XQ Super School Project

http://xqsuperschool.org/about

Application Submission
Concept, Discovery and Design Phases
Prepared for the Community of Los Altos, CA
Prepared by Team Norris / myschool
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CONCEPT

Super School Concept

Our super school will be called:
What is the "working" name of your high school?

myschool

A bold and compelling idea will be at the center of our school:
What is your idea, and why does it have the potential to transform high school learning?

myschool: Placing Each Student at the Center of Their Own Educational Experience.

By placing each student at the center of their own educational experience, students can grow, transform and become of value not only to themselves, but to others as well, and ultimately become independent, innovative and productive citizens of the 21st century.

This idea will force the following paradigm shifts in high school learning: from the military model toward personal empowerment and mastery, from monopoly toward market, from rote learning toward cognition, from bureaucratic toward entrepreneurial and from mass production toward mass productivity. myschool exists to offer a different type of education for a different type of citizen: one who is environmentally aware with a holistic perspective of self, community and world, equipped to solve unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges.

To ensure that our school truly serves the needs of our community, we plan to get input from young people by:
How will you find out what young people think about their school experiences and their future?

myschool will find out what young people think about their school experiences and their future by interpreting themes and trends from three sources: 1) The XQ Youth Voice Cards; 2) Survey results from: Young People’s Confidence in School, Community, and the Future: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It; 3) Survey results from: Los Altos High School in Partnership with Stanford University Surveys Students About Feelings on School, Home Experiences, Extracurricular and Paid Activities, School Culture, Stress and Feelings About the Future.

To get insights into how we can prepare our students for postsecondary education and the future of work, we plan to:
How will you get input from educators, employers, higher education, and other constituencies about the knowledge and competencies students need?
To get insights into how we can prepare our students for postsecondary education and the future of work, myschool plans to: 1) Reach out to educators from the local community; 2) Analyze local educational programs for opportunity gaps; 3) Reach out to a fellow UCSB graduate who is now Microsoft’s Senior Director of Environmental Sustainability; 4) Analyze passages and statistics from an article by David Marshall (Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts at UCSB) regarding the practical value of studying the arts and humanities and how they complement the skills business leaders and employers want in new employees (contrary to warnings that an arts or humanities major will lead to financial insecurity, low salary and job dissatisfaction); 5) Analyze passages from, "Reinventing Education - Entrepreneurship in Americas Public Schools," by Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., former Chairman and CEO of IBM; 6) Read about the science of adolescent learning and what constitutes deeper learning skills on the XQ website.

Our school will also build on the inspiring examples, research, and ideas of others: What 2-3 resources, from the XQ website or elsewhere, would you encourage everyone in your community to read/watch, and why?

1) "Essential Education - Drawing Forth the Golden Child," by Gary Bacon, Ph.D., 1992 California Teacher of the Year finalist. An opportunity gap has existed in Los Altos, CA ever since 2002 when the Learning Community, a Los Altos High program focused on identity formation and personalized education, was closed due to budget cuts after 30 successful years. "Essential Education" characterizes the early Learning Community experience. This book presents a blend of educational theory, anecdotal experiences and personal insights that influenced the development of the program and profoundly affected the lives of its students. Gary Bacon created the program in collaboration with a group of students, parents and other teachers in the 1970s.

2) "Reinventing Education - Entrepreneurship in Americas Public Schools," by Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., former Chairman and CEO of IBM. The Next Century Schools program was launched by the RJR Nabisco Foundation to fund bold ideas for fundamental change in public education. According to the book, "The central problem for American public schools is that they have not been forced to continuously adapt themselves to the changes in their students and the demands of society and the economy. Operating outside the market, they have been insulated from the necessity to change." This is the landmark book about the Next Century Schools program and the schools that have participated.

3) "myschool: Meeting Critical Success Factors and Delivering Value for the Future of Education," by Scott Norris (http://www.scottnorrisartstudio.com/scottnorrisartstudio/About_Scott_files/myschoolTHREE.pdf). This article, the third in a series of four, outlines the critical success factors that schools must meet in order to deliver value in the future. All the critical success factors discussed in this article, however, ultimately hinge on, and are essentially meaningless without, placing each student at the center of their own educational experience. For then, and only then, can each student grow,
transform, and be of value not only to themselves, but to others as well, and, ultimately, become a productive member of the human community.

All the elements of our school will come together in powerful learning experiences for students:
Describe 4-6 core experiences that exemplify what it will mean to be a learner at your school, and especially how students will be encouraged to take ownership of their own learning.

1) Innovative Student-Centered Instructional Strategies: Teachers will act as learning coaches or managers thereby allowing students to be placed in the center of their own educational experience. In each content area, when applicable, students will create their own personalized program of study from a choice of units and will work with the instructor to create a proposal outlining the specific lessons to be completed in each unit and the specific time frame for its completion. When applicable, students will have the option of studying a unit either comprehensively (more topics covered with less depth) or intensely (fewer topics with more depth). Students will have the opportunity to create their own individualized projects with the assistance of the teacher. For subjects such as math, innovative web sites such as khanacademy.org will be used.

2) Relevant and Flexible Curriculum: The real world will be incorporated into all instructional areas so that students perceive the relevance of what is taught. A team of students will be organized to confer with teachers on a regular basis in order to review and give input on curriculum and policies. Content areas will expose students to many different cultures and value orientations so they will be prepared for a multicultural world and so students from various backgrounds can seek out and form a personal connection with what they are learning (i.e. resources will be made available on history as written or told by different cultural perspectives and on the many important contributions made by people from various cultures to certain areas of study). The boundaries between subject areas will be blurred in order to demonstrate the interrelationships between content areas by having units contain lessons, when applicable, drawn from other subject areas to reveal that knowledge is ultimately interdisciplinary. New and exciting EdTech innovations such as iTunes U will be used for customizing curriculum, delivering coursework to students and assessing learning.

3) Flexible Use of Time: The normal period system will be reworked to benefit teachers as well as students. Teachers will be allowed to research current events, collaborate and brainstorm with other teachers, work on new instructional materials, meet with individual students and network among the community and with local businesses. Students will be able to spend more uninterrupted time engaged in concentrated work on individual or small group projects or working on content area proposals with teachers, etc. (This flexible use of time is in direct response (as discussed in the October, 2013 article, "myschool: Forcing Paradigm Shifts in Education Delivery") to the current military paradigm in schools today in which students are required to attend each
class for a determined amount of time – an obvious waste of time which is inherently inefficient, counterproductive and not cost-effective.)

4) A Safe (Both Academically as Well as Personally) and Personalized Environment: The innovative student-centered instructional strategies and the flexible use of time will allow increased amounts of time for teachers to spend with each student on a personal, one-on-one basis, both academically and as individuals. Students will be supported by everyone (teachers, fellow students, administrators and parents) in all endeavors.

With these learning experiences firmly in place, myschool will reinforce the idea that it is okay for students to follow their own chosen interests and coursework regardless of occupational pressure or industry trends, prepare students to be engaged citizens in our global society and bring out the joy of learning by making students feel safe and supported to experiment with ideas without fear of failing or making mistakes.

The additional expertise and/or people we need are:
What other experts or community resources will you need as team members, advisors, or supporters?

Resources are needed in all areas for implementation of the concept. While reaching out to numerous high technology companies in Silicon Valley, myschool will also take advantage of community-based networking and partnership opportunities for assistance designing and planning the school. For example, the Silicon Valley Education Foundation (SVEF) offers after-school programs and support to educators and students, works with school districts to promote best practices and policies and places EdTech and other resources into classrooms. SVEFs main objective is to make Silicon Valley #1 in high school graduates academically prepared to complete post-secondary education.
DISCOVER

Students in the 21st Century

Success in today’s world requires a whole new set of skills. High school should be a place where young people have an equal opportunity to develop skills that make them ready for the future.

Application Questions

What are your top three insights about the challenges facing your prospective students in the 21st century, both globally and in your community?

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, data charts, or other pieces of evidence you can share with your community to illustrate your insights and why they are important.

The community of Los Altos, California has some very high achieving students. Sometimes such achievement can come at great cost. A survey of 1,400 Los Altos High students revealed that 57 percent said they felt burned out often or even daily. (Exhibit 1.) This statistic, plus comments made by counselors and students about the culture of stress at the school, reveal three insights about the challenges facing prospective students. 1) Develop a Balanced Skill Set: Much of the culture of stress comes from competition for colleges (i.e. striving for stellar GPAs, competing for scarce scholarships, participating in extracurricular activities) possibly at the expense of developing deeper learning skills. A former AP English teacher from Los Altos High told me, "Although ... loudly criticized by parents who believe in the memorization model ... successful business & CEO-types ... want their new employees to use more self-direction & creativity in their work." Ninety-five percent of business leaders and employers agree their company made it a priority to hire people "with the intellectual and interpersonal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace." (Exhibit 2.) 2) Develop an Inward Focus: Students need to become the center of their own educational experience. The culture of stress is forcing some to prove their value to others before knowing their own value as individuals (i.e. identity formation). An opportunity gap has existed ever since 2002 when the Learning Community, a Los Altos High program focused on identity formation and personalized education, was closed due to budget cuts after 30 successful years. 3) Develop an Outward, Environmental Focus: Microsoft’s Senior Director of Environmental Sustainability told me that students "need to spend time outdoors in nature to better understand our relationship with nature and the importance of protecting it." (Exhibit 3.)
Percent of Los Altos High School students who said they felt burned out often or even daily.

- Survey of 1,400 LAHS students in partnership with Stanford University asking about feelings on their school and home experiences, extracurricular and paid activities, school culture, stress and how they felt about the future.
Percent of business leaders and employers who agree that their company made it a priority to hire people "with the intellectual and interpersonal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace."

- UCSB Dean of Humanities & Fine Arts

93% agreed that a candidate’s "demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems" is more important than his or her undergraduate major.
Microsoft's Senior Director of Environmental Sustainability:

"[Students] need to spend time outdoors in nature to better understand our relationship with nature and the importance of protecting it."
Youth Experience & Aspirations

How will you engage young people in the co-creation process for your school? Student perspectives must be a key component in your research as you build your school — after all, they’re the ones you’re designing for.

Application Questions

What are your top three insights from young people about how they experience school and learning in their lives, about how they see their education and career opportunities, and about your role in preparing them for the future?

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, data charts, or other pieces of evidence that illustrate what you’ve learned.

Youth Voices. (Exhibit 4.) Insight 1: Schools of the future - Young people revealed the following about school and learning: there is too much emphasis on grades versus individual abilities; they want more group discussions and project-based work; they want EdTech; they want to be taught how to learn and adapt to new situations; they want more choice; they are just memorizing for tests at the expense of the joy of learning; they want to be challenged to think; they want to be empowered and inspired; they are positive about their aspirations, but observe a school / life / work skill disconnect; they appear confident in their ability to succeed, but less confident in social institutions or their ability to influence them. Since youth of today will inherit unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges schools of the future need to do two things: reveal the connection between school and life outside of school, and make young people feel empowered, inspired and included, showing them they can influence the world around them. (Exhibit 5.) Insight 2: College Stress - Students are fighting for spots in college. The University of California system has more out-of-state and international applicants, as well as more competitive in-state applicants. Students getting into UC often have at least a 3.8 GPA and excellent SAT or ACT scores. As a result, students are adding state schools to their lists which adds additional time and stress. Scholarship opportunities once available are dwindling. Some students are stressed because they don't want to burden their parents with college debt. Insight 3: Over-committed - Students end up so over-committed they reach their stress limit, "hit the wall" or get physically ill. One local school is working with a group that collects data on student well-being, stress and resiliency. (Exhibit 6.)
focus on my abilities   more group discussions
teach me how to learn & adapt to new situations

Youth Voices

where is the joy of learning?    let me choose
fight for college    i'm just memorizing for tests
EdTech    over-committed    empower me    SAT
3.8 GPA    school / life / work skill disconnect
i know where i want to go    help me get there
inspire me    social distrust    hit the wall

can i change the world?    challenge success
listen to me    competition    college debt
stress    i can succeed    challenge me to think

Exhibit 4
Since youth of today will inherit unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges, schools of the future need to do two things: reveal the connection between school and life outside of school, and make young people feel empowered, inspired and included, showing them they can influence the world around them.
Over-committed

Students end up so over-committed they reach their stress limit, "hit the wall" or get physically ill. One local school is working with a group that collects data on student well-being, stress and resiliency.
The Science of Adolescent Learning

Recent scientific advances provide new insights on how adolescents learn. How should we adapt teaching methods to capitalize on the ways young people absorb and engage with information?

Application Questions

What are your top three insights about how young people learn — the insights you’re most passionate about bringing to life in your school?

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other pieces of evidence that have informed your thinking and give you confidence that your school can enrich young people’s learning.

1) Connect: According to Gary Bacon, founder of the Learning Community, a Los Altos High program spanning 30 years, "[When] we were developing the proposal for the Learning Community ... we placed a high value on the principle that learning was most effective when the learner found a personal connection with, or personal meaning associated to, the learning act." (Exhibit 7.) This connection is supported by the science of adolescent learning: "When you push young people to think deeply, make connections, and develop higher-order thinking skills, they’re not just adding to what they know—they’re building the fundamental capacity of their brains." 2) Support: Students must feel safe to experiment with ideas without fear of failing or making mistakes. Students must be supported by everyone ... in all endeavors. (Exhibit 8.) As Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman reveal in, "In Search of Excellence," "Tolerance for failure is a very specific part of the excellent company culture." In other words, making mistakes is part of the learning process. XQ says similarly, "First, we need to make sure that our students are developing the foundational skills required to move on to higher levels of learning; then, we must provide them with opportunities to test out their skills with demanding content. The repetition of these two steps throughout a young person’s learning journey across disciplines is the most effective way to engage their brains." 3) Inspire: The pressure students feel to attend college runs counter to what they need from a good learning environment, which according to XQ, "acknowledges that the primary mandate of young people is identity formation, and provides them with opportunities to safely envision themselves as the adults they want to become." Microsoft’s Senior Director of Environmental Sustainability says, "[Students] need to be inspired to achieve advanced degrees." (Exhibit 9.)
"[When] we were developing the proposal for the Learning Community ... we placed a high value on the principle that learning was most effective when the learner found a personal connection with, or personal meaning associated to, the learning act."

- Gary Bacon, Ph.D., 1992 California Teacher of the Year finalist, founder of the Learning Community and author of, "Essential Education - Drawing Forth the Golden Child"
Support

"Students must feel safe to experiment with ideas without fear of failing or making mistakes. Students must be supported by everyone (teachers, fellow students, administrators and parents) in all endeavors."

- "myschool: Meeting Critical Success Factors and Delivering Value for the Future of Education"
"[Students] need to be inspired to achieve advanced degrees."

- Microsoft's Senior Director of Environmental Sustainability
DESIGN

School Mission & Culture

What mission, purpose, and core values will animate and unify your school? Consider how these might build the engagement of students and adults, rally the support of your community, and drive the development of your school.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to how you might communicate your mission to others, including prospective students, teachers, and parents.

Mission: To place each student at the center of their own educational experience. (Exhibit 10.) Our mission will allow students to grow, transform and become of value not only to themselves, but to others as well, and ultimately become independent, innovative and productive citizens of the 21st century. Our mission will force the following shifts in high school learning: from the military model toward personal empowerment and mastery, from monopoly toward market, from rote learning toward cognition, from bureaucratic toward entrepreneurial and from mass production toward mass productivity. Purpose: We exist to offer a different type of education for a different type of citizen: one who is environmentally aware with a holistic perspective of self, community and world, equipped to solve unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges. (Exhibit 11.) Core Values: The myschool culture will be based on three core values (Connect, Support and Inspire) and will be the standards for the myschool community. (Exhibit 12.) Curriculum & Instruction: Connect - myschool will provide instruction so students can create meaningful learning connections. Support - Students will feel safe to experiment with ideas without fear of making mistakes and will be supported by everyone in all endeavors. Inspire - Students will be inspired to choose their own academic path. Governance & Organization: Connect - Employees of myschool will maintain genuine, open connections with all personnel and students. Support - Employees will support the mission and purpose of myschool in their actions and decision-making. Inspire - Employees will inspire students by pursuing their own academic or personal interests, revealing that education is a lifelong endeavor. Community: Connect - myschool will maintain meaningful connections with the local community. Support - myschool will support local causes. Inspire - myschool will inspire other schools through the successful implementation of its mission and purpose.
MySchool
Mission
To place each student at the center of their own educational experience.
We exist to offer a different type of education for a different type of citizen: one who is environmentally aware with a holistic perspective of self, community and world, equipped to solve unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges.
myschool
Values
Connect Support Inspire
Teaching & Learning

How will you enable and demonstrate student-centered, standards-based learning at your school? Illustrate your vision by describing two learning experiences that show how students will learn deeply and build toward mastery.

Provide up to 150 words per learning experience, and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how learning will be different and exciting at your school.

1) Personalized Plan of Instruction (PPI): A fundamental tool at myschool will be the PPI. Example: U.S. History Civil Rights Unit - In this unit, students will create a PPI, with consultation and approval from the teacher, by choosing from a series of lessons (based on Standards 11.10) including their choice of final project to be assessed by the class. Students build understanding and work toward mastery by selecting their lessons, navigating their way through the subject matter, taking ownership of learning and maintaining accountability. Utilization of the PPI allows the teacher to be a learning coach or manager. (Exhibit 13.) This unit shows interrelationships between content areas by containing lessons from other subject areas (i.e. how the civil rights movement influenced music and art). The unit is classroom-based and requires use of students’ Learning Pods equipped with an iMac, iPad, iTunes, iTunes U, headphones, etc.

2) Environmental Science Interdisciplinary Project: Sustainability and Hydroponics. Students will work in teams designing, constructing, maintaining and cultivating high-density garden systems. The importance of sustainability will be introduced through community field trips: Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills (growing organic sustainable food), Recology Mountain View (recycling) and Ouroboros Farms in Pescadero (aquaponics). (Exhibit 14.) Assessment of trips will be through students' reflective blog posts. Each team then designs a hydroponic gardening system applying geometry and scale factor in creating scale drawings. Approval of designs will be done by the teacher. Assessment of completed systems will be made by other teams. Students then grow and cultivate crops choosing from a selection of vegetables and herbs. Students will learn to conduct readings of the water in their soil-less garden systems and balance pH and TDS levels. Finally, there will be a tasting of student-created dishes with their vegetables and herbs as ingredients.
Personalized Plan of Instruction

Students build understanding and work toward mastery by selecting their lessons, navigating their way through the subject matter, taking ownership of learning and maintaining accountability. Utilization of the PPI allows the teacher to be a learning coach or manager.
Students will work in teams designing, constructing, maintaining and cultivating high-density garden systems [hydroponics]. The importance of sustainability will be introduced through community field trips: Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills (growing organic sustainable food), Recology Mountain View (recycling) and Ouroboros Farms in Pescadero (aquaponics).
Student Agency & Engagement

How will your school support and enable students to form positive identities as continuous learners, build complex skills, and contribute as members of their communities? Develop profiles of 2-3 representative students and describe their growth and development through high school.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how your school will cultivate student agency and engagement.

Student 1: Tina likes English class. To support her love of reading she will work with all her myschool English teachers to create Personalized Plans of Instruction for different types of literature to expose her to many different genres. As she progresses through high school she will continue to pursue her love of reading by forming a book club with her peers. Tina also enjoys going to plays but is too shy to join the drama club. myschool will create a Personalized Plan of Instruction for her to Skype and visit with theater arts students and faculty at Foothill college for support and encouragement. This Plan of Instruction will strengthen her identity throughout high school as she is supported in overcoming her shyness. (Exhibit 15.) Tina does not like traditional physical education offerings. She mentioned this to one of the myschool physical education teachers and they will work together to bring in offerings such as yoga, tai chi, meditation or light stretching. Student 2: Matt loves school so he participates in the Student-Faculty Senate where he periodically meets with other students and members of the myschool faculty to discuss and give input on curriculum and school policies. (Exhibit 16.) He has aspirations of becoming a physics professor. myschool will support him in this endeavor by working with physics teachers to create a Personalized Plan of Instruction for advanced / AP Physics. myschool will also help him coordinate visits to a local university physics professor to mentor, guide and inspire him in his quest throughout high school and beyond. Matt will hone his teaching skills by tutoring at the one of the local middle schools which uses Khanacademy.org. He enjoys volunteering at a local food bank so myschool will help him form a group of students to volunteer along with him.
Tina enjoys going to plays but is too shy to join the drama club. myschool will set up a Personalized Plan of Instruction for her so she can Skype and visit with theater arts students and faculty at Foothill college for support and encouragement. This Plan of Instruction will strengthen her identity throughout high school as she is supported in overcoming her shyness.
Student Agency & Engagement

Matt loves school so he participates in the Student-Faculty Senate where he periodically meets with other students and members of the myschool faculty to discuss and give input on curriculum and school policies.
Networks & Partnerships

What partners will be part of the ongoing work of the school? Explain how partners will work together to design and plan the school, and how your partnership will support student learning, engagement, development, and connection to post-secondary success.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how your school will draw upon deep partnerships to expand and enhance student experiences.

While reaching out to numerous high technology companies in Silicon Valley, myschool will also take advantage of community-based networking and partnership opportunities for assistance designing and planning the school. For example, the Silicon Valley Education Foundation (SVEF) offers after-school programs and support to educators and students, works with school districts to promote best practices and policies and places EdTech and other resources into classrooms. SVEFs main objective is to make Silicon Valley #1 in high school graduates academically prepared to complete post-secondary education. Another potential partner is Mentor Tutor Connection (MTC). MTC helps students achieve their potential and thrive by providing tutors at elementary and middle schools and mentors to high schools in the Mountain View Los Altos High School District. Another potential partner, aligned with the environmental focus of myschool, is Acterra, an environmental non-profit serving the Silicon Valley. Acterra offers several thousand volunteer opportunities for adults and youth, ranging from habitat restoration to carbon reduction. They also teach people to become environmental change agents in their communities, neighborhoods, workplaces and schools. A potential partner aligned with the myschool community focus is the Mountain View-Los Altos (MVLA) Challenge Team. The MVLA Challenge Team builds meaningful community partnerships to support the success of children, youth and families in the cities of Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. The Challenge Team brings together leaders from school districts, city and county services, parent and student groups and other non-profit organizations to serve youth and strengthen the community. SVEF, MTC, Acterra and the MVLA Challenge Team are all aligned with the core values of myschool (Connect, Support and Inspire) and will be invaluable assets as myschool moves forward. (Exhibit 17.)
Networks & Partnerships

Silicon Valley Education Foundation, Mentor Tutor Connection, Acterra and the Mountain View-Los Altos Challenge Team are all aligned with the core values of myschool (Connect, Support and Inspire) and will be invaluable assets as myschool moves forward.
Things to Think About:
What’s the big idea that sets your school apart? What makes it unique?
Think of this like an elevator pitch. Imagine you have 30 seconds to say something memorable.

The word "education" is derived from the Latin root "to draw out."

How many times did you feel like your high school was set up to draw out the real you?
To get at your real interests?
Probably not that many.
And how did that make you feel?
Probably genuinely disinterested.

What would you say if I told you there is a school which places each student at the center of their own educational experience?
Where teachers are like learning coaches or managers. Where students have more say in what they are taught. Where students can create real world connections and can actively imagine their own futures.

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?
It’s called myschool.
And it’s the future of education.