virginia Graduate is to transform learning, teaching, and schooling across the Commonwealth. As Dr. James Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction noted, "When I think about the best teachers that I had, I remember the teachers who really challenged me to open my mind and think critically about things in ways I never had before. This is the kind of deeper learning that we want all students to experience." Similarly, Virginia Secretary of Education Atif Qarni stated, "Virginia's schools have a duty to prepare students to combat challenges head on, by equipping them with both content knowledge and critical 21st century readiness skills. The Profile of a Virginia Graduate requires that students demonstrate core competencies like critical thinking, collaboration, creative thinking, communication and citizenship."

While the Profile of a Virginia Graduate was designed by the Virginia Board of Education to provide local school communities with a framework of competencies that students should develop as they master the Virginia Standards of Learning and work through division curricula, the Profile did not provide a roadmap for how school divisions should strategically identify, develop, revise, and align local efforts necessary for implementation of the Profile framework.

School administrators and classroom educators quickly realized that the new Profile would demand innovative approaches to learning that would impact current school division policies, funding, teaching practices, use of time and school schedules, infrastructure needs, professional learning structures, communication with parents and communities, and numerous other aspects of schooling. The Virginia Department of Education also stressed that the shift to the new Profile framework was not just a high school initiative but rather should impact all PK-12 grade levels.

After multiple conversations and a convening with the Virginia Department of Education and Jobs for the Future staff, a collective of Virginia organizations mobilized together to initiate the **Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network (VaLIN)**, a statewide initiative intended to bring together school division design teams and foster innovation across the Commonwealth. The

objective was to create a network of educators who would work together to find solutions to common challenges and share resources relevant to implementation of the Profile.

The Network was formed through funding and in-kind support from the following partners:

- **Edu21C Foundation**, a national nonprofit of Ted Dintersmith supporting organizations whose initiatives impact K-12 learning through commitments to help schools provide great life paths to children
- **Jobs for the Future/Hewlett Foundation**, a national nonprofit focused on broadening educational and economic opportunity who serves as a Hewlett Foundation grant recipient in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education
- **Virginia School Consortium for Learning (VaSCL)**, an educational consortium of over 60 Virginia school divisions that promotes collaboration and high-quality professional learning in order to improve classroom instruction and school leadership practices.
- **James Madison University**, the fiscal agent for the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network
- **Virginia Department of Education**, the administrative agency for public school education in Virginia

Together these entities united around the overarching purpose of fostering changes in Virginia school divisions that result in a) deeper learning, b) expanded equity, and c) increased learner engagement strategies for students. These changes are by design transformational of the school experience for all Virginia children, closing educational and workforce divides, and cultivating 'future ready' students, schools, and communities across the Commonwealth.

II. Lead Innovation Teams

Applications for VaLIN opened in January 2019. Nearly 60 Virginia school divisions applied to be part of the first VaLIN cohort. School divisions that applied were asked to collectively commit to:

- Engage in thoughtful innovation as pioneers for the Commonwealth;
- Model openness to growth within their own team and throughout the cohort;
- Leverage their regional, local, and virtual coaching supports;
- Create and share innovation artifacts and best practices throughout the network and, ultimately, across the Commonwealth; and
- Be present at all planned Institute sessions.

Each applicant school division responded to four prompts intended to assess their readiness for participation in the cohort:

1. What does engaging, deep, challenging learning mean to your team today?
2. Describe your interpretation of engaging, deep, and challenging learning that already exists in your community today.
3. What key strength do you predict your team will bring to the cohort's collective success?
4. What critical need do you anticipate other lead teams and the facilitators can help you address?

Eventually 31 school divisions were selected for Cohort 1 (see Table 1) and the remainder were invited to apply again for the second cohort. The 31 participating school divisions represented a broad cross-section of Virginia school systems and came from all eight Superintendent's Regions of the Commonwealth. Three divisions dropped out of the cohort due to change in leadership or competing priorities that were unanticipated when their applications were submitted. Over 90% of the teams completed a full year of project development and implementation actions.

Approximately two-thirds (65%) of the school divisions in Cohort 1 were rural. About 19% of the divisions were suburban school systems, and the remaining 16% were city or town school divisions.

School divisions of all sizes were represented in Cohort 1, ranging from small school systems (0 to 2,000 students) to very large school systems (more than 50,000 students). The average school division percentage of free- and/or reduced-price lunch students in Cohort 1 was 51%, with a range of 18% to 100%.

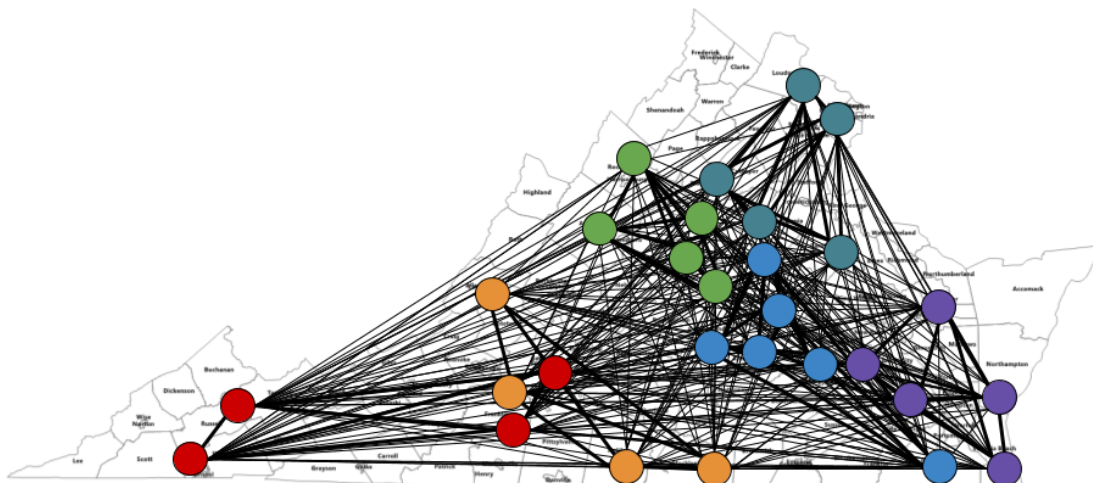
Some of the smaller school divisions partnered together. Ultimately, the 31 school divisions created 26 Lead Innovation Teams. Each Lead Innovation Team selected 6 team members to represent the division(s). Team members consisted of superintendents and central office

administrators, principals, instructional coaches, classroom teachers, parents, higher education faculty, and other school community members.

Table 1. VaLIN Cohort 1 Participants

Region	School Division	Student Enrollment	FRL %	Location
1. Central Virginia	Goochland County	2,001 - 5,000	33%	rural, distant
1. Central Virginia	Hopewell City	2,001 - 5,000	93%	suburb, large
1. Central Virginia	Petersburg City	5,001 - 10,000	100%	suburb, large
1. Central Virginia	Powhatan County	2,001 - 5,000	20%	rural, distant
2. Tidewater	Newport News City	20,001 - 35,000	67%	city, middle
2. Tidewater	Poquoson City	2,001 - 5,000	18%	suburb, large
2. Tidewater	Suffolk City	10,001 - 20,000	50%	rural, fringe
2. Tidewater	Virginia Beach City	50,001 and above	39%	city, large
3. Northern Neck	Caroline County	2,001 - 5,000	51%	rural, distant
3. Northern Neck	Middlesex County	0 - 2,000	57%	rural, distant
3. Northern Neck	West Point	0 - 2,000	32%	town, fringe
4. Northern Virginia	Loudoun County	50,001 and above	18%	suburb, large
4. Northern Virginia	Madison County	0 - 2,000	46%	rural, distant
4. Northern Virginia	Manassas Park City	2,001 - 5,000	62%	suburb, large
4. Northern Virginia	Orange County	2,001 - 5,000	45%	rural, distant
5. Valley	Albemarle County	10,001 - 20,000	31%	rural, fringe
5. Valley	Augusta County	10,001 - 20,000	41%	rural, fringe
5. Valley	Bedford County	5,001 - 10,000	37%	rural, fringe
5. Valley	Fluvanna County	2,001 - 5,000	36%	rural, distant
5. Valley	Greene County	2,001 - 5,000	42%	rural, distant
5. Valley	Louisa County	2,001 - 5,000	46%	rural, distant
5. Valley	Rockingham County	10,001 - 20,000	41%	rural, fringe
6. Western Virginia	Alleghany County	0 - 2,000	53%	rural, fringe
6. Western Virginia	Franklin County	5,001 - 10,000	55%	rural, distant
6. Western Virginia	Roanoke County	10,001 - 20,000	30%	suburb, midsize
7. Southwest	Buchanan County	2,001 - 5,000	82%	rural, remote
7. Southwest	Norton City	0 - 2,000	93%	town, distant
7. Southwest	Washington County	5,001 - 10,000	51%	rural, fringe
8. Southside	Cumberland County	0 - 2,000	74%	rural, remote
8. Southside	Halifax County	5,001 - 10,000	70%	town, remote
8. Southside	Mecklenburg County	2,001 - 5,000	63%	rural, distant

III. The Network Model



Over the course of their VaLIN experience, Lead Innovation Teams were expected to identify - and begin to operationalize - local actions related to deeper learning, expanded equity, and increased learner engagement strategies foundational to the Commonwealth's Profile of a Virginia Graduate outcomes. Although the implementation team helps facilitate the network's activities, the VaLIN work is necessarily collaborative and driven by local school division needs. The VaLIN network is not a top-down mandate, nor is it a collection of 'best practices' that are rolled out to school divisions. Instead, VaLIN is a collective learning and sharing space driven by the desire to partner together to:

1. LEVERAGE high-quality, customized support to create and implement strategies that enhance Profile of the Virginia Graduate outcomes in local communities;
2. IMPLEMENT local systemic innovations in structures and practices specific to community needs (e.g., internships, interdisciplinary curricula, innovative instructional practices, performance assessments and portfolios); and
3. HELP BUILD the Virginia Is for Learners Innovation Network by sharing local innovation artifacts and participating in site visits and professional supports that connect school divisions across the Commonwealth.

The VaLIN experience is structured around several key design principles, including:

- Equitable access for all Virginia school divisions and the students that they serve;
- 'Bottom-up,' client-centered innovation;
- Responsiveness to differential contexts and team needs;
- Collaborative capacity-building for collective efficacy;
- Positive interdependence and cross-fertilization of ideas and resources;
- Active and interactive work-and-learn models;
- Systems-oriented design thinking that accommodates ambiguity and dreams BIG;
- Thoughtful intentionality of action; and

- Job-embedded professional learning and ongoing local and regional coaching based on effective adult learning practices.

Numerous cohort structures were created to deliver on these design principles and scaffold the inherent competencies and knowledge of the Lead Innovation Teams. For instance, on-site Institutes between March and December 2019 brought the teams together from across the Commonwealth. Institute locations were varied to accommodate different regions' driving needs. During the six Institute days, participants engaged in a diversity of hands-on activities intended to build collective efficacy. Numerous opportunities also existed for peer-to-peer sharing, dialogue, and critical reflection around locally created artifacts, challenges, and action steps. The Institutes were planned by the VaLIN Steering Committee in collaboration with a design implementation team comprised of:

- Advanced Learning Partnerships (ALP), an educational consultancy group based in Carrboro, North Carolina, that helps schools design new learning and teaching systems, empower educators and students, and amplify community capacity;
- Scott McLeod, an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Founding Director of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education (CASTLE) at the University of Colorado Denver, who focuses on 'future ready' school leadership
- Rebecca Ellis, Programs Director at Edu21C, and Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network resource and learning development liaison

In between the Institute days, Lead Innovation Teams engaged regularly with their designated ALP coaches at both the local and regional levels. Each team was assigned to a smaller regional group, which met frequently with its ALP coach and other school divisions to discuss team progress, celebrate local successes, and identify common challenges and collaboration opportunities. Additionally, numerous online and on-site learning opportunities were created to extend the learning work beyond the Lead Innovation Teams to other school personnel. For example, teams frequently engaged in site visits to other VaLIN school systems to cross-pollinate innovative practices. Similarly, ALP coaches offered virtual seminars and full-day design sessions on locally selected topics.

Finally, a virtual Network Hub was created to coordinate the work of the VaLIN teams and allow them to share resources with each other. All Institute agendas and activities were stored on the hub, and 'team drives' were created that allowed Lead Innovation Teams to upload into those digital repositories their vision statements, learner profiles, publicity materials, work artifacts, and other information that they wanted to share with each other.

IV. Sparking Innovation

Numerous learning, coaching, and collaboration opportunities were created throughout the VaLIN experience to help Lead Innovation Teams accomplish their local goals. The VaLIN implementation team utilized ongoing feedback from the teams to design each Institute and other structured interactions and to give participating school divisions access to new resources and design tools.

Breakout workshops. Breakout workshops were intended to serve as change catalysts. These learning opportunities included topics such as authentic learning and assessment; career- and work-based learning; rethinking professional development; and redesigning learning spaces and school schedules. Other sessions pertained to online and blended learning; learner profiles and competency frameworks; community engagement strategies; project- and inquiry-based learning; and instructional design for deeper learning, greater student agency, more authentic work, and rich technology infusion.

Design tools. Participants were introduced to Ted Dintersmith's Innovation Playlist, IDEO's Design Kit, Charrette protocols, storyboarding templates, the 10x Bolder protocol, 2Revolutions' Innovation Scorecard, the Stanford University d.Lab's Liberatory Design cards, the Innovator's Compass, and the 4 Shifts Protocol, among other useful resources and design tools. Lead Innovation Teams also experienced visioning sessions to build a sense of urgency; engaged in critical interrogations of local opportunity gaps and equity concerns; modeled common language development and crucial conversations together; and conducted environmental scans to identify implementation barriers and potential solutions.

Extensions to other school personnel. Multiple school divisions invited Scott McLeod to work with their teachers, principals, and instructional coaches to roll out the 4 Shifts Protocol in their schools and classrooms. ALP coaches facilitated a whole host of activities with their school division partners, including sponsoring collaborative strategic planning sessions, devising common language frameworks, identifying action steps, holding workshops on community messaging, defining and coaching for deeper learning, creating rubrics, hosting webinars, designing for student-driven learning, and creating final impact plans.

Documentary. Students in the Media Program at Fluvanna High School traveled across the Commonwealth, filming local and regional school division activities, interviewing participants and facilitators, documenting new student learning experiences, and capturing the overall VaLIN experience. Their full-length documentary, [Change It Up](#) was released in Spring 2020 to inspire communities, educators, and policymakers to embrace the possibilities for student learning inherent in the new Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

[Cumberland County Public Schools](#)

[Loudoun County Public Schools](#)

[Newport News City Public Schools](#)

[Rockingham County Public Schools](#)

[Suffolk County Public Schools](#)

Edu21C Resources. Ted Dintersmith’s Edu21C Foundation provided curriculum resources throughout the Cohort 1 year. The 28 of Virginia’s 132 school divisions that benefited from these resources account for over 300,000 students among Virginia’s roughly 1,300,000 total student population. Participating division enrollments ranged from 800 students to more than 80,000 students, and VaLIN teams represented the full spectrum of geographies, income levels, and ethnicities in Virginia. Collectively, the resources and support Dintersmith provided to Cohort 1 teams built community, staff, and leadership capacity to support innovative education practices and projects.

At the VaLIN kick-off meeting in March 2019, each Cohort 1 team received a DVD copy of the documentary film *Most Likely to Succeed*, and each Cohort 1 team member received a copy of the book *What School Could Be*. These resources came with Dintersmith’s promise to support the school divisions’ efforts to mobilize their communities around innovations in education.

Throughout the cohort year, Dintersmith fulfilled that promise by providing outreach services to Cohort 1 school divisions. Divisions requested and received over 4,000 copies of *What School Could Be* for uses including division-wide teacher professional development, community/school book studies, student/teacher/administrator book studies, and school leadership retreats. The books came with additional support including online and customized book study guides and personal and video appearances by Dintersmith at teacher professional development sessions and school leadership meetings. VaSCL’s annual student leadership conference attendees also received copies of the book and used it as a spark for discussions about how their school experiences could be improved. Student leaders from that meeting will facilitate a discussion at the kick-off event for Cohort 2.

Each Cohort 1 team division also received authorization to show the award-winning documentary *Most Likely to Succeed* royalty-free at community outreach events. Interested divisions received planning support and materials for these community film showings from Dintersmith’s foundation. One key component to successful community night events was The Innovation Playlist and its “Mobilize Your Community” resources to help with planning and outreach. Dintersmith also made numerous appearances both personally and via video to assist with community events. He continues to work with several Cohort 1 divisions that have ongoing community outreach plans or that began innovation projects after holding a community night screening.

Cohort 1 Leadership Teams also benefited from additional resources supplied by Dintersmith, including the video “The Future of Work,” which many teams used to build support for their work among school leadership, colleagues, community members, and other stakeholder groups.

Coaches working with the Innovation Playlist were able to use plays such as the “The Future of Work” and Sir Ken Robinson’s video, “Creativity,” to spark conversation and engagement among Cohort 1 team members as they immersed themselves in important work. Finally, Dintersmith secured a video from Sir Ken Robinson expressing support for the Cohort 1 teams’ efforts and inspiring them to continue their efforts beyond their cohort year. This video was a highlight at the final Cohort 1 meeting.

V. Outcomes and Impact

The Lead Innovation Teams engaged in a wide variety of activities to move their local schools and communities forward. In sum, the sheer volume of innovative activity across the 28 participating school divisions was staggering. Below are just some of the many activities that the VaLIN participants initiated during their first year in the network:

- Local screenings of Ted Dintersmith's documentary, *Most Likely to Succeed*
- Exhibition nights to acquaint parents and community members with new modalities of student learning
- Visioning sessions with parents and school board members
- Creation of new local vision and mission statements, strategic plans, and graduate profiles
- Initiation of mentoring, job shadowing, and internship opportunities for students
- Student empathy interviews
- Redesigned teacher evaluation processes
- Establishment of new regional conferences and maker fairs
- School or district-wide adoption of strategies from the Innovation Playlist
- Sponsorship of local student and educator design challenges
- Establishment of new 'innovation teams' and other teacher leadership structures
- Creation of new trans- and interdisciplinary courses and senior capstone experiences
- Educator book studies around *What School Could Be* and *Harnessing Technology for Deeper Learning*
- Investments in STEM, blended learning, and 1:1 computing initiatives
- Creation of deeper learning instructional frameworks and curricular pathways for students
- Leadership retreats to build administrator capacity for deeper learning work
- Development of design thinking workbooks for teachers
- Instructional coaching and redesign of lessons and units
- Initiation of computer science and competency-based education training for educators
- Establishment of new 'exploration camps' and innovation labs
- Educator training in project- and inquiry-based learning
- Creation of videos, slide decks, social media channels, and other publicity and marketing mechanisms
- Learning walks to diagnose learning gaps and inequities
- Alignment of curricula for deeper and 'future ready' learning
- Design of rubrics, proficiency scales, performance assessments, portfolio systems, action research projects, and other evaluation metrics to assess local growth
- Partnering with outside entities such as the New Tech Network and local universities and community colleges
- And much, much more...

Because of the wide diversity of projects and initiatives across the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network, it is a challenge to assess the 'success' of the VaLIN project. In terms of

new processes and structures (and energy and enthusiasm of the Lead Innovation Teams), VaLIN appears to be a promising new mechanism for achieving the Virginia General Assembly's new student diploma requirements. However, it will take several years to identify and understand the long-term impacts on students and communities of this school redesign and innovation work. Additionally, the target competencies of the new Profile of a Virginia Graduate - the '5 Cs' of critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship - are not as easily measured as more traditional student learning outcomes of rote factual recall and procedural regurgitation. Divergent thinking and interpersonal skills are not easily reduced to fixed-response assessments.

At this time, some measures of success of the VaLIN initiative include:

1. Ongoing participant feedback and coaching notes from ALP (see Charts 1 through 3);
2. Lead Innovation Team portfolios and work artifacts, available at <http://bit.ly/2019VaLINartifacts>;
3. School division case studies (see Appendix A);
4. Impact perspectives from participants (see Appendix B); and
5. Video perspectives from participants and facilitators (see Appendix C).

Charts 1-3 show participant feedback before and after professional learning sessions focused on developing understanding and applications of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate as supported through equity, deeper learning, and active engagement strategies.

Chart 1. Perceptions of VaLIN participants before/after professional learning sessions (average scores)

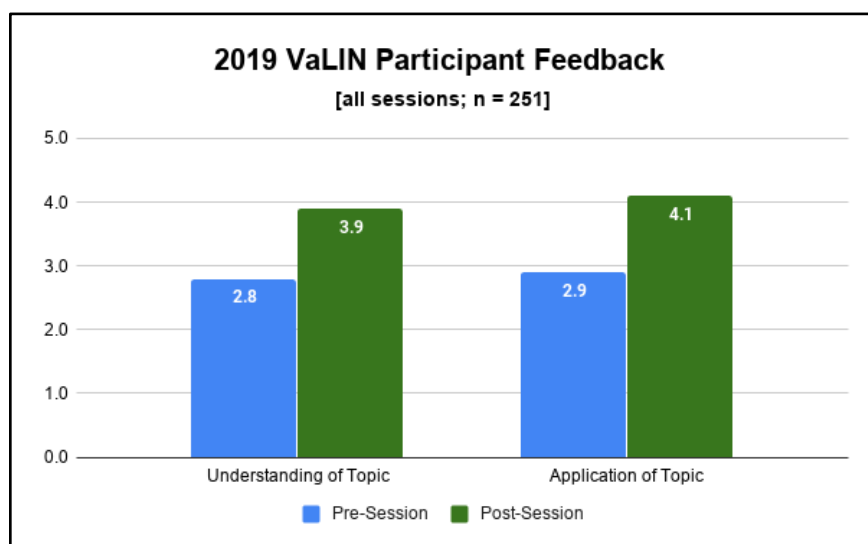


Chart 2. VaLIN participants' perceptions of understanding before/after professional learning sessions (categorical percentages)

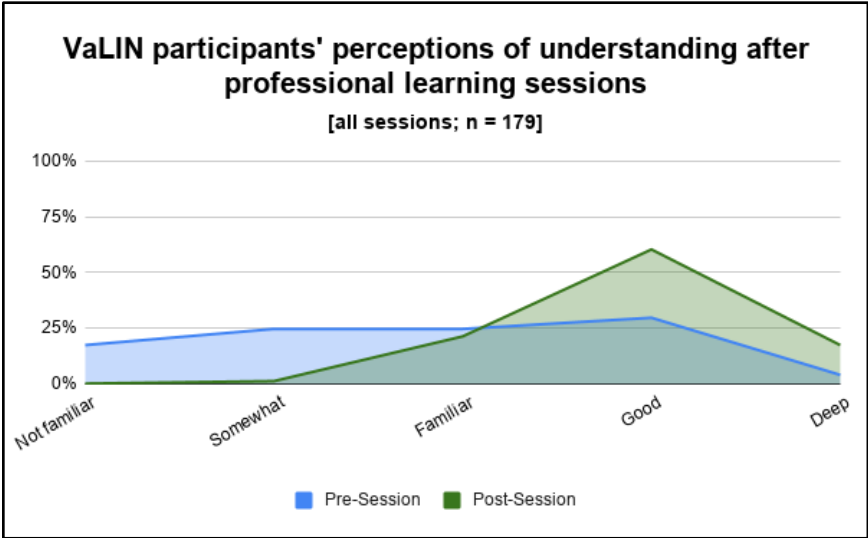
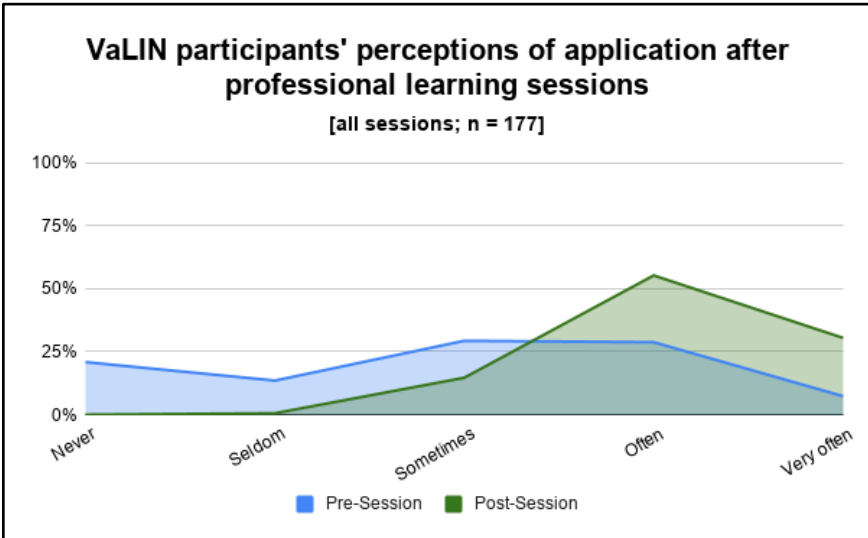


Chart 3. VaLIN participants' perceptions of application before/after professional learning sessions (categorical percentages)



VI. Findings and Recommendations

The VaLIN initiative appears to be off to an excellent start. The Lead Innovation Teams from the 28 school divisions in Cohort 1 seem to have embraced their roles as ‘lead innovators’ for the rest of the Commonwealth and have energetically embarked on a number of new initiatives designed to address the VaLIN priorities of a) deeper learning, b) expanded equity, and c) increased learner engagement strategies for students. Indeed, we have been impressed with the emphasis on equity throughout this experience as school divisions approach this work through the lens of closing both achievement and life success gaps for traditionally-underserved students, families, and communities. Every child deserves to be ‘future ready.’

Participating school divisions not only have been eager to create new structures and learning opportunities but also have been excited to learn from and share with another. Over and over again we heard from participants that being in the network was an incredibly valuable experience for them. Although they valued the time during the Institutes and local and regional meetings to work together in their teams and engage in sense-making, what was most impactful for them was the chance to hear from and collaborate with other school divisions. The importance of strengthening relationships and communities of practice across the Commonwealth cannot be overstated.

At the beginning of the VaLIN experience, school divisions were asked to identify local priorities as part of their initial application to the initiative. These organizational emphases often changed as the Lead Innovation Teams progressed in their work. These shifts were expected as teams were exposed to new ideas and state-of-the-art resources and design tools. Many Lead Innovation Teams became more ambitious as they were exposed to the activities of other school divisions, which meant that they were pushing each other in positive ways to go further and faster for the benefit of schoolchildren. School divisions need (and deserve) the space, time, and permission to find meaning, adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities, and alter their innovation and improvement strategies.

A key challenge for some school divisions occurred when Lead Innovation Team members left over the summer. In one case, a team leader became a superintendent in another school division. Some teams found that they needed to switch out team members to better support their innovation focus once projects were determined. Also, three divisions withdrew from the process by the end of the Cohort 1 experience. Two teams received a multi-million dollar innovation grant and needed to redirect staff toward implementation of the grant. One team had a change in superintendent that resulted in redirection of staff focus.

A primary need for all of the school divisions in Cohort 1 will be to determine how to scale their innovations beyond ‘early adopter’ educators, grade levels, and schools. Many of the programs initiated by the Lead Innovation Teams are in pilot phase or are occurring at small scale. Moving to broader implementation becomes more difficult as initiatives are pushed toward ‘late adopter’ or resistant educators and school cultures. School divisions will need additional assistance,

ongoing support, and further opportunities to connect and collaborate if learning truly is to be transformed across school districts and the Commonwealth.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that assessment of the success of the VaLIN initiative is inextricably intertwined with the ability of the Virginia Department of Education and its school divisions to collaboratively identify meaningful and feasible mechanisms for appraising divergent thinking, interpersonal, and social-emotional skill sets. As noted earlier in this report, assessing student competencies such as the '5 Cs' is much more difficult than assessing traditional, convergent student learning outcomes. Lead Innovation Teams and their educational colleagues will need additional technical assistance, leadership structures, professional learning opportunities, and other capacity-building supports to roll out high-quality performance assessments, portfolios, exhibitions, community defenses, and other assessment mechanisms.

It has been an absolute joy to work with Cohort 1 of the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network. All partners in this initiative can be proud of the contributions that these incredible educators are making locally to their communities and to the Commonwealth as a whole. Virginia students and families will benefit greatly in the years to come from this important work.

This Report was developed by the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network Content Developers, Writers, and Editors:

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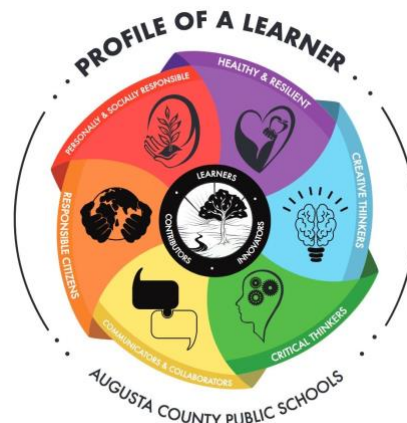
The Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network Team Contributors

The VaLIN Steering Committee

Appendix A. Case Studies

Case studies of 6 VaLIN Cohort 1 Lead Innovation Teams are available at the URLs below.

- Augusta County Public Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019AugustaCaseStudy>
- Cumberland and Louisa County Public Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019CumberlandLouisaCaseStudy>
- Greene County Public Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019GreeneCaseStudy>
- Hopewell City Public Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019HopewellCaseStudy>
- Manassas Park City Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019ManassasParkCaseStudy>
- Powhatan County Public Schools, <http://bit.ly/2019PowhatanCaseStudy>



[Augusta County Public Schools](http://www.augustacountypublicschools.org)

Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

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We believe the four priorities listed below will lead all Augusta County students and adults further into the 21st century with the skill set to be contributors, learners, and innovators in an ever-changing world. Our team applied internal expertise as well as leveraged the coaching and network capacity within VALIN to:

- Create an Augusta County Profile of a Learner complete with 21st-century skills and attributes and indicators for each
- Design a graphic to illustrate the ACPS Profile of a Learner
- Create a teacher-leader Trailblazer role to implement best practices for integrating the Profile of a Learner into classroom instruction
- Design professional learning and coaching to support the Trailblazer role



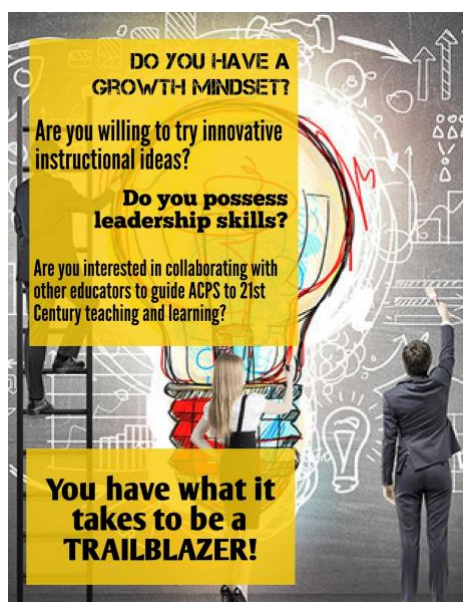
In reflecting upon our organizational practices inside Augusta County Public Schools, it became apparent that the connections between various initiatives were not as seamless as we would have preferred. While teams were working toward similar goals, we were not defining the desired outcomes using consistent terminology. After discussions with our Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network coach, we decided our first action should be to develop a Common Language Framework to serve as a guide for our stakeholders. We saw this as providing consistency for the organization as we continue to move forward with our initiatives. We also felt that it was important to promote the construct of risk-taking for our instructional staff. To do this, we recruited a team of teachers to commit to “passion projects” to complete during the school year. The goal was to support teachers in exploring innovative teaching practices and programs for supporting our students.

Over the last year, our Innovation Team capitalized on a wealth of resources and strategies gleaned from the VALIN sessions, coaches, and participants. Program implementation goals and formative benchmarks were determined that defined our work

and propelled us forward. Our Innovation Team met regularly and maintained careful documentation of decision-making, action items and incremental progress made. The Augusta County Public Schools Profile of a Learner content was drafted by the Innovation Team and honed and finalized by our school division's stakeholders. Graphic design was completed by our art teachers, producing a professional depiction of our division-specific profile. Finally, the teacher-leader Trailblazer role was created, advertised, and filled with 27 teachers (PK-12) in an inaugural cohort. Professional learning, collaborating, and trailblazing is now occurring in 15 of our 18 schools and the regional technical center.

Prior to VALIN, we struggled to create momentum and design a Profile of a Graduate plan that could move us forward. Networking and collaborating with our coach and other school divisions through the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network provided the time, expertise, and resources to guide us with this work. We continue to be in contact with our ALP coach and other VALIN school divisions to share our work and hone our next steps.

The development of the **Trailblazer** model ensures implementation of the ACPS Profile of a Learner. Creating the profile, graphic, and indicators is a major accomplishment;



however, the most important task is integrating the profile and achieving deeper learning. The **Trailblazer** model provides a pathway to mastery of skills and attributes students need for success in this century and deeper learning experiences for all students. Working alongside these trailblazing teachers, coaches and instructional staff are experiencing firsthand the work that must be done. Setting the example for instructional best practices, Trailblazers will lead their colleagues to join our movement to implement deeper learning in all schools for all learners. Our next step as a Division is to carefully define the resources and plan required to multiply the Trailblazer cohorts over multiple years while maintaining fidelity to the Profile of a Learner.

Although we are still early in our process, our accomplishments thus far are positively impacting student learning. Twenty-seven teachers are experimenting, exploring, and collaborating to provide deeper learning opportunities for their students. Their excitement and joy is evident in their coaching sessions, written reflections, and conversations.

The Trailblazer role has provided a needed focus on the integration of the Augusta County Public Schools Profile of a Learner into instructional goals and strategies as opposed to SOL scores and the memorization of facts.

Additionally, some initial professional learning with all building administrators helps to build their local capacity to be change agents in all schools. As additional student data and reflections are collected and a second cohort of teachers is recruited, student outcomes will become more visible. In the future, we anticipate the need to develop formative assessments that allow educators and site-based teams to practice using the Profile of a Learner as a means of reinforcing common language.



As Thomas Friedman said, “The world only cares about...what you can do with what you know (and it doesn’t care how you learned it)”. The Augusta County Profile of a Learner calls for students and adults in our school communities to be lifelong learners, innovators, and contributors to our community and world. As we move toward integration of deeper learning strategies in all classrooms and learning environments inside and outside of the school building it is necessary to incorporate the Augusta County Learner Profile as the center of our work. This will ensure deeper learning, student agency, more authentic work experiences, and technology infusion becomes a part of the learning that occurs in each classroom in our schools.



[Cumberland County Public Schools](#)

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[Louisa County Public Schools](#)

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Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

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Eugene Williams, principal

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Wendy Pruden, high school teacher

Publication Date: March 1, 2020

When we received the invitation to apply to become members of the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network, Cohort I, we reached out across our two rural divisions to discuss the potential of becoming a collaborative team across Cumberland County Public Schools and Louisa County Public Schools. Our divisions had a shared interest in advancing deeper learning, equity, and active engagement among students in our separate divisions and in implementing strategies to support the Profile of a Virginia Graduate outcomes for learners in our schools. We saw an advantage with small high school faculties to build a professional learning community, virtually and face-to-face, so that our teachers would be able to expand their thinking about deeper learning and the Profile of a Virginia Graduate. We submitted a collaborative application based on our shared priorities and when accepted began to immediately work to bring our innovation team together despite the physical distance between our two divisions.

Our key innovative priorities were as follows:

- 1) establishing a sustainable Professional Learning Network (PLN) focused on a deeper learning journey tied to the 5 C's, and
- 2) involving students throughout the process, starting with the recruitment of teachers and ending with providing feedback on lesson plans and implementation.



These were priorities because teachers learn and grow through collaboration with other educators and students are primary stakeholders who can give important feedback.

Cumberland and Louisa Students Work Together with Teachers from both divisions

The planning team started with a survey of both teachers and students, as well as conducting student interviews, to determine current learning practices in the classroom. *Students* were then assigned the task of recruiting teachers to go on a deeper learning journey through joining the **Think Differently PLN**. Based on data collected, the planning team selected the 4 Shifts Protocol as a tool to improve deeper learning in the classroom. The team then designed the following PLN Process:

Session 1: Discuss basics, which included reviewing the importance of team building, identifying PLN norms, defining Deeper Learning, reviewing the relevance gap, introducing the 4 Shifts Protocol (with Scott McLeod via Zoom), and practicing the protocol to improve sample lesson plans (not owned by any member of the PLN). Homework: Bring a lesson of your own to Session 2.

Session 2: Review team building, deeper learning, and 4 Shifts Protocol; participate in a question and answer period with Scott McLeod (via Zoom); Redesign own lesson plan; and engage in a critique of lesson plans by peers and students. Homework: Teach the revised lesson and get feedback from a student in the class.



Session 3: Share (both teachers and students) how the revised lesson went, facilitate Cumberland students visit Louisa classrooms, and allow teachers to work on revising 1-2 more lessons. HW: Be prepared to teach the revised lesson—a peer will observe and provide feedback at either Session 4 or 5.

Sessions 4 and 5: Provide opportunities for Cumberland teachers to observe Louisa teachers and vice versa. Following the peer observation, pairs would meet to receive feedback. Facilitate Louisa students to observe Cumberland classes.

Students from the two schools visited each other and tried out new classes

The planning team met both in person and virtually to make decisions and plan the sessions. Teacher feedback was a key component of many of the decisions that were made. Time is always a key challenge in schools—which includes both finding time for team planning and for teachers to participate in the PLN process. The divisions managed to secure sufficient substitutes to allow teachers to be out of the classroom.



We had many successes throughout this experience. We discovered that the PLN process works well and is sustainable and replicable. Students, who were empowered to recruit teachers and to provide feedback on lesson plans and implementation, developed a new appreciation for what teachers do to plan. The network provided Cumberland and Louisa teachers opportunities to share resources—*this was so successful that teachers have asked to continue this process.*

Cumberland and Louisa Teachers work together

Several outcomes were achieved. First, the design and implementation of the Think Differently PLN and the development of a structured process supported teachers and students to come together as a team. The process also resulted in team members understanding the definition of deeper learning, of being able to use the 4 Shifts Protocol to review and revise lessons, and of embracing the process of receiving feedback during both the lesson design phase as well as during and after lesson implementation. Team members also concluded that the PLN Process of lesson plan revision results in deeper learning experiences for students. The team also concluded that the process is both sustainable and replicable.



Cumberland students give teachers feedback on lesson plan implementation

Louisa/Cumberland Artifacts	Think Differently Professional Learning Network	Process Summary
Think Differently PLN Process		
Teacher Recruitment by Students Agenda		
Louisa Invitation		
Teacher Survey		
Student Survey		
4 Shifts Protocol		
Critique Protocol		
Student Reflection Video		
Lesson Design with Students Video		
	STEP 1 Student Voice and Agency STEP 2 Students Recruit Teachers to go on a deeper learning journey STEP 3 We Offer Resources and Selfing Deeper Learning STEP 4 4 Shifts Protocol / 4 Shifts Protocol with Peers and Student Team STEP 5 Implement the Revised Lesson STEP 6 Teacher and Student Reflection STEP 7 Peer Observations	

Future targets include continuing the Think Differently PLN between Cumberland and Louisa by expanding to a new cohort led by the first cohort. We may even expand cohorts beyond high school. We would like to continue to use the 4 Shifts Protocol to revise lessons; however, we may move to the five-year plan/process that Scott McLeod has developed for revising units.

We also plan to continue to use students throughout the entire PLN process. These future targets were adopted because the process has resulted in deeper learning, increased engagement, and a stronger focus on the 5 C's.



[Greene County Public Schools](#)

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Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

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Publication Date: March 1, 2020

The key innovation priority of the Lead Innovation Team for Greene County Public Schools is to establish an environment of equity for our students in their 21st century learning experiences.

Prior to our recent work over the past year, our system design allowed for a great deal of autonomy with teachers interested in shifting their practices, yet lacked an intentional mechanism to spread innovative teaching practices. Our goal through our work was to maintain the teacher voice in the process, but to also provide a more structured and systematic way of ensuring more learners were accessing high-quality 21st century instruction. Lastly, through innovation work over the past three years we had noticed a “plateau effect” in the ability to influence and encourage teachers and leaders to take risks and make the necessary shifts in their instruction to prepare our students for their futures. To overcome this stalling effect, we launched a system-wide Lead Innovator Network that includes a comprehensive approach to effective coaching, common language, artifact gathering, and curating of resources to give our educators and leaders the tools they needed to continue to scale up our work at a greater level.



Since we began to work together as a lead innovation team selected to participate in the Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network last year, we set the goal of providing equitable access for students to 21st century learning experiences. We began by re-defining the purpose of our Division Innovation Team to become coaches for teachers to support their focus on one of our *Five Pillars of Innovation*:

- Integration of Technology
- Application of Knowledge and Creativity

- Communication and Collaboration
- Personalized Learning, and
- Social-Emotional Learning.

Through an application process, classroom teachers in grades PK - 12th were selected to become designated Lead Innovators for our school division, with a specific focus on one of the five-pillars. As Lead Innovators, teachers selected for the program have engaged in ongoing coaching cycles with division coaches, created and curated artifacts and resources to assist their colleagues, and contributed to our common language “Innovation Insights.” Additionally, we have utilized this same work to begin building a digital media presence around the five pillars of innovation that will serve as a both a public facing message of our work but also an interactive instructional tool for teachers. As our division progressed through the past year, our team focused continuously on ensuring teacher voice is present in all that we do and that our Division’s innovation team consistently collaborated to create the next steps at critical decision-making points.



The most significant challenge we experienced throughout this process has been our desire to scale the work as quickly as possible to reach as many classrooms as possible, while also preserving the quality and integrity of our paths to innovation. We found it necessary to continually assess our progress and areas of weakness at various checkpoints along the way and make adjustments accordingly. In our original plan, we had established two cohorts of over fifty educators to engage in this work in the first year. However, this was not sustainable in a division as small as Greene County particularly since we also had clearly identified the need to fully support each of the Lead Innovators. We found that we could manage and support one cohort of fifty educators, not two. We were able to adjust our plans, redefine the path forward, and keep the energy and momentum behind the vision for the future.

The greatest success so far is that our Lead Innovator Program has moved the division's learning innovation work out of being pockets of excellence, and into the hands of many talented educators across the division. In turn, by reaching more classrooms and engaging more educators along the way we have had a tremendous impact on the student experience in the classroom. Additionally, by staying committed to the teacher voice in each step of the path, our common language documents provide a clear and concise way for each of our educators and leaders to better understand the necessary shifts required in our instruction. Prior to this work we were relying solely on the initiative of a few to keep the momentum. We now have a collective and very focused group, cross-representative of our staff and students that is very focused on the overall mission priority that we establish an environment of equity for our students in their 21st century learning experiences.



When looking at the outcomes of our work, much has changed in our school division over the past year. Our division's Innovation Team has a clearly defined purpose, regularly collaborates, and successfully implements vertical teams around our five pillars of innovation. Additionally, our targeted approach with Lead Innovators has allowed us to develop a commonly understood language of innovation that can then be scaled up to reach additional teachers in our schools. Furthermore, this work has reignited the passion our school district staff has to shift learning experiences to reflect 21st century needs. Importantly, it has allowed us to focus on our "why" in these shifts. We have experienced surprises along the way to include a necessary scale back of our initial plans at the semester break. The process of scaling up this work increased the need to continually revisit with our Lead Innovators to keep the reasons we were engaging in this from the beginning in front of them. However, looking holistically at the collective progress we have made and the experiences our students are experiencing, we are proud of where we are today and even more proud to consider where we will be in the future.

Our future innovation work will build from and scaffold the momentum, the structural design, and the common language documents that have been developed over the past year through the Lead Innovator program. We are currently building out a digital database that organizes and aligns the artifacts collected over the past year with our five pillars of innovation. This database will then serve as a growing resource for our staff throughout the division as they work to incorporate the five pillars of innovation into their instruction. Furthermore, we plan to add another cohort of Lead Innovators to join the work for the 2020-2021 school year and repeat the processes we have followed throughout this first year of implementation. Through this continuous cycle, our common language documents will continue to be refined and understanding of the true application of these principals will further spread to additional teachers as our Lead Innovators connect teachers throughout the division across our schools. Additionally, we have also set a goal that curriculum guides, pacing, and instructional resources align with the language of the five pillars. Finally, every teacher in the school division will align their instructional work to at least one pillar each year through their professional goals, professional development plan, and in the feedback process in which they engage both with administrators and coaches.



Hopewell Magic! Creating Lasting Legacies

[Hopewell City Public Schools](http://www.hopewellcitypublicschools.org)

Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

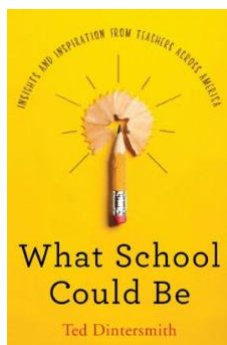
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Publication Date: March 1, 2020

#HopewellMagic: Bringing Focus to Deeper Learning

There are a number of terms being used to describe innovative practices in education - The Profile of a Graduate, The 5 C's, Deeper Learning, Project-Based Learning, Competency-Based Learning, Expeditionary Learning. To bring more intentionality and focus to our own Deeper Learning work, we had to develop a common language that matched our vision and mission.



To bring this work to life, we needed to explore models of excellence and give staff permission to move boldly beyond current comfort zones. We accomplished this by screening *Most Likely to Succeed* for all staff and the community, and by providing all staff with a copy of *What Schools Could Be*. Ted Dintersmith and Dr. James Lane also came in person to meet with all staff and community leaders, to affirm our efforts, and challenge us to start taking small steps towards big change. We focused on three core actions to engage staff and students in developing a deeper learning model in our schools:

Deeper Dialogue

Through instructional rounds, and using our deeper learning framework, we engaged our instructional leadership team in dialogue centered around the continuous improvement process.

Human-Centered Design

We generated empathy interview questions for students giving them agency and ownership in their own learning, using their ideas to bring fun back into rigor. We worked intentionally, allowing who they are as individuals into learning spaces.

Exhibitions

Deeper Learning experiences have been designed in a way that encourages fieldwork, connects with subject matter experts, and provides an authentic audience with whom students can share their learning.

Whenever one is trying to disrupt tradition and the status quo, challenges can be expected; adding to the complexity of this change work is the fact that education is deeply personal, and it is also human-centered. Once we defined our focus areas and Deeper Learning Framework, we noticed a few things - the high stakes testing culture runs deep, taking the first small step towards the **Deeper Learning** unknown is scary, and a refined measure of student success isn't always binary. We discovered our need to intentionally develop and continuously strengthen our division's culture of **risk-taking**.



[Click Here to Play Video](#)

For our teachers and administrators to feel safe taking risks and moving beyond just test scores, we had to create an environment where people were comfortable discussing change. There were a number of protocols and strategies used to unpack these challenges, but at the heart of all these tools was deeper dialogue.

Through empathy interviews and instructional rounds, we were able to create the type of dialogue and equity necessary to push the work forward at all levels - administrators, teachers, and students alike worked collectively to break down the “we vs they” barriers and generate new solutions. We’ve found that while this is a work in progress, engaging in powerful dialogue has helped our division push beyond the fear of failure, and see innovative change through the powerful lens of possibility!



One of our biggest surprises is how strong the pull of traditional education structures and status quo really are in public education. Even though people can agree that change is needed, creating systemic change that liberates students from these traditional structures proves difficult. In spite of these surprises, we’ve found through this process that leading small changes can generate incredible outcomes. [Most notable are the outcomes listed below:](#)

- Through common language and focus, we brought Deeper Learning out of the clouds and into the classroom.
- Instructional leaders and principals are more comfortable leading Deeper Learning.
- Deeper Learning is happening more frequently in day to day instruction.
- Instructional leaders are more comfortable taking risks.
- Students have more voice and agency in their learning.
- Parents and community members are gaining a better understanding of what Deeper Learning looks like.
- **Most importantly, students LOVE learning again!**

We know these outcomes, in addition to many others, were achieved through survey data, exhibitions, instructional rounds, and empathy interview data. There has also been a shift in the

type of dialogue that our team has. It has become more collegial and remains aligned to the heart of our mission, vision, and our “why.”

Another surprise that we are extremely grateful for, is the number of thought partners who have joined us on this journey, including Ted Dintersmith, Dr. James Lane, Becky Ellis, Pam Moran, Gena Keller, Gaynell Lyman, Kaleb Rashad, and many other districts leading this work. There’s a quote that caught our team’s attention:

“Don’t just give people tools. Give people each other.”

This network is inspiring people to be #BetterTogether. Being a part of VaLIN has given Hopewell the encouragement, permission, and resources necessary to push our innovation priorities forward. Our division is excited to continue this journey alongside teams across the state to bring innovation and excellence to this work and help create a lasting legacy for all students!

Hopewell has experienced a number of successes during our time with VaLIN. Defining focus areas and a common language around what Deeper Learning looks like in a classroom was a critical first step forward. Our focus areas were aligned to the values that we hold for our students, and the Deeper Learning framework was aligned with the 5 Cs and the Profile of a Graduate. This gave us a common path forward.

Implementing instructional rounds has allowed us to successfully norm all our instructional leaders around the framework through dialogue around how to lead Deeper Learning, the evidence we see of Deeper Learning, and the small change we might make to improve our students’ experience. *Ted Dintersmith’s Innovation Playlist was an essential resource when showing models of innovative practices in action.*

We have also successfully used empathy interviews to better understand the human-centered side of this work. Providing time and space for teachers and students to ask questions and share their learning journey has been essential in helping us collectively engage in this work together.



[Click Here to Play Video](#)

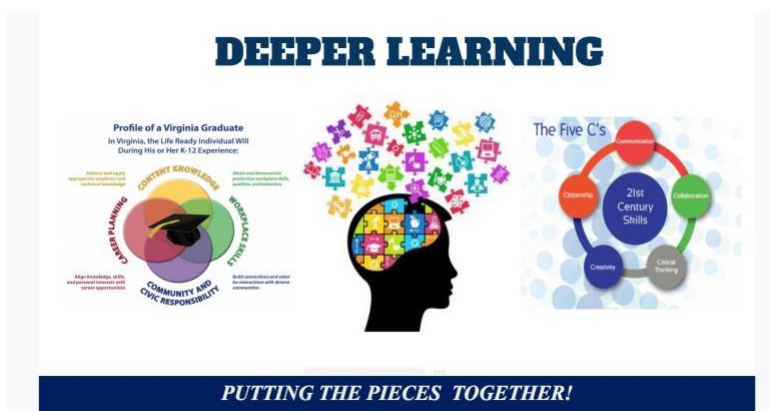
Finally, one of our greatest successes has been our division-wide exhibitions that have provided exceptional experiences for every student in Hopewell to share their Deeper Learning journey with parents, peers and other community members.

Hopewell is committed to our mission of radically transforming our educational system. We will continue to focus our innovation priorities around content alignment, student experience, and continuous improvement. We've seen firsthand the tremendous impact these small changes can have on our entire division. Our targets shift towards:

1. scale, agency, continuous improvement, and cultivating our thought partnerships.
2. Expanding our Deeper Learning Frameworks - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication and Collaboration, Creativity and Innovation, and Accessing and Analyzing Information
3. Scaling the Work - embedding Deeper Learning in every classroom
4. Increasing Student Agency - voice and choice

Designing change packages through the use of Improvement Science will allow us to document and share specifically which small steps are being successful with other educators. We will position ourselves to fail forward and pivot more seamlessly. Student agency is also a key component in the implementation of the Profile of a Graduate; *high school students are now joining us in lesson planning and vision casting to ensure their voices aren't lost along the way.*

We look forward to continuing to cultivate new and existing thought partnerships. Our shared vision with VaLIN is much larger than just Hopewell, it's about each of us bringing the hopes and dreams we have for our young people together. We faithfully lock arms alongside Ted, Dr. Lane, Pam, Gena, Kaleb, and the entire Commonwealth to collectively bring voice to every student, and champion their stories on a scale that has never been seen before in Virginia!





[Manassas Park City Schools](#)

Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

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Publication Date: March 1, 2020

Upon reflection of our organizational practices, it became apparent to the Manassas Park City Schools Lead Innovation Team that the connections between various

initiatives were not as seamless as we would have preferred. While teams were working toward similar goals, we were not defining the desired outcomes using consistent terminology. After discussions with our Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network coach, we decided our first action should be to develop a Common Language Framework to serve as a guide for our stakeholders. This we believed would provide consistency for the organization as we continue to move forward with our initiatives. We also felt that it was important to promote the construct of risk taking for our instructional staff. To do this, we recruited a team of teachers to commit to “passion projects” to complete during the school year. The goal was to support teachers in exploring innovative teaching practices and programs for supporting our students.

To develop our Manassas Park City Schools Common Language Framework, the steering committee worked with our assigned coach to define the parameters of our work. The team identified specific strands that were to be included and for each strand developed a rubric of skills and behaviors that students, educators, and leaders would demonstrate as they grew within each strand. For our teacher cohort, we recruited a team of teachers who wanted to develop a specific project that would benefit the students of Manassas Park. The teachers applied, attended training, and were provided planning time to develop and implement their individual initiatives.



Our initial plan for our teacher planning cohorts called for recruiting two teams, one in the fall and one in the spring, to build capacity for our innovative programs. We quickly learned that one semester did not provide teachers enough time to fully develop and implement their programs. As a mid-course adjustment, our planning team decided to stick with a single cohort and extend the time to develop the project to a full school year.

We have noticed that many of the teachers who joined the cohort have been invigorated this school year. One teacher chose to lead a school side book study centering on restorative discipline practices. She led the book study to include on-line discussion groups and modeled the described practices within her classroom. She worked with students to develop a podcast that focused on the behavioral practices in the classroom. Another teacher used the project as an opportunity to introduce strings instruction into the elementary classroom. Overall, the teachers that joined the cohort have served as strong advocates for innovative practices across the school division.



Elementary student learning about the cello

Moving forward, we will continue to enhance our K-5 STEM program. Our elementary STEM curriculum is designed with the 5Cs in mind, and the supporting activities are geared to strengthen those skill sets for our younger students. We also plan to expand and enhance our middle school offerings through Project Lead the Way. At the high school level, we are excited to build upon the Health Services strand of our Compass program. Through a partnership with a local philanthropic association, local universities, and public health agencies we will develop a pathway for students in health services careers that will include high school course work, internships, industry credentials, immediate post high school employment, and an associates and/or bachelor's degree in a health services field.

Manassas Park City Schools Design Thinking Workbook



Use this workbook to craft ideas about how to truly innovate and allow students to drive their learning. In order to edit the document you will need to click on File → Make a Copy. Rename your copy something that will allow you to find it easily to share with your colleagues as we collaborate.



[Powhatan County Public Schools](#)

Pocahontas Landmark Center
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Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort I Case Study Report

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Publication Date: March 1, 2020

In the fall of 2018, Powhatan County Public Schools completed work on a new Strategic Plan. It was a culmination of a community-wide review of the current practices and the desired outcomes for the division. As part of the process, we developed a mission, vision, core value statements, and four major goals.

Our first goal is Personalized Learning: Create pathways for each student to achieve academic excellence. Within this goal, we saw an opportunity to use our participation in the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network to advance several of our key performance indicators by prioritizing innovations around (1) a Common Language by refining our DL421 instructional framework and defining key terms and ideas within the Strategic Plan, (2) Portrait of a Graduate to include a focus on equity and professional development, and (3) explicit instruction of the 5Cs through communication and collaboration protocols.



[Click here to play video](#)

In addition to our work in the VaLIN Institutes, the VaLIN team set intentional timelines to develop and complete projects. Working with our coach, Tony Borash, we held workshops with key staff and visited VaLIN colleagues to observe best practices. These timetables kept the workflow moving as the team members represented a diverse range of instructional personnel from the classroom teacher to the Superintendent. When our first two priorities were nearing completion ahead of schedule, we added a goal to explicitly teach and assess student mastery of the 5 Cs. We expanded the work group to include the instructional team and grade level teachers as we developed the communication and collaboration protocols. This allowed the VaLIN team to set the initial vision for the work but included a broader group of stakeholders for buy-in, professional expertise, and implementation.

The biggest challenge was to complete several projects within a compacted timeframe of the VaLIN cohort. The superintendent created an expectation for the work and an urgency for completion. From there, the VaLIN team created a set of timetables to appropriately research, process, and develop a plan to meet our key innovation priorities. The challenge was made easier with regular VaLIN meetings and communication with our Coach. They served to inspire us, keep us on task, and not allow the work to slide to the back burner. This support built around a collaborative model enabled us to meet all of our goals in a short timeframe.



Powhatan educators with ALP coach Tony Borash

Our biggest success was creating definitions for key terms around our vision of Deeper Learning. Over the last five years, we have worked on a variety of structures: Strategic Plan, Instructional Framework, and Professional Development. Several terms that were part of those structures needed further definition so that all stakeholders -- teachers, staff, administration, community -- would better understand the terms. We spent time as a team, then with a larger group of instructional personnel with the support of our VaLIN coach, to define what those terms (personalized learning, engagement, culturally responsive, social emotional learning, instructional coaching, balanced assessment) meant from a Powhatan perspective. We rolled out the Common Language definitions with our simplified [DL421 Instructional Framework](#) at the beginning of this school year. The impact was immediate. We observed greater fidelity of implementation as a result of everyone speaking the same language.

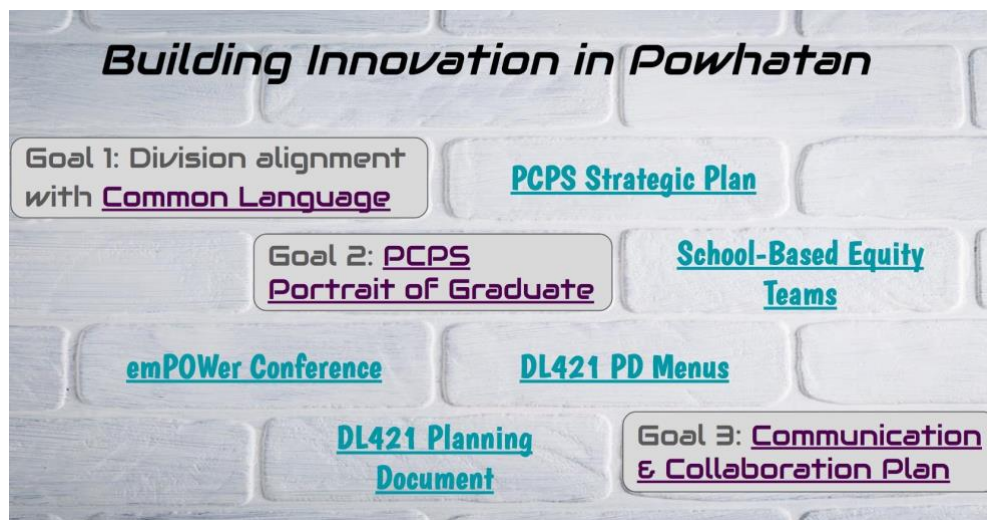
In addition to the development of Common Language, we updated the format of our DL421 Instructional Framework. This was a direct result of feedback from teachers on our VaLIN team. It created a more user-friendly format that teachers could use for planning classroom lessons and evaluating their professional development needs. One of the main outcomes of the DL421 Instructional Framework is Communication and Collaboration. The VaLIN team identified the need for explicit instruction of Communication and Collaboration in grades K-5. This sparked a project for the instructional team and classroom teachers. Together, they created I CAN statements with a progression chart with specific activities and protocols for teachers to implement from grades K-5.



Finally, the team identified several existing structures, frameworks, and activities so that the division could create a Portrait of a Powhatan Graduate. Taking ideas from the mission, vision, and core values from the Strategic Plan, as well as the outcomes of the DL421 Instructional Framework, we were able to create a visible representation of our aspirations for a PCPS graduate.

Powhatan Team at work VaLIN July Institute

As a division, we achieved more than expected. Because there was a window for the cohort, there was an urgency to finalize some of our goals and outcomes. We are pleased that we have finalized two of the projects -- Common Language and Portrait of a Graduate. We are in the final stages of our Communication and Collaboration project. We have also used the VaLIN process to inform our work with professional development, as we have offered expanded voice and choice for teachers with specific menus of professional development at each school. We also developed relationships with peers in other school divisions outside of our usual regional partnerships. This allowed us to peek into their divisions, gain insights, and expand our thinking about some of our existing structures and processes.



Appendix B. Impact perspectives

Through our partnership with Cumberland County in the VaLIN, our teachers have been able to gain new perspectives on the work that they do with our students. By working collaboratively with their colleagues from another division, they are able to identify ways to incorporate deeper learning into their lessons through the use of the 4 Shifts Protocol. Our teachers are also having powerful conversations with students to better understand how their students perceive what they are asked to do in the classroom. These discussions help our teachers develop educational experiences that are meaningful for our students. We can't wait to expand this work across our division.

Superintendent Doug Straley, Louisa County Public Schools

The Virginia Lead Innovation Network has provided us networks, partnerships, and expertise not only with Louisa County High School but with school divisions around the Commonwealth - all with a focus on deeper learning. With our small size and lack of resources, this network has been beneficial in providing our teachers and administrators the knowledge, skills, and processes in which to move learning experiences to include more higher-level thinking, student agency, and authenticity. It also led us to including students in the lesson design and critique process which has been hailed as invaluable to both our educators and students.

Superintendent Amy Griffin, Cumberland County Public Schools

Changing school at a classroom level is difficult work. Making an attempt at systemic change at the district level requires a clear vision, a process that is well aligned with the goals, and the ability to focus on key decisions without being distracted by noise or too many attempts to reinvent the wheel. The VALIN experience has connected us with future focused thinkers like Ted Dintersmith, with top notch researchers like Scott McLeod, with policy experts from VDOE, with change management experts, and with other divisions that are also attempting to move the needle. This access to high quality people and ideas has been key in clarifying our thinking, incorporating ideas from colleagues, and avoiding pitfalls that others may already have encountered and navigated.

Superintendent Oskar Scheikl, Rockingham County Public Schools

The School University Resource Network (SURN) at the College of William & Mary School of Education actively participated in the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network's (VaLIN) first

cohort in multiple ways, affording us a particularly interesting and useful vantage point for examining impact.

As a member of a team of three small school divisions and SURN as a university partner, we observed first-hand the power of collaboration, particularly in leveraging scarce resources. With our help for coordination, these divisions were able to pull together teachers and leaders on a tight timeframe and accomplish so much more than they would have been able to alone. Moreover, as a center that regularly pulls together assistant superintendents from the state's smaller school divisions, I saw copious sharing and connections across these leaders both during the fellowship and now, since its completion. While I know of and am participating on one other team in the second cohort, I suspect there are more who were encouraged and motivated by the actions of this first cohort!

Additionally, through some new funding, I was able to offer a fellowship of the innovative School Retool professional learning experience for school and district leaders who participated in the first VaLIN cohort. Having coached five cohorts in this leading for deeper learning experience, I have already noticed the momentum and motivation for innovation from these leaders. They came to the experience ready to lead innovative incremental change in their schools and divisions.

As a learning leader and collaborative partner in professional learning in the state, I find this work inspiring and integral for deeper learning in Virginia. This level of alignment, striving to elevate innovation, capitalizing on collaboration, is critical if we are going to realize the full intentions of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

Amy Colley, Executive Director, School Leadership Institute, School University Research Network (SURN), College of William & Mary School of Education

Success in innovation happens when teachers feel as though they have been given permission by their building level/central office administrators. That seems to be the one thing that is holding teachers back. Where it works is where there is an enthusiasm from the top to engage students and letting test scores fall where they may. (they all have indicated that when innovation occurs... the test scores follow.

Innovative classrooms are busy... they look like controlled chaos. Administrators in schools where this works are just as connected to the kids as the teachers are. Teachers and administrators are on the same page... they don't care about "how it looks," they care about students really learning and not just being good standardized test takers.

Collaboration happens in these schools at all levels.

Fluvanna High School Student Media Team

(what they noticed when they visited schools to capture video interviews and classrooms at work for the *Change It Up* documentary)

Appendix C. Video perspectives

Video perspectives of VaLIN participants and facilitators are available at the Virginia is for Learners Network YouTube site.

<http://bit.ly/2019VALINvideos>

Appendix D. Communication Strategies and Platforms

Communication about VaLIN occurred across multiple mainstream and social media platforms as well as at state and national conferences. Some examples are listed below.

Websites and Videos

- VaLIN website, <https://valin.vascl.org>
- VaLIN YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJm6AGt_oU4MPNSZdl43bnw/about
- Virginia Department of Education - Virginia is for Learners Website, <http://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov>
- Virginia Department of Education - News Release, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2019/03-mar19.docx
- Innovation Playlist, <https://teddintersmith.com/innovation-playlist>
- *Change It Up* student video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3LrLOsS7zA>
- *Dangerously Irrelevant*, <https://dangerouslyirrelevant.org/2019/01/virginia-is-for-learners-innovation-network.html>
- Greene Schools join innovation network, https://www.dailyprogress.com/greenenews/news/greene-schools-join-innovation-network/article_d773554e-561b-11e9-8cd4-3f34f033378d.html
- Rockingham County Schools selected for innovation network, https://www.dnronline.com/news/rockingham_county/rockingham-county-schools-selected-for-innovation-network/article_e072c2a2-f81a-53c4-a9c8-3b89595cd7cb.html

Social Media

- Virginia School Consortium for Learning LiftUpEd blog, <https://vascl.net>
- #VaLIN and #VAis4Learners hashtags on Twitter
- VaLIN newsletters, <https://www.smore.com/es5hp-vais4learners-innovation-network>
- Getting Smart podcast with James Lane and Ted Dintersmith, <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2019/11/podcast-virginia-superintendent-james-lane-on-unleashing-innovation>
- Aurora Institute blog post, <https://www.inacol.org/news/education-innovation-is-flourishing-across-the-commonwealth-of-virginia>

State and National Conference Presentations

- Virginia Association of School Superintendents, 2019 Annual Spring Conference
 - Gena Keller and Amos Fodchuk presented on VaLIN
 - Scott McLeod keynoted and facilitated workshops on deeper learning and the 4 Shifts Protocol
- Virginia School Consortium for Learning, 2019
 - Scott McLeod facilitated a workshop on deeper learning and the 4 Shifts Protocol

- Aurora Institute, 2019
 - Amos Fodchuk, Gena Keller, and the Fluvanna High School student media team gave a presentation on driving statewide innovation through professional learning networks
- EdSurge, 2019 Fusion Conference
 - Scott McLeod and participating superintendents Amy Griffin and Andrea Whitmarsh presented on VaLIN and other statewide and regional innovation academies for school leaders
- Learning Forward, 2019 Annual Conference
 - Amos Fodchuk and Gena Keller presented on VaLIN

Appendix E. Cohort 1 Partners

Virginia Department of Education. The vision of the Virginia Department of Education - in collaboration with the Governor, Secretary of Education, General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education, local school boards, education stakeholders, and parents - is to create an excellent system of public education that prepares every Virginia student for success. The mission of the Virginia Department of Education is to lead and facilitate the development and implementation of a quality public education system that meets the needs of students and assists them in becoming educated, productive, responsible, and self-reliant citizens.

Virginia School Consortium for Learning. VaSCL is an educational consortium composed of more than 60 public school divisions from across Virginia. The organization is dedicated to providing high-quality professional learning and promoting professional collaboration among educators in order to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

Edu21C Foundation and Ted Dintersmith. The Edu21C Foundation is associated with the Dintersmith family. The Edu21C Foundation makes grants to other organizations. The president, Ted Dintersmith, wrote the book, *What School Could Be*, and produced the documentary, *Most Likely to Succeed*.

James Madison University. The organizing theme for the Educational Leadership program is the development of the school / district administrator's central role as the interpreter, facilitator, and initiator of educational change, leading to effective schools for all children.

Jobs for the Future. JFF is a national nonprofit that drives change in the American workforce and education systems to achieve economic advancement for all.

Appendix F. Steering Committee Members

- **Gena Keller**, Former Assistant Superintendent for Learning, Virginia Department of Education and Director of the Commonwealth Learning Partnership (Co-Chair)
- **Pam Moran**, Executive Director, Virginia School Consortium for Learning (Co-Chair)
- **Robin Crowder**, Executive Director, Educational Leadership Program, James Madison University (retired)
- **Becky Ellis**, Programs Director, Edu21C Foundation
- **Tina Manglicmot**, Director of STEM and Innovation, Virginia Department of Education
- **Liza Scallet**, Administrative Coordinator, Virginia School Consortium for Learning
 - * **Tony Borash and Amos Fodchuk**, Advanced Learning Partnership Advisors

Appendix G. Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to frequently asked question (FAQs) about the Virginia is for Learners Innovation Network are available at

<https://valin.vascl.org/application/faq>