



# Reflection Guide for School Leaders

Transformative learning happens when schools cultivate young people's natural curiosity and leverage their abundant passion to pique their interest in answering real-world questions. It happens when students from every background and culture are presented with challenges that have personal resonance, giving each an entry point to complex material and providing them with an opportunity to acquire and practice skills they recognize as critical to their success.

By embedding rigor and purpose deeply into every learning opportunity, educators can deliver transformative learning experiences for all students. Transformative learning experiences make schools more equitable places where every single student has access to deep, meaningful learning, and multiple pathways to success. If we focus our collective efforts on fundamentally changing what is actually happening in classrooms, at the core of school, we can finally bring about deep and broad change. Read more about this in *Making High School Meaningful: A Vision for Transformative Learning Experiences*.

*The following guidance serves as a set of strategies school leaders can leverage to initiate reflection and discussion around the student learning experiences in their building.*

For more practical resources and tools for transforming learning and creating student-centered schools, please visit [www.springpointschools.org/making-high-school-meaningful/](http://www.springpointschools.org/making-high-school-meaningful/).

## Landscape Analysis:

To what extent are transformative learning experiences already happening?  
In what classrooms or parts of the school day are these happening?

### A Student Interviews:

Start with the end users—the students in your buildings. We know that this group is likely to give you the most honest answers so why not begin here? The following are some potential questions to guide these conversations:

- Ⓧ What is the most meaningful assignment you've worked on this year? Tell us about what it entailed and what you accomplished?
- Ⓧ Why was it meaningful to you?
- Ⓧ What did you learn?
- Ⓧ How will you use what you learned in the future?
- Ⓧ Can you give us an example of a time when your learning really connected to who you are as a person and to your community? How often do you have learning experiences like that?
- Ⓧ Do you ever have opportunities to learn from other people, outside of your teachers?

*Note: Be sure to speak to a wide-range of students representing a wide range of backgrounds, skill levels, ages, etc. Additionally, in processes like these, it is important to find students who are succeeding in school and those who might be disengaged or for whom school is not currently working.*

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### B Student Assignment Collection:

Call on five to seven teachers across a range of disciplines, grade-levels, and courses to provide you with a sample of student work produced within the last month. As much as possible, work samples should be more summative in nature—reflecting something that students have devoted an extended amount of time to creating.

Once work samples have been collected, analyze these using excerpts from Springpoint's Transformative Learning Experience Rubric, included below. The rubric contains the criteria and key indicators that we use when designing and evaluating the quality of transformative learning experiences.

## INDICATOR 1: RIGOR

Sub Indicator	Criteria	Rating
<b>Depth &amp; Complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>④ <b>Depth:</b> Learning experiences demand critical thinking, inviting students to be discerning consumers of information (text, media, data, etc.), require them to carefully question and scrutinize information, and empower them to think, problem-solve, and reason for themselves.</li> <li>④ <b>Complexity:</b> Learning experiences are centered around a driving question that lacks an obvious solution or answer.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient
<b>Cognitive Lift</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>④ <b>Student-Centered:</b> Lesson-level learning experiences incorporate opportunities that require students—not teachers—to do the cognitive lift.</li> <li>④ <b>Depth of Thinking:</b> The modalities of each learning experience—such as modeling tasks, labs, research tasks, etc.—invite students to construct and create meaning, as opposed to receiving and reciting information.</li> <li>④ <b>Scaffolded:</b> Scaffolds provided throughout the course of each project do not lower the cognitive lift for students, but rather give them access to complex concepts through appropriate modifications.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient

## INDICATOR 2: PURPOSE

Sub Indicator	Criteria	Rating
<b>Relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>④ <b>Engaging:</b> Learning experiences focus on high-interest topics and questions that are tied to student interests, passions, and identities.</li> <li>④ <b>Community-Based:</b> Students are focused on topics that are connected to themes that affect the various communities students belong to in and outside of school.</li> <li>④ <b>Personally Meaningful:</b> Learning experiences are designed so students can see themselves and their peers in the work; they can find personal applicability within key topics and focus areas.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient
<b>Authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>④ <b>Relevant &amp; Transferable:</b> Learning experiences are purposeful, lending themselves to real-world problem solving and applications that students value.</li> <li>④ <b>Authentic Product:</b> Units require students to create authentic products—such as editorials, podcasts, etc.</li> <li>④ <b>Community Engagement:</b> Learning experiences allow students to engage with and present to authentic audiences of experts, community members, and peers; students receive guidance, coaching, and/or feedback from these audiences.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient

### INDICATOR 3: CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE

Adapted from “Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard” Developed by J. Bryan-Gooden, M. Hester, & L. Q. Peoples Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University.

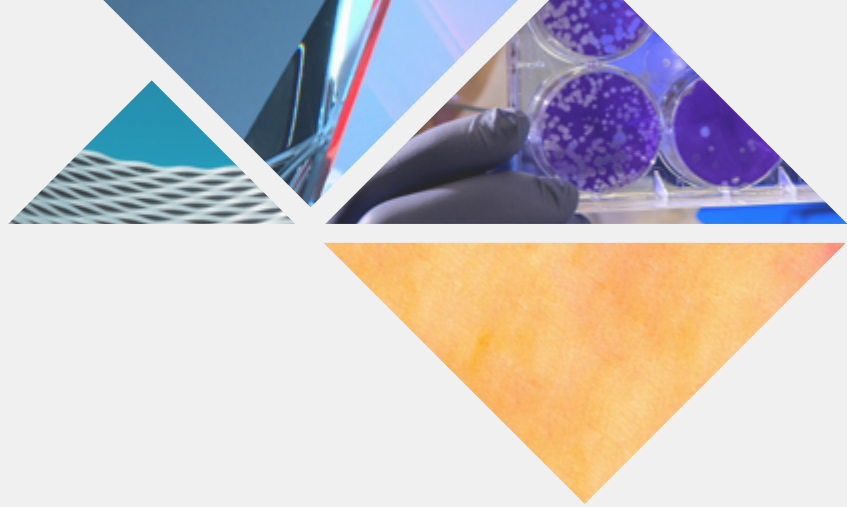
Sub Indicator	Criteria	Rating
<b>Power and Privilege</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓢ <b>Asset-Based:</b> The curriculum communicates an asset-based perspective by representing people of diverse races, classes, genders, abilities, and sexual orientations through their strengths, talents, and knowledge rather than their perceived flaws or deficiencies.</li> <li>Ⓢ <b>Critical Lens:</b> Curriculum and instructional activities promote or provoke critical questions about the societal status quo. They present alternative points of view as equally worthy and challenge the status quo.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient
<b>Multiple Perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓢ <b>Affirming:</b> The curriculum recognizes the validity and integrity of knowledge systems that are present in communities of color, collectivist cultures, matriarchal societies, and non-Christian religions.</li> <li>Ⓢ <b>Inclusive:</b> The curriculum presents different points of view and perspectives on the same event or experience, especially points of view from marginalized people and communities.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient
<b>Values Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓢ <b>Prior Knowledge:</b> Students are given opportunities to contribute their prior knowledge and experience, not just respond to the text and information presented.</li> <li>Ⓢ <b>Validating:</b> Instruction builds a bridge between home and school and seeks to incorporate students' culture and lived experiences.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Approaching <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient

## Step 2

### Reflection and Planning:

After speaking with students and reviewing a range of assignments, the following questions can help guide reflection and next steps.

- Ⓢ What were the trends that emerged?
- Ⓢ Where did you see examples of transformative learning experiences happening?
- Ⓢ What do you think led to this?
- Ⓢ To what extent might this be driven by the school leader? The teacher?
- Ⓢ Where do you see a lack of transformative learning experiences?
- Ⓢ What do you believe might be holding this back (e.g., curriculum, belief in student ability, policies and mandates, etc.)?
- Ⓢ What additional questions does this reflection prompt you to ask?



# Reflection Guide for System Leaders

Transformative learning happens when schools cultivate young people's natural curiosity and leverage their abundant passion to pique their interest in answering real-world questions. It happens when students from every background and culture are presented with challenges that have personal resonance, giving each an entry point to complex material and providing them with an opportunity to acquire and practice skills they recognize as critical to their success.

By embedding rigor and purpose deeply into every learning opportunity, educators can deliver transformative learning experiences for all students. Transformative learning experiences make schools more equitable places where every single student has access to deep, meaningful learning, and multiple pathways to success. If we focus our collective efforts on fundamentally changing what is actually happening in classrooms, at the core of school, we can finally bring about deep and broad change. Read more about this in *Making High School Meaningful: A Vision for Transformative Learning Experiences*.

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### A Student Interviews:

Start with the end users—the students in your buildings. We know that this group is likely to give you the most honest answers so why not begin here?! The following are some potential questions to guide these conversations:

- ⊗ What is the most meaningful assignment you've worked on this year? Tell us about what it entailed and what you accomplished?
  - Why was it meaningful to you?
  - What did you learn?
  - How will you use what you learned in the future?
- ⊗ Can you give us an example of a time when your learning really connected to who you are as a person and to your community? How often do you have learning experiences like that?
- ⊗ Do you ever have opportunities to learn from other people, outside of your teachers?

*Note: Be sure to speak to a wide-range of students representing a wide range of backgrounds, skill levels, ages, etc. Additionally, in processes like these, it is important to find students who are succeeding in school and those who might be disengaged or for whom school is not currently working.*

### B Student Work Collection:

Call on your school-based leaders (e.g., principals, assistant principals, etc.) to send three different samples of student work produced in classrooms that day or that week—the intent is to get a representative and objective snapshot of student work. Analyze these work samples against the following questions:

#### RIGOR: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE TASK...

- ⊗ Require students to perform the cognitive lift themselves, constructing and creating meaning, as opposed to receiving and regurgitating information?
- ⊗ Include an open-ended task and/or a driving question that lacks an obvious solution or answer?
- ⊗ Prompt students to engage in the core thinking of academic disciplines. Are they called upon to take on the role of the critic, the historian, the scientist or the mathematician?

**PURPOSE: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE TASK...**

- ⊗ Pose questions to students on issues they care about and that connect to their interests, identities, and/or real-world problems?
- ⊗ Require that students move their learning beyond the classroom to encounter multiple perspectives and engage with the larger community?
- ⊗ Involve the creation of authentic work products that are presented to real stakeholders to express, persuade, or advocate for a position?

**Step 2**

**Reflection and Planning:**

After speaking with students and reviewing work samples with the above questions in mind, the following can help guide reflection and next steps.

- ⊗ What trends emerged?
- ⊗ Where did you see examples of transformative learning experiences happening?
- ⊗ What do you think led to this?
- ⊗ To what extent might this be driven by the school leader? The teacher?
- ⊗ Where do you see a lack of transformative learning experiences?
- ⊗ What do you believe might be holding this back (e.g., curriculum, belief in student ability, policies and mandates, etc.)?
- ⊗ What additional questions does this reflection prompt you to ask?



# Reflection Guide for Funders

Transformative learning experiences make schools more equitable places where every single student has access to deep, meaningful learning, and multiple pathways to success. If we focus our collective efforts on fundamentally changing what is actually happening in classrooms, at the core of school, we can finally bring about deep and broad change. Read more about this in *Making High School Meaningful: A Vision for Transformative Learning Experiences*.

*The following questions can facilitate reflection and discussion around the extent to which investments are resulting in rigorous and purposeful learning experiences.*

- 1:** To what extent are our investments impacting the instructional core of school and resulting in substantive improvements to what students are doing in classrooms and the quality of the student learning experience overall? What evidence do we have?
- 2:** What metrics do we use to assess our grantees' progress? Does this have an impact on our grantees' ability to create or cultivate transformative learning experiences? Might we consider other measures?
- 3:** Are there places where rigor and purpose show up in our portfolio and the work of our grantees? How might these bright spots serve as learning/demonstration sites for staff and the field? What might we do to support more grantees in their quest to get there?

Reflecting on these questions can prompt discussion of the role philanthropy can play to elevate the focus on the quality of the student learning experience—what students are presented with, what they are asked to do, and how they are required to engage—to truly shift outcomes for young people.