BUILDING 21
B21 PHILADELPHIA

NETWORK-BASED LEARNING

> " *Our vision for the future of education is one where young and adult learners are connected through a learning network built upon rigorous learning, deep personal relationships, and powerful lived experiences and facilitated by technology.* "
>
> TOM GAFFEY, CHIEF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIST, BUILDING 21

KEY FEATURES:

- ☑ **New School**
- ☑ **Flex and À la Carte Blended Model**
- ☑ **Competency-Based Learning**
- ☑ **Project-Based and Experiential Learning**
- ☑ **Community Partnerships**

AT A GLANCE:

Start Date: Fall 2014
Grades Served: 9-12
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Operator: B21
Operator Type: Nonprofit
School Type: District
Setting: Urban
Students at Start: 150
Students at Capacity: 600

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System: Edmodo, Slate, Google Apps for Education, Drupal

Student Information System: Pearson/StudentNET, Slate

Gradebook: Slate Competency Dashboards

Assessment Tools and Approaches: Performance Tasks, MAP, iLit, Academy of Math, Khan Academy

Digital Content Providers: Khan Academy, Academy of Math, iLit

Hardware: Chromebooks (students), Surface Pro 3 (staff)

The Vision: If you can picture school as a network with an individual learner at the center who is connected to learning through integrated courses, technology, deep personal relationships, and powerful lived experiences, then you can picture Building 21 (B21). As a non-selective neighborhood high school in the School District of Philadelphia, B21's mission is to empower networks of learners to connect with their passions and build agency to impact their world. It's accomplished by providing the support and structure for students to develop the skills and mindsets to design their own learning.

The Academic Model: The mastery-based academic model of B21 provides learning through project-based, passion-based, and online instructional approaches. Students engage directly with real-world learning opportunities both in and out of school.

Students design their own pathway to graduation by demonstrating competencies that cross academic, mindset, and social-emotional learning. A personal advisor helps ensure that students are on track to graduate and to achieve their goals.

Building 21 is organized into studios, workshops, and advisories. Core studios are project-based and enable students to pursue interdisciplinary lines of inquiry in areas such as science and social studies. Choice studios are passion and interest-based and enable students to explore areas of interest while completing real-world projects and connecting learning to life. These authentic opportunities deeply engage students in integrated content, focusing on their individual areas of interest and need.

Blended learning modules and focused skill development are incorporated into workshops. Aligned with Common Core standards, the workshops are targeted at acceleration in math and literacy. While students are grouped heterogeneously in core studios and by interest in choice studios, they are organized by skill level in workshops.

Assessment at B21 is varied and frequent. Diagnostic assessments determine students' current level of competency and a performance assessment exhibition concludes a studio. Student work is assessed using the learning continua and teachers and students receive assessment data through blended learning modules.

To create connections, build a sense of identity, and support personalized pathways, students are grouped into an advisory. Each advisor works with a group of 17 students who will be with that advisor until they graduate. The relationships built in advisories are the foundation of the model.

The Organizational Model: Everyone at B21 is a learner, including staff. Teachers and outside experts from industry and higher

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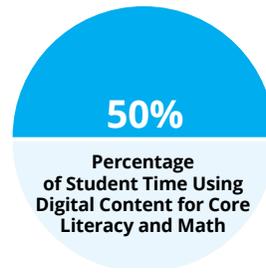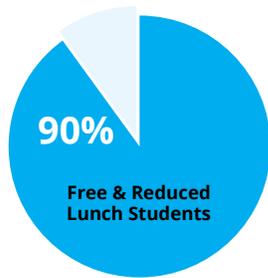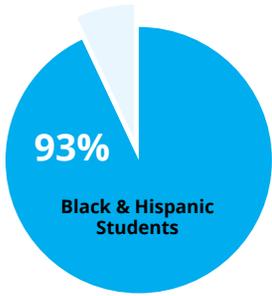
education work together on studio learning experiences with students, enabling a highly fluid integration of content and reorganized roles, time, and tasks for educators. Teacher development focuses on mastery of competencies, collaboration, and continuous learning through inquiry and action that parallels B21 student learning experiences.

At the top level of the model is B21's competency framework, which provides a dashboard for students and advisors to serve as a design constraint for learning pathway design and to track progress toward graduation. A toolkit for the framework was developed in partnership with the Office of New School Models at the School District of Philadelphia.

The Operator: B21, a School Development Partner with the School District of Philadelphia, opened its first school in fall 2014. The Office of New Schools at the district provides leadership and oversight for B21 and other innovative new schools. The district has agreed to work with the B21 team to infuse the lessons learned from its first school into systemic high school reform efforts around personalized learning, blended learning, and proficiency-based pathways. B21 is opening its second school in Allentown in Fall 2015 following the same growth model.

The network approach of B21 lends itself to nimble, flexible growth where instead of creating additional schools, B21 may add learning nodes to its network in partnership with local communities and families in Philadelphia and nationally. The nodes can plug into the competency framework, online content and modules, and community partnerships while providing space for anchor learning communities, core studios, and individual and group workspaces for students and staff. The goal is to reach 10,000 students in five to seven years.

DECOUPLING LEARNING FROM SCHOOL
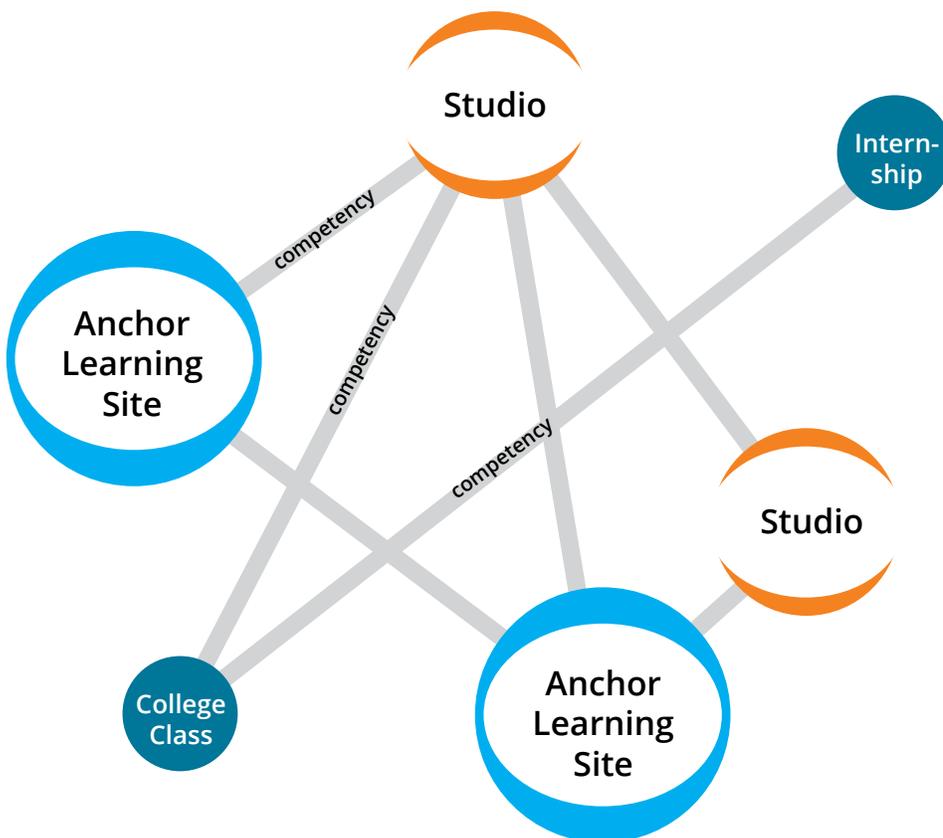
Building 21 seeks to create a network of project-based, passion-driven, and blended learning opportunities. These opportunities are grounded in a competency-based progression system that enables teachers and students to design a wide array of learning opportunities and to produce evidence of mastery.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

School URL: http://ferguson.b-21.org/

Operator URL: http://www.b-21.org/ | Contact: Laura Shubilla, laura@b-21.org

NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES

nextgenlearning.org