



Design Principles

Overview

The North Carolina New Schools Project partners with local school districts and higher education institutions to help secondary schools become nimble, rigorous and focused institutions that graduate every student prepared for college, careers and life. **NCNSP's goal is to spark and support deep instructional change by purposefully and dramatically rethinking traditional high schools' organization to promote more effective teaching and learning.** Our essential premise is straightforward: to improve public secondary schools everywhere, individual schools must be encouraged and assisted to invent and implement more effective means of serving students. The successes that these schools achieve must be sustained, their processes supported, and their new structures for success replicated.

Design Principles

Each child in every school is entitled to achieving high academic and affective outcomes. To that end, the following six design principles for NCNSP schools are non-negotiable for all involved in leading secondary school transformation:

- **Ready for College:** NCNSP schools are characterized by the pervasive, transparent, and consistent understanding that the school exists for the purpose of preparing all students for college and work. They maintain a common set of high standards for every student to overcome the harmful consequences of tracking and sorting.
- **Require Powerful Teaching and Learning:** NCNSP schools are characterized by the presence of commonly held standards for high quality instructional practice. Teachers in these schools design rigorous instruction that ensures the development of critical thinking, application, and problem solving skills often neglected in traditional settings.
- **Personalization:** Staff in NCNSP schools understand that knowing students well is an essential condition of helping them achieve academically. These high schools ensure adults leverage knowledge of students in order to improve student learning.
- **Redefine Professionalism:** Evident in NCNSP schools are the collaborative work orientation of staff, the shared responsibility for decision making, and the commitment to growing the capacity of staff and schools throughout the network.
- **Leadership:** Staff in NCNSP schools work to develop a shared mission for their school and work actively as agents of change, sharing leadership for improved student outcomes in a culture of high expectations for all students.
- **Purposeful Design:** NCNSP schools are designed to create the conditions that ensure the other five design principles: ready for college, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, leadership and redefined professionalism. The organization of time, space, and the allocation of resources ensures that these best practices become common practice.