Sharing the Story of Impact:
Philadelphia Innovative High Schools

The Workshop School Case Study

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The Barra Foundation's mission is to invest in innovation to inspire change that strengthens communities in the Greater Philadelphia region.

Through the Catalyst Fund, The Barra Foundation (Foundation) invests in ideas that tackle problems or seize opportunities in new, different, better and significant ways. These timely and novel approaches push boundaries and have the potential to inspire change. We recognize the need to provide financial support for risk-taking, challenges to old assumptions, and new models for accomplishing important work in the social sector. We also value learning as an important part of the innovation process.

In reviewing its portfolio of grants, the Foundation began to recognize that over the years it had funded several schools that were now part of the Innovation Network of The School District of Philadelphia (District). The Foundation invested in each of these schools—Science Leadership Academy, the Workshop School, Building 21 and Vaux Big Picture High School—early in their development because we believed that their creative new approaches had the potential to not only change the lives of students, but also help inform and advance the field of education.

Given our desire to share learning as part of the innovation process, the Foundation decided to embark on its first "thematic review" to look back across these four grants to capture learnings from these highly innovative schools in the District that have been supported by the Foundation.

Over the last year, ImpactED, in partnership with the Foundation, has engaged in an intensive year of learning about these models. We wanted to learn from this work and explore the

necessary conditions (at the school and system level) for fostering school innovation. We hope that by sharing these findings others will be inspired to think differently. To help readers consider how these models might be adopted and adapted, ImpactED has included a Recommendations section at the end of the report.

We thank the school leaders and their staff for their thoughtfulness and willingness to share openly during this process and for the important work they do every day to awaken students' potential through new approaches. The District was a valued partner in this exploration as well. We also extend our thanks to our partner ImpactED for their enthusiasm for taking on this opportunity to explore what makes these models work—and what holds them back.

To view the reports and accompanying videos for all of the schools,
please visit:
www.barrafoundation.org/phila-innov-hs/

To learn more about The Barra Foundation and our work supporting these schools and other innovative approaches in the areas of Arts & Culture, Education, Health and Human Services in the Greater Philadelphia region,
please visit:
www.barrafoundation.org

THE **BARRA** FOUNDATION

OVERVIEW

Background

The Workshop School is a project-based open enrollment public high school in West Philadelphia, serving 100% economically disadvantaged students. It was founded in 2013 in response to two critical problems:

- ✅ A mismatch between what's typically taught in school and the skills required in the real-world

- ✅ The reality that this mismatch is even more pronounced in disadvantaged communities, where schools often focus on remedial knowledge and skill development.

According to Workshop School leadership, project-based learning is a way to not only build critical skills, but also to combat systemic discrimination and disadvantage.

The school's mission is to unleash the creative and intellectual potential of young people to solve the world's toughest problems. This is accomplished by putting real world challenges at the center of the curriculum, and evaluating students' work based on the progress they make in defining, exploring, and ultimately developing solutions to those problems. The model is based on three simple principles:

- ✅ **The work is the work:** Real-world questions and problems are our curriculum. What we've learned shows in what we do and the impact we have.

- ✅ **Community first:** We trust each other, we believe in each other, we seek and expect the best in each other.

- ✅ **Persist and improve:** A first draft is never a final draft and a prototype is never a finished product. To improve our work, we have to want to make it the best it can be, seek feedback, and learn from failure.

The model is rooted in the belief that student learning should be composed of not only building academic knowledge but, more importantly, cultivating real-world skills through meaningful learning experiences. In the lower house (9th and 10th grade) of the Workshop School, students engage in project-based work in advisories. In 11th and 12th grade, they enter the upper house, where they participate in one of four pathways - automotive, entrepreneurship, internships, or college prep. The Workshop School's culture mirrors its approach to student learning, which focuses on reflection and continuous improvement. Since its opening, the Workshop School has iterated on its approach each year, cultivating a culture of creativity and innovation where staff have felt comfortable taking risks and constantly trying new things without a fear of failure. Indeed, at the Workshop School, failure is understood to be a critical part of the learning process.
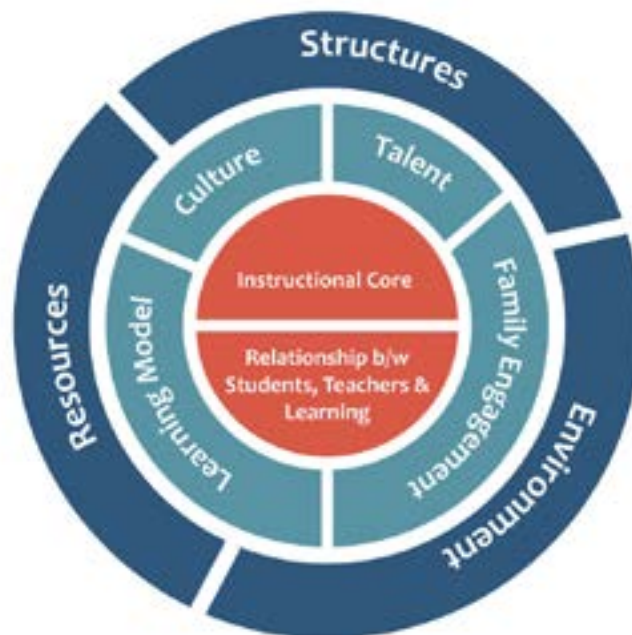
Demographics

87% Black/African American	**6%** Multi-Racial / Other	**3%** Asian	**3%** English Language Learners
1% White (Non-Hispanic)	**3%** Hispanic/Latino	**100%** Economically Disadvantaged	**21%** Special Education (IEP)

Methodology

The Barra Foundation contracted with ImpactED to learn more about the first year of implementation at the Workshop School model. Between December 2017 and March 2018, members of our team immersed themselves in the school and collected data through the following sources:

- ✅ **Meetings with Key Stakeholders:** Formal and informal meetings with a variety of stakeholders, including the principal, teachers, parents, and community members/partners

- ✅ **Observations:** Observations of classrooms and teacher professional development

- ✅ **School and Community Events:** Attendance at school and community events, including internal events like presentations of student work and external events like school advisory council meetings

After several months of data collection, we systematically analyzed our results, identifying trends and variation. We shared our results with school leadership to ensure our findings accurately captured their experience. Our results are reported to align with the following framework:

Instructional Core. This section describes how the school builds relationships between students, teachers, and instructional content and how student success is defined/measured.

School-Level Features. This section describes how the school design supports the instructional core and discusses strengths and challenges associated with implementation.

- ▶ Learning Model
  Approach to curriculum/instruction

- ▶ Culture
  Elements and strategies for building culture among students and teachers

▶ Talent
Processes for recruiting and supporting teachers

▶ Family & Community Engagement
Strategies for engaging families & community

Conditions. This section explores the conditions that support/inhibit the school model.

▶ Structures
Formal and informal structures that support or inhibit the learning model

▶ Resources
Financial, human, and community resources that support or inhibit the learning model

▶ Environment
External factors that can have an impact on strategy, operations, and performance

all photography by Andrew Gormley - andrewgormley.com

SUMMARY

At its core, the Workshop School is about helping students develop the skills they need to navigate their own life-long learning. The Workshop School creates meaningful learning experiences by using hands-on projects that focus on real-world problems and are directly relevant to students' lives and passions. Students participate in these inter-disciplinary projects in the morning and attend topical seminars in the afternoon. The Workshop School's model is grounded in the belief that the processes students use to solve problems are as important as the products they create, and students earn more freedom and outside exposure as they progress through school.

Instructional Core

- From its inception, the Workshop School has mapped content knowledge and skills onto meaningful real-world experiences; however, the specific skills framework has iterated and become more central over time.

- Developing student skill in navigating their learning is core to the Workshop School's model and a prioritized area of growth.

- The Workshop School asks students to demonstrate learning not only on end products but also through the processes they use to create them; however, the latter has been more challenging to assess.

School Features

- The Workshop School uses an advisory model as the core structure for facilitating meaningful project-based learning, which creates the opportunity for advisors to build strong relationships with students.

- The Gateway process serves as a mechanism for ensuring students are prepared for the "Upper House"; however, staff continue to wrestle with how to hold students who don't pass this assessment accountable to their learning.

- The Workshop School is teacher-led and fosters a strong professional community among educators.

Conditions

- The Workshop School's unique approach to learning is made possible through flexibility to alter the daily schedule, but is limited by space constraints.

- The Workshop School has cultivated a teacher-led environment where staff are empowered to constantly iterate on their approach.

- The District's course framework and graduation requirements limit the Workshop School's ability to shape its curriculum.

INSTRUCTIONAL CORE

The Workshop School (WS) focuses on serving the whole child by making connections between students' course of study and their lives beyond school. This includes building a deeper understanding of the communities in which students live and helping them apply knowledge and skills to solve meaningful real-world problems. Students' learning experiences are designed to focus on both the academic content and the real-world skills that are critical for long-term success.

- **From its inception, the Workshop School has mapped content knowledge and skills onto meaningful real-world experiences; however, the specific skills framework has iterated and become more central over time.**

   At the Workshop School, content knowledge is viewed as a building block students need in order to engage in meaningful learning experiences. Over time, leadership has recognized that the core of the school is not being "project-based," but rather using projects and other experiences (e.g., internships, business plans) to cultivate a set of real-world skills. While the foundation has stayed the same since the school's inception, the specific skills have iterated each year in an attempt to simplify and clarify student learning goals. The most recent iteration of these skills includes collaboration, project management, commitment to improve, reflection and self-awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

- **Developing student skill in navigating their learning is core to the Workshop School's model and a prioritized area of growth.**

   One of the goals of the Workshop School is to equip students with the "wayfinding" skills they need to become lifelong learners. 11th and 12th-grade projects are tailored to reflect students' passions and abilities, and advisors help students develop strategies to design, assess, and monitor their own progress. For example, during a recent exhibition, an 11th grade student highlighted how she researched and contacted organizations where she was interested in interning and took steps to overcome bureaucratic challenges (e.g., acquiring identification, submitting background checks, and persistently following up when staff was unresponsive).

> They spend the first half of the year getting their internship and the rest of the time being placed. But the first part of the year isn't just the preamble, it's just as important as the actual experience. Teachers structure the experience of determining what you want to do, doing interviews and deciding your approach to finding an internship. They put students in the situation where they have to navigate that experience.
>
> **- Leadership**

- ◉ **The Workshop School asks students to demonstrate learning not only on end products but also through the processes they use to create them; however, the latter has been more challenging to assess.**

While process-oriented skills (e.g., collaboration, project management, commitment to improve, reflection and self-awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving) are critical to the Workshop School model, staff has made less progress in developing an evidence base for judging success on these skills. In the early years of the model, WS staff was focused on honing in on the right process-oriented skills. Moving forward, it will be critical to determine how these skills can best be assessed so that the Workshop School can better understand how the model impacts students' learning.

SCHOOL-LEVEL FEATURES

Learning Model

At the Workshop School, content is incorporated into core projects. Structurally, the Workshop School is organized into lower (9th and 10th) and upper (11th and 12th) houses. Each morning in both the lower and upper houses, students spend four hour blocks in advisories focused on project-based work and, in the afternoon, attend seminars focused on building content knowledge and specific skills. At the end of 10th grade, students have to pass Gateway to enter the "upper house," where they participate in one of four career pathways.

✓ **The Workshop School uses an advisory model as the core structure for facilitating meaningful project-based learning, which requires advisors to build strong relationships with students.**

As one advisor noted, problems in the real world aren't split up into subject areas (e.g., Math vs. English problems), so neither is the Workshop School's day. Students spend four hours per day in advisory, engaging in meaningful project-based work. In the initial years of the model, WS leadership developed a more complex project-based implementation guide, but has since learned the value of simplification. Each project includes the key goal and deliverables, as well as how the project aligns to subject area standards. For each standard/skill, teachers define what outstanding work will look like. At the Workshop School, "a first draft is never a final draft," which means that this process is often iterative and messy. Since students spend significant time in advisories, this makes the cultivation of strong relationships, discussed in greater detail in the following section, critical to successful implementation of the model.

> The purpose of this project is to help us inform people in power that there are people in Philadelphia that are working without a college degree who aren't able to pay their bills. Before this project, I didn't realize how expensive childcare and paying off student loans was.
>
> **- Student**

Sample Projects:

9th grade Lamp Project.
Students learn about electricity, design, and advanced manufacturing by designing and making their own lamps.

10th grade Mass Incarceration Project.
Students learn about the causes and historical forces behind mass incarceration, and produce a public symposium highlighting responses and solutions.

Upper House (11th and 12th grade) "Workshop Tank" Project.
Students identify needs or opportunities in their community, and develop a business plan to launch a nonprofit organization to address those in need.

● **Peer, parent, and community feedback builds students' investment in exhibitions.**

During half-hour quarterly exhibitions, students reflect on their work and share their project successes, challenges, and upcoming quarterly goals with their peers, teachers, and parent(s). After each presentation, staff, students, and parents complete feedback forms highlighting how well students presented the project's purpose, used supporting evidence, and justified their conclusions. Exhibitions provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning experiences, as the full community asks probative questions about their methods for arriving at conclusions. In place of traditional report card conferences, parents are invited to exhibitions, and are given the opportunity to meet with their child and their advisory immediately following the student's exhibition.

● **The Gateway process serves as a mechanism for ensuring students are prepared for the "Upper House"; however, staff continue to wrestle with how to hold students who don't pass this assessment accountable to their learning.**

The Gateway process is the ultimate exhibition. During Gateway, students present to a panel of WS staff and outside reviewers to outline what they have learned as underclassmen, both academically and about themselves, and which Upper House pathway they are interested in pursuing as a result. These outside reviewers introduce a different type of accountability which, as the quote depicts, can force some students outside of their comfort zone. While Gateway is a critical part of the Workshop School's model, staff have different

> In exhibitions, it's easier because everyone in your class knows you and knows what you've been up to. During Gateway, you're explaining things to someone who doesn't know anything about you or what you've been doing. How do you convince those people that you're ready to move up?
> **- Student**

perspectives on how best to handle students who don't pass the assessment. On the one hand, WS staff believe in fostering an environment where students can learn from failure; however, they also want to promote the accountability that students will face in the real-world.

In the Upper House, students gain real-world experiences through career pathways, which vary in quality depending on challenges outside of the Workshop School's control.

Based on Gateway assessments, Upper House students pursue college prep, internship, automotive, or entrepreneurship pathways. In the college prep pathway, students are placed in Community College of Philadelphia classes based on their performance on an Accuplacer test, and students who pass these classes are eligible to take classes at Drexel or Penn.

> My first internship didn't work out. I was disappointed but this school taught me to never give up. So I had to do a lot of calling around....I love my internship now.
>
> **- Student**

In the internship pathway, students identify their passions and interests, select and contact organizations where they would ideally intern, conduct shadow days, and ultimately develop their resume and interview before securing the internship. In the automotive pathway, students gain practical skills, complete projects that serve the local community, and work to pass field-related competency tests. In the entrepreneurship pathway, students experience working in a live business with real, paying clients, primarily for design, construction, and light manufacturing. While these pathways provide students with a sense of the reality of life beyond high school, they also present challenges. As in real jobs, some internship work is more engaging while some is more menial, and mentors can have different expectations of both students and themselves in internships. While sometimes frustrating for students, this reinforces the Workshop School's principle that "the work is the work," as overcoming obstacles builds students' resilience for the challenges they will face post-high school.
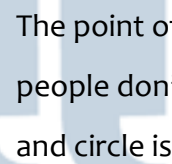
Culture

The culture at the Workshop School puts community first. Staff subvert typical student-teacher hierarchies and discipline methods in favor of forging strong relationships and developing values and norms alongside youth. Students are empowered to take ownership over their own learning process, as well as the culture they create at the Workshop School.

◉ **At the Workshop School, culture begins with the community students and staff build with one another; this work starts each day in Morning Circles.**

As one advisor notes, at the Workshop School, "we invite the whole child into the school, unlike other schools that try to keep the whole child out." Each morning begins with Morning Circle, where students share their thoughts and feelings related to their school work or life outside of school. To facilitate these trusting conversations, students and advisors work together to define expectations and shared norms at the beginning of the year. In the first month of school, students discuss questions like the following: "What type of community do you want to build?" "What's the purpose of school?" "What makes a good student?" During a two-week consensus-building activity, students generate four words that encapsulate their values as an advisory and discuss what it means to live up to those values. Morning Circle provides students a daily opportunity to reflect on their progress and discuss the community they want to build with each other.
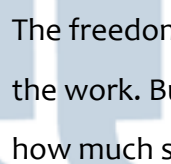
> The point of morning circle is to share. Some people don't get enough attention at home and circle is a place to be heard.
>
> **- Student**

◉ **While Workshop School staff expect students to take ownership of their own learning and behavior, finding the balance of structure and freedom is an ongoing challenge.**

Student ownership is central to the the Workshop School model, and as a result, the school emphasizes norms over rules. In strong advisories, the full community takes ownership over their learning process and their behavior by modeling these shared norms. However, staff report that it can be challenging (as the student quote below reflects) to know how best to balance student autonomy with structure. To be successful in navigating this balance, advisors have to build trusting relationships that allow them to encourage students to take risks, make mistakes and dedicate time to self discovery. Deep poverty and trauma exposure heightens the complexity of this work, as many students struggle in school for reasons that lie far beyond the classroom.

> The freedom here both inhibits and helps students a lot. It's up to you to do the work. But sometimes you don't want to do the work....The challenge is how much structure do you provide?
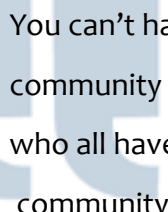>
> **- Student**

Talent

At the Workshop School, staff culture mirrors student culture. Teachers have ownership over their approach to instruction and regularly build community through formal structures like staff meetings and informal relationship building.

✓ **Teachers employ and value formal and informal means of teacher-led collaboration to plan, troubleshoot challenges, and iterate on lessons learned.**

Teachers shared that they've never worked at a school quite like the Workshop School. Much like students, teachers have a high level of ownership, whether that's over the approach to restorative justice or whether to operate on a trimester or quarter basis. This culture is facilitated through committed time each week for collaboration, but ultimately, it's the informal "un-PD sessions" teachers report are most critical to their success. While space at the Workshop School is tight, the office has a small conference table, which serves as a workspace and an area for staff to convene on a daily basis.

> You can't have a democratic community for the students unless you've built a democratic community for the staff. What does it mean to have a group of professionals working together who all have a voice and all have decision-making power? The adults have to have the same community as we're building for the kids, otherwise it seems hypocritical.
>
> **- Leadership**

✓ **The advisory model and level of teacher autonomy requires staff to build a new set of skills, which creates a steep learning curve for newer teachers and can lead to burnout among more experienced teachers.**

Over the past several years, teachers have compiled sample projects for advisors to build off of, but ultimately, staff have considerable autonomy to develop their own curricular materials. This flexibility allows advisors to innovate and customize their approach to meet students' needs and respond to students' capabilities, which staff report is what is most rewarding about being a teacher at the Workshop School. However, this level of autonomy also comes with challenges. Given the structure of advisories, projects incorporate multiple content areas, which means advisors are no longer content experts, and in many cases must learn new content alongside their students or bring in outside experts. Additionally, given the relational focus, advisors must be comfortable with themselves and understand their own identity and power, so they can effectively build deep relationships with students facing significant trauma. These challenges are compounded for teachers who are new to the school - even those with years of experience in the field - as working within this model requires adopting an entirely new mindset. For veteran educators, the constant iteration is both empowering and exhausting.

Family & Community Engagement

Family engagement is critical to the Workshop School's model for student success, and staff members work to align parental and school priorities. Community engagement is promoted not only during student projects, but also through upper house pathways.

- **Involving parents in student exhibitions promotes student growth and progress; however, it has been challenging to engage all parents in the Workshop School model.**

   Parental involvement supports the Workshop School's goal of providing relevant learning experiences and is particularly valuable during student exhibitions. Leadership notes that when parents are involved in exhibitions, it "changes the whole vibe in the room" and increases student engagement in presentations. Parents challenge students to take their work to the next level and can help to reinforce key learnings at home. Advisors call parents at the beginning of the year to explain their role in student exhibitions and if they aren't able to attend, they send packets containing student's best work, quarterly goals, and areas for improvement. Despite these efforts, staff report that it is sometimes difficult to engage parents in the Workshop School model. Lower House parental involvement is relatively high, but this engagement tapers off with students in the Upper House. The Workshop School is trying to engage parents beyond typical high school activities (e.g., extracurriculars, prom) and establish parents' role in student attendance, achievement, and in-class behavior. However, the Workshop School has struggled to define a bigger role for families within the school community.

- **The Workshop School's community partnerships have helped facilitate meaningful real-world learning experiences for students.**

   Networks and partnerships are a critical component of all real-world learning and a central element of the Workshop School's approach. In 2018 alone, Workshop School programs and projects engaged more than 50 partner organizations and institutions. In some cases, partners serve as experts to inform student learning. In other instances, partners serve as clients for student work or host Upper House interns. Partnerships with colleges and universities form the backbone of the school's dual enrollment programs. While critical to authentic learning, it is important to note that building and sustaining these partnerships is time and labor intensive.

CONDITIONS

There are several conditions that have supported the Workshop School's implementation efforts. Curricular and professional development flexibility has allowed WS leadership to structure meaningful student learning experiences and build a professional culture among staff. However, while the school has certain flexibilities, the Workshop School faces challenges aligning the learning model's goals with the more rigid graduation requirements laid out by the District.

- **The Workshop School's unique approach to learning is made possible through curricular and professional development flexibility, but is limited by space constraints.**

  As a member of the District's Innovation Network, the Workshop School is provided with flexibility over curriculum and professional development, which allows for deeper student engagement through structures such as morning circle, advisories, quarterly student exhibitions, and weekly teacher professional development. However, limited space in the actual school building hinders curricular adaptations. For example, the school would like to expand and differentiate its upper house pathways to meet student interests, but a lack of classroom space limits the number of groups that can meet simultaneously at any given time.

- **The Workshop School's leadership has effectively used site selection processes and raised additional funds to build a staff that is highly committed to the learning model.**

  To be successful at the Workshop School, teachers must be passionate about the creation process and resilient in the face of challenge. Leadership has been able to capitalize on the site selection process to ensure that all staff at the Workshop School are aligned to this core philosophy. Additionally, through its nonprofit, the Workshop School has been able to raise additional funds to provide necessary resources for teachers and to hire additional support staff.

- **The District's course framework and graduation requirements limit WS' ability to shape its curriculum.**

  Since the Workshop School educates students primarily through projects and hands-on experiences, it is a challenge to align what students are learning with the District's graduation requirements, which are geared towards traditional coursework. Staff spend considerable time reconciling the soft skills they see as the real work with these requirements, trying to retrofit their unorthodox curriculum to the district-mandated credits (e.g., 4 English, 4 Math, 4 Social Science, 2 foreign language, 2 humanities, 1.5 PE and Health, and 2 electives).

> We should have an open understanding of what a learning experience is. An internship is not a class and we have to retrofit it into a framework for our kids to earn a thing called credit. Courses may not need to be the vehicle to get things done. We need to rethink the way learning experiences are set up.
>
> **- Leadership**

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Workshop School

⊙ **Continue to refine the assessment strategy and determine how best to communicate that strategy with diverse audiences.**

The Workshop School has spent considerable time iterating on the skills framework to clearly articulate the desired goals for student learning and developing a strategy for assessing both end products and the processes students use to create them. However, it is still challenging to measure certain skills that are core to the model, such as students' ability to navigate internships. Even more so, it is challenging to communicate about the value of this assessment approach with a diverse range of stakeholders. As the Workshop School continues to refine its assessment strategy, staff should consider the following questions:

▸ How can the Workshop School continue to build educator capacity to gather both qualitative and quantitative evidence of harder to measure skills (e.g., success in navigating internships)?

▸ How can assessment account for students' varied starting points, as well as the challenges they face outside of the school context?

▸ How can the Workshop School tailor its communication approach about assessment to the needs of various stakeholders? For example, to communicate to parents if their child is where he/she needs to be and if the school is meeting his/her specific needs and to communicate to the district if the model is producing the desired results.

⊙ **Support teachers to navigate the tension between relationships and accountability.**

Teachers at the Workshop School prioritize creating strong relationships with students to cultivate a trusting community in their advisories. However, they sometimes struggle to find the right balance between managing these relationships and holding students accountable to abiding by shared norms and producing high quality work. To respond to variation across advisories, staff created an internal working document on the criteria that make a strong advisory. Leadership should consider formalizing this document into a rubric advisors can use to create common language and develop better support systems for staff to continually strengthen their practice in these areas.

⊙ **Balance the iterative nature of WS with the need to make the work sustainable.**

At the Workshop School, a first draft is never a final draft, and iteration is at the core of the model. Staff have the autonomy to consistently make changes to their practice, and as a result, the school's approach has been modified each year. While this agency facilitates the Workshop School's continual improvement, it also has the potential to be overwhelming, especially for new teachers who already have a steep learning curve. To avoid staff burnout, the Workshop School should strategically prioritize which changes to make each year.

For Other Schools

✅ **Create a comprehensive model that is rooted in core design principles.**

At the Workshop School, the design principles are the foundation for the school's model and create a common framework for decision-making. Building an innovative model around a traditional set of school values would be quite challenging. Instead, innovative schools should bring the community together to determine core principles and then ensure those principles inform all of the school's educational systems and structures.

✅ **Build student ownership and prioritize learning experiences that will help students be successful in the real-world.**

The Workshop School structures projects that tap into students' passions, creating parallels between the work in school and students' communities outside of school. Cultivating student ownership requires providing opportunities for students to make choices about their work, encouraging self-assessment and reflection throughout the learning process, and promoting an interactive learning environment. Schools should work to align these types of meaningful learning experiences with rigorous knowledge and skill development.

✅ **Recruit - and empower - teachers who are creators and strong relationship builders.**

In recent years, WS leadership has focused on hiring teachers who are strong relationship builders. While expertise in project-based learning models is a benefit, these skills can be more easily cultivated than relational skills. Once hired, staff will need additional support to navigate the challenges of balancing strong relationships with clear accountability. Providing staff with strategies for managing this tension will ensure that teachers have the support needed to successfully execute innovative learning models.

For Districts

✅ **Work with schools to develop next-generation assessment systems.**

Districts should lead the work of defining quality measures that align to innovative schools' varying approaches to learning, and, in particular, the emphasis on real-world skill development. These assessment systems can be used to not only determine summative achievement, but also to develop formative assessment strategies that empower teachers and students to make real-time adjustments in practice. Districts should utilize lessons learned from the NGLC's Assessment for Learning Project to inform this work.

✅ **Provide innovative schools with needed flexibility to implement their models with fidelity.**

Workshop School has benefited from scheduling flexibility, which has allowed for extended morning project blocks and off-site internships. However, staff still spends considerable effort trying to align their core skills and product/process ratings with the District's course and graduation requirements. To ensure

that needed autonomy is balanced with clear accountability, districts should involve innovative schools in the creation of metrics which would allow for effective monitoring, but also provide the necessary freedom to try new approaches.

● Help to identify and train teachers who will succeed in innovative schools.

It requires a particular mindset to be a successful teacher at innovative schools like the Workshop School. Districts should host special recruiting opportunities for candidates interested in working at innovative schools and provide flexibility in hiring and transfer requirements to ensure that teachers are a strong fit for innovative models. Districts should also consider how to build pipelines into the classroom for prospective staff who have the advisor skill set but not necessarily the teaching credential.

For Funders

● Be prepared for iteration.

New school models aren't always fully formed and typically evolve, not just when they are being designed and initially implemented, but over time. This iteration can be uncomfortable for many funders who want to understand their grantee's work. Funders should prepare for the reality that the work of innovative schools can look messy and keep an open - and ongoing - dialogue with their grantees. They should create a space where it's OK for grantees to share risks, failures and changes associated with implementing their model.

● Give it time and look beyond common metrics of success.

Because innovative schools are creating new models that take time to build, it also takes time to produce results on traditional metrics of success (e.g., test scores). Funders need to be patient and not expect to see these types of results in the early years of implementation. It's also critically important that funders support a broader definition of student success that captures soft skills (e.g., growth mindset, collaboration, resilience) and interim measures (e.g., student attendance). If these skills are cultivated and students feel safe, comfortable, and heard, there is a good chance higher scores will follow.

● Remember that innovation requires R&D dollars and schools need funding beyond what is provided by their districts.

Successfully implementing an innovative school model requires strategic and thoughtful design. However, some of the hardest funding to get is funding associated with designing and implementing new programs. While district funding meets the basic needs of schools, many schools have nonprofit affiliates that fundraise for R&D and additional programs or resources (e.g., one-to-one tech or non-required staff to implement trauma informed approaches or makerspaces). If funders want to support the type of work that challenges existing models, they should consider taking on some of the risk of investing in new work— particularly at the planning stage. They should also consider supporting districts in their efforts to create the conditions necessary for success (e.g., high quality instructional materials, coaching supports).

For more information on the Workshop School,
please contact
Matthew Riggan at matthew.riggan@workshopschool.org.

Learn more about ImpactED's work at www.impactedphl.com.