Next Gen Learning School Observation Tool & Process

Purpose
This tool is designed to help individuals collect observations and evidence of learning within your school. Using this gathered information, teams meet for a discussion and reflection session. This session is designed to help your team identify strengths to build upon and questions to guide your team's work on how you might best strengthen learning for the students in your school. The classroom observations, school-wide observations, review of student work, data gathering discussions with staff and students, and group discussion will give your team an opportunity to build a shared understanding of each key component of "next gen learning."

Directions
1. Each individual uses one observation sheet.
2. Review the "Look Fors" in each row.
3. Determine the process for your team. You may divvy up the categories (for example, 2 people might focus on 2 of the categories); you may decide to select a set of 2-3 categories as a team; or you may decide to focus on all the categories.
4. In small groups of 2-3, visit classrooms within your school and collect observations in each category (Relationships, Student Agency, Pace, Path, Instruction, Place, Structures, Data and Technology, Other). Record evidence and observations of the components and take pictures if allowed by the school.
   Note: Any pictures taken must maintain student confidentiality (no front facing photos of students; photos of student work should not reveal the student's full name, etc.) and be used for the team's research and should not be shared outside the team.
5. After visiting classrooms, meet with your team for 60 minutes using the discussion prompts and note catcher.

Next Gen Learning
Learning approaches that develop students in well-rounded ways to build their academics, life skills, wellness, and citizenship share some common characteristics: They respond to the strengths, needs, and cultural backgrounds of each individual student. They make sure students "master" skills and knowledge before moving on. They connect academic knowledge and skills to on-the-job work experiences and real problems in our communities, adjusted to even our youngest learners. They use the most advanced tools available in our society, including technology but also what is known in education as "learning science." Educators often refer to these learning approaches as student-centered, personalized, competency-based, equitable, experiential, authentic, and technology-enabled. At NGLC, we use the term *next generation learning* to capture all of these learning approaches.

Observation Guide
This guide is organized by categories of observable actions related to next gen learning. It includes specific actions to "Look For" in your school related to each category:
1. Relationships – how adults and children demonstrate caring about each other
2. Student Agency – the ways that students have control over their learning
3. Pace – how the timeline for learning matches each student's needs
4. Path – the variety of ways students may learn and demonstrate their learning
5. Instruction – how students learn from teachers, their peers, and others
6. Place – the physical environment and spaces for learning
7. Structures – how adults and children share responsibility for managing culture, procedures, and resources
8. Data & Technology – the ways that adults and children use digital tools and data to support learning
9. Other – observable actions that don't fit other categories but are noteworthy to you

Keep in mind that you will not see or collect evidence on every "Look For" during your visit, and that's ok!

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RELATIONSHIPS

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
RELATIONSHIPS • Teachers demonstrate caring about students beyond the classroom • Other staff demonstrate caring about students beyond the classroom • Students demonstrate caring about each other in and beyond the classroom • School community demonstrates caring about larger community **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • Can you tell me how adults at your school show you they care? • Can you tell me how students at your school show you they care? • How do you show others at school that you care about them?	**Teacher actions:** • Teachers either informally or formally (assignment, warm-up, etc.) ask students about their lives, families, interests • All students and their families are known well by at least one adult on campus (long-term relationship) • Teachers have 1:1 check-ins with students • Teachers encourage students to be themselves in language, dress, identity, and social interactions • Teachers support students who may be discriminated against or bullied **Student actions:** • Students invite others to eat lunch with them, or to participate in other activities • Students are able to work with or talk to others from any background, group, or social circle • Students know something personal about each of their classmates: interests, likes/dislikes, etc. • Students and teachers openly discuss issues of identity, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socioeconomics, bias, privilege, etc. • Students work on social justice or community service projects **Systems/Structures:** • An open, warm, welcoming, accepting, inclusive community and space • Circles, Morning Meeting, assemblies, or other community-building activities • Community service requirements for graduation • Exhibitions or other public presentations of student work • Opportunities for students to celebrate and show their strengths • Opportunities for students to be exposed to different perspectives and to show empathy, as well as to celebrate different backgrounds • Ongoing ways for students to give feedback on belonging: surveys, focus groups, etc. • A culture where all students are affirmed and valued regardless of academic background or behavior; there are no students left out • A culture that fosters pride and awareness about diverse cultural backgrounds of students	

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STUDENT AGENCY

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
STUDENT AGENCY • Students set learning goals and track their own progress • Students know their strengths, needs, and passions • Students make choices about their own collaborators for learning within or outside of school • Students make decisions about their learning • Students demonstrate purpose and initiative in their work • Students rely on one another and recognize when to advocate for themselves when they come across a challenge **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • How does your school help you know your strengths and interests or passions? • Do you have opportunities to set your own goals? If yes, tell me about a time when you did that. • Do you have opportunities to make your own decisions about what you study or learn? If yes, tell me about a time when you did that.	**Teacher Actions:** • Teachers have 1:1 check-ins to help students set goals and to monitor progress • Teachers tailor learning experiences to students' interests, skills, knowledge, goals • Teachers demonstrate how the content or skills they are learning apply to real-world problems and situations, or connect learning to students' communities, interests, or goals **Student Actions:** • Students demonstrate high-level work and discussions; activities are relevant, real-world, multi-step, and require critical thinking like analysis, synthesis, evaluation, application, and creativity. • Students seek help from peers or check directions before seeking help from the teacher • Students are able to learn from failure, by using reflective processes • Students choose peers to work with on projects, find outside mentors or coaches, or choose a teacher as mentor or advisor • Students choose coursework or outside learning activities (online courses, internships, job shadowing, college classes) • Students choose a topic for a project based on interest and/or students choose a process for their project. • Students can explain the purpose of the work either informally or formally (exhibitions, presentations) • Students can explain how what they are working on will help them in a career or interest. • Students have 1:1 check-ins with peers on progress • Students participate in extracurriculars that relate to an interest or career: debate club, newspaper, music, art, sport, ROTC, 4H, etc. • Students complete reflection activities on how to improve based on feedback and experience • Students complete strengths and interest finder surveys and tools **Systems/structures:** • Exploratory projects like job shadowing, career days • Learner profiles with goals (Personalized Learning Plans) • Goal setting and translating goals into actions • Choice boards for projects and activities	

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PACE

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
PACE • Students access curriculum and resources independently and at a pace that fits their needs • Students create and execute a plan that includes a timeline for learning, production, and deadlines • Students take assessments and advance when ready • Students know their pace relative to the expected pace • Students access support, whether advanced or behind **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • Do you have opportunities to learn at a pace that is right for you even if that's slower or faster than most students? If yes, tell me about a time when you did that. • Do you have opportunities to support students to learn at a pace that's slower or faster than the pace most students follow? If so, tell me about a time when you did that.	**Teacher Actions:** • Teachers regularly (daily, weekly, monthly) check student progress, often using online tools • Teachers have systems for following up with students to monitor ongoing progress • Teachers provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to show what they know (entry assessments to a lesson, exit tickets, etc.) • Teachers' expectations for work are clear; teachers may use sample work ("exemplars") or rubrics • Teachers specifically teach skills that develop habits of success such as: self-direction, positive mindsets, learning strategies, and social skills • Teachers celebrate and positively reinforce students who are working hard and using time effectively **Student Actions:** • Students independently work on personalized or blended learning online platforms • Students work independently: choosing reading books, choosing projects, going to multiple stations in the classroom • Students can access their work or learning at anytime, anywhere • Students use project plans and processes for checking in and monitoring progress as they work independently or in small groups to complete a project • Students use strategies to stay on task, focus, and to complete tasks • Students have "on demand" assessments • Students can explain their progress and their goals (e.g., "I know I need to get to x, so this week I am going to do x, y, z") • Students receive feedback from peers and adults regularly • Students may be working on different assignments or tasks and can explain what they are working on and why • Students attend office hours, ask peers for help, go to intervention groups, or self-advocate for help or extension **Systems and Structures:** • Competency-based learning: Grades are not based on averages of all work or time on task but are based on demonstrations of learning that show what they know and can do • Cross-curricular or interdisciplinary projects, e.g., designing a technology solution and then writing a letter to a representative arguing for a policy solution to support it • Celebrating students for learning from failure, growth, and risk taking. • Using outside organizations for tutoring and other expert help	

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PATH

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
PATH • Students have a variety of ways to learn objectives/learning goals • Students seek out experts/resources to meet objectives/learning goals • Students have a variety of ways to demonstrate proficiency/mastery • Students have opportunities to design their own path with support from adults as needed **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • How do you learn best? Do you have opportunities to learn this way? Do you have opportunities that stretch you to learn in other ways? • How do you like to show your learning? Do you have opportunities to show your learning in this way and in ways that stretch you as a student? • How do you help students learn?	**Teacher actions:** • Teachers use a variety of instruction: whole class/teacher led, small group, stations, group work, independent work, labs, simulations, discussions, student led (mini lesson, presentations) • Teachers create multiple access points for an activity or project that may include supports like sentence starters, models, organizers, list of steps, or other cues • Teachers provide multiple sources of information that vary in type (e.g., visual, written, audio for hearing impairments, dyslexia) • Teachers follow lesson plans that allow for multiple options for meeting objectives/learning goals • Teachers circulate and help students, push them academically, and/or provide them with different ways of doing things **Student actions:** • Students design their own projects. There are multiple topics, formats, and problems, and these are completed in various ways. Example: students identify a problem in the community, research solutions, and design and present their own solution • Students “pivot” and try a new strategy when something is not working • Students have thought partners or online mentors to ask for help or resources • Students engage in Independent research • Students have multiple ways of demonstrating learning: role plays, interpretive art, oral presentations, tests, exams, labs, building models, etc. • Students monitor each other and hold one another accountable **Systems/structures:** • Personalized Learning Plans, college or career readiness plans, wayfinding plans. • Partnerships with local organizations or universities, field trips	

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INSTRUCTION

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
INSTRUCTION • Students are held to high expectations and teachers provide a variety of instruction and support to help students meet expectations • Students receive small group or 1:1 coaching from teachers • Students provide each other with peer support and feedback • Students access support from other staff, in or outside the classroom, on demand **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • Can you share with me a time when you were held to high expectations at school? • How do your teachers teach you? • How do you organize your classroom instruction to make sure that all students learn?	**Teacher Actions:** • Teachers work with students 1:1 while other students work independently or in small groups • Teachers anticipate where students may struggle • Based on data, teachers circulate to help students or push students to go further • Teachers visibly post learning goals or targets **Student Actions:** • Students work independently • Students tutor each other, work collaboratively, use feedback protocols, answer each other's questions • Students create and/or access a network of experts for learning, help, or thought partnering such as mentors in the workforce, peer mentors, etc. • Students can state the learning goals or targets and understand how they can demonstrate understanding and skills **Systems and Structures:** • Office hours, tutoring, emailing teachers, open door policies to get help from another teacher • Partnerships with outside organizations for students to use as a resource	

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PLACE

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
PLACE • Environment is designed by students and changes as activities change • Students learn in diverse spaces across the school • Students access spaces that enhance the learning activity • Students initiate opportunities to learn outside of school and/or with experts, and use evidence of learning from these opportunities **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • Do you have opportunities to learn outside of the classroom and/or the school? If yes, share with me an example. • Do you provide opportunities for students to learn outside of the classroom and/or school? If yes, share with me an example.	**Teacher Actions:** • Teachers direct or suggest to students where and how they might work best • Teachers plan instruction that is "place based" and leads students outside of the classroom **Student actions:** • Students are able to explain why they learn better in a certain space or environment, with certain tools, in a certain format, or with certain people • Students access places that advance their learning: field trips and field study • Students participate in learning activities outside of the school building: internships, online, outside, fieldwork, mentors or partnerships with experts, etc. **Systems and Structures:** • Various types of seating and workstations: desks, rug, high table, couches, working outside the classroom, etc. • Academies and linked learning that is specific to a career, for example: health care career academies, or tech academies	

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STRUCTURES

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
STRUCTURES • Students drive classroom culture and responsibilities • The school has procedures, routines, organization systems, classroom set-up, resources, etc. to manage learning effectively **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • Can you share with me an example of a time when a teacher or your school supported you to be a decision-maker or have a strong voice in decisions that affect the school? • How does your school know how you are doing? • What systems do you have in place as a school to know how your students are doing in their schoolwork, learning, and in their lives beyond school?	**Teacher Actions:** • Teachers work with students to set and reach goals • Teachers collaborate with other teachers to ensure student success (grade level teams, department/content teams) • Teachers regularly circulate to ensure that students are on task, to address misunderstandings, to help students, or to push their skills/knowledge • Teachers expect and create norms and structures around participation, including understanding that participating can come in many forms (oral, written, etc.) • Teachers track and review participation data • Teachers follow up with students to participate and engage • Teachers create routines for starting class and for completing work, and have students practice routines and procedures • Teachers and students co-create a safe, orderly, and clean space with visual reminders of norms, visons, values, routines • Teachers intervene calmly when norms are not followed **Student Actions:** • Students co-create norms for the classroom or help create expectations for the school • Students lead learning discussions • Students lead or participate in restorative circles for discipline • Student participate in peer “juries” for discipline • Students set goals or an agenda at the start of class • Students have means of communicating when they need help (e.g., Red cup=stuck, Yellow cup=needs help, Green=good to go) • Students know what to do when class starts without direction (e.g., log into computers, grab packets, sit in a circle, join their group, start routines) • Students can explain why routines and norms exist, why they are important, and why and when they may choose not to follow them **Systems and structures:** • Regular processes for student input: surveys, town hall meetings, student advisory board, etc. • Students have a regular time to check in with peers or the teacher • Students sit on advisory boards or are team members on decision-making committees	

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DATA AND TECHNOLOGY

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
DATA AND TECHNOLOGY • Data and technology are used to support student learning **QUESTIONS TO ASK:** • What roles do data and technology play in supporting you (your students) to learn?	**Teacher actions:** • Teachers use digital tools like Google Classroom to monitor student progress and collaborate (such as giving feedback on a Google doc) • Teachers use technology and data to figure out who needs more practice, and who is ready to move on • Teachers use technology and data to track progress • Teacher use data to purposefully group students by level or skill (e.g., these students need to work on writing a thesis statement) • Teachers can explain why and how they grouped students, who needs help, and who needs extension • Teachers improve their practice by acting on feedback from various forms of data such as observations, student work, formative assessments, and tests, etc. • Teachers improve their practice by implementing new strategies learned from other teachers • Teachers can explain how and why they improved their practice • Teachers demonstrate a deep understanding of their content and subject area, including multiple ways to teach topics or skills as well as common misunderstandings **Student actions:** • Students can work at their own pace—they are all working on different parts of an assignment • Students can look at their own data (grades, work, test scores, feedback) and see where they need help or where they need to improve **Systems and Structures:** • Online programs are adaptive—they adjust work or assessments to students' needs • Teacher collaboration time is built into the schedule with protocols and norms	

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OTHER OBSERVATIONS

CATEGORY	LOOK FORS	NOTES
OTHER • Additional noteworthy actions		

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DISCUSSION

- Which next gen learning components do we have in place?
- Which next gen learning components are missing (or were not observed today)?
- What questions did this process raise for us? In what ways was what we saw and experienced/or didn't see and didn't experience consistent with our thinking about learning in our school? Did this process uncover areas we'd like to learn more about as a team? How does this experience inform our team's plan and goals for attending the Innovative Schools Learning Excursion to Vista Unified School District and Mission Vista High School?

NOTE-CATCHER

Which next gen learning components do we have in place?	
Which next gen learning components are missing (or were not observed today)?	
What questions did this process raise for us?	

In what ways was what we saw and experienced/or didn't see and didn't experience consistent with our thinking about learning in our school?	
Did this process uncover areas we'd like to learn more about as a team?	
How does this experience inform our team's plan and goals for attending the Innovative Schools Learning Excursion?	
Other	