

# Thank you for raising your hand to help rethink high schools across Rhode Island.

**This work is for everyone: teachers and school leaders, parents and family members, high school students and recent grads, community and business leaders—and you!**

**You and your team can use this three-part guide to navigate XQ's design materials and work together to rethink high school in your community. It will help you engage thoughtfully and creatively with the big challenges of high school redesign.**



## Here's Some Advice to Help You Get Started:

- Turn school design on its head. Start with your big idea, your vision.
- Look at your whole school. Don't just plan for piecemeal change or tinker at the margins.
- Give young people space to be heard, and make sure they're authentically, deeply engaged.
- Build a design team that reflects your entire community.
- Consider how the world is changing for young people and how their education can change to prepare them better for life after high school.
- Recognize that educators need to work differently, too.
- Be prepared to be transformed—no matter where you are now.

Let's reimagine what high school can be for students and your community!



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## START REIMAGINING

**Transforming high schools in your community will require bold thinking, a belief in the possibility of real, substantive change, and a commitment to making sure every single young person has the opportunity to dream big and succeed. So where do you begin?**

### XQ LEARNER GOALS

Start with the ultimate goal: developing XQ Learners—students who are deeply engaged in their own learning and fully prepared for all that the future has to offer. Use these goals as a blueprint for your work as you imagine how deep, rigorous, and interconnected learning really needs to be.

**Read Here:** [bit.ly/2xqlearnergoals](https://bit.ly/2xqlearnergoals)

### XQ DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Ground yourself in the XQ Design Principles, building blocks for the vibrant, engaging high schools your students need and deserve. As you work with your team, consider how you can design a school that embodies all of these principles in a forward-thinking, integrated way.

**Read Here:** [bit.ly/xqdesign-principles](https://bit.ly/xqdesign-principles)

### HOW TO CAST A TEAM

Recruit a great team that reflects the diversity of your school community. For inspiration, check out How to Cast a Great Team in the XQ Design Kit or download a PDF.

**Read Here:** [bit.ly/xqcastateam](https://bit.ly/xqcastateam)

**If you're redesigning an existing school, think strategically about who could be involved.**

**HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:**

- Students, especially those from marginalized communities
- Parents, caregivers, and other family members
- Fabulous teachers with a track record of ensuring that every student learns
- Teacher leaders with a knack for adult learning
- A counselor or youth development expert
- Someone who loves doing research
- A strong, persuasive, fast writer
- An educator from an afterschool program or setting, such as a museum

Recruit people who you're confident will stick with this for the long haul. And remember, you can add people to your team later on as you build momentum.

**On successful teams, students, parents, community members, and educators work together to drive the process.**

**HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:**



### **Crosstown High**

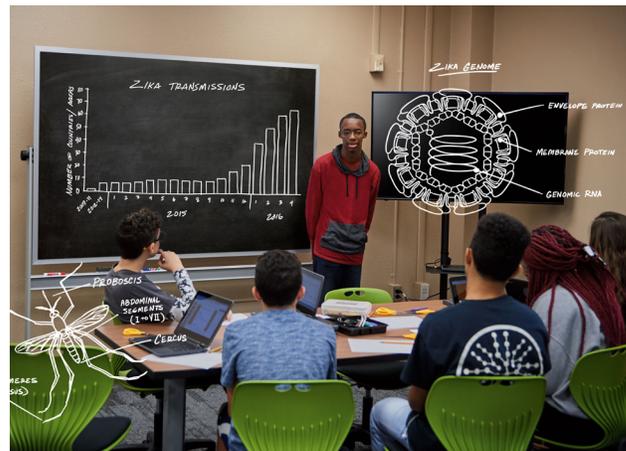
One design team started with a parent who noticed a billboard for the XQ Challenge. She pulled together a 67-person team that worked together to design Crosstown High, a diverse-by-design high school committed to addressing deep segregation in Memphis, Tennessee.

**Learn More:** [bit.ly/xqcrosstownhigh](http://bit.ly/xqcrosstownhigh)

**Hundreds of teams from communities all across the country submitted school designs to the XQ Super School competition.**

**HERE IS WHAT WE LEARNED:**

- Recruit people who will help you generate bold ideas.
- Invite students as designers and show respect for their leadership.
- Include people who can help you build connections between school and community.
- Create a level playing field where all voices are acknowledged equally.
- Encourage a diversity of opinion, and don't agree too soon.
- Be honest about the strengths and challenges faced by your school and your community.
- Listen to one another and believe in yourselves.



### **PSI High**

In Seminole County, Florida, the design team was made up entirely of students, who came together weekly at the district office to create their dream school, advised by the district's director of innovation. The result is PSI High (Problem Solving Incubator), a high school that inspires and grows future innovators.

**Learn More:** [bit.ly/xqpsihigh](http://bit.ly/xqpsihigh)

## Your first team meeting. Who's represented? Who's missing? Is a diverse group of students engaged?

### HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Get to know why you're here, individually and collectively. Really get to know each other as people. Suggested exercise: Ask everyone to share a story about an important moment from their own high school experience.
- Respect the expertise of educators, but make sure students, families, and community members are actively engaged.
- Begin to explore what you are solving for. Ask critical questions:
  1. What's the racial/ethnic and economic composition of the students we serve? How many of them are English language learners or receiving special education services?
  2. How does student performance differ across race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status? What disparities do we see?
  3. How many of our recent graduates entered two- and four-year colleges within a year of graduating? What proportion persist in college? Of those who entered, what proportion had to enroll in remedial English or math courses?
- Make a plan to begin gathering insights from young people and community members.
- Discuss how you can communicate with and engage students, school staff, and the whole community.

## EXPERT SERIES

Here's an easy way to get inspired: Listen to the podcasts in the XQ Expert Series. Each one covers a big topic in school design and features a smart conversation among some of the nation's leading experts in high school transformation. Choose a few to listen to with your team, then come together for your own discussion.

**Read Here:** [bit.ly/xqexpertseries](https://bit.ly/xqexpertseries)

## GET INSPIRED BY YOUTH

To find out what young people really think and feel about high school, go ask them. You'll be inspired by what you hear. We've included a booklet, [How to Tune in to Youth Voice](#), and a set of Youth Voice Cards in the XQ Design Kit to help you get started.

**Read Here:** [bit.ly/xqyouthinspire](https://bit.ly/xqyouthinspire)

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## TIME TO DIVE IN

**The XQ Knowledge Modules are resources for designing a great high school that's right for your community. Each module walks you through a different element of high school design and a step in the school design process. They will help you ground your work in the best thinking, research, and examples.**

The Discover modules come first because that's the place to start. It includes three modules that will help your team learn more about local young people, the challenges they face in the future, and how they learn best.

Once you've completed the Discover modules, you'll be ready to start designing.

Remember: your XQ+RI planning grant application will be assessed based on the depth and outcomes of your Discover process.



### 1. Students in the 21st Century

What do young people need to learn now to succeed in the future? As you read and explore, pay attention to how all young people have fared in your school. Look closely at the experiences of students who are struggling, have poor attendance, or have dropped out. Go out and talk with community members, business owners and employers, and people from local colleges, universities, and career certification programs.

**Read Module Here:** [bit.ly/21stcenturystu](https://bit.ly/21stcenturystu)

#### **Why This Module Is Important:**

To serve students well, we must stop thinking about the either/or between career and college. All students need to be prepared to make their own choices

about the paths that await them in the future.

- Your team needs to understand that new careers require new skills and knowledge. That means building curricula and instructional approaches that prepare students for those new pathways.
- Too many students are already behind when they enter high school. And too many high school graduates require remediation in college. We need to accelerate student learning at every stage, so students get the most out of high school and are truly ready for postsecondary learning.

### **What You and Your Team Can Do:**

Review available data about how your students are doing right now and how your graduates do in college and other postsecondary pathways. Look for disparities between groups of students and think about what you can do to address those gaps.

- Visit colleges and employers and ask what young people need to thrive there. What gaps do they see in how well your graduates are prepared?
- Look for opportunities to connect students with learning experiences that get them outside the school walls, spark their interests, and inspire them to explore possible careers.



## **2. Youth Experience and Aspirations**

Use this module to answer the question, “What can young people teach us about high school?” This is your opportunity to reach out to young people, find out how they experience high school today, and get them involved in the design process. Listen deeply and broadly, so you’re hearing the full panoply of student voices and perspectives. View this work as capacity building for young people. Your act of listening will help them believe in themselves, reflect on their goals and values, and validate that they have a place at the table.

**Read Module Here:** [bit.ly/youthexperiences](https://bit.ly/youthexperiences)

### **Why This Module Is Important:**

- When you put young people at the center of your process, you set the stage for designing a student-centered school. Adults’ aspirations are never enough.
- High school is a time when students build their identities. They need to see the link between learning, their own rich identities, and their goals for future success.
- Listening to young people isn’t a one-time thing. Start authentic conversations now, and build them into every aspect of your school design.

### **What You and Your Team Can Do:**

- Ask local young people where they learn best outside of school. Then go and see what makes those programs and places special. Invite the educators you meet to join your team.
- Make the extra effort to reach, connect with, and build agency among the most marginalized students, ensuring their voices are heard and validated. By doing so, your team will inspire trust in your work and a belief that change is possible.
- Use different methods—interviews, town hall meetings, roundtables—to gather feedback from lots of students. And be sure to include interested students on your team.



## **3. The Science of Adolescent Learning**

Use this module to answer the question, “How do teenagers learn and grow?” Dig into the research and learn why—despite what many have said in the past—high school is not too late to intervene in a young person’s learning trajectory. The adolescent brain is still growing, synapses are forming, and student learning gains can be much greater than previously thought. These findings have profound implications for how high schools operate as well as for our expectations of what students can achieve.

**Read Module Here:** [bit.ly/adolearning](https://bit.ly/adolearning)

### **Why This Module Is Important:**

- Adolescence is prime time for learning, as students shape their identities and consider who they are and who they want to be. Your team can build opportunities for students to develop positive identities into every aspect of your school.
- Intelligence is not fixed. Students with a growth mindset understand that their talents can be developed through perseverance and hard work.
- To reach their full potential, students need to build on a foundation of skills and knowledge. That's why it's so important for students to acquire fundamental knowledge and develop essential skills in their high school years.

### **What You and Your Team Can Do:**

- Discuss your insights about adolescent learning and what they mean for your school design. How might they affect school culture, assessments, instruction, technology, even class schedules?
- Explore what you might do to embed youth development principles into the daily operations of your school.
- Talk with local experts about adolescent learning and youth development. Get insights about student motivation from psychologists, after-school educators, and others who work with young people.

Your team's engagement with the three Discover Knowledge Modules will not only prepare you for your XQ+RI planning grant application, but also for the future direction of your high school community. You're also welcome to explore the other 10 XQ Knowledge Modules.

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## WHAT'S NEXT?

**Your XQ+RI Challenge planning grant application will include questions about your overall vision for high school redesign in your community and on the work you do on the three Discover modules.**

**Details and updates are available at:**

[www.ride.ri.gov/xqri](http://www.ride.ri.gov/xqri)

**Applications are due:** May 2019

**For support or questions, please contact:**

XQ+RI@ride.ri.gov.



### **Don't Have Your Design Kit Yet?**

We can fix that! XQ will mail a kit with materials for your team directly to you.

**Order One Here:** [bit.ly/xqrhodeisland](http://bit.ly/xqrhodeisland)