create a hub of
Connected Learning

Connected learning is about much more than plugging youth into technology.

It's about forging links between classroom academics, students' interests, and opportunities for youth to engage socially with peers and mentors. It's about empowering students to transition from passive recipients of discrete knowledge into active and engaged learners who discover, connect, invent, and produce – and along the way acquire the higher-order skills they need to thrive in the today's world.

Are you already providing some connected learning experiences? Would you like to implement more?

Use the checklist below as a guide to explore how you can implement connected learning principles and practices into your program design.

SPHERES OF LEARNING

Connected learning knits together three critical contexts for learning.

LEARNING SPHERE	SOME WAYS TO IMPLEMENT
Peer-supported In their everyday exchanges with peers and friends, students are contributing, sharing and giving feedback in inclusive social experiences that are fluid and highly engaging.	Students are given the opportunity to: • Contribute expertise, ideas, and questions. • Share work. • Give feedback to their peers. • Socialize and hang out. • Mess around/play in social context.
Interest-powered When a subject is personally interesting and relevant, learners achieve higher-order learning outcomes.	• The experience is centered on student interest. • Students can form groups to explore a facet of their interest. • Students can "lurk" as they discover new interests. • There are supports for students to develop expertise around their interests. • Student interest is being publicized and celebrated both in and out of the classroom. • Pathways for mastery in an area of interest are made visible for others to see, either within the platform or within connected experiences.

Academically Oriented Learners flourish and realize their potential when they can connect their interests and social engagement to academic studies, civic engagement, and career opportunity.	• Mentors are present and help students to connect their interest/ activity to academic/institutional domains. • Outputs are made visible within the school or classroom that have relevance to the adult world. • Adults (teachers, administrators, and parents) celebrate student participation as academically meaningful and relevant. • The school and/or classroom provide space/opportunity for engagement with interest.

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CORE PROPERTIES

Connected learning incorporates three core properties.

PROPERTY	PROGRAM DESIGN CHECKLIST
Production-centered Digital tools provide opportunities for producing and creating a wide variety of media, knowledge, and cultural content in experimental and active ways.	• Students have access to digital production tools. • There are structures to support remix of others' work and the curation of community work. • Work is visible/discoverable to others within the school/classroom and outside of the school/classroom. • Artifacts are easily exportable.
Shared Purpose Social media and web-based communities provide unprecedented opportunities for cross-generational and cross-cultural learning and connection to unfold and thrive around common goals and interests.	• Activities are organized around projects with a shared goal. • There are opportunities for students to team and compete, either at individual or group levels. • The learning experience supports cross-generational leadership and ownership. • The authority is distributed across student and adult spaces.
Openly Networked Online platforms and digital tools can make learning resources abundant, accessible, and visible across all learner settings.	• Groups are loosely networked. • There are easy ways for groups/students to connect and coordinate action or activity. • There are multiple points of entry and outreach. • The platform aligns with Creative Commons licensing.

Connected learning incorporates four key design principles.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE	PROGRAM DESIGN CHECKLIST
Everyone Can Participate Experiences invite participation and provide many different ways for individuals and groups to contribute.	• All students have a role to play, which allows them to contribute. • Peer-based exchange, such as communication and sharing, is easy and reciprocal. • Diverse set of resources to support teaching and mentorship are available.
Learning Happens by Doing Learning is experimental and part of the pursuit of meaningful activities and projects.	• Students are involved in hands-on inquiry. • Students are being challenged to tinker, explore, hypothesize, and test assumptions. • The learning experience allows students to show understanding in multiple ways. • Support resources are linked to production opportunities and are easy to find and share. • Students have access to mentors who are modeling best practices within the domain.
Challenge is Constant Interest or cultivation of an interest creates both a "need to know" and a "need to share."	• A "need to know" is created by organizing learning around solving complex problems set in engaging contexts. • The design of the challenge creates both a reason and an opportunity for sharing. • A shared interest is being pursued via the challenge. • Students have the opportunity to both team up and compete. • Students are getting feedback on activities in ways that help them "get better" at a task or challenge. • Students have access to models for what differing levels of expertise look like within a domain. For example, novice, apprentice, senior, master levels. • Students are using data as a core resource for learning.
Everything is Interconnected Students are provided with multiple learning contexts for engaging in connected learning—contexts in which they receive immediate feedback on progress, have access to tools for planning and reflection, and are given opportunities for mastery of specialist language and practices.	• The learning experience builds in opportunities for authority and expertise to be shared and made reciprocal among among students, mentors, and teachers. • There is a way for students to share their work, skill, and knowledge with others across networks, groups, and communities. • Students have control over when and with whom they share their work. • Students are allowed to remix and build on the work of others to meet a shared goal. • Teachers and parents are helping students to make connections across contexts and communities.

THE ROLE OF NEW MEDIA

New media amplifies opportunities for connected learning in four key arenas.

ARENA	PROGRAM DESIGN CHECKLIST
Fostering Engagement and Self-Expression	**Interactive, immersive, and personalized technologies:** • Provide responsive feedback. • Support a diversity of learning styles and literacy. • Pace learning according to individual needs.
Increasing Accessibility to Knowledge and Learning Experiences	• Through online search, educational resources, and communities of expertise and interest, students can easily access information and find relationships that support self-directed and interest-driven learning.
Expanding Social Supports for Interests	• Through social media, students can form relationships with peers and caring adults that are centered on interests, expertise, and future opportunity in areas of interest.
Expanding Diversity and Building Capacity	• New media networks empower marginalized and non-institutionalized groups and cultures to have voice, mobilize, organize, and build economic capacity.

connected learning