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# 1

## *Schools Must Change*

The world we live in has fundamentally changed. Our students have moved into the Information Age. Meanwhile, our high schools continue to operate on the ideas and assumptions from the Industrial Age. As a result, there is a fundamental disconnect between students and the schools they attend.

- The industrial efficiency envisioned for teaching in the early 20th century is not reflected in learning efficiency for students in the 21st century.
- The learning styles of today's digital kids are significantly different than those for whom our high schools were originally designed. They work, think, and learn differently—and our schools were not designed for them.
- Instruction is primarily based on teachers talking in classrooms, textbooks, memorization, and content-based tests; schools are becoming increasingly out of sync with the world around them.
- Schools focus on linear, sequential, left-brain thinking in a world that requires both left- and right-brain capabilities.
- The segregation of skills and tasks that typified the industrial approach is reflected today in our approach to creating schools for the future—and it does not serve us well.

### *What's the definition of insanity?*

*Doing the same thing you've always done, but expecting or wanting or needing completely different results. If we continue to do what we've always done, we will continue to get what we've always got.*

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## *Self-Directed Learning*

Self-directed learning schools provide individualized instruction within a campus context. Their characteristics generally include the following:

- Under the direction of teacher-advisors, students work at their own pace using digital learning guides.
- Teachers support and monitor progress, gathering students for group discussions or work when appropriate.
- Students have access to teachers as needed.
- Both students and teachers have places to work in advisories and learning halls.
- There are no periods during the school day nor semesters during the 12-month year. Learning is self-paced. Schooling is a continuous process.

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## *Cyber Schools*

The cyber school is not a physical place, but a service, available to students anytime, anywhere.

- Students may earn all of their high school credits at the cyber school or use it to complement studies at a local campus.
- Although instruction is entirely digital via the Internet, students are assigned a teacher for every course with whom they have digital and phone communications.
- Instruction is available around the clock all year. Students work at their own pace, starting and completing courses when they wish.
- The school offers a wide range of courses that are updated frequently. Highly qualified teachers are drawn from across the country and specifically trained for digital instruction.

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## *Diverse High Schools*

### *No More Cookie-Cutter High Schools*

In a diverse high school district, most or all of the high schools provide different teaching and learning methods to serve students with varied interests and learning styles.

- Each campus may be different in its teaching methods, course offerings, facilities, and schedule.
- Students and parents select a high school on the basis of their interests and needs. There are no attendance zones.
- Parity among the schools is measured in terms of outcomes for students.
- Over time, the schools change their programs in response to changing needs in the community and to attract students.