



FUTURE READY CASE STUDY #8



Burien,
Washington



Highline
School District



19,288
Students



44
Schools



Suburban

Creating a Safe Space for Innovation

Highline Public Schools is a large suburban school district bordering Seattle in the State of Washington. The district enrolls students in grades Prekindergarten through 12. The student population is diverse, consisting of approximately 37% students of Hispanic descent, 24% White, 14% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 13% Black. Approximately 60% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 23% of students are classified as English language learners.¹

Before Superintendent Dr. Susan Enfield began her tenure at the district, the focus for technology was to ensure that equipment was current; there were no concrete plans for the integration of technology into the district's curriculum and instruction. Dr. Enfield added a focus toward personalized learning for students to perform and progress at their levels and to ensure critical learning at the student level and through the appropriate guidance and software applications. She and her leadership team developed a four-year strategic plan that leveraged resources such as training and tools from the district's inclusive education department to guarantee that all students graduate from Highline technology savvy and technology literate. Highline Public Schools worked to enhance the use of educational technology and to create a culture of innovation to support effective technology use. Facilitated by the [Future Ready Schools \(FRS\) resources](#), the district's approach to this work included a dual focus on personalized learning for students and teachers and the strategic use of resources and partnerships.

FUTURE READY FOCUS AREA

- Collaborative Leadership
- Personalized Student Learning
- Robust Infrastructure
- Personalized Professional Learning

¹ Source of district statistics is the 2014–15 Common Core of Data, the most recent year available at time of publication.

Transition to Digital Learning

With the emphasis on personalized learning, Dr. Enfield and her team began the process of shifting teachers' classroom instruction. With approximately 1,500 teachers in the district, leadership acknowledged that there is a challenge in achieving consistency of effective technology use among so many individuals. Their approach allowed teachers to lead the innovation and create buy-in. On an individual level, leaders identified and supported teachers who were proactive and motivated as they took risks and experimented with blended learning approaches and technology use. For example, a librarian transformed her library into a maker space with equipment (such as an HP Sprout, Dremel three-dimensional printer, Snapkits, Makey-Makey kits, Robot kits, and a video production camera with a green screen) for students to be creative, design products, work on projects, and create videos. In a more formal approach, the district partnered with Discovery Education to establish a digital leader corps in its middle and high schools to develop teacher leaders who practice and model innovative, student-centered instruction. To support professional learning, the district created courses on Canvas, the district's learning management system, which teachers can access independently. The courses include video clips of other Highline teachers modeling instructional practices. Teachers can access information to help them with their instruction in the moment rather than waiting for formal professional development.

The district also took steps toward helping teachers to implement personalized student learning. Through Tableau, a data-visualization dashboard, the district technology department developed interactive and intuitive reports that allowed teachers "to see where a student is [in terms of performance] at any given point in time." Teachers have access to scorecards for each student that incorporate data such as test results from the student information system, learning management systems, and software tools. The scorecard illustrates a student's progress, challenges, and opportunities; teachers and school leaders use this snapshot to identify instructional strategies and give supports to meet the needs of students and families. To assist teachers, a personalized learning manager oversees a cadre of coaches who use data from Tableau, in company with classroom observations, to create actionable items around the data. For example, coaches may work with teachers to make changes in lesson delivery based on student assessment data.

Finally, the district focused on the strategic use of resources to support Future Ready work. Although leaders initially intended to implement a 1:1 environment, they realized that they did not have the resources to do so, and their research has shown that a 1:1 context is not required to achieve student performance gains. The district also realized that a 1:1 environment may not be the best approach for all students at all levels, especially for students in the lower grades. Instead, teachers have access to carts with varied devices that employ touch technology, such as iOS, WinOS, DroidOS, and ChromeOS, for students to use individually or in small groups. For the upper grade levels, the district is examining a "bring your own device" policy, allowing students to use their own devices when they have them and supplying devices for students who do not. The district

leveraged partnerships with the business and philanthropic community to fund the program, including a recent proposal with a telecom company that would provide 4,000 devices (plus Internet access on those devices) over five years to low-income students.

Use of FRS Resources

Highline leaders reported that the FRS resources guided much of their planning for the transition to digital learning. Leaders completed the District Leadership Self-Assessment multiple times and attended a Future Ready Summit with school leaders, curriculum and instruction staff, coaches, and practitioners from the district. A team of nearly 30 district- and school-level staff are planning for implementation of the Future Ready Framework and are learning from the self-assessment and summit in the district; this ongoing effort includes both formal planning meetings and informal conversations across the group, with future plans to bring student and parent voices into the work.

For Highline's leadership, the FRS resources provide a useful framework for the effective use of technology. The Future Ready Framework assists the district in considering all aspects of technology, going beyond the instructional changes for students and considering how that affects professional learning for teachers, infrastructure to support implementation, and resource allocation to make it possible. According to Dr. Enfield, the Framework "demystifies and removes some of the fear and anxiety around technology" experienced by some practitioners. With the fast pace of change in the world of technology, having frameworks to build upon allows the district to be responsive to the need for technology integration without reinventing the wheel.

Finally, the resources, such as the Future Ready Summits, incorporate a large pool of districts with which one can collaborate. Highline has already done so in several regards, such as hosting visiting districts during one of the Summits and initiating a connection with a Future Ready librarian per the request of Highline librarians. Although these opportunities to learn from one another are useful and essential, Dr. Enfield emphasized that it is important to recognize that there is "no one way or one path to be Future Ready." She notes that districts, when learning from one another, should be willing to adapt approaches shared by others to meet the unique context of their districts, rather than simply replicating another district's policy or practice without making necessary adjustments.

Results

Highline recognized several quick wins in its shift toward Future Ready and blended learning. Leadership noticed that teachers became more confident in their ability to innovate and that they were willing to take risks. To support this culture, the district shifted its own role in technology, which leaders viewed as another quick win. The district tightly controlled the use of technology in the past; today, it has intentionally reduced its control to allow teachers more room for creativity and innovation. For example, the district eliminated unnecessary

Internet filters, reducing the filtering as much as possible while still complying with state requirements. The district leadership recognized that without open access to the Internet, the system was, in the words of one district leader, “not allowing our staff or our students to take advantage of learning opportunities.”

In the long term, graduation rates at Highline have increased since Dr. Enfield joined the district, beginning at 62.5% and increasing to 74.8% in four years. Dr. Enfield attributed that increase partly to the transformation of the nature of the classroom through personalized learning: “Giving kids access ... [to] courses that are worthy of our kids’ intellect ... more computer science, more advanced courses, more project-based learning. Things that kids tell us they want and that we know they’re deserving and capable of.”

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Highline identified several recommendations for other districts implementing Future Ready approaches. First, invest in teachers as innovators who can lead the way and set the direction for the district, as well as serve as models for their peers. Second, create safe spaces for teachers and principals to take risks in schools and for districts to take risks on a larger scale. Third, listen to your students to learn what they need and how to leverage resources to meet those wants and needs; allow for student voice and choice. Ultimately, for Dr. Enfield, successful implementation is about supporting the people in the district to be successful rather than focusing solely on money, tools, and strategy. She emphasized, “We don’t want to be doing this *to* our kids or *to* our teachers; we want to be doing this *with* our kids and *with* our teachers.”



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About This Case Study

This is one of nine case studies that examine and document districts' uses, applications, and perceptions of the Future Ready Schools (FRS) professional learning resources in their efforts to become Future Ready. The resources of interest include the Future Ready District Pledge, the Future Ready Interactive Planning Dashboard (and District Leadership Self-Assessment), and the Future Ready Summits. The FRS resources are built on a Future Ready Framework with a set of seven Gears to support a comprehensive transition to digital learning.

Visit <http://futureready.org/> for more information on Future Ready Schools and the resources discussed in the case studies.

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