Design Thinking and Action Research: Shifting Fayette County teachers toward a deeper learning disposition

Recommendations from FCPS teachers:
By Lauren Hill, NBCT

Fayette County Public Schools promises that all students will become lifelong learners, civically engaged and culturally responsive, future- and life-ready, and reflective and resilient, as reflected in FCPS's Portrait of a Graduate. To meet these promises, our teachers must embody these principles and become skilled at designing learning experiences that cultivate these qualities in our students. Students and teachers must be supported by a district-wide system that prioritizes symmetrical learning experiences and nurtures personal and professional growth.

To test this theory of action, the Department of Innovation teamed up with 28 self-selected teachers (Teachers Leadership for Deeper Learning or TL4DL) and key external partners: UK Next Generation Leaders (UKNextGen), Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC), Classroom Teachers Enacting Positive Solutions (CTEPS), and What School Could Be (WSCB).

We came to understand:

> **Essential Premise #1:** Coordinating school- and district-led efforts with grassroots, teacher-driven leadership is crucial to effect these changes and reimagine school structures and the use of time to serve students more effectively.
>
> **Essential Premise #2**: Symmetrical, deeper learning experiences for teachers pave the way for effectively bringing deeper learning experiences to students.

After two years of digging into deeper learning and conducting action research, the Teacher Leaders for Deeper Learning (TL4DL) team makes the following recommendations:

1. **Document and uplift deeper learning innovations** within and across all schools. Though often separated by only a few blocks or hallways, school faculty and staff operate within silos created by other convenient but limiting structures like geography, grade level, content area, or team. We also often depend solely upon easy and inexpensive methods of communication, like email or faculty/district meetings, to share information. We must prioritize identifying innovation and designing more effective networks through which these methods can be shared, understood, replicated, and improved.

Consider:

a. Organizing and prioritizing a more rigorous and focused use of in-place social and traditional media.
b. Creating a moderated and local virtual community connected to Elevate or an alternate space existing within the regular rhythm of school that encourages school personnel to contribute to the conversation, regardless of formal role, that operates as a safe space to share challenges and ideas.
c. Expand *Elevate* to support teacher collaboration through workflow and feedback loops and ultimately serve as a home for a *community of practice* for teachers that highlights and celebrates expertise.
d. Encourage two-way communication about innovation that includes parents, students, and the larger community.
e. Use visual markers (signs, badges, etc.) in schools, offices, hallways, and doors.
f. Facilitate periodic low-stakes gatherings of interested community, school, and district leaders to nurture deeper learning innovation.

Read about Claudett Edie's Deeper Learning Journey, Librarian at Leestown Middle School, as a model for others to learn from and replicate.

Read RISE Academy's Sydney Arnold's story describing how she battled isolation as a new teacher.

2. **Elevate teachers as leaders.** Administrative teams are stretched thin as they cultivate a safe and effective school culture and climate and serve as instructional leaders. It is imperative that the leadership of teachers be nurtured and depended upon to bring about school improvement. Further, a teacher's flat career expectations breed job dissatisfaction and engender feelings of powerlessness that leadership opportunities - formal and informal - can alleviate.
   In addition to traditional team and department chair positions, consider designing systems through which teachers might:
   a. Mentor colleagues in deeper learning strategies and career-advancing opportunities like earning National Board certification, micro-credentials, or other vehicles for rank change.
   b. Lead and contribute to committees or initiatives to spearhead innovation in schools and the district.
   c. Think creatively and allocate resources to offer accessible ways for teachers to advance their careers that honor and spread expertise through micro-credentialing, specialized certification, and myriad options to lead without leaving the classroom.
   d. Reimagine school schedules and teacher/student ratios to allow all faculty and staff more time for job-embedded professional learning and collaboration.
   e. Draw on the Kentucky Teacher Leadership Framework to inspire additional ways for teachers to lead.

Read Pivotal Relationship Pathways: Mentoring and Team Teaching by Catherina Sammons, Science teacher at Tates Creek High School, FCPS

Read about Southern Middle's Anna Predmore's deep dive into student self-advocacy and her personal story From Despair to Deeper Learning.

Read how The Learning Center's Kathryn Eakins created an inclusive school for ALL learners.

3. **Design professional learning around teacher-led cohorts and action research.** If deeper learning is best for students, it is also best for adults. Relevant, collaborative, and iterative cycles of exploration, research,

planning, testing, and reflection support symmetrical cycles of learning for teachers while simultaneously fostering teacher agency and capacity;

a. Create a system through which teachers may lead and participate in collaborative, action research-based cohorts that explore teacher-identified areas of interest and challenges.
b. Provide coaching and guidance to teacher leaders in peer coaching and Cognitive Coaching methods to ensure quality experiences for teacher participants.
c. Nest these communities of practice within existing support structures in schools and the district.

Read Upside down is right side up: Shifting priorities for professional learning by Lauren Hill, Leestown Middle School, FCPS

Read Dixie Elementary Mac Bailes' Instructional Coaching: Humanizing the Process for Growth.

4. **Evaluate and refocus professional learning communities** to meet the highest level of Hargreaves' collaborative professionalism, which may be described as PLCs focused on a meaningful purpose or problem of practice identified by participants. PLCS should include:
   a. A strong focus on analyzing student work and whole-child considerations.
   b. Tools, structures, and protocols for meeting, coaching, feedback, planning, and review to support practical action and continuous improvement of the work undertaken together.
   c. A coherent approach focused on explicit outcomes to build individual and collective leadership.
   d. Work that is driven by passion and inquiry which creates transformational problem-solving.

Read A Teacher's View of PLCs, an Interview with Dustin Bowen, FCPS

Read SCAPA Bluegrass's Venecia Proctor's Manageable Workloads Within Teaching.

Read Jesse Clark Middle School's Brison Harvey's Supporting Teachers with Actionable Data.

5. **Leverage new and existing partnerships** to co-design mutual support systems. Collaborative efforts will include post-secondary, business industry, and community agencies and educator preparation partners who jointly focus on supporting district challenges related to the educator workforce alongside FCPS.

Read Eli Parham's From Classroom To Community: Empowering students as advocates through deeper learning and the creation of community outdoor spaces of Tate's Creek Middle School, FCPS.

Read about Booker T. Washington's Kiauna Coleman's plan to Open Doors To The World.

6. **Expand teachers' performance assessment expertise** and develop new metrics for students' deeper learning success while developing a local performance assessment system to measure progress toward the POG promises and deeper learning outcomes.

Read about Ashley Rosen and STEAM Academy's journey with defenses of learning.

Read about The Learning Center's Amy Schwarz use of Digital Portfolios.

Read about Ashland Elementary's Ashley Oldham's approach to empowering students through dance.

See how Claire Johnson of Leestown Middle School created a Portrait of a Pre-Engineering Student.

7. **Create a district-wide map** that clarifies and publicizes relationships and responsibilities between all roles, departments, schools, and individuals. This will help everyone understand available support opportunities and protocols. Rather than creating boundaries and hierarchical relationships, this map should be invitational in design, inviting all stakeholders to engage with each other and identify expertise and interests. Consider this a professional social network that connects and expands upon existing networks and relationships, both formal and informal.

Easily locate expertise like Lafayette's Morghan Fuller Trauma Informed Instruction or Vanessa Jirik's Blending Academics with Soft Skills.

Identify successful innovations like Frederick Douglas High School's Pablo Alcala's Creating A Student Run Production Company.

Read about Winburn Middle School's Jenny McCall's Innovative and Evidence Based STEM Strategies.

8. **Establish a deeper learning facilitation team** that may include teachers, students, Office of Academic Services (OAS), and representatives from the greater school and district communities to align and streamline efforts, increase coherence, and reduce fragmentation across the district. This team must embrace a fluid, collaborative approach. We recommend that the team begin by identifying and describing the current state of the system and then engage with design thinking to create a plan to create a culture and climate that will enable deeper learning to flourish.

9. **Support pilot schools** that develop and elevate deeper learning professional learning communities sharing promising practices and teaching schedules — and create ways to spread their know-how to others across the district.

10. **Create *Distinguished Schools for Deeper Learning***, building on the pilot schools to identify and spread promising practices. Provide time and resources for schools to learn from each other.

This shift to deeper learning necessitates a renewed approach to assessment. Kentucky and FCPS are redesigning their assessment and accountability systems to focus on equity, personalization, and vibrant learning experiences. The new state accountability system will use multiple domains to measure school quality and allow for a locally designed assessment model. These changes will be implemented in phases beginning next year. (More specific information is available here.)

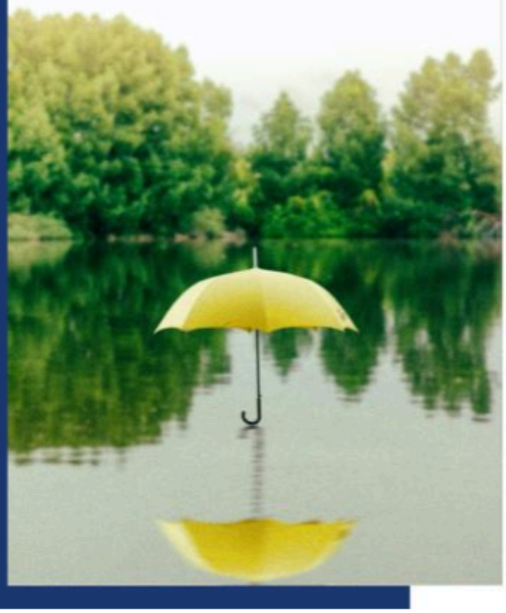
Developing and fostering sustainable systems for Deeper Learning in FCPS
By Aaron Davis

Innovation	Scaling	Challenges
Use visual markers (signs, badges, etc.) on schools, offices, hallways, and doors.	Creating and curating a moderated local virtual community connected to ELEVATE or alternate space within the regular rhythm of school that encourages school personnel to contribute to the conversation regardless of role.	**Communication**: organizing and prioritizing focused use of media AND appropriate, timely channels of communication across the organization **Balance:** Demands of instructional time, staffing challenges with certified and classified staff, roles and responsibility designations across staff. **Funding:** Professional demands of teachers building, designing, and working beyond the contractual work hours.
Encourage two-way communication about innovation that includes parents, students, and the larger community.	Facilitate monthly low-stakes gatherings of interested community, school, and district leaders to nurture deeper learning innovation.	
Reimagine school schedules and teacher/student ratios to allow all faculty and staff more time for job-embedded professional learning and collaboration.	Reimagine district calendar to provide opportunities for cross-district teacher PLC networks to collaborate and engage in deeper learning planning, discussion, and development.	
Establish school-level mentorships, professional partners, or triads that provide support and accountability for teachers beyond a traditional grade or content-level PLC.	Establish mentorship opportunities for colleagues to engage in deeper learning strategies AND career-advancing opportunities such as NBCT, micro-credentials, or other vehicles for rank change.	
Design and provide professional learning around in-house teacher leaders that have engaged in successful deeper learning practices in the classroom.	Design and provide professional learning opportunities that elevate and celebrate the accomplishments of teachers engaging in deeper learning practices.	

Innovation	Scaling	Challenges
Defining expectations of ELEVATE and developing an instructional rhythm that provides opportunities for authenticity with ELEVATE	Redesigning ELEVATE with input of students and teachers so that it can be used more effectively and intentionally to serve as a	**Synthesizing:** Many voices at the table to achieve goals including ELEVATE leads, District Leadership, Office of Technology, and Superintendent Student

implementation and meaningful student engagement.	community of practice for both students and educators.	Leadership Team **Consistency:** Diverse challenges of schools causing de-prioritization of PLCs and low expectations for teacher engagement. **Defined Parameters:** This challenge can be overcome with the proposed district-wide map that clarifies and publicizes relationships between roles, departments, and schools. Roles are defined, but lanes can become blurry without such definitions.
Identify teacher leaders, elevate their opportunities to lead colleagues in-house, and to participate in Deeper Learning Task Force.	Establish Deeper Learning Facilitation Team from that may include teachers, students, Office of Academic Services (OAS), and representatives from the greater school and district communities	
Establish and continue norms, schedule, and outcomes for PLCs and prioritize them as practice within the school.	Continue professional learning opportunities with PLC and PLC+ models for both administrators and teachers. Provide supports and feedback through coaches, specialists, and other supports.	
Extending the prioritization of PLCs as a non-negotiable practice with explicit norms and outcomes, developing a teaching and learning schedule that fosters and gives opportunity for deeper learning and vibrant learning experiences across disciplines.	Establish criteria for and then identify schools as pilot schools for deeper learning that have fostered healthy PLC culture, promising practices with deeper learning, and innovation with scheduling for teachers. Furthermore, develop a system or platform for these pilot schools and leaders to share their knowledge districtwide.	
Innovation	**Scaling**	**Challenges**
	From the pilot schools, identify and create Distinguished Schools for Deeper Learning	
Leveraging new and existing partnerships across post-secondary, business and industry, community agencies, and educator preparation partners. School-level partnerships may be hyper-localized or community-specific such as anecdotal connections through PTSA members, booster clubs, neighborhood community centers, etc. District-level partnerships are accessible more wide-scale through partnerships through Civics Expos, Career Fair, BizTown (Junior Achievement), etc.		

Deeper learning is …



- learning that matters to ALL students.
- teachers facilitating meaningful and challenging experiences so that students develop a sense of purpose and can connect to the content, to each other, and to their world.
- students learning how to learn, asking questions, reflecting, and inviting feedback about their work.
- students showing what they know and demonstrating standard mastery by applying their learning to new situations and inventing solutions to problems through authentic tasks.

Adapted from UK and CKEC

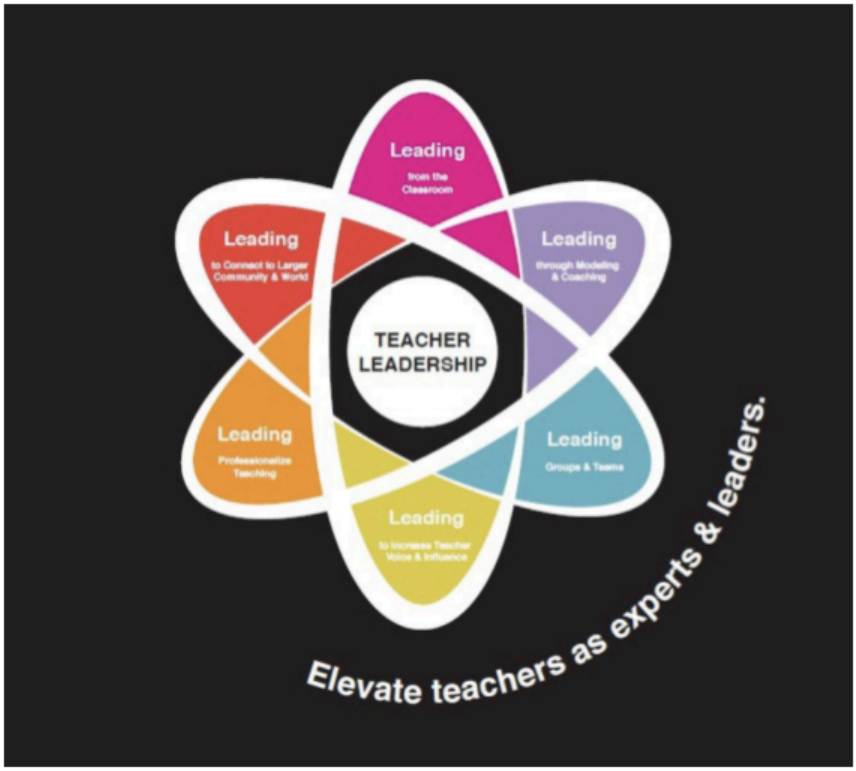
The FCPS Deeper Learning Initiative: Vibrant Learning & Assessment for All

Fayette County Public Schools

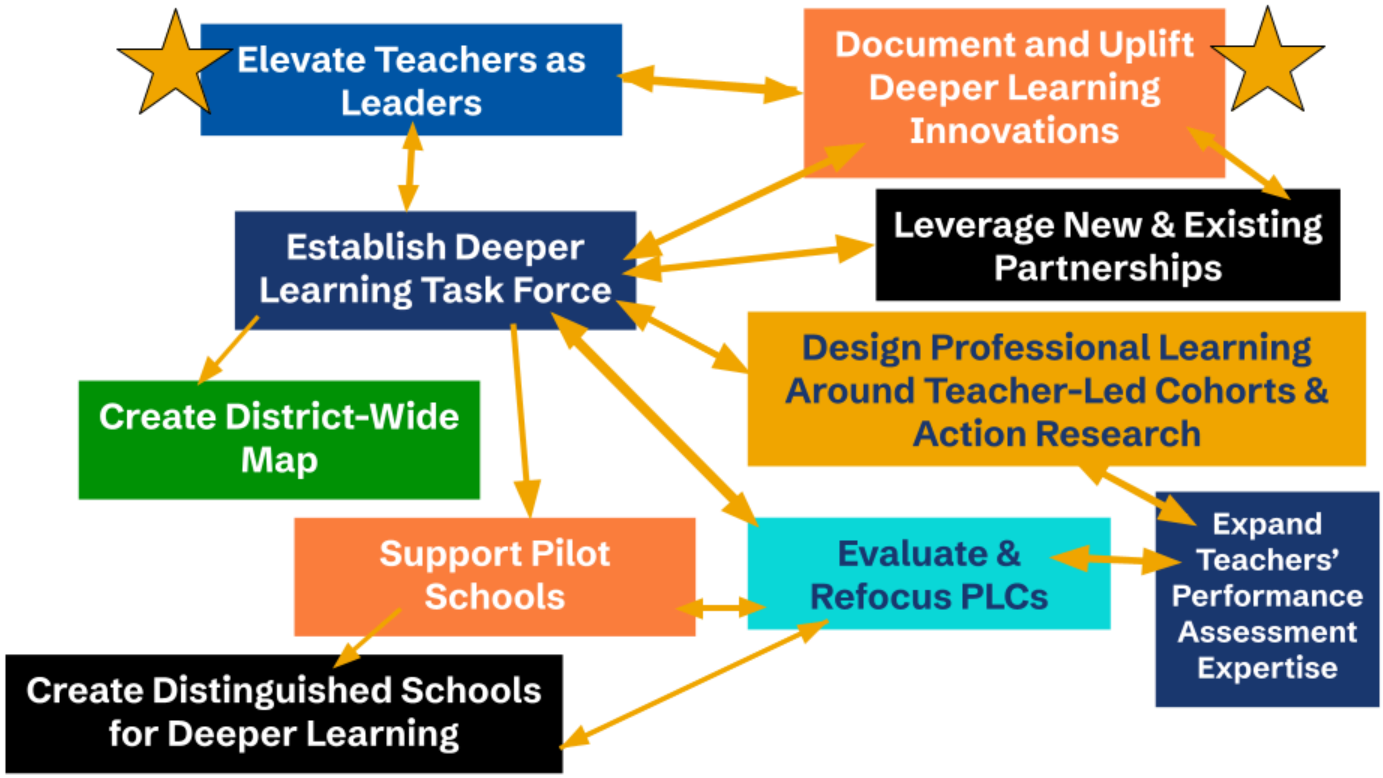
Deeper Learning → **Standards for Learning**

Self-Directed Learning	Collaboration	Academic Mindset	Content Expertise	Critical Thinking + Problem solving	Effective Communication
• Meaningful Feedback • Exhibitions of learning • Student-led conferences • Concept mapping • Inquiry-based learning • Questioning techniques • Collaborative learning structures • Classroom discussions or academic discourse			• Project-based learning • Performance tasks • Blended learning models • Goal setting & monitoring • Visible thinking strategies • Academic mindsets • Self-guided learning • Metacognitive & reflection strategies		





[Kentucky Teacher Leadership Framework]



Leveraging how teachers are already leading	Document and Uplift Deeper Learning Innovations Elevate Teachers as Leaders Leverage New and Existing Partnerships
Getting strategic by building on teachers' strengths	Document and Uplift Deeper Learning Innovations Elevate Teachers as Leaders Design Professional Learning Around Teacher-Led Cohorts & Action Research Establish a Deeper Learning Task Force Create a Districtwide Map Evaluate & Refocus PLCs
Developing a school's readiness for teacher leadership	Document and Uplift Deeper Learning Innovations Elevate Teachers as Leaders Design Professional Learning Around Teacher-Led Cohorts & Action Research Evaluate & Refocus PLCs Support Pilot Schools Create Distinguished Schools for Deeper Learning
Addressing the challenges and opportunities of PLCs	Document and Uplift Deeper Learning Innovations Elevate Teachers as Leaders Design Professional Learning Around Teacher-Led Cohorts & Action Research Evaluate & Refocus PLCs
Overcoming barriers of deeper learning practices and policies	Expand Teachers' Performance Assessment Expertise Leverage New and Existing Partnerships Create Distinguished Schools for Deeper Learning

Teacher Leader Action Research 23-24

This table represents the compilation of action research projects presented at the FCPS 2024 TL4DL Deeper Learning Symposium.TL4DL Projects 2024

Teacher Leader	Project Title	Deeper Learning Competency
Heesung Choi, The Learning Center	Teaching Korean Culture through PBL	Collaboration
Kiauna Coleman, Booker T. Washington Elementary	Opening the Doors to the World	Collaboration
Claire Johnson, Leestown Middle School	Portrait of a Pre-Engineering Student	Content Expertise
Eli Parham, Tate's Creek Middle School	From Classroom to Community	Content Expertise/Critical Thinking and Problem Solving/Collaboration/Self-Directed Learning
Jenny McCall, Leestown Middle School	Innovative and Evidence Based STEM Strategies	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
Pablo Alcala, Frederick Douglass High School	Creating a Student-Run Production Company	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
Dustin Bowen, FCPS	Deeper Learning Avenues	Collaboration/Self-Directed Learning
Catherina Sammons, Tate's Creek High School	Bridging Divides through Modeling	Self-Directed Learning
Vanessa Jirik, Lafayette High School	Blending Academics with Soft Skills	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
Brison Harvey, Jesse Clark Middle School	Supporting Teachers with Actionable Student Data	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

	Ashley Oldham, Ashland Elementary	Empowering Students through Dance	Self-Directed Learning
	Kathryn Eakins, The Learning Center	Inclusiveness in Education	Collaboration
	Anna Predmore, Southern Middle School	From Despair to Deeper Learning Project Poster	Self-Directed Learning
	Morghan Fuller, Lafayette High School	Trauma-Informed Instruction	Self-Directed Learning
	Mac Bailes, Dixie Elementary	Instructional Coaching: Humanizing the Process for Growth	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
	Amy Schwarz, The Learning Center	Empowering Learners through Digital Portfolios	Self-Directed Learning/Effective Communication
	Alexandra Nau, Bryan Station High School	Creating a Meaningful & Purposeful Advisory	Collaboration and Effective Communication
	Sydney Arnold, RISE Academy	Building a School Culture Where Everyone Thrives	Collaborate and Communicate Effectively
	Jay Cloud, Bryan Station Middle School	Implementing Employability Skills - eOS edition	Collaboration
	Dallas Cooks, Tate's Creek Middle School	Entrepreneurship in Agriculture	Self-Directed Learning
	Claudett Edie, Leestown Middle School	Leestown Middle Does Deeper Learning and PBL	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
	Lori Graham, Squires Elementary	Deeper Learning: Agency and Achievement in Struggling Students	Content Expertise
	Ashley Rosen, STEAM	Defending Student Ownership	Self-Directed Learning

	Academy	**of Learning**	
	Cathy - Pivotal Relationship Pathways: Mentoring and Team Teaching, by Catherina Sammons, Tates Creek High School, FCPS		
	Sydney - It's Time to Empower Educators, by Sydney Arnold, RISE Academy, FCPS		
	Dustin A Teacher's View of PLCs, Interview with Dustin Bowen		
	Venecia - Manageable Workloads Within Teaching, Venecia Proctor, SCAPA Bluegrass, FCPS		
	Susan - The Weight of Assessments, Susan Snodgrass, FCPS		