NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES

FRIDAY FOCUS

Note: We continue our special series of Friday Focus e-blasts from NGLC deputy director Andy Calkins and NGLC's MyWays project team, providing a preview beta-toolbox of resources for NGLC grantees and friends from our forthcoming MyWays initiative. This is the third of three installments on MyWays.

How Well Are We All Answering

Next Gen Learning's Three Big Questions?

NGLC grantees: use these new, hot-from-the-oven tools

to appraise your school model's most crucial design elements

Today's MyWays installment provides tools for you to use in connection with the third of these three Big Questions:

- How well are we defining and articulating what success looks like for students attending our school?
- How well does our design for learning and the organization of our school *directly support* students' attainment of our richer, deeper definition of success?
- ***How do we gauge students' progress in developing those competencies? And: How can we measure and articulate our school's overall performance, beyond proficiency in ELA and math?***

For schools reflecting principles of next generation learning—personalized, student-centered, competency-based, blended, experiential, designed around deeper learning goals—developing and activating strong, clear answers to these questions is an imperative. For the past 18 months, NGLC has been incubating a project intended to help our grantees, and other educators entering this space, to do exactly that. Whether you are in the midst of your fourth year of implementation or your first—or planning ahead towards next fall—we hope you will use these MyWays tools as "critical-friend" analytical lenses to examine the depth and clarity of your answers to the three Big Questions.

Mark your calendar and **please note a change in schedule**:

- ***Friday, November 6, 3:00-4:00 p.m. ET:*** Join us for a webinar hosted by the primary MyWays researchers and authors, Dave Lash and Dr. Grace Belfiore. This webinar is for interested grantees to walk through the tools and the extensive research and analyses that lie behind them. The *focus will be on linking the latter two MyWays installments, on the learning model and assessment strategies.*

  Join: https://educause.acms.com/nglcmeeting 1-877-944-2300, 99463#
- Here is the **recording of the MyWays webinar held on W*ednesday, October 28*** which focused on linking the first two MyWays installments, defining success and sharpening your learning design.

We hope to learn from your use of the tools this fall in order to refine them before wider release and distribution of the complete set of MyWays resources. Those of you who are interested in deeper, extended use of MyWays to improve or to shape your school model: we'd like to talk with you. The tools presented here are just the tip of a much larger set still to come.

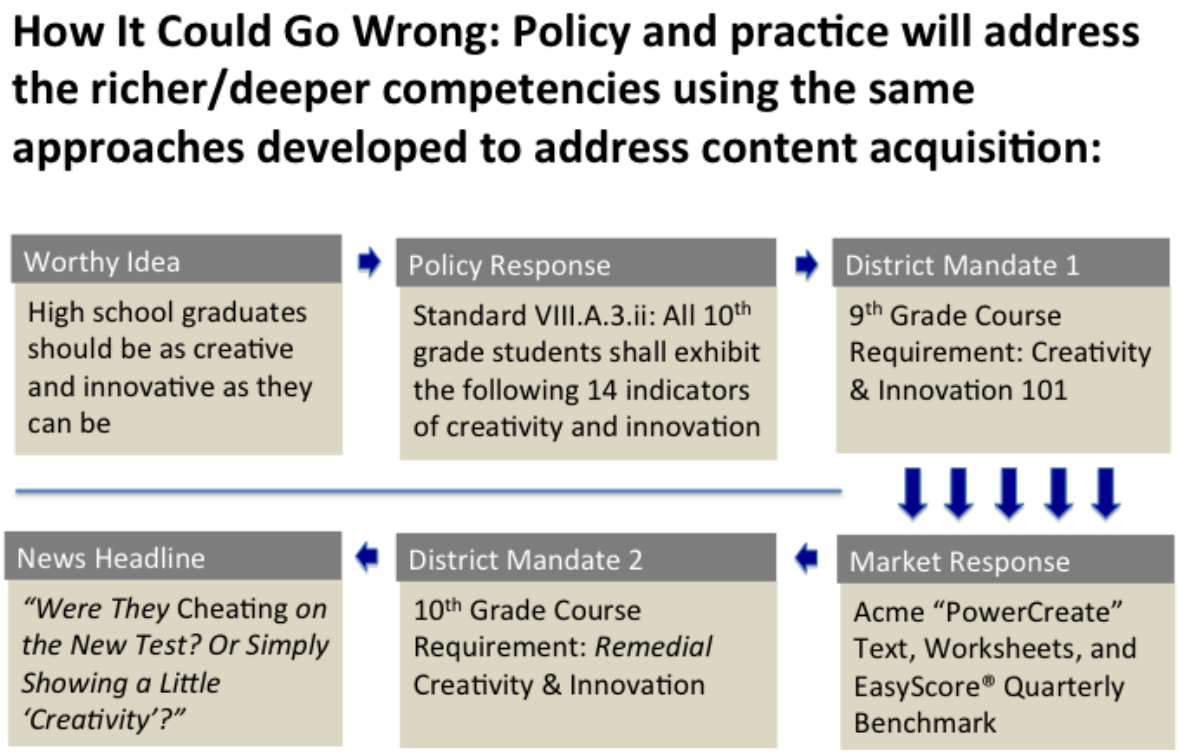
This Week's *Putting MyWays to Work* Installment:

Exercise 3: Assessment Design as Integrated as Your Definition of Student Success

Assessment design is what keeps us all awake at night, bouncing between excitement over tremendously promising new possibilities and… well... terror. Terror born from concern that we are inadvertently helping to create a monster.

The MyWays competencies defined in the first installment of this series provide a rich, distilled and synthesized composite of the more than two dozen major "richer/deeper" frameworks we were able to identify. We are convinced that this set of twenty competencies, organized in four arenas— Content Knowledge, Creative Know How, Habits of Success, Wayfinding—reflects a comprehensive and sufficiently nuanced answer to the question, *What should today's high school graduate know and be able to do, in order to succeed in college (or other postsecondary education), career, and civic and personal life?*

But the competencies do *not* represent a checklist with component parts that should drive curriculum, pedagogy, scheduling, and assessment. The whole competency set is crucially important for school leaders, teachers, and (we would argue) students to hold and use as a North Star. The temptation to use them, in classic standards-based reform methodology, as definers of the assessments that in turn would shape the learning experiences of students, would almost inevitably result in the "atomizing" of the skills and in unintended consequences as shown in the fictional schemata below:

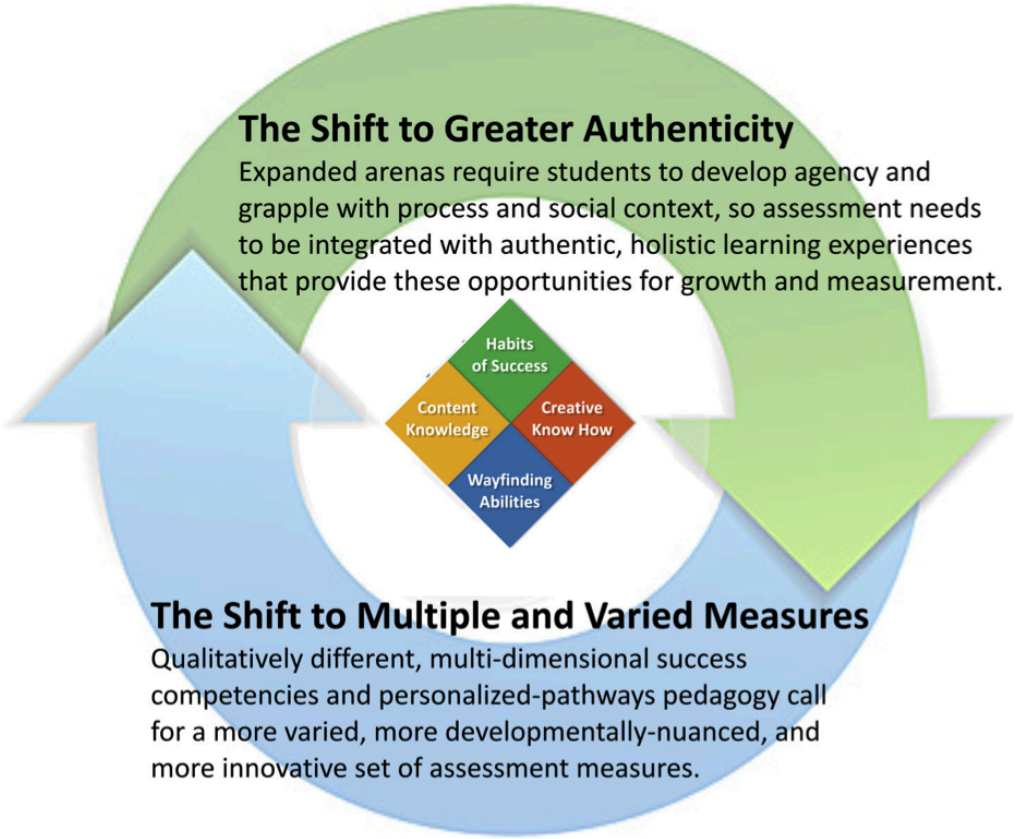


The truth is that our understanding of how to assess for this broader, deeper, richer set of competencies is in its infancy. What we *do* know is how much impact assessment design can have on pedagogy and students' learning experience, especially when it is driven by accountability requirements. The first era of standards-based reform was shaped in large part by what we knew how to assess with any degree of confidence: math and ELA content acquisition. So, much of American classroom practice rolled toward drilling and test preparation. It is honestly a bit frightening to imagine what could happen if the much harder-to-assess competencies in Creative Know How, Habits of Success, and Wayfinding were to be "promoted" in the same way.

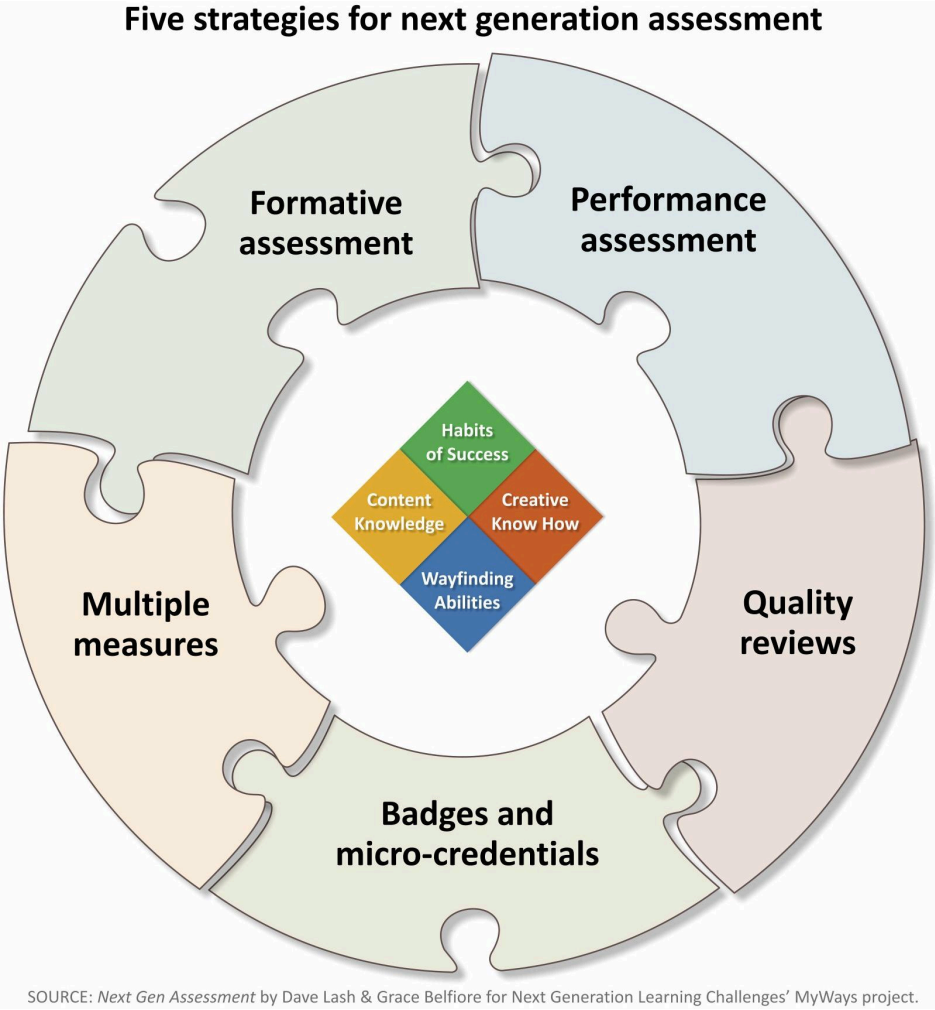
Okay: enough with the scary side. The extraordinary-opportunity side of this equation is just as compelling, and leads us to the two MyWays exercises designed to help you advance your own approach to assessment.

The Basis for the Assessment Design Exercises

As is explained in far greater detail in the third MyWays Overview document in the Beta Toolbox, we have developed three constructs to prod your leadership team's thinking on assessment design. The first construct, seen below, illustrates two major shifts in assessment design that are already lifting off the ground and that encompass a good deal of the re-imagining of the role of assessment that next gen, personalized learning models require.



These two major shifts are catalyzing a move, already underway in many and perhaps most NGLC grantee schools, toward the design and implementation of the second construct, a multi-modal range of assessments, as seen below:

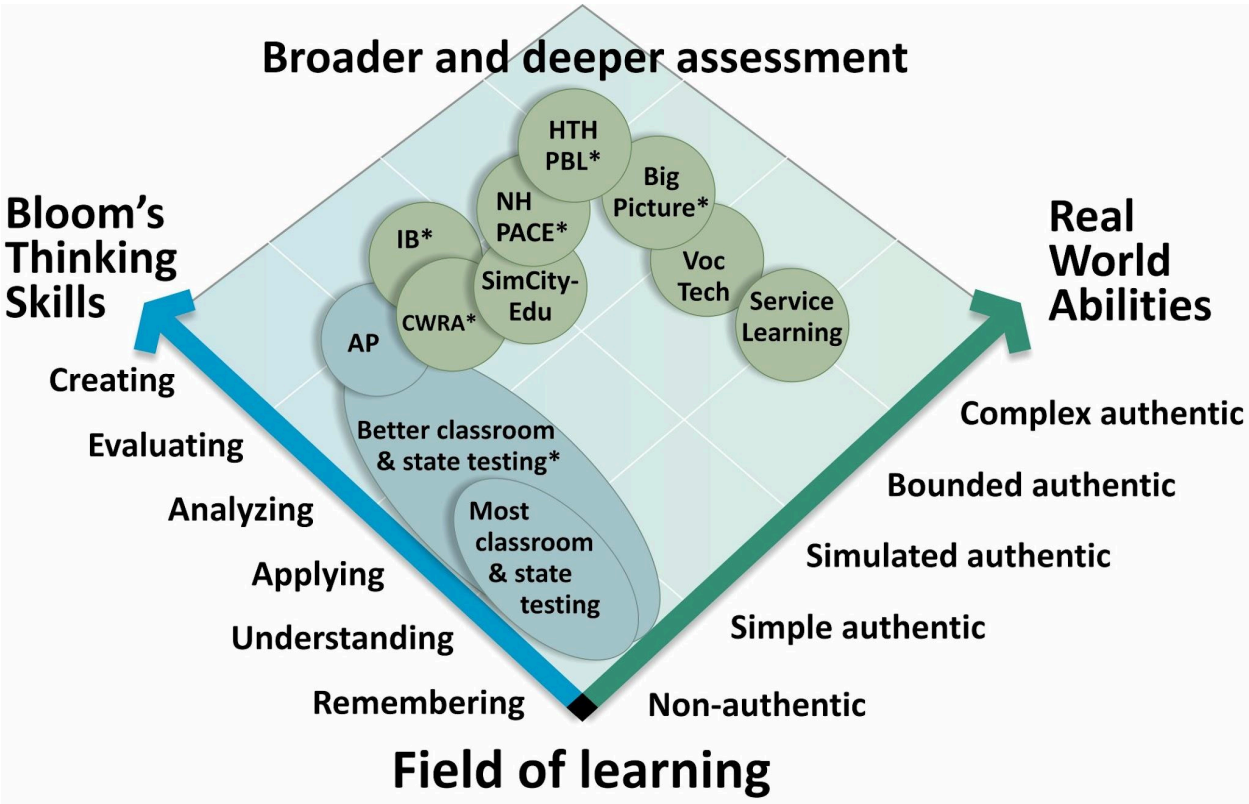


SOURCE: *Next Gen Assessment* by Dave Lash & Grace Belfiore for Next Generation Learning Challenges' MyWays project.

The five assessment types are described in the *Next Gen Assessment* overview and examples are provided for each one. The discussion hinges on the recognition that students develop multiple competencies simultaneously. In a richly designed project crossing several traditional curricular boundaries, students may be developing competencies across three or four of the

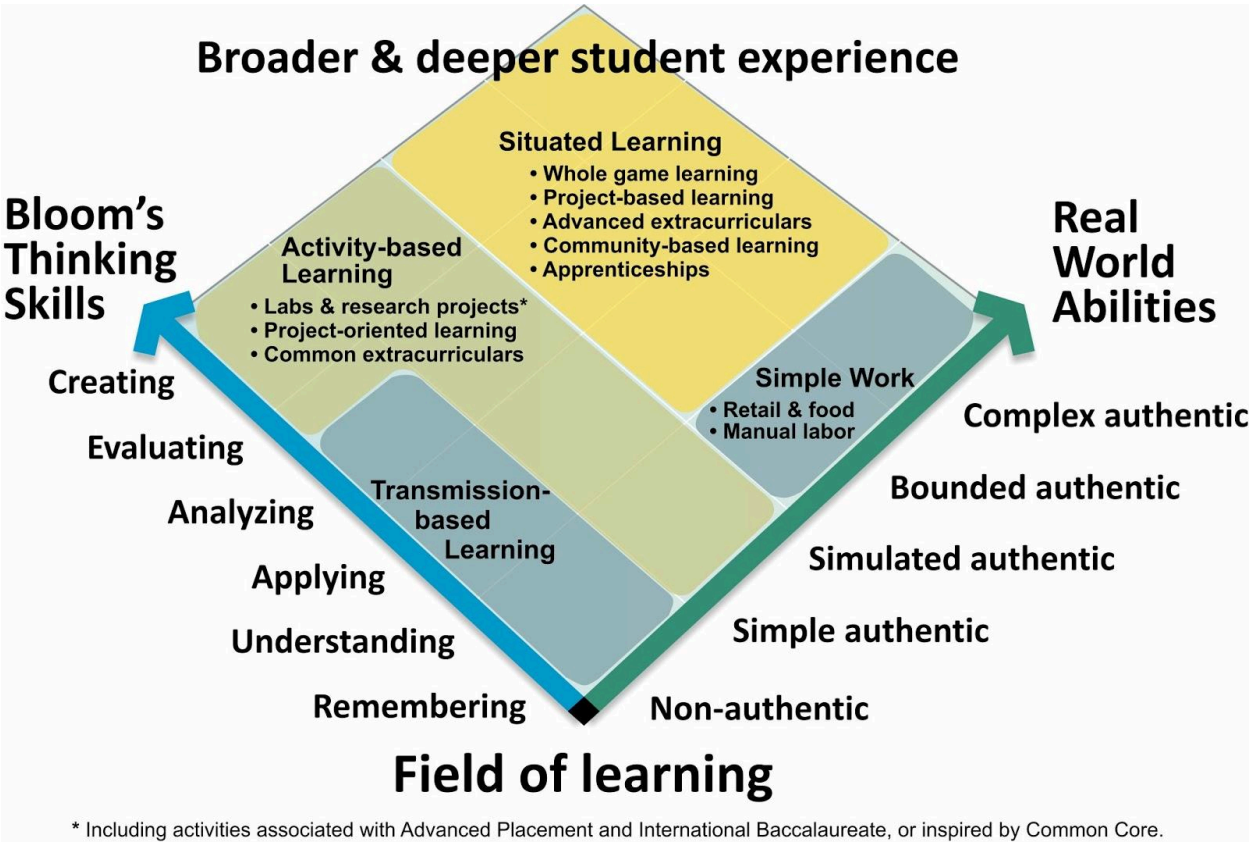
MyWays arenas—Content Knowledge, Creative Know How, Habits of Success, and Wayfinding. The task of assessment within such a learning model is to surface areas of solid progress and others of concerningly insufficient progress while allowing the learning to proceed in a holistic, integrated way—what we referred to in the MyWays Learning Design installment as *whole game learning.*

This matching of learning design and assessment design led to the third construct we've created for your use: a visual way to "plot" your current assessments, using the field of learning we introduced in the *Whole Game Learning* overview.



*Asterisked assessments are: Better classroom & state testing – includes PISA for Schools and Common Core assessments from PARCC and Smarter Balanced; IB – International Baccalaureate; CWRA – College Work & Readiness Assessment, a scenario-and document-based 90-minute assessment; NH PACE – New Hamphire Performance Assessment for Competency Education state testing (waiver); HTH PBL – High Tech High's whole game learning-rich project based learning approach; Big Picture – Big Picture Schools' experiential learning model, which integrates workplace-based learning. The latter two Deeper Learning models use extended, embedded performance-based assessment. For more on all of these, see the MyWays *Next Gen Assessment* overview from Next Generation Learning Challenges.

Most of the tests that states have used for accountability purposes over the past 15 years produce the equivalent, in terms of responding to classroom practice and student experience, of short bunts down the third-base line. Better tests move further out that left-field axis of Bloom's Thinking Skills, but fail to move away from that line, out of non-authentic, traditional on-demand test design toward the more authentic forms of assessment that lie further out the Real World Abilities axis—the first base line. Where do your current assessment strategies tend to lie? How well do they match the plotting of the learning experiences you may have done through the use of the MyWays Learning Design tools? See the comprehensive learning design version of this field of learning graphic, below.



The Exercises and the Tools:

In the MyWays Beta Toolbox, you will find the MyWays Three-Big-Questions Exercise Set. Exercise 3 includes two tools designed for your use in engaging with staff, board, and others around how your school is gauging student progress towards your complete definition of student success—the third Big Question. The exercise is presented in the slide deck; in addition, there are tools provided as separate docs and the *Next Gen Assessment* overview.

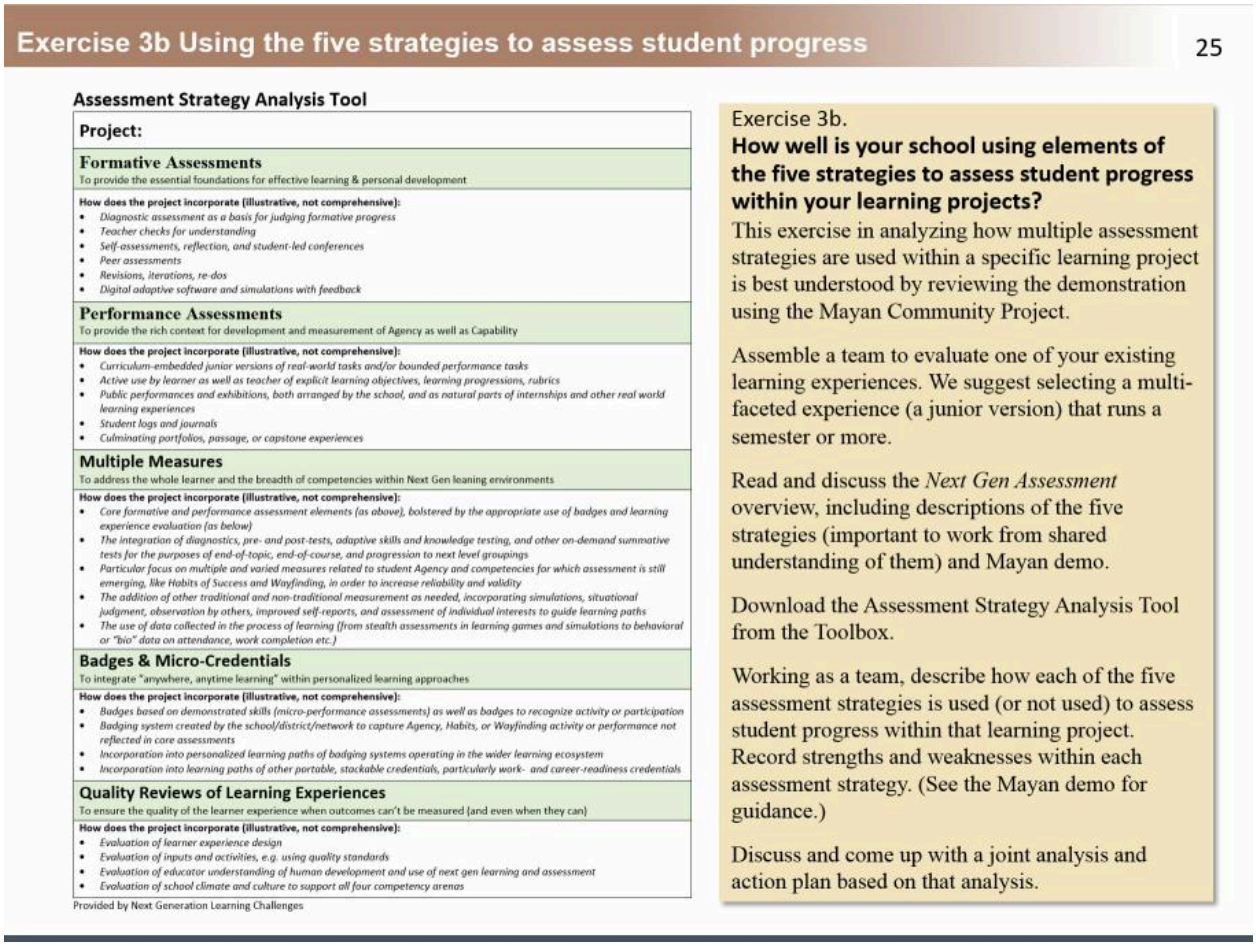
- *Exercise 3a: How well is your school currently employing the five strategies that support next gen assessment, overall?* Use the worksheet tool in the Beta Toolbox, shown below, as a tool to scrutinize your school's full set of assessment strategies and identify opportunities to fill out your approach. A caution: Individual assessments may map directly back to individual competencies in some cases, particularly in Content Knowledge. But in general, educators should resist the temptation to tie all of the competencies to specific assessments. Instead, we encourage you to develop an understanding of when, where, and how your range of assessment strategies might pick up signals of either progress or a concerning level of stasis in any student's development of the competencies -- particularly in Creative Know How and Habits of Success. The worksheet tool provided here should help you engage your staff in understanding which competencies surface through your current set of assessment strategies and which ones need more deliberate attention.

Assessment-Competency Correlation Tool **PROJECT:**

	Formative Assessments	Performance Assessments	Multiple Measures	Badging & Micro-credentialing	Quality Review of Learning Experiences
Content Knowledge • English Core • Math Core • Science, Social Studies, Arts, & Language • Career-related Tech Skills • Interdisciplinary & Global					
Creative Know How • Critical Thinking & Problem-solving • Creativity & Entrepreneurship • Communication & Collaboration • Info, Media & Tech Skills • Practical Life Skills					
Habits of Success • Academic Behaviors • Self-Direction & Perseverance • Positive Mindsets • Learning Strategies • Social Skills & Responsibilities					
Wayfinding Abilities • Surveying College, Career & Life Landscape • Identifying Opportunities & Setting Goals • Developing Personal Roadmaps • Finding Needed Help & Resources • Navigating Stages of the Journey					

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- *Exercise 3b: How well is your school using elements of the five strategies to assess student progress within your learning projects?* This exercise helps you apply the five strategies to your design for a specific project or lesson unit. We are not suggesting that every project needs to incorporate all five strategies, but a richly designed, fully-built project (like the High Tech High Mayan Community project we use as an example) almost certainly would incorporate multiple strategies.



Exercise 3b Using the five strategies to assess student progress

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Assessment Strategy Analysis Tool

Project:

Formative Assessments
To provide the essential foundations for effective learning & personal development

How does the project incorporate (illustrative, not comprehensive):
- *Diagnostic assessment as a basis for judging formative progress*
- *Teacher checks for understanding*
- *Self-assessments, reflection, and student-led conferences*
- *Peer assessments*
- *Revisions, iterations, re-dos*
- *Digital adaptive software and simulations with feedback*

Performance Assessments
To provide the rich context for development and measurement of Agency as well as Capability

How does the project incorporate (illustrative, not comprehensive):
- *Curriculum-embedded junior versions of real-world tasks and/or bounded performance tasks*
- *Active use by learner as well as teacher of explicit learning objectives, learning progressions, rubrics*
- *Public performances and exhibitions, both arranged by the school, and as natural parts of internships and other real world learning experiences*
- *Student logs and journals*
- *Culminating portfolios, passage, or capstone experiences*

Multiple Measures
To address the whole learner and the breadth of competencies within Next Gen leaning environments

How does the project incorporate (illustrative, not comprehensive):
- *Core formative and performance assessment elements (as above), bolstered by the appropriate use of badges and learning experience evaluation (as below)*
- *The integration of diagnostics, pre- and post-tests, adaptive skills and knowledge testing, and other on-demand summative tests for the purposes of end-of-topic, end-of-course, and progression to next level groupings*
- *Particular focus on multiple and varied measures related to student Agency and competencies for which assessment is still emerging, like Habits of Success and Wayfinding, in order to increase reliability and validity*
- *The addition of other traditional and non-traditional measurement as needed, incorporating simulations, situational judgment, observation by others, improved self-reports, and assessment of individual interests to guide learning paths*
- *The use of data collected in the process of learning (from stealth assessments in learning games and simulations to behavioral or "bio" data on attendance, work completion etc.)*

Badges & Micro-Credentials
To integrate "anywhere, anytime learning" within personalized learning approaches

How does the project incorporate (illustrative, not comprehensive):
- *Badges based on demonstrated skills (micro-performance assessments) as well as badges to recognize activity or participation*
- *Badging system created by the school/district/network to capture Agency, Habits, or Wayfinding activity or performance not reflected in core assessments*
- *Incorporation into personalized learning paths of badging systems operating in the wider learning ecosystem*
- *Incorporation into learning paths of other portable, stackable credentials, particularly work- and career-readiness credentials*

Quality Reviews of Learning Experiences
To ensure the quality of the learner experience when outcomes can't be measured (and even when they can)

How does the project incorporate (illustrative, not comprehensive):
- *Evaluation of learner experience design*
- *Evaluation of inputs and activities, e.g. using quality standards*
- *Evaluation of educator understanding of human development and use of next gen learning and assessment*
- *Evaluation of school climate and culture to support all four competency arenas*

Provided by Next Generation Learning Challenges

Exercise 3b.
How well is your school using elements of the five strategies to assess student progress within your learning projects?
This exercise in analyzing how multiple assessment strategies are used within a specific learning project is best understood by reviewing the demonstration using the Mayan Community Project.

Assemble a team to evaluate one of your existing learning experiences. We suggest selecting a multi-faceted experience (a junior version) that runs a semester or more.

Read and discuss the *Next Gen Assessment* overview, including descriptions of the five strategies (important to work from shared understanding of them) and Mayan demo.

Download the Assessment Strategy Analysis Tool from the Toolbox.

Working as a team, describe how each of the five assessment strategies is used (or not used) to assess student progress within that learning project. Record strengths and weaknesses within each assessment strategy. (See the Mayan demo for guidance.)

Discuss and come up with a joint analysis and action plan based on that analysis.

Resources

- MyWays Beta Toolbox - Dropbox folder with the full set of beta-version MyWays tools and resources available to NGLC grantees and friends. These tools should help grantees assess their strategies to measure student growth across the MyWays competencies. The other challenge posed in our third “Big Question,” regarding schools’ strategies in measuring and articulating schoolwide performance on the richer/deeper success definition, is the focus of a new NGLC project funded by the Overdeck Foundation. The 6-8 month research project will scan NGLC grantees’ various strategies and synthesize the results.
- Previous Friday Focus Installments of *Putting MyWays to Work*:
    - 1: Fine-Tuning Your Definition of Student Success

- 2: Learning Design as Rich as Your Definition of Student Success

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OpporCommunity

Visit NGLC's OpporCommunity to learn more about special opportunities curated just for you including:

- **New Grant Opportunity! Assessment for Learning Project.** These grants, offered by The Center for Innovation in Education and NGLC, will support educators to fundamentally rethink the core role(s) that assessment can play to support student attainment of deeper learning. Nearly $2 million is available for 12-15 grants. Applications are due December 10, 2015. Informational webinars will be held on November 4 and 12. See the website for details and send your questions to new NGLC program officer Tony Siddall, tsiddall@educause.edu. Tony is managing NGLC's involvement in the project.

- **The recording and slides from last week's Gooru Schools Collaborative webinar** presented by NGLC grantees Gooru and Leadership Public Schools are now available.

- **Contribute to research on trends and needs in socio-emotional learning and personal success skills in education** as well as an innovative new tool that could have a major impact on how SEL is assessed and delivered. Benefits: Besides helping to impact the future of education, you will receive a summary of the research findings, entered into a drawing to win a new exciting bit of education technology or a deluxe Red Sox ticket package. ***This is not a heavy lift.*** Simply complete this 20-minute survey from Programs in Afterschool Education and Resiliency (PEAR), an initiative of Harvard University and McLean Hospital (which explains the Red Sox package!).

- **If you are heading to iNACOL** and haven't let us know, please do so with a quick email to Dalia Hochman (dhochman@educause.edu) and a response to the NGLC Reception Invitation, which you'll find at this webpage describing all NGLC-related activities at the event. Hope to see you there!

- **XQ SuperSchool:** We have clarified with the **XQ SuperSchool Project** that it would welcome concept proposals from current NGLC grantees. This $50 million grant program is geared around catalyzing five radically new high school designs. NGLC grantees hatching plans to open a new school: you could be a strong contender if your new school represents a conceptual and design leap forward from your current model. Grantees interested in landing a grant to support your current model: you too can compete if your proposal envisions a significant leap forward in the design of your model. The XQ advisors we met with recommend that NGLC grantees submit short concept applications by the project's first deadline, November 15. One additional note: XQ is especially looking for high school designs that incorporate input and/or partners with "fresh perspectives" from outside of traditional public education structures and communities.

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NGLC in the News

To keep abreast of the grantees in the news, be sure to visit "NGLC in the News" on our website and we invite you to sign up for the NGLC e-newsletter. These news features will help you stay in the know!

- **NGLC and Grantees at the White House:** Program Officer Dalia Hochman will represent NGLC, along with a number of our grantees, at a November 10 summit to discuss a forthcoming proposal from President Obama. Stay tuned for details but it will involve challenge grants for new-model STEM-oriented high schools.

- **NGLC at EDUCAUSE Annual Conference:** Tom Vander Ark and Andy Calkins presented on 10 Major Implications of K-12 Reform for Higher Education, October 29 in Indianapolis. More than 7,000 EDUCAUSE members attended the conference, highlighted by a keynote from Daniel Pink. See our joint blog about the topic of the session.

We've built a library for the archived editions of the Friday Focus. If you don't see what you need there, let us know and we will build a Friday Focus to meet your need.

Best,

Andy and the NGLC team