



Innovative Schools Toolkit

MICROSOFT INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

Education has never been more important for young people around the world and for their communities. The global and regional challenges we face will require the next generation to become innovative thinkers and effective problem solvers in ways never before imagined. Countries all over the world are recognizing that antiquated educational approaches and practices will no longer suffice, and that schools must embrace reform that makes education more engaging, collaborative and relevant to 21st-century economic and social needs.

The **Microsoft Partners in Learning Innovative Schools Program** works with communities of schools with a common interest to transform education. The program offers frameworks and models for change that any school and any educational system can adapt and apply to help students achieve their full potential. The program draws from the experiences of 12 pathfinder schools around the world and applies their best practices to envisioning, creating, assessing, improving and evaluating innovative 21st-century learning environments.

Together, we have discovered that schools can successfully innovate when:

- Their leaders are empowered to think big.
- The entire learning community of teachers, students and administrators shares a vision of change.
- They connect, collaborate and explore best practices with education leaders worldwide.

PURPOSE OF THE INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS TOOLKIT

The most difficult step on the journey towards innovation is the first one. Where do we start? Many questions and concerns are immediately obvious to you, mostly to do with constraints of finance, curriculum, professional practice and possibly the expectations of parents. However, the biggest risk of all is to take no risk at all.

With this in mind we have created the **Innovative Schools Toolkit** which is a clear, accessible and practical guide for you and your school community to begin the journey of innovation. The toolkit is intended to be a starting point rather than a complete solution and it offers a process that can be customized based on your unique needs.



The toolkit works online or offline and all the resources contained within it are fully downloadable. It is aimed at all the stakeholders in your school's wider community so that their thoughts, ideas and expertise can help make your innovation journey easier, better and more sustainable.

STRUCTURE

The **Innovative Schools Toolkit** is divided into 4 key sections: a self-reflection, case studies and knowledge library resources and practical workshops. The sections are interlinked and you can work through them step by step or use them when needed. You may use all the resources or just some, the idea is to make the toolkit work for you rather than use it as a fixed framework for innovation.

Self -Reflection

The self-reflection should be conducted as the starting point. Use it to evaluate where your school is now and where you want it to be in each of 4 big areas that offer opportunities for educational reform. Consider what areas you are targeting for reform, and to what degree that reform is incremental improvement or fundamental change. Identify barriers to change and ways to address them. There is no right or wrong answers—this is a self-reflection to help each school understand the choices it is making in the service of its reform efforts. Evaluate your situation based on people's daily behavior not just on school visions. The self-reflection can be conducted many times during your innovation journey as a measure of progress as well as a reminder of why you are innovating in the first place. Make sure that as many stakeholders as possible have an opportunity to complete the self-reflection and encourage honesty as it is the best way to transform practice. None of the data that you input will be kept by anyone except those you send it to or if you print it off and hand it out.

The four key areas for focus are:

1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
2. Leadership and Culture of Innovation
3. Ongoing Professional Development
4. Learning Environments

CASE STUDIES AND KNOWLEDGE LIBRARY

This section of the toolkit contains a range of resources that will help you to understand what is happening around the world in terms of innovation in education and also provide you with access to a wealth of carefully selected whitepapers and research documents from leading experts in the field. All resources are fully downloadable and a mixture of documents, PowerPoint's, videos and websites. They are categorized under the same four categories as the self-reflection:



1. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
2. Leadership and Culture of Innovation
3. Ongoing Professional Development
4. Learning Environments

WORKSHOPS

There are two kinds of workshops in the toolkit which can be used to guide you in your journey of innovation. They can be used to stimulate thinking, help you achieve consensus or educate others on your vision.

Process Workshops

These 8 workshops will help your school work through the steps towards innovation and they should be conducted in a linear fashion.

Workshop 1: Planning Engagements

This is an important stage to ensure that the purposes of innovations are supported by all stakeholders. This workshop supports discussions on what is meant by innovation, building stakeholder engagement and the development of an action plan to manage the change process.

Workshop 2: Creating a shared vision

This workshop supports the development of a clear and specific vision, designing a framework for innovation and identifying a set of enablers to help you achieve your vision.

Workshop 3: Exploring Possibilities

This workshop will help to prioritize what you need to work on as a school. It will also support you to explore possibilities for these large scale innovations by discussing case studies from other schools, discussing educational philosophies and understanding your own vision in more depth and from more points of view. It will guide you through developing a first draft plan for implementation.

Workshop 4: Culture of Innovation

This workshop guides you through a process of managing “actions” for change. The suggestions for action are arranged in ‘Ladders’ from very small and easy actions to transformative large actions. This range of suggestions means there will be something for everyone.

Workshop 5: Sharing Ideas

This workshop aims to provide teachers with good ideas in line with the school vision and core aims. Supports the teachers to collaborate with similar goals and develop a clear and shared focus on improving learner competencies.



Workshop 6: Implementation

This workshop supports the establishment of baseline as the starting point for the implementation, baseline in terms of attitudes and opinions and baseline in terms of objective measures. It will help develop and agree protocols for the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to work together most effectively.

Workshop 7: Reviewing Progress

This workshop looks at some of the review processes that are commonly in use and considers the central need for the school to be a reflective learning organisation that invites feedback.

Workshop 8: Continuous Improvement

This workshop provides an opportunity to share reflections and re-connect with the core purpose and vision of the school. It provides example analysis and evaluation tools that staff can use and helps structure an event at which collective progress can be evaluated and recognized.

Skills Workshops

These workshops are shorter, simpler and can be accessed individually or in groups to help build a set of skills to help make the innovation journey smoother. These skills include simple techniques for change management, project planning building visions. These workshops can be used at any time and suggestions are made in the toolkit as to when might be most appropriate.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS AND RESOURCES

Although the toolkit is a stand-alone resource we recommend that you use it in conjunction with the **Partners in Learning Network**. This site contains an array of tools and online communities which can be used to make communicating to your school team easier and more effective. Use the school profile page as a way to track your progress and share with other schools, which are on the same journey, your successes and great ideas as well gather their feedback and advice.

To help you organize your resources, we have provided a **Microsoft Office OneNote** tool that enables you to quickly and easily manage the outputs from your workshops as well as store key documents and resources that you collected along the way.

Link to the Innovative Schools Toolkit: <http://www.is-toolkit.com>