Secondary School Redesign Self-Assessment Tool

Barnett Berry and Cheryl Jones-Walker

About the Center for School and System Redesign

The Center for School and System Redesign at the Learning Policy Institute supports research, practice initiatives, and policy strategies that can transform educational systems to respond to the needs of young people for an equitable and empowering education in our rapidly changing world. This work aims to enable practitioners, policymakers, families, and community organizations to understand and use the science on how young people grow and learn to develop schools and systems that facilitate meaningful learning in a caring community.

This ***school-level*** **redesign tool** was created for you, your colleagues, and local community partners to identify your secondary school's assets, needs, and opportunities to transform teaching and learning goals, structures, and processes. Grounded in the *Redesigning High School: 10 Features for Success* report, this tool is intended for use across a wide range of school redesign models, including California school district networks engaged in the state's secondary school redesign pilot.

The tool, developed primarily for a school-level design team of educators and allied professionals, can guide your inquiry, analysis, and action. Working in teams, your job is to organize data, examples, and insights that highlight strengths and identify gaps within three redesign principles. These features describe essential elements of successful secondary schools redesigned to:

1. create relationship-centered learning environments;
2. provide challenging and engaging instructional design; and
3. build professional capacity for culturally responsive, inquiry-based learning.

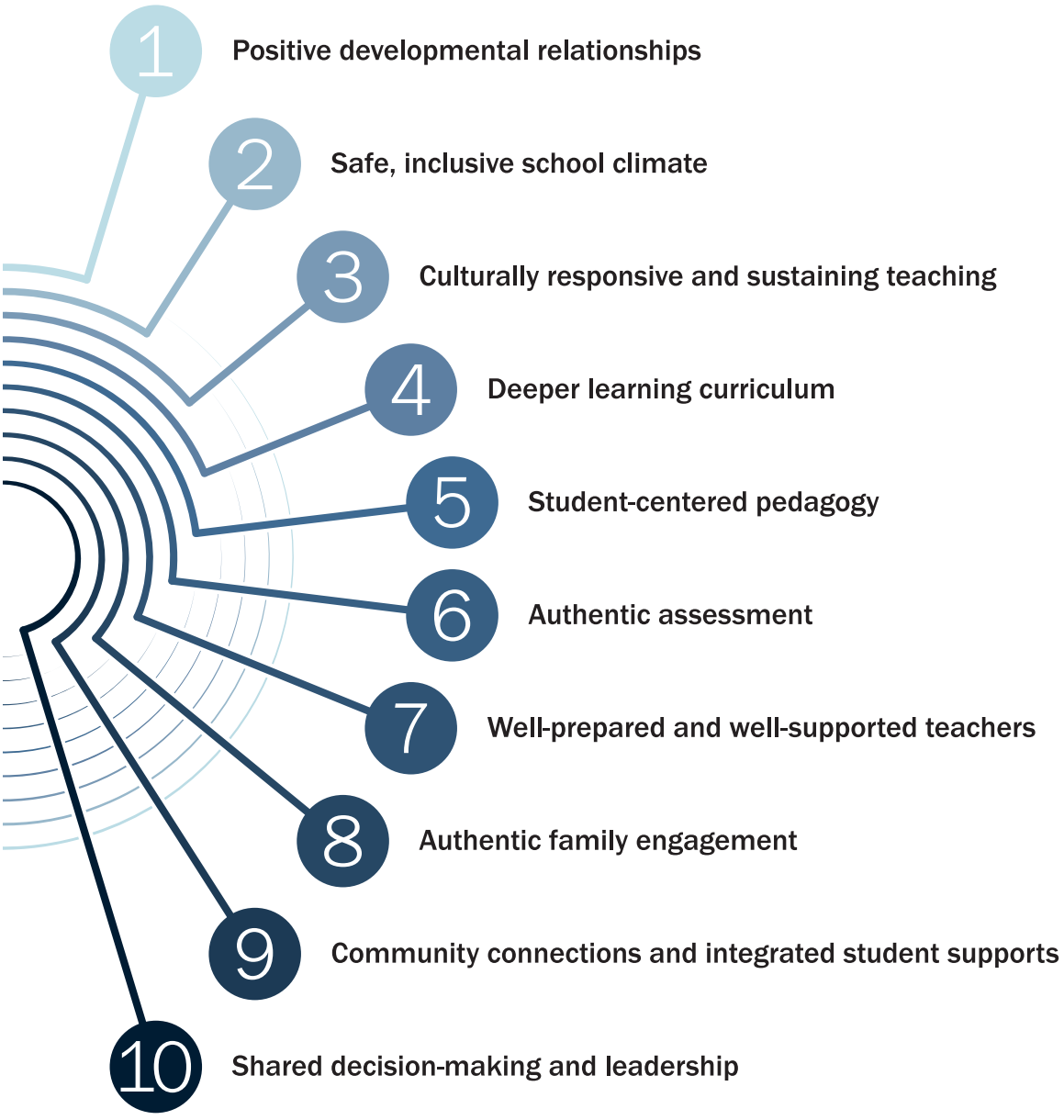
The tool is meant to help your team synthesize data and insights and provide a roadmap for implementing your short- and long-term strategies. It outlines practices and identifies the infrastructure needed to redesign schools in ways that layer practices and policies so that all components speak to one another across all levels of the system. This process is designed to inform professional educators and contribute to a public narrative about how we can transform schools and systems.

Over time, we expect to assemble evidence to support the crowdsourcing of strategies for change, leveraging sharing across systems and within schools. A companion district-level tool is being developed to guide central office leaders and school boards in assessing their capacity and creating the enabling conditions for successful school redesign. A public-facing tool and process, aligned with current

community engagement strategies, will be needed as well to inform and inspire parents and students while also documenting and uplifting their assessments of where their schools are and where they need to be.

Figure 1 indicates 10 evidence-based features of effectively redesigned high schools. Together, these features help create an environment where all students can succeed academically and upon graduation find fulling work or engaging college opportunities. These features are the framework that underlies this school-level self-assessment tool.

Figure 1. 10 Features of Successfully Redesigned Schools



Source: Darling-Hammond, L., Alexander, M., & Hernández, L. E. (2024). *Redesigning high schools: 10 features for success*. Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/533.285

Process for Assessing Assets and Opportunities. The process for reimagining your school begins with an assessment of the current organization, systems, and practices. For each redesign principle, representative "essential elements" (or school-level practices) are identified to help you assess where your school is on the redesign journey. For each element, we ask you to list any assets—e.g., an initiative or program—you already have in place. Next, use the rubric to gauge the extent you would find each element in your school. Then, reflect on the big picture by identifying the evidence or examples you used or gathered to make your rating based on the rubrics offered. Data may include student engagement surveys, focus groups, participation rates in community-based or workplace learning, industry certifications, classroom observations, or assessments.

Redesign Principle 1: Create relationship-centered learning environments

- Ensure every student is well-known and supported.
- Foster positive developmental relationships.
- Advance pupil success and equitable outcomes through student-centered and community-connected learning and personalized student and family supports.

Redesign Principle 2: Provide challenging and engaging instructional design to develop deep knowledge and key competencies

- Deepen content knowledge, dispositions, and durable skills.
- Promote measurable growth in student engagement and learning.
- Document student learning and growth through authentic assessments.

Redesign Principle 3: Build professional capacity for culturally relevant and inquiry-based learning

- Design sustainable structures to maintain impact over time.
- Prepare and support teachers to master culturally responsive and sustaining teaching.
- Cultivate shared leadership.

Redesign Principle 1

Create relationship-centered learning environments. Ensure every student is known and supported to advance pupil success and equitable outcomes through student-centered learning and personalized supports. For more details see the following sections of *Redesigning High School: 10 Features for Success*: Positive Developmental Relationships; Safe, Inclusive School Climate; Authentic Family Engagement; and Community Connections and Integrated Student Supports.

Examples of key school-level practices include the following:

- The school schedule and calendar allow for the time and space needed to support positive developmental relationships—e.g., advisories (including advisory curriculum), teaching teams, looping, and interdisciplinary courses used as a way to personalize instruction and reduce a teacher's pupil load.
- Community circles are used routinely to ensure equality of student voice related to both academic and social-emotional matters.
- Trauma-informed and healing-oriented practices and explicit teaching of empathy are embedded in core curricula to promote individual and collective wellness.
- Varied methods are used to engage parents and families, including student-led conferences and home visits.

Integrated student supports, or wraparound services, bring together school and community-based resources to ensure that students receive the support they need to be able to learn (e.g., mental and physical health services, housing or food assistance) and support rigorous community-connected classroom instruction and expanded learning opportunities.

Assets for Principle 1: Create Relationship-Centered Learning Environments

Essential elements	Structures or practices that reflect this element	Rubric rating, 1–4	Evidence to support your rating
1.1 Students are part of a small learning community with a consistent teaching team that shares a cohort of students.			
1.2 Advisories are protected and consistently implemented through intentional scheduling, curriculum, staffing, and leadership expectations.			
1.3 Students experience restorative practices that build, strengthen, and repair communities while teaching conflict resolution skills.			
1.4 Teachers and counselors know each of their students through connections, data/evidence, and integrated supports, combining academics, attendance, and social-emotional learning (SEL) indicators to guide proactive supports.			
1.5 Families are full partners in building a strong relational culture through student-led conferences, culturally responsive communication, and shared decision-making.			
1.6 Advisories, core content courses, and integrated supports extend to community-based learning (e.g., service learning, civic engagement projects).			
1.7 Core content and integrated supports are combined to support work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships, dual enrollment, and career-connected experiences.			

Rubric for Principle 1: Create Relationship-Centered Learning Environments

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
1.1 Students are part of a small learning community with a consistent teaching team and cohort of students.	Students experience school primarily as a large, impersonal setting. Groupings are unstable, adult responsibility for students is diffuse, and few structures ensure that students are known well over time.	Some students participate in smaller learning communities, grade-level teams, houses, or pathway cohorts, but access is uneven, adult teams are inconsistent, or relationships do not yet extend across multiple years.	Nearly all students are part of a clearly defined small learning community with a stable peer cohort and a consistent team of adults who share responsibility for academic progress, belonging, and support.	Every student is fully embedded in a small learning community that serves as a core organizing structure for teaching, relationships, and support. Adult teams and student cohorts create continuity over multiple years and ensure that students are known, challenged, and well cared for.
1.2 Advisories are protected and consistently implemented through intentional scheduling, curriculum, staffing, and leadership expectations.	Advisory is absent, optional, or functions mainly as homeroom. Students' academic, social-emotional, and postsecondary needs are monitored informally and depend largely on individual adults.	Advisory exists but varies in quality, frequency, staffing, or purpose across grade levels, classrooms, or student groups. Curriculum and expectations are emerging but not yet consistently enacted.	Advisory is scheduled regularly, staffed intentionally, and supported by common curriculum, routines, and leadership expectations. Advisors know students well, communicate with families, and help coordinate academic and personal supports.	Advisory is a core organizing structure of the school's relational culture. Every student has a trusted adult advocate and peer community; advisory is integrated with student goal setting, family communication, restorative practices, postsecondary planning, and evidence of belonging and success.
1.3 Students experience restorative practices that build, strengthen, and repair communities while teaching conflict resolution skills.	Restorative practices are rare or limited to isolated staff. Discipline remains primarily reactive, rule-based, and exclusionary, with little explicit teaching of conflict resolution or repair.	The school has begun using restorative practices, such as circles or mediation, but implementation is uneven across classrooms, grade levels, and/or student groups. Staff and students have limited shared language or training.	Restorative practices are used in most classrooms and common spaces to build community, address conflict, and repair harm. Students are explicitly taught empathy, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and accountability.	Restorative practice is the default schoolwide approach to building relationships, resolving conflict, repairing harm, and sustaining belonging. Students and adults share common routines, language, and responsibility for maintaining a safe, inclusive community.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
1.4 Teachers and counselors know each of their students through connections, data/evidence, and integrated supports, combining academics, attendance, and SEL indicators to guide proactive supports.	Teachers and counselors rely mostly on informal knowledge or isolated data points, such as grades, attendance, or behavior incidents. Student support is reactive, fragmented, and dependent on individual staff initiative.	Staff use some shared data/evidence and support processes, but connection building, academic indicators, attendance patterns, and SEL/well-being information are not yet consistently combined or used across teams.	Teachers, advisors, counselors, and support staff regularly combine relational knowledge with academic, attendance, SEL, and other evidence to identify patterns, coordinate integrated supports, and respond proactively to student needs.	Every student is known through a coherent system that combines trusted adult relationships, student voice, family input, academic evidence, attendance pattern data, SEL/well-being indicators, and integrated supports. Teams use this evidence routinely to anticipate needs, remove barriers, personalize supports, and monitor whether interventions are improving belonging, engagement, and learning.
1.5 Families are full partners in building a strong relational culture through student-led conferences, culturally responsive communication, and shared decision-making.	Family engagement is mostly one-way, episodic, compliance-driven, or crisis-oriented. Families and partners have limited influence on school climate, student supports, or relational practices.	Families participate in some relationship-building efforts, but engagement is inconsistent, uneven across communities, or not yet central to the school's relational culture.	Families are regular partners in strengthening belonging, communication, and student support. The school uses culturally responsive outreach, two-way communication, and shared problem-solving to deepen trust.	Families are trusted co-creators of the school's relational culture. Shared decision-making, culturally responsive communication, and coordinated partnerships ensure that students experience coherent support across school, home, and community.
1.6 Advisories, core content courses, and integrated supports extend to community-based learning, including service learning, civic engagement, and community-connected projects.	Advisories, coursework, and student supports are mostly school-based and disconnected from community-based learning. Community experiences are limited, optional, or available only to some students.	Some advisories, courses, or support structures connect students to community-based learning, but opportunities are uneven, loosely coordinated, or not yet aligned with students' goals and needs.	Advisories inform integrated supports so that academic, social-emotional, and logistical supports are coordinated to allow more students to succeed in classrooms and community-based learning.	Community-based learning is fully woven into the school's relationship-centered design. Advisories, courses, families, community partners, and support teams work together so that every student can access meaningful, safe, culturally responsive, and developmentally rich learning beyond school walls.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
1.7 Core content and integrated supports are combined to support work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships, dual enrollment, and career-connected experiences.	Work-based learning is limited, disconnected from core coursework, and available only to some students. Supports for access (e.g., preparation, transportation, etc.) and follow-through are minimal or informal.	Some students participate in internships, apprenticeships, dual enrollment, or career-connected experiences, but connections to core content are uneven and supports depend on individual staff, programs, or partners.	Core content courses and integrated supports are intentionally coordinated to help students explore interests, prepare for work-based learning, apply academic knowledge, reflect on experiences, and connect learning to postsecondary and career goals. Barriers to participation are actively identified and addressed.	Work-based learning is an equitable and integrated part of the school's instructional and support system. Every student has access to well-supported, career-connected experiences in which core academic learning, advising, counseling, family engagement, employer partnerships, and postsecondary connections reinforce one another.

Redesign Principle 2

Provide challenging and engaging instructional design to develop deep knowledge and key competencies. Deeper knowledge and skills promote measurable growth in student engagement and learning (through authentic assessments). For more details see the following sections of *Redesigning High School: 10 Features for Success*: Deeper Learning Curriculum, Student-Centered Pedagogy, and Authentic Assessment.

Examples of key school-level practices include the following:

- Deeper learning is fostered through inquiry that engages students in answering essential questions and challenges students to understand concepts deeply, find and apply information, and assemble evidence.
- Project-based and interdisciplinary learning explores real-world issues through questions students pursue, resulting in a product or presentation to an authentic audience, including written documentation and often an oral presentation, an exhibit, or a portfolio defense.
- Community service activities and internships provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and future career goals, contribute to the lives of others, and learn how to engage the world outside of home and school.
- Opportunities for feedback and revision provided by teachers support mastery, where work is structured so that students can tackle difficult tasks by iterating toward excellence with continual opportunities for feedback, practice, and revision guided by rubrics that make learning goals clear.
- Performance assessment systems are based on common, schoolwide standards reflected in projects integrated into daily classroom practices using models, demonstrations, and exhibitions to show students the kind of work they will be expected to produce.

Schools that motivate and succeed with learners from diverse backgrounds support intellectually challenging work and focus on preparing all students to meet the higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills demanded by contemporary college and careers. A student-centered pedagogy recognizes that each student is a unique individual who learns in their own way and can thrive when teaching offers multiple pathways for learning.

Assets for Principle 2: Provide Challenging and Engaging Instructional Design That Develops Deep Knowledge and Key Competencies

Essential elements	Structures or practices that reflect this element	Rubric rating, 1–4	Evidence to support your rating
2.1 Teachers build units, lessons, and assessments with knowledge of their students' experiences, interests, learning needs, and cultural contexts.			
2.2 Students have regular opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary, experiential learning in core classes.			
2.3 Students have opportunities to demonstrate mastery of substantive knowledge and its application to their interests and durable skills.			
2.4 Students engage in cycles of practice, feedback, and revision in demonstrating content knowledge and durable skills.			
2.5 Student learning is assessed thoughtfully and consistently through research projects, entrepreneurial challenges, performance tasks, or capstone presentations.			
2.6 Work-based learning experiences are developed with community, postsecondary, and industry partners and are credit-bearing and competency-aligned.			
2.7 Service learning is embedded in the school curriculum through civic engagement and community improvement projects.			

Rubric for Principle 2: Provide Challenging and Engaging Instructional Design That Develops Deep Knowledge and Key Competencies

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
2.1 Teachers build units, lessons, and assessments with knowledge of their students' experiences, interests, learning needs, and cultural contexts.	Instruction is primarily content-driven and recall-oriented, with limited attention to students' experiences, interests, learning needs, or cultural contexts.	Some teachers incorporate student interests, cultural contexts, or learning needs into lessons, but these practices are inconsistent and often added onto traditional instruction.	Teachers commonly design units, lessons, and assessments that connect academic content to students' identities, interests, prior knowledge, learning needs, and real-world contexts.	Student knowledge is central to instructional design schoolwide. Units, lessons, and assessments are culturally responsive, cognitively demanding, personalized, and grounded in students' lived experiences, questions, and aspirations.
2.2 Students have regular opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary, experiential learning in core classes.	Learning is largely confined to single-subject classroom instruction, with few opportunities for students to investigate real-world problems, connect disciplines, or learn through experience.	Some interdisciplinary or experiential learning opportunities exist, often through individual teachers, short-term projects, electives, or special programs. Coherence and access vary.	Students regularly engage in interdisciplinary and experiential learning in core classes. Teachers intentionally connect content areas through inquiry, projects, fieldwork, simulations, community problems, or career-connected tasks.	Interdisciplinary, experiential learning is a defining feature of the instructional program. Students routinely use knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines to investigate meaningful problems, produce public work, and explain the relevance of their learning to families, communities, and partners.
2.3 Students have opportunities to demonstrate mastery of substantive knowledge and its application to their interests and durable skills.	Students are mostly asked to reproduce information or complete procedural tasks. Opportunities to demonstrate deeper understanding, transfer knowledge, or apply learning to meaningful contexts are limited.	Students have some opportunities to apply knowledge to projects, problems, or personal interests, but expectations for mastery, transfer, and real-world application are uneven.	Students regularly demonstrate mastery of substantive knowledge by applying concepts, skills, and evidence to authentic problems, personal interests, and real-world contexts.	Demonstrations of mastery are embedded across the school. Students apply deep content knowledge and durable skills—such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and adaptability—to complex, authentic tasks, with appropriate technology and AI-enabled tools used to support inquiry, creation, reflection, and presentation.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
2.4 Students engage in cycles of practice, feedback, and revision in demonstrating content knowledge and durable skills.	Student work is typically completed as a one-time assignment. Feedback, when provided, is mostly evaluative, grade-focused, or too late to improve learning.	Students have some opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and revise work before final submission, but these cycles vary by teacher, course, or assignment.	Structured cycles of practice, feedback, reflection, and revision are common across core classes. Students use rubrics, exemplars, peer critique, teacher feedback, and self-assessment to improve work.	Practice, feedback, and revision are embedded in the school's instructional and assessment culture. Students, teachers, and families understand feedback as a tool for growth, and students routinely revise work toward clearly defined standards of quality and mastery.
2.5 Student learning is assessed thoughtfully and consistently through research projects, entrepreneurial challenges, performance tasks, or capstone presentations.	Assessment relies primarily on tests, quizzes, worksheets, or recall-based assignments. Students have few opportunities to demonstrate learning through authentic products, performances, or presentations.	Some authentic assessments are used, but expectations, rubrics, quality criteria, and evidence of deeper learning vary across classrooms or programs.	Authentic assessments are common across core classes. Students regularly complete research projects, performance tasks, entrepreneurial challenges, exhibitions, or presentations that assess deeper learning and carry meaningful weight in grades and progress monitoring.	Authentic assessment is schoolwide and coherent. Capstones, portfolios, exhibitions, and performance tasks provide valid evidence of content mastery and durable skills; results inform instruction, student supports, family communication, college admissions, employment readiness, and continuous improvement, with AI-enabled tools used responsibly to support documentation, scoring, synthesis, and reporting.
2.6 Work-based learning experiences are developed with community, postsecondary, and industry partners and are credit-bearing and competency-aligned.	Work-based learning is sporadic, optional, or limited to a small number of students. Experiences are rarely credit-bearing or aligned to competencies, and partnerships depend on individual staff.	Some internships, job shadows, apprenticeships, dual enrollment experiences, or career-connected projects are available and may carry elective credit, but alignment to competencies, standards, and student goals is inconsistent.	Work-based learning is intentionally designed with community, postsecondary, and industry partners. Most experiences include learning plans, defined competencies, student choice, adult support, reflection, and credit-bearing options.	Work-based learning is an equitable and integrated part of the instructional program. All students have access to meaningful, credit-bearing, competency-aligned career pathway experiences, supported by sustained two-way partnerships among educators, counselors, families, postsecondary faculty, and industry professionals.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
2.7 Service learning is embedded in the school curriculum through civic engagement and community improvement projects.	Service activities, if present, are mostly episodic, volunteer-based, or disconnected from academic learning, civic understanding, and community priorities.	Some service learning or civic engagement projects are connected to coursework, but opportunities are uneven and often depend on individual teachers, clubs, or special events.	Service learning is intentionally connected to curriculum in multiple courses or grade levels. Students investigate community issues, work with partners, apply academic knowledge, reflect on impact, and develop civic skills.	Service learning is a coherent, schoolwide pathway for civic learning and community contribution. All students engage in sustained, academically rigorous, culturally responsive projects that address authentic community priorities, strengthen civic agency, and produce evidence of deeper learning through public demonstrations, reflection, and assessment.

Redesign Principle 3

Build professional capacity for culturally responsive, inquiry-based learning. Design sustainable structures to maintain impact over time through well-prepared and well-supported teachers for culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. For more details see the following sections of *Redesigning High School: 10 Features for Success*: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching, Well-Prepared and Well-Supported Teachers, and Shared Decision-Making and Leadership.

Examples of key school-level practices include the following:

- Teachers are recruited and selected for their expertise in facilitating and assessing deeper learning.
- Teachers have skills to build empathy and deep relationships among students that accommodate for their diversity of experiences.
- Teachers are inducted and developed as individuals—and in teams—with skills to teach in heterogenous learning environments.
- Teachers are organized in teams to use their respective expertise and collective knowledge to advance student learning and fortify students' sense of community.
- Teachers have sufficient protected time for authentic collaboration to work with colleagues in and across schools as well as with allied professionals.
- Schools create the collaborative professional structures and incentives that promote the distribution of pedagogical expertise and shared responsibility for key decisions.
- Teachers routinely engage collectively in action research, conducting rigorous inquiry into a question of practice.
- Schools develop distributed leadership across the school community, including parents and students.

Redesigned high schools invest deeply in training, involve teachers in decision-making, and provide teachers with scheduled time and opportunities to create a coherent set of practices and become experts at their craft. Teachers with these opportunities are more effective and more likely to remain in a school for the long run, resulting in improved student achievement. Redesigning schools involves an explicit commitment to culturally responsive and sustaining teaching, which promotes respect for diversity and allows all students' experiences to be understood, appreciated, and connected to the curriculum.

Assets for Principle 3: Build Professional Capacity for Culturally Responsive and Inquiry-Based Learning

Essential elements	Structures or practices that reflect this element	Rubric rating, 1–4	Evidence to support your rating
3.1 Teachers are prepared, recruited, and inducted to enact culturally responsive instruction and practices to facilitate deeper learning.			
3.2 Teachers, in teams, routinely design, test, and refine learning experiences and performance assessments, using evidence from student work.			
3.3 Teachers actively seek and act on student input and interests, validating their identities and cultures in their learning experiences.			
3.4 Leadership structures reinforce teacher collaboration and leadership in shaping relational practices and creating a system of distributed teaching expertise.			
3.5 Teachers have opportunities to share their expertise with administrators and colleagues and design and execute innovations from the classroom and in the community.			
3.6 Teachers have dedicated and protected time to work with families and community partners to strengthen learning strategies and integrated student supports.			
3.7 Teachers are supported to design, supervise, and assess community-connected and work-based learning.			

Rubric for Principle 3: Build Professional Capacity for Culturally Responsive and Inquiry-Based Learning

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
3.1 Teachers are prepared, recruited, and inducted to enact culturally responsive instruction and practices to facilitate deeper learning.	Hiring, induction, and professional learning focus mainly on general teaching responsibilities or compliance requirements. Teachers receive limited preparation in culturally responsive instruction, deeper learning, student-centered pedagogy, or authentic assessment.	Some hiring, induction, or professional learning activities introduce culturally responsive practices and deeper learning, but expectations are uneven and not yet embedded in the school's talent strategy.	Recruitment, hiring, induction, and ongoing professional learning are aligned to the school's vision for culturally responsive, relationship-centered, and deeper learning instruction. Every teacher receives structured support to enact these practices.	The school has a coherent talent development system that prepares, recruits, inducts, mentors, and retains teachers who can design culturally responsive, inquiry-rich, student-centered learning. School leaders know each teachers' strengths, needs, and aspirations and support all teachers to grow as designers of deeper learning, authentic assessment, and equitable student supports.
3.2 Teachers, in teams, routinely design, test, and refine learning experiences and performance assessments, using evidence from student work.	Teachers mostly plan individually. Collaboration, when it occurs, focuses on logistics, pacing, or short-term problem solving rather than shared design, student work, or assessment quality.	Some teacher teams meet to plan lessons, projects, or assessments, but collaboration is inconsistent and evidence from student work is used unevenly.	Teacher teams regularly use protected collaboration time to design, test, and refine learning experiences and performance assessments. Student work, rubrics, feedback, and assessment evidence guide instructional improvement.	Collaborative inquiry is embedded in the school's professional culture. Teacher teams routinely examine student work, calibrate expectations, refine performance tasks, and improve instruction in a system of connected autonomy to strengthen deeper learning outcomes for all students.
3.3 Teachers actively seek and act on student input and interests, validating their identities and cultures in their learning experiences.	Student input is rarely gathered or used to shape instruction. Curriculum and classroom practices provide limited opportunities for students to see their identities, cultures, interests, and questions reflected in learning.	Some teachers use student surveys, conversations, or choice-based assignments to inform instruction, but practices vary by classroom and are not yet part of a shared instructional approach.	Teachers regularly seek student input and use it to shape topics, texts, projects, supports, and demonstrations of learning. Students' identities, cultures, interests, and community experiences are intentionally validated in learning experiences.	Student voice and cultural validation are central to instructional design schoolwide. Students help shape learning questions, projects, assessments, and improvement priorities, and teachers routinely act on student input to strengthen belonging, agency, rigor, and relevance.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
3.4 Leadership structures reinforce teacher collaboration and leadership in shaping relational practices and creating a system of distributed teaching expertise.	Leadership is largely administrator-directed. Teacher collaboration and leadership are informal, limited, or dependent on individual initiative. Relational practices vary across classrooms.	Some teacher leadership roles or collaboration structures exist, but they are unevenly connected to schoolwide goals for relational culture, deeper learning, or instructional improvement.	Leadership structures intentionally support teacher collaboration, shared decision-making, and teacher leadership. Teachers help shape relational practices, instructional priorities, and systems for sharing expertise.	Teachers, counselors, administrators, students, and partners share responsibility for strengthening relational culture, instructional quality, and deeper learning. Teacher expertise is systematically identified, developed, and spread across the school.
3.5 Teachers have opportunities to share their expertise with administrators and colleagues and design and execute innovations from the classroom and in the community.	Leadership is largely administrator-directed. Teacher collaboration and leadership are informal, limited, or dependent on individual initiative. Relational practices vary across classrooms.	Some teacher leadership roles or collaboration structures exist, but they are unevenly connected to schoolwide goals for relational culture, deeper learning, or instructional improvement.	Leadership structures intentionally support teacher collaboration, shared decision-making, and teacher leadership. Teachers help shape relational practices, instructional priorities, and systems for sharing expertise.	Distributed leadership is a defining feature of the school. Teacher expertise is systematically identified, developed, and spread across the school. Every teacher leads in some way.
3.6 Teachers have dedicated and protected time to work with families and community partners to strengthen learning strategies and integrated student supports.	Teachers have little protected time to engage families or community partners. Communication is mostly reactive, individual, or focused on problems after they occur.	Some time or structures exist for family and partner communication, but collaboration is inconsistent and not yet integrated with instructional planning or student support systems.	Teachers have dedicated time and clear routines to collaborate with families, counselors, support staff, and community partners. These relationships inform learning strategies, student supports, and coordinated responses to student needs.	Family and community collaboration is embedded in teachers' professional roles and schedules. Teachers, families, counselors, and partners jointly strengthen instruction, student supports, cultural responsiveness, and access to community-connected learning opportunities.

Key element	1 – Emerging	2 – Developing	3 – Advancing	4 – Excelling
3.7 Teachers are supported to design, supervise, and assess community-connected learning.	Community-connected and work-based learning depend on isolated programs or individual staff. Teachers receive little preparation to design, supervise, or assess learning beyond the classroom.	Some teachers support service learning, civics projects, internships, apprenticeships, dual enrollment, or career-connected experiences, but expectations, supervision, and assessment practices are uneven.	Teachers are prepared and supported to design, supervise, and assess community-connected and work-based learning. Experiences are connected to core content, student interests, defined competencies, reflection, and evidence of learning.	Community-connected and work-based learning are integrated into the school's instructional system. Teaching teams are prepared and supported to work with counselors, families, community partners, postsecondary faculty, and employers in improving meaningful learning beyond school walls.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Carolyne Quintana, Chief Executive Officer at Learning Matters, for her feedback. We also thank Matthew Pilarski and Michele Phillips from The Learning Agenda and members of the RedesignED Network for beta testing this tool and providing valuable feedback.

Funding for the Secondary School Redesign Self-Assessment Tool was provided by the Youth Thriving Through Learning Fund and the Stuart Foundation. Core operating support for the Learning Policy Institute is provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Sandler Foundation, Skyline Foundation, and MacKenzie Scott. We are grateful to them for their generous support. The ideas voiced here are those of the authors and not those of our funders.

Suggested citation: Berry, B., & Jones-Walker, C. (2026). *Secondary school redesign self-assessment tool*. Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/989.859

Document last revised July 14, 2026