Culture of Inquiry
How do we keep students at the center of instruction and assessment practices while equally valuing and promoting teacher learning? How can schools and districts engage and empower students while energizing teachers and administrators through purposeful professional development and skill building?
Early in the i3 New England Network project, representatives from CSSR and project schools, gathered at the Urban Academy in New York City to participate in the New York Performance Standards Consortium’s moderation study. Consortium schools use this process to review artifacts of student work and ensure that instruction and assessment meet rigorous learning standards, including the use of rubric data to drive instructional improvement. At the end of the day Ann Cook, co-director of the Urban Academy and founder of the Consortium, shared her advice for creating a culture of inquiry in the i3 New England Network: “start with pedagogy and instruction in the classroom!”

A “Culture of Inquiry” is a set of conditions that exist within a school or a district in which the focus of the learning for students and adults is around answering important and compelling questions. The culture of inquiry exists at two levels: with students at the classroom level, and with educators at the school level. In the classroom, it is evident through flexibility in the curriculum as it is driven by student questions rather than a list of content that has be covered. Teaching and learning is co-constructed by both students and teachers, and is motivated by genuine authenticity and questions that both kids and adults want answered. Students are at the center of all learning activities and have the ability to connect their passions with “uncommon” learning tasks. These uncommon learning tasks are self-driven and individually designed to connect with their personal passions and interests, but are assessed against a working rubric that is common across all students working towards demonstration of mastery of core competencies. It is important to note that in a culture of inquiry, students are still held to the established standards or competencies; pursuing those learning outcomes through an inquiry-based process provides a better method for understanding and retaining new knowledge. At the school level, a culture of inquiry promotes purposeful collaboration, instead of siloed practice. Faculty and administrators seek answers to important and relevant questions about their practice using student data in a cycle of inquiry to inform their work. It is a powerful model of authentic learning for both students and adults.

Gregg Sinner, CSSR School Change Coach and chair of the i3 New England Network Performance Assessment Review Board argues that the purpose of creating a culture of inquiry is to “liberate the genius and goodness that exists in all children.” When schools adopt a culture of inquiry, the learning for students and adults is equally significant and powerful. The schools that made the greatest strides towards creating a culture of inquiry over the five-year project have done so through the following three avenues, each of which is elaborated on later in this guide.

- Developing inquiry-based teaching practices in the classroom
- Using a cycle of inquiry as a model for teacher collaboration
- Engaging all stakeholders

DEVELOPING INQUIRY-BASED TEACHING PRACTICES

Inquiry-based instruction cultivates critical habits of mind that transcend any particular discipline. When students experience learning as a process of posing and seeking answers to interesting questions, they also learn how to learn. Inquiry in the classroom expects them to be active agents in their own education, while teaching and reinforcing skills needed for success in our increasingly complex society. This was particularly true in the i3 New England Network as teachers from many different disciplines embraced this approach, and created new levels of engagement for their students. Many educators saw a shift in their role from provider of information, to facilitator of learning. At Pittsfield Middle High School, teacher Jenny Wellington experienced such a shift, and describes it in this video.

The following section includes stories and strategies of successful implementation in four main content areas: Math, English, World Languages, and Social Studies. The lessons contained in these examples can be applied to almost any other content area with a motivated faculty and consistent training and support from leaders with a vision for whole school change.

MAKING STEM COMPELLING

The instructional sequence for STEM instruction in the United States is often introduce, model, practice. Application of learning comes after skill development, and most experience is with word problems that involve following examples from very similar problems demonstrated by the teacher, or rote memorization of processes. Application, in this approach, is often more about following steps and recognizing cues and patterns rather than drawing on a knowledge base to really puzzle through a problem. One major success for the i3 New England Network was broadening the vision of what rigorous inquiry-based STEM instruction and assessment could look like. Powerful practices that helped STEM teachers cultivate inquiry-based teaching in their classrooms included:

1) developing new methods of assessment; 2) teaching through problem solving; 3) promoting classroom discourse and “grit;” and 4) changing the kind of feedback students received.
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While many teachers and schools continue to use unit tests and semester exams to assess fluency and understanding of concepts, most teachers adopted new methods for assessing student performance for applied problem solving. Working collaboratively, teachers developed performance tasks and open-ended problems that required their students to synthesize and apply their learning in novel contexts. Teachers developed rubrics to define the criteria for quality performance on these tasks. The design of these tasks did not necessarily mean starting from scratch; frequently, the inspiration came from a problem or lab in the current textbook, and the challenge was to rewrite it so that it became non-routine. See math teacher, and PAWG member, Caitlin Porpiglia from Nashua (NH) High School North, describe her methods for assessing performance assessment.

STEM teachers also worked on shifting instruction from teaching toward problems to teaching through problem solving. Finding compelling problems to open a unit of study was as important as developing high quality performance tasks—good opening problems “hook” students by engaging them and provoking questions, motivating the need to learn new skills. Direct instruction typically does follow, and includes teacher demonstration and student practice to build fluency. The difference is that the need to learn and practice the skill is motivated by the students’ prior experience with the opening problems, and serves to answer a more compelling question.

Inquiry-based STEM instruction means students are more frequently working in small groups arguing their ideas with each other, testing possibilities, proposing alternate approaches, and helping each other understand the content involved. For many teachers, and students, these shifts caused real discomfort. Students were more at ease following steps and working from a clear pattern or demonstration—a common refrain was “just show me what to do.” Teachers had to rethink their assumptions about successful teaching—resisting the urge to explain too quickly, instead working on coaching students to think things through. In a 2013 TED talk, “Math Class Needs a Makeover,” educator Dan Meyer urges teachers to “be less helpful.” He argues that the practice of providing students with routine problems and easy to follow steps, along with just the right information, deprives students of real problem solving experience and makes them “impatient with irresolution,” and inclined to give up if the answer does not come quickly. Teachers in the i3 New England Network grappled with this impatience and discomfort, and encouraged students to push through that discomfort to new levels of problem solving.
Inquiry-based teaching requires a different kind of feedback for students. The use of rubrics to assess open-ended problem-solving challenged teachers in the i3 New England Network to describe the criteria that defined excellent work, rather than use points to give credit or partial credit. For students, this means better, clearer feedback about their performance, shifting their thinking from “did I get the right answer?” to “was I thinking about the problem in a way that made sense, and how can I improve?” This type of feedback yielded powerful discussions on student progress and was critical to the success of the new systems of assessment and instruction. In this video, a teacher from Nashua (NH) High School North uses a “calibration protocol” with students in his Freshmen Writing class. The protocol itself can be found here. Pay particular attention to the calibration process, which can be used across all disciplines to create better inquiry-based learning opportunities. The Power of a Network Guide offers more insight on the calibration process, including through the i3 New England Network’s Performance Assessment Working Group.

STUDENTS TAKE THE LEAD IN ENGLISH CLASS

Inquiry-based teaching in the English classroom creates conditions for rich discussion of texts, and the opportunity to construct relevance with present-day issues and students’ own sense of self. English teacher Katrina Kennett at Plymouth (MA) South High School uses Ed Cafés in her classroom to facilitate these conversations. Ed Café is a student-led discussion forum where students select topics (related to content) that they want to explore. Students research their topics, prepare discussion questions related to their findings, and lead a conversation with a small group of their classmates who have also chosen to participate in their discussion.

In order for the Ed Café to be successful, Ms. Kennett works with students to build routine structures in which discussions take place. The following description shares the process of a typical class period spent on Ed Café. Before turning the class over to four student leaders, Ms. Kennett typically conducts a brief review of the reading to ensure that everyone understands the content from the day before. The four leaders then announce the topics on which they will lead their discussions that day—there is a general sense of excitement in the class as students decide which discussion to join. Already familiar with the process, students quickly re-arrange the classroom by moving their desks to one of four designated sections.
Each Ed Café has a clear process to follow. The discussion leader first gives a brief overview of the selected research topic as well as the questions they have prepared for the group – who are also “experts” since they’ve all read the text. A discussion ensues and everyone, including the discussion leader, takes notes on any new insight or question the discussion raises for them. During this time, Ms. Kennett moves around and spends a few minutes listening to each group. When she announces that there are 5 minutes left, the discussion leaders begin to wrap up the conversations and ask their colleagues for final thoughts. At the end of the process, each leader presents to the class their topic and a few take-away ideas from their discussion. Ms. Kennett always shares a couple insights that she has from listening to the groups, and suggests that some of them might make good topics for future discussions. At the sound of the bell there are typically unresolved debates that continue into the hallway. This inquiry-based, student-driven process truly motivates and inspires students beyond the classroom bell.

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN WORLD LANGUAGES
Successful implementation of inquiry-based learning strategies in World Languages requires a student-centered classroom where teaching and learning is co-constructed around interesting and level-appropriate questions based on self, and learning activities are immersed in the culture related to the target language. Curriculum design focuses on developing conversation starters rooted in topics that engage and encourage students to talk about self. In an inquiry-based World Languages classroom, teachers move away from large survey units on topics such as food or clothing, and instead work to facilitate meaningful conversations driven by student interest.

At Plymouth South (MA) High School, students in a Spanish language classroom suggested exploring America’s coffee culture by asking, “Does America really run on Dunkin’?” The classroom teacher wasn’t certain if the students wanted to discuss their favorite beverages, describe their dependency on caffeine, or discuss the cultural relevance Dunkin Donuts coffee has in New England. However, with an intriguing question to guide learning, she was able to trigger language exploration within the scope of students’ skills. For example, a new Spanish student would not be able to compare Dunkin Donuts coffee to coffee brewed at home; however, they could list all the drinks they consumed and share which drink was their favorite. They could also list others drinks and brands present in other areas of New England and the United States.
By beginning with a provocative question, and creating flexible lessons in which students drove the inquiry process, the classroom environment often shifts dramatically. Inquiry-based instruction requires teachers to listen carefully to student responses and allow student conversations to evolve based on student interest. As a result, students develop language skills with real conversation tasks, and are far more competent than their peers who can merely describe the contents of their refrigerator.

World Languages teachers in the i3 New England Network were driven to implement inquiry-based learning strategies out of their curiosity about language development and acquisition. Better understanding how humans learn language facilitates the creation of level-appropriate questions. Teachers worked to better understand the proficiency and performance standards outlined by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and found greatest success when their tasks and questions aligned with the language levels detailed by ACTFL. But what does this mean in practice? In the past, teachers often developed the sequence of a lesson or unit based on vocabulary and grammar content. Years of classroom study were predominantly designed on verb tenses and grammatical complexities. By focusing instead on how language is acquired, teachers are utilizing more classroom time to allow lengthy discourse that results in greater conversational competence and comprehension.

**PROBING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING IN SOCIAL STUDIES**

Social Studies lends itself particularly well to the culture of inquiry that can be developed in the classroom. A practice central to Social Studies involves asking compelling questions that demand critical thinking and problem solving related to authentic scenarios. At Kearsarge Regional (NH) High School, American Government teachers have sparked student engagement through the Point of Inquiry [AF1] project. This assignment is introduced to students on the first day of class and they are asked to keep a running list of topics and questions that they have about government as the class progresses. Later in the year, students select a topic of interest from the framework of the structured curriculum in order to create their Point of Inquiry. The Point of Inquiry is a statement or question that drives research and exploration rooted in an area of student interest.
By the end of the project, students will research and write an informative paper, and then present findings in small round table discussions on their selected topic. The Point of Inquiry assignment has created increased levels of engagement among students in the American Government course and has the added benefit of exposing all students to a wide array of contemporary issues during the roundtable discussions that take place as a final element of the assessment process.

Early in the year, social studies teachers begin preparing students to complete the Point of Inquiry project by creating opportunities for students to create compelling questions. Students frequently work in groups to collaboratively generate questions about video segments or pieces of writing they have encountered. The process includes brainstorming ideas and collectively evaluating and improving questions to move away from simple close-ended questions to more dynamic open-ended questions. Such assignments allow students to consider what makes a good question, and in many instances, ultimately drive the selection of their Point of Inquiry topic.

One example of a unit that prepares students for the Point of Inquiry project evaluates whether the United States Government has remained true to the nation’s Constitutional Principles in dealing with the detention and prosecution of enemy combatants at the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Students start by investigating questions that they create regarding the detention and military commissions taking place in Guantanamo Bay. After completing their own research, students engage in a class discussion facilitated by the teacher and ultimately write a position paper in response to the following prompt: Assess the level of success that the United States Government has achieved in staying true to the nation’s Constitutional Principles in creating the military commissions in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Lessons developed using an inquiry approach, such as the Guantanamo assignment, bring a required unit on Constitutional Principles to life with a relevant real world dilemma. Instead of simply memorizing examples of judicial review and checks and balances, students must evaluate how well the government has applied these Principles to the difficult issues confronting the War on Terror and how these Principles should be used in an ever-changing world. As a result, students are better able to participate in our nation’s democracy by considering how they want their representatives to apply the Constitutional Principles to future dilemmas the nation may face.
GETTING STARTED

What can educators do to begin to transition to more inquiry-based teaching practices? Educators must start by gaining a better understanding of the students in their own schools and how best to meet their needs. CSSR coaches regularly facilitate student shadowing, student forums and other culture and climate evaluations to gather information. Training and professional development for both teachers and students were critical to creating the conditions illustrated above. CSSR coaches worked with teachers to understand the guiding principles of inquiry-based teaching, and to learn strategies for implementing them in their content areas through a personalized approach to developing skills and knowledge. For many teachers, a safe entry point was learning to develop strong essential questions and good questioning techniques to drive learning in the classroom. A number of teachers used the Question Formulation Technique from the Right Question Institute (http://rightquestion.org/education/) to jumpstart their work.

In addition, teachers viewed videos of classroom practice, developed and tuned inquiry-based lessons and assessments, and practiced using protocols to facilitate substantive conversations regarding change in practice. Students’ voices were included in all the conversations regarding the transition to inquiry-based teaching. Students provided authentic feedback on their instructional needs and desires, their visions for what inquiry-based teaching practices could look like in their classrooms, and their ideas about what their role could be in the learning process.

TEACHER COLLABORATION & THE CYCLE OF INQUIRY

For schools to adopt a true culture of inquiry, the transformative practices cannot be limited to interactions with students in the classroom. In order for it to become part of the fabric of a school or district, the leadership and faculty must embrace the same facets of inquiry learning as the students. The work of teachers must be 1) to establish the right structures to sustain collaborative practices, and 2) use these structures to engage in a Cycle of Inquiry focused around student data for the purposes of improving teaching and learning and increasing student achievement.
Creating a Professional Learning Community through Collaborative Structures

One of the most basic and powerful ways to create and sustain collaborative structures in schools is to create a faculty of trained professionals that engage with one-another regularly. Their collaboration includes guided discussions and activities to examine student work using vetted calibration or validation protocols. This requires that schools create an environment for purposeful and courageous conversations around professional practice and teacher behaviors. CSSR offers a five-day Collaborative Skills and Practices (CSP) training that is designed to: support the development of a truly collaborative school community; promote reflective practice; and encourage facilitative leadership—with an ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.

Cycle of Inquiry

Collaborative structures provide the right foundation for school teams to engage in a Cycle of Inquiry in which student and other pertinent school or district data are used to answer important and compelling questions brought forth by teachers and administrators. Educators and students in the i3 New England Network used the Cycle of Inquiry to have interdisciplinary conversations focused on specific artifacts of student work that would engage teachers to improve inquiry within the classroom and throughout the entire learning community.

In a Cycle of Inquiry teachers begin by coming together around a key problem of practice. Teachers then gather appropriate data that they analyze using structured protocols to help them develop a better understanding of their problem. From there, they develop a strategy and plan of action to begin addressing the issue. Lastly, teachers analyze new data to see what impact their strategy has had on the problem of practice. Because it is a cycle, the inquiry continues by raising additional questions that build off the original problem of practice, or arise as a result of new strategies.

Collaborative structures, including the Cycle of Inquiry, are an invaluable tool for schools moving towards a culture of inquiry. For such transformational changes to take place, educators must de-privatize their practice as they develop new lessons, calibrate assessment tools, validate summative assessments, and continuously look at student work with their colleagues as part of the data analysis portion of the inquiry cycle.
Getting Started

What can educators and schools do to promote a culture of inquiry? “Shadow students” is the advice that Linda Chick, site coordinator at Manchester West (NH) High School suggests. Principal Chris Motika went on to say, “you have to see the school from the student’s perspective; it is an eye-opener. Let the teachers and students determine what comes next [in your transformational change], but it is critical that any shift in culture starts with them.” In the i3 New England Network, CSSR coaches led faculty conversations to learn from the findings of student shadowing. These conversations led into the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) tasked with addressing the gaps in practice revealed by the shadowing. Coaches provided the PLCs with training on effective collaboration that eventually led to the formal development of the Collaborative Skills and Practices training offered to all thirteen i3 New England Network schools. From there, teachers began using the Cycle of Inquiry to address barriers to full-scale implementation of a culture of inquiry. As critical as it is to begin this transformational change with students, i3 New England Network schools also continuously collaborated with students in the transition to inquiry-based teaching practices and regularly reviewed artifacts of student learning as part of the Cycle of Inquiry.

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

The involvement of school and district leaders was a critical linchpin for those i3 New England Network schools that made significant strides towards building a culture of inquiry. For any change initiative to be successful in schools, administrators have to develop a vision for the work as well as a plan for its implementation. CSSR coaches supported all school leaders (positional leaders, student leaders, instructional leaders and culture change leaders) in understanding and adopting several guiding principles for building a culture of inquiry. CSSR coaches further helped these leaders build their capacity to lead and sustain the work by engaging multiple stakeholders in the change process. The following guiding principles outline CSSR’s vision for the culture of inquiry in i3 New England Network schools:

- **Listen to students and involve them in curricular discussions around learning and teaching.** A culture of inquiry begins with understanding how students in your school learn best and what they need to be career and college ready.
- **Teachers facilitate learning instead of deliver information.** This creates an environment where students feel both empowered and equally responsible for driving the learning in the classroom.
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- **Students are allowed and expected to complete learning anytime, anyplace and at any pace.** Schools are encouraged to evaluate their structures and systems, including classroom and bell schedules, to ensure they align with the goals of “anyplace, anytime learning.” These changes must involve all stakeholders and sometimes challenge local requirements (ie. seat time).

- **Pedagogical changes are driven by students gaining and demonstrating the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to be competent and well-prepared for life after high school.** Inquiry-based learning begins with students asking questions about content, and using the content as an entry point for exploring possible answers to these questions. This process empowers students to take more ownership of the learning while developing the skills with which to do so.

- **Assessments guide and inform teaching so that learning opportunities meet the needs of each student.** Instruction and assessments can be co-constructed by students and teachers to measure and reinforce content knowledge, skills and behaviors needed to be successful.

- **Students and teachers regularly collaborate and look at student work through moderation, calibration and validation.** Both students and teachers learn through a culture of inquiry. School leaders must foster a collaborative culture amongst teachers, including by training them to develop the collaborative skills necessary to sustain the work. More information about moderation, calibration and validation can be found in the Power of a Network section of this guide.

**SUPPORT FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

In order to create lasting change in classroom practice, school and district leaders had to engage stakeholders in the change process. Whether at the beginning of the process or a short time after the work began, a vision for change was articulated by school leaders. Stakeholders were invited to engage with the vision and have open conversations about what implementation would mean for everyone. School leaders also communicated the incentives, resources, and skills needed for the change process, combined with an action plan outlining the steps the school would take to achieve this vision.
This process avoided the “roll-out” phenomenon, in which people feel that something is being done to them, not with them. It’s important to remember that the journey toward change is not a linear one, but that full engagement of those involved enables a school to start where they are and travel where they need to be. The important point is that all of the i3 New England Network schools made substantial progress toward their goals over the five-year period. For some, it took the entire five years, but the slow and steady pace enabled new ideas and practices to fully take root.

Professional development for teachers and students was ongoing, collaborative and embedded in the work of the school. This went beyond workshops and presentations, rather allowing teachers to see and experience different instructional methods, reflect on how those methods might work with their students, and work collaboratively to implement the changes they identified as important to their work. Teachers spent substantial time working collaboratively across the i3 New England Network schools to develop lesson plans and assessments to bring back to their sites, and shared these lessons, assessments and student work with each other in structured sessions. Groups learned from each other, not just from an “expert” in the room. Professional development also focused on shifting beliefs about teaching and learning through courageous conversations that are critical for tackling major change initiatives.

Students, parents, and community members needed to understand the changes, and needed assurance that even if the new learning environment looked different than what they were accustomed to, students would still be prepared for postsecondary life (even better prepared!) In many i3 New England Network schools, leaders created the conditions for teachers and students to take risks, learn from their triumphs and tribulations, and continuously improve their work – all in a supportive environment. These leaders regularly engaged with parents and community members about the changes that were underway.
The following outlines CSSR’s process for facilitating the development of a culture of inquiry in the i3 New England Network schools:

- **Professional development for teachers and students is ongoing, collaborative, and embedded in the work of the school.** Summer Institutes focused not just on learning new techniques, but also on shifting beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers revisited these conversations annually and spent time working with, and learning from, colleagues in other districts. Under the best conditions, this effort was sustained in the daily and weekly practice of the school community, as teachers planned and worked together in their own departments, consciously implementing the changes that they committed to making.

- **Practitioner-based professional development drives the work.** Professional development was led by experienced teachers who are still primarily in the classroom, so participants were able to see examples from practitioners who do (in real schools, with real kids) what they aspire to do. Teachers didn’t just read about or see a presentation about a particular approach; workshops frequently had teachers experience the method firsthand—they tackled open ended math problems, experienced responsive Spanish instruction, grappled with texts, and reflected on their experience as learners. Additionally, teachers spent substantial time working collaboratively to develop lesson plans and assessments to bring back to their sites, and shared these lessons, assessments, and student work with each other in structured sessions. Groups learned from their peers, not just from an “expert” in the room.

- **Teachers learn structures to make collaboration productive.** The use of protocols greatly enhances the work of collaborative groups in several ways. First, the teacher presenting the work articulates the kind of critical feedback they seek. Then, the group has clear supports and structures to keep the conversation focused and moving forward, with an eye toward making the most of the limited time they have together. Guidelines for participation (both for when and how to contribute, and when to listen) help balance the voices at the table and increase the range of perspectives and contributions. Finally, the reflective closing at the end of each protocol invites all participants, not just the presenter, to consider how the work influences their own professional practice.
In these conversations, teachers examine student work samples to align their expectations for quality work, fine-tune assessment tasks and lesson plans, and problem-solve issues of implementation that inevitably arise in the midst of change.

- **School leaders create conditions where teachers and students can take risks.** Clear communication with the entire school community about a common vision of what student centered learning will look like helps everyone to understand and work toward a common goal. Making time for teachers to collaborate with each other strengthens the work. Buffering, where possible, some of the many competing demands experienced in a school helps sustain a focus on what is really important.

- **Teachers have access to resources, models, and support.** Coaching support was built into the school year annually. Additional professional development and coaching were brought in as teachers requested help, and the sessions were designed to tackle the questions teachers most wanted to address. Many schools still use textbooks as a major resource in classes. Teachers in the i3 New England Network needed resources beyond the text, as well as a green light to view the text as a resource, not the curriculum. Teachers do not have to recreate the wheel in each individual school, but can, through their expanded professional network, find resources to help them design high quality student-centered instruction.

**FINAL REFLECTIONS**

Moving towards a culture of inquiry requires time and patience. i3 New England Network schools that were able to make significant progress focused on 1) creating a culture of inquiry focused on meeting the unique needs of their students; 2) helping teachers develop inquiry teaching and assessment practices in the classroom; 3) developing collaborative structures amongst teachers that enabled them to use a cycle of inquiry to explore meaningful questions about real problems of practice, and 4) working with school leaders to understand the guiding principles for the work and
Crafting a vision and action plan for their schools. These four areas can serve as entry points for any school or district to begin the work of shifting towards a culture of inquiry.

Schools who successfully transform into inquiry-based learning environments reap many benefits. Successful i3 New England Network schools saw a marked increase in the levels and types of student engagement. Because much of the learning is driven by student interest and exploration, students inevitably develop a sense of self-efficacy and new attitudes about the classroom. Schools also saw a marked increase in the quality and depth of teacher collaboration. The following are example outcomes from schools participating in the i3 New England Network:

- Anecdotal evidence from faculty, students, parents and community members on improved school culture and climate
- Faculty sought revisions to the bell schedule to better accommodate the inquiry-based teaching practices with which they had become proficient
- Evidence of student voice/choice in instructional and assessment practices

In addition, the independent i3 New England Network evaluator, UCLA Center X has provided evidence of the following in several of the i3 New England Network schools:

- A decrease in class failure rates
- Higher college attendance and graduation rates
- Successful employment after high school
- Higher standardized test scores
- Decrease in school discipline rates (attendance, suspensions, and detention rates)

A culture of inquiry benefits everyone involved. If schools are serious about making this shift, they must develop and communicate a vision for successful implementation and can use the guiding principles above as a road map. They must also remember that developing a culture of inquiry will not happen overnight. It requires a commitment and investment of time and other resources to ensure its sustainability beyond one school/district leader, or one funding cycle. Success, however, will result in students who are better equipped to successfully engage in the world beyond school—an outcome that benefits the entire community.