

NEXT GENERATION LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

CO-CREATED



THE COLORADO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

CO-CREATED learning environments are those in which students play an active role in shaping their learning experience, and see themselves as owners of their own educational outcomes. Teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members all play important roles in education.

STUDENTS...

- are encouraged and expected to make decisions which authentically impact their learning experience.
- feel the consequences (good or bad) for their decisions. Students learn by observing patterns regarding which kinds of decisions work for them and their colleagues as learners, and come to find their optimal ways of working independently and as part of a group.
- analyze the feedback they receive, assess themselves regularly, and are given choices about how they will spend their time, or what mode they will use to learn in the future.
- learn to make good choices by being given small, low risk choices at first, and then working up to participating in much more flexible systems.
- are expected to produce work on an extended timeline and are given the opportunity to manage the time in between, so they can practice making short-term decisions with long-term goals in mind.
- work with each other and connect to resources and people outside the classroom to engage in meaningful, relevant learning in both academic and non-academic endeavors.
- take creative and important risks, are allowed to fail, and are supported in learning from failures.

EDUCATORS...

- think and plan intentionally about how to help students build their analysis and decision-making skills as they plan for students' development of literacy or math skills.
- design instruction such that it makes time for students to make decisions and try out new skills independently.
- monitor individual student participation and performance very closely, so they can give meaningful feedback not just about their progress toward academic targets, but also about their strategies and decision-making.
- help students set goals and analyze how their decisions and implementation of their strategies correlate with changes in their progress toward those goals.
- do not take away students' power by doing work for them or giving solutions when they are stuck, but instead ask students questions that help them to remember the assumptions behind their strategies, and what their current results might indicate they need to reconsider.



- are prudent about giving students access to models, practice with skills, and knowledge they need before releasing them to grapple with how to use those knowledge and skills.

IN PRACTICE:

- The level of decision-making and associated risk to be managed ratchets up over time. Students may begin by choosing whether to work independently or in pairs when released from whole group instruction. Then later, students may progress to choosing whether to attend a workshop or work independently, or choosing to design a study plan and then try to follow that plan to see if it is feasible and effective.
- This can play out in small ways, within the design of the content of a course, or in a school-wide way, e.g.:
 - » Within a middle school social studies class, students may be given the task of finding out how people in their community feel about a local issue. Given some parameters around the ability to physically leave campus, the ability to use phones, and access to computers, groups may be given a day or two to create a plan that they think will get quality information and be feasible for them to pull off as a team. Groups may then present plans to get feedback from other teams, and then have a chance to improve their plans. The students are then challenged to execute their plans, compare their information and discuss the degree to which each method was able to yield quality representative information, and/or compare their data to professionally gathered data on the same topic.
 - In this situation, everyone is learning about the same local issue, everyone is learning to work with a team and create a plan, everyone is learning about why opinion polling is used and how to do it in ways that are representative or skewed – the only variable is the precise method students choose to use to gather that information with their team. Students may have a bad idea, they may try it, and discover that it does not work well. This process has not cost them any essential learning, and has given them the chance to analyze and learn from failure. That is the central idea behind co-created learning environments. Students try their ideas and see if they work or not – then they feel the consequences of having a good or ineffective idea.
- In Kunsopskolen schools, for example, students make decisions about their schedule on an ongoing basis. On a biweekly basis, students work with their advisor to build their schedule. They talk together about what the student has mastered, how they work well, what support they like, and what support they need. Based on that reflection, they set a schedule that may have a student working completely independently in one academic discipline that week, while doubling down on small group instruction in another, and signing up for small group practice or time on skillware for another. The students decide what kind of work will best meet their needs. Teachers and students monitor progress in their web-based learning management system. Students in these schools have a chance every two weeks to try to determine what the best plan for them as a learner is, then to try that plan, and learn more about the general parameters of their optimal learning plan.

RESOURCES:

[Kunskopskolen](#) operates schools where every student is recognized as a unique individual with the ability, ambition and support to learn and grow beyond what she or he thought was possible (described above).

[Buck Institute for Education \(BIE\)'s website](#) has created free materials to assist in project-based learning- such as planning forms, student handouts, rubrics, and articles for educators to download and use to design, assess, and manage projects.