

NORTH CAROLINA

DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN

Policy Brief
June 2014

Prepared by the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation



OVERVIEW

North Carolina is committed to providing the personalized digital-age education K-12 students need to be successful in college, in careers, and as productive citizens. North Carolina has already made significant progress with statewide efforts, and many districts have digital learning initiatives well underway. However, much remains to be done to ensure that all students throughout the State have equitable access to high quality digital learning. Recent legislative actions that address preparing educators for digital learning, providing digital resources, and ensuring technology access across all schools, as well as the goals of the new State Board of Education Strategic Plan, are important steps in moving forward.

The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University, in collaboration with policymakers, education leaders, practitioners, business leaders and other partners from throughout the State, has been asked to develop the **North Carolina Digital Learning Plan** to continue and accelerate North Carolina's progress. This Policy Brief sets the stage for the overall effort.

TRANSITIONING TO DIGITAL-AGE EDUCATION

The transition to a digital-age education system that fully harnesses the power of modern technologies will impact all aspects of education, including the content students learn, the methods teachers use, where and when learning takes place, what resources are required, and how success is defined and measured. Systemic changes in K-12 education are required in order to effectively prepare students for college, careers, and civic life in this rapidly changing, interconnected, technology-driven world.

NORTH CAROLINA PROGRESS ON THE TRANSITION TO DIGITAL LEARNING

This transition has already begun in North Carolina at the State, district, and school levels. The School Connectivity and K-12 Cloud Computing initiatives place North Carolina at the national forefront in providing the robust broadband access and related software and services that are foundational to the transition. The North Carolina Virtual Public School has expanded curriculum offerings through virtual learning for students throughout the State. The Home Base system will continue to provide teachers, students, parents and administrators with real-time access to student data and teaching and learning resources. Many of the State's educators have already gained first-hand experience as digital-age learners in virtual and blended professional development programs. Most importantly, districts and schools throughout the State are deeply engaged in innovative local digital learning initiatives — including Mooresville Graded School District, which has become a national model.

The challenge moving forward is to pull these important initiatives together into a coherent long-term strategy that sets directions, supports innovation, provides resources, and removes barriers, so that the State's educators and students will benefit fully from digital content and tools.

LEGISLATIVE AND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ACTIONS

North Carolina legislators recently passed important pieces of legislation. SL2013-12 calls for the State to transition by 2017 from textbooks to digital materials that are effective for all learners, are aligned with the curriculum, and can be kept current. SL2013-11 and SL2013-226 call for the State Board of Education to develop and implement digital teaching and learning standards for teachers and school administrators by July 2017. Furthermore, the General Assembly and the State Board of Education agree on the need to create standards for wireless connectivity and broadband capacity for a digital learning environment and to develop recommendations for achieving the standard statewide.

In December 2013, the State Board of Education passed a requirement for every student to take at least one course online as a requirement for graduation. More recently, the April 2014 State Board of Education Strategic Plan further supports the legislature's directions by (1) calling for all schools to have sufficient wireless access to support digital learning initiatives; (2) increasing the number of teachers and students using digital learning tools; (3) using Home Base as an essential resources for instructional delivery, online testing, and communications with parents and students; and (4) personalizing education for every student. These legislative and State Board of Education actions are important steps in supporting all North Carolina public schools as they move forward with the transition to digital learning.

DEVELOPING THE NORTH CAROLINA DIGITAL LEARNING PLAN

To implement these legislative requirements and elements of the State Board's Strategic Plan, North Carolina has contracted with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University to develop the ***North Carolina Digital Learning Plan***. The charge to the Friday Institute is comprehensive, as the contract scope of work specifies:

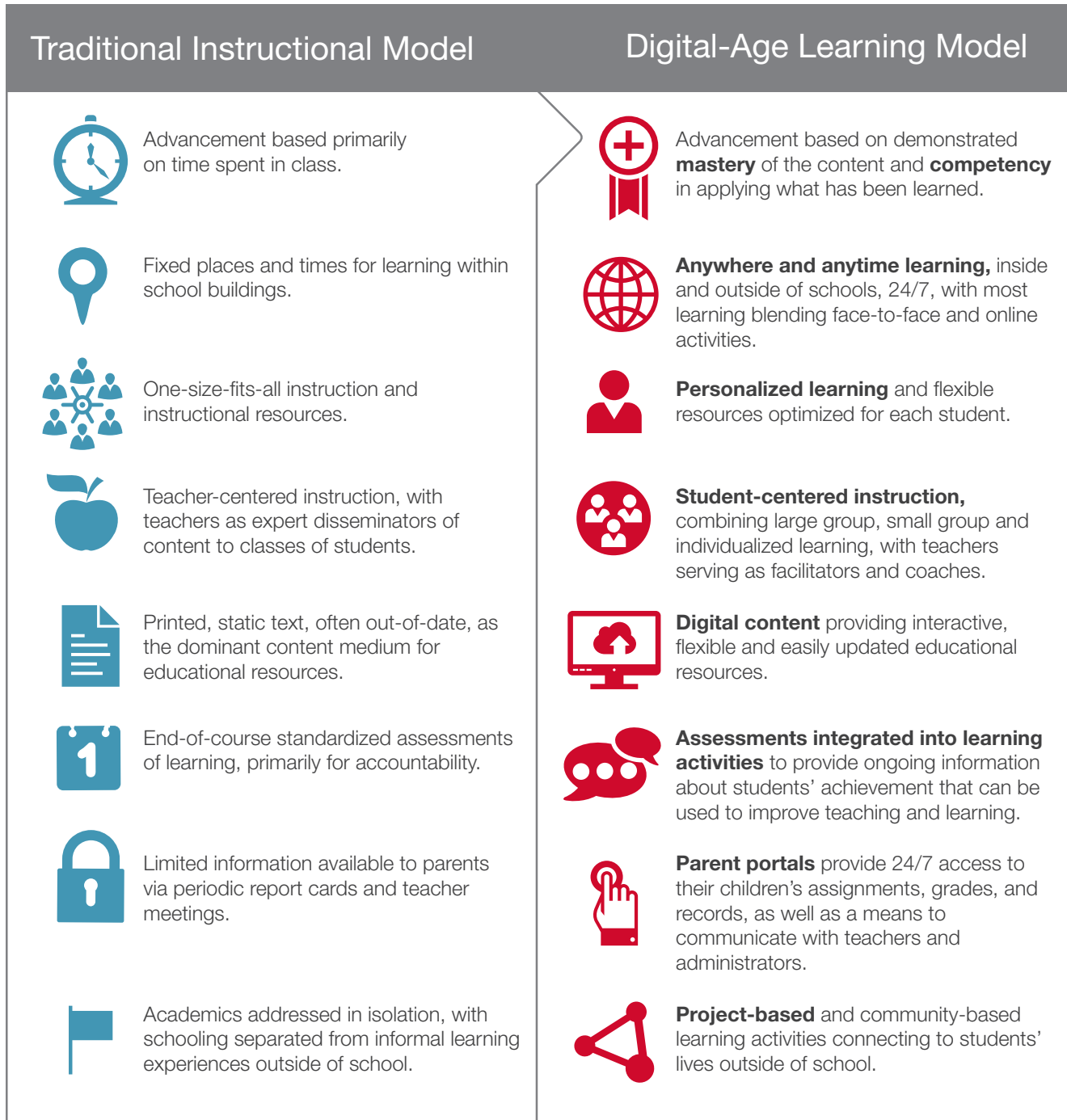
The digital transition defined in SL2013-12 will require changes in instructional practices, new types of educational resources, changes in classroom and school management, revised school staffing models, enhanced school and district technology infrastructure, Internet connected devices for all students and teachers, and educator training and support tailored to specific district and charter deployments. Further, State and local funding and policy frameworks will need to be revised. In short, the digital transition will require comprehensive planning.

To respond to the charge, the NC Digital Learning Plan will address the following major questions:

1. What exemplary approaches and lessons learned from local school districts' digital learning initiatives should North Carolina build upon?
2. How will North Carolina transition from funding for textbooks to funding for digital materials that are aligned with curriculum, remain current, and are effective for all learners?
3. How will existing systems, such as Home Base, the North Carolina Virtual Public School, Public Libraries, and the K-12 Cloud support the transition to digital resources and digital learning?
4. How will North Carolina ensure that all public schools and community anchor institutions have the technology, service, and support infrastructure needed to sustain robust digital learning?
5. How will North Carolina enhance or build the capacity of all its teachers, school leaders, and district leaders to fully utilize digital resources and meet the new digital learning standards?
6. How do State and local education policies and processes need to be updated and revised to further digital learning?
7. How can North Carolina best support current and future local digital learning transitions in districts throughout the State?
8. How does the digital learning transition impact school budgets and how can the digital learning transition be funded?
9. How will the K-12 digital learning transition impact post-secondary teaching and learning in North Carolina?

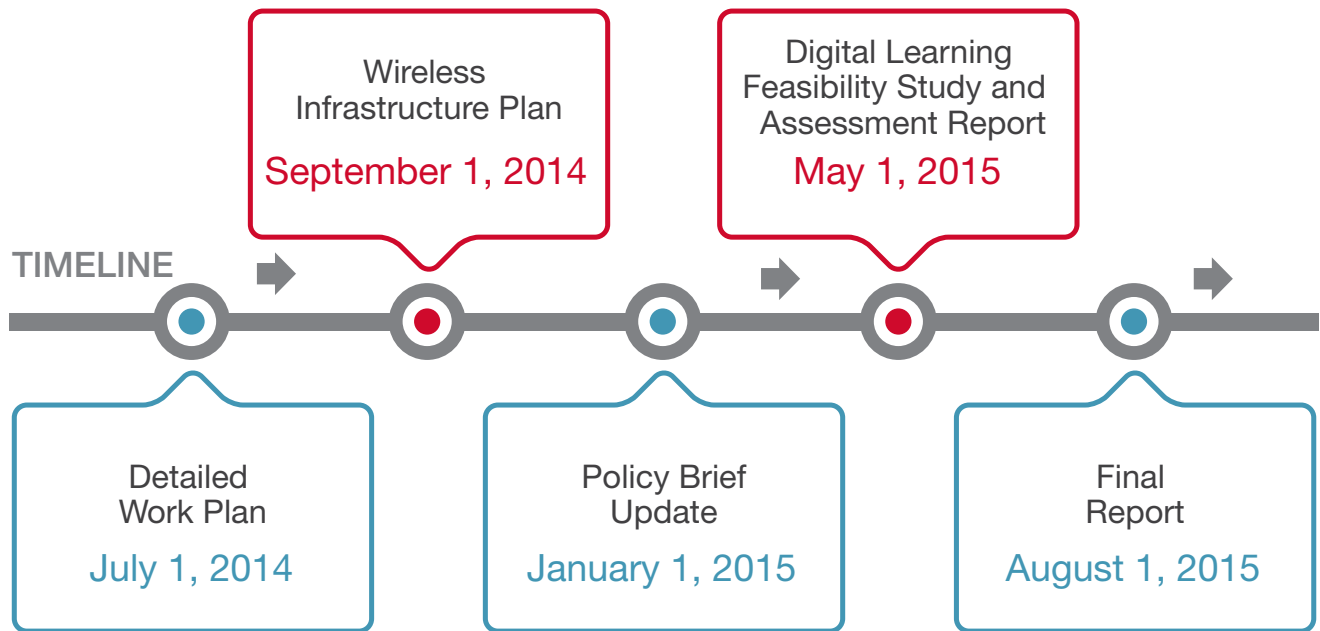
ELEMENTS OF THE K-12 DIGITAL LEARNING TRANSITION

Our work will be informed by K-12 digital learning transitions already underway in schools and districts across North Carolina and beyond, with the **North Carolina Digital Learning Plan** designed to support and enhance local initiatives. While schools and districts are taking different approaches and moving at different paces in this transition, a number of common themes have emerged that help clarify what this change to *digital-age* education looks like for our students, parents, educators and schools.



NEXT STEPS

The Friday Institute is developing a work plan that expands on the core questions and elements of the digital learning transition, defines the deliverables, and outlines the approach to this planning project. This work plan will be available on July 1, 2014, and will specify the organizational structure, oversight, advisory board, and stakeholder engagement processes for the project. The additional deliverables included in the scope of work are shown in the table below:



This policy brief, future deliverables and other information relevant to the NC Digital Learning Plan will be available at <http://ncdlplan.fi.ncsu.edu>. Inquiries and recommendations about the plan can be submitted to the Friday Institute by email to ncdlplan@fi.ncsu.edu.