

**Future Ready Schools**

**West Virginia and Pennsylvania Collaborative**

Future Ready Schools (FRS) is a project of the Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed), a non-profit advocacy organization that seeks to ensure all students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college-level classes and/or postsecondary careers. FRS provides high quality professional learning to K–12 public, private, and charter school leaders focused on planning and implementing personalized, research-based digital learning strategies for all students. Though all aspects of its work, All4Ed successfully collaborates with policy makers, researchers, non-profit advocates, corporations, and practitioners to ensure that:

***“Every child a high school graduate, prepared for postsecondary success.”***

Established in 2014, the Future Ready Schools’ network of public-school leaders has grown rapidly to be the largest group of innovative educators in the United States, with 3,300 superintendents having signed the pledge. The school-based audience strands have over 17,000 active participants in FRS professional learning communities and 1,800 district teams are working on systemic planning to implement effective digital learning using the FRS tools. More than 42,000 innovation-oriented educators are active in the FRS network. On average, 200–250 district and school leaders attend each face-to-face institute and 800 education leaders register for each FRS webinar. Presently, thirty states and the District of Columbia participate in the state leadership program, with thirteen states (CA, IL, IN, KY, MI, NE, NH, NJ, OH, OR, UT, WI and WY) hosting state workshops and statewide FRS projects.

FRS continues to grow and flourish by providing research-based tools that support personalized, student-centered learning practices. These tools include but are not limited to the FRS District Pledge, framework, interactive platform for district digital transition planning, school leadership strands, case studies, resources on emerging themes of equity and the changing workforce as well as practitioner-led webinars, blog posts, and resource guides. FRS also offers national professional learning institutes and specialized state workshops that increase capacity among instructional leaders at the school and district levels.

**Interaction with Practitioners:** The FRS network generates consistent input, feedback and participation from practitioners who serve on FRS Advisory Team, comprised of expert practitioners (superintendents, district technology (IT) directors, curriculum and instruction specialists, and professional learning coordinators). These individuals have expertise implementing and leveraging technology to improve instructional practice. They also have extensive knowledge of the Future Ready Schools framework and materials. Additionally, FRS institute facilitators and educator strand leaders (librarians, teacher instructional coaches, technology leaders, principals, and career advisors) work collaboratively to design personalized professional events and program frameworks that model high-quality professional learning practices.

**The “Why” Statement: Problems and Opportunities**: The guiding principle for the FRS work is that evidence-based practice grounded in research should dictate good policy at the school, district, state, and federal levels. In turn, sound policy can ensure wide-scale adoption of effective practice so that all students benefit. FRS consistently connects research, policy, and practice to advance goals for student success including development of necessary skills in critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration.

**The Challenge:** The nation’s schools need to do a better job of preparing all students for jobs and careers that, in many cases, have yet to be developed. Traditional education models that emphasize teacher-centered delivery of instruction are no longer enough to prepare students for a technology driven world. Innovation has become a requirement, and should be context specific, of high quality and rigorous. With that however, recent research shows that increasingly, “the field” (district and school leaders) are being called to do much more with limited capacity and resources.

Students and parents are demanding innovative student-centered approaches that don’t always align to existing policies, practices, and procedures within the system. FRS provides states and districts with a framework to tackle these complicated issues by tapping into systemic planning, research, and experts to help them along the way. Additionally, the suite of free resources provided to the FRS network, provides professional growth opportunities for educators that increase their capacity to implement innovative personalized learning approaches.

**Key Themes and Thought Leadership**: Through all the activities planned, FRS provides leading edge strategies with direct connections to:

* Workforce Development and Jobs
* Equitable Outcomes for all Students
* Evidence and Continuous Improvement

The work consistently connects research, policy, and practice to advance goals for student success including necessary skills in critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration.

*Potential Connections to ESSA and Equitable Outcomes for Students:* ESSA Title IV gives states and districts unprecedented new flexibility to invest in innovation and the effective use of technology (digital learning). It also provides funding for districts to provide better access to a well-rounded education for all students and to ensure that wrap-around services are made available for millions of historically underserved students. The new Title IV offers powerful ways to leverage the intersection of technology and essential services, and many districts need a plan to maximize the impact of this opportunity.

**Announcing Future Ready Schools West Virginia and Pennsylvania (WVPA) Collaborative Project (the Project)**

**Description of the Project**

Future Ready Schools ® (FRS) --led by the Alliance for Excellent Education— with support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation the Grable Foundation has created the Future Ready Schools: West Virginia and Pennsylvania collaborative (FRS-WVPA.)  This project is part of a broader effort to create programs that improve education opportunities among students of color, those living in rural districts, and those from low-income families.

The WVPA Collaborative Project will focus on helping schools and districts in southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia to (1) to take maximum advantage FRS’ free tools and resources to implement innovation and sound instructional practices in their schools and (2) access to mentors and experts to achieve greater student learning outcomes using proven, evidence-based strategies.

Participants will use the full suite of Future Ready Schools® (FRS) tools and resources to solve problems of practice on the effective use of technology in schools. Whether its technology integration, innovative lesson planning, instructional leadership, use of data to improve learning outcomes, or some other topic, the Future Ready Schools can help educators to leverage current and future investments in technology in support of high quality education for all students.

*Advisory Committee and Objectives:* An advisory committee made up of education leaders in both states is consistently convening to ensure the project addresses the specific needs within WV and PA, and aligns to the state’s goals and aspirations for increasing student success. The FRS team invites your district to participate in this regional cohort that will benefit from existing free FRS resources offered through the network, and customized activities for the region. In addition to the advisory committee, the FRS team will work with regional leaders and partners to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities to participating district and school leaders to:

* Gain a deep understanding of the evidence-based FRS framework that helps district and school leaders implement instructional programs using technology with fidelity.
* Assess areas of growth in one or more FRS gear within the framework.
* Participate in relevant webinars, events, and collaborative activities to support the districts advancement of their own goals.
* Obtain regional support in the form of in-person workshops, Identify and articulate specific goals to address problems of practice.
* Go through two or more steps of the five-step planning process with fidelity to advance goals set forth
* Benefit from evidence-based strategies and expert advice to successfully implement your plan of action.
* Participate in a regional network of like-minded practitioners grappling with similar problems of practice.
* Inform the national effort on areas of improvement and enhancement of the free offerings provided to districts across the U.S.

Future Ready Schools is excited to work with interested districts in West Virginia and Pennsylvania on a regional project (the Project). FRS free tools and resources will be used to help create a regional network that helps district and school leaders realize the potential for increased learning outcomes through innovative teaching practices. The Project provides support before the purchase of technology and after devices or other solutions are deployed to ensure appropriate systems are in place that encourage a productive culture of innovation in schools across the region.

Regional activities and events will be offered to ensure context and appropriate topics are addressed – this include specific help for district leaders representing high proportions of underperforming and/or historically underserved students. The project will foster an ongoing professional learning network that shares resources, captures best practices, and identifies additional, specific needs of these districts and student populations. To seize on the opportunity, the project will provide district leaders with support as they set meaningful goals and move through a streamlined planning process.

**Expectations of Participating District and School Leaders**

The Alliance has invited a select group of districts to participate in this program based on dashboard usage, demographics characteristics, high school graduation rate, and an analysis of readiness for personalized student-centered learning. As a member of this cadre, each district must meet the following expectations:

* Full support from the superintendent by taking the FRS pledge or providing a confirmation letter regarding participation with an acknowledgement of these expectations.
* Approval to list your district as a member of the FRS-WVPA collaborative.
* Designation of a project manager who will lead the FRS team and coordinate maximum participation and usage of the resources and activities offered.
* Participation of at least three members of the FRS team during the in-person event mentioned above to be scheduled in early 2019.
* Full acknowledgement of the timeline for program completion (December 2019). While FRS action plans may be comprehensive in nature or smaller in scope, the expectation is that participants will participate in the activities described above to inform understanding and increase capacity in implementing effective technology programs.
* Assign appropriate representative(s) to participate in monthly conference calls to help with sustainability and multi-faceted participation at the conclusion of the program.
* Willingness to be interviewed for case studies, or stories, regarding this project.
* Emphasize practical research-based strategies to benefit students from low income families.
* Share artifacts and exemplars that emerge from this program to be shared nationally with like-minded districts who seek to solve similar challenges.
* Participation in an evaluation surveys showing results from a pre-post assessment of participants’ capacity for implementing innovative programs with fidelity.

The goal is to help district and school leaders realize the potential for technology and provide equitable access to the vast educational opportunities afforded through personalized learning strategies. With this WVPA cohort of participants, FRS will provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to district and school leaders, and gain greater understanding of the framework and best practices to support specific needs, especially in under resourced districts, to increase the impact of well-implemented student centered learning initiatives in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and across the U.S.