The Hewlett Foundation Education Program
Deeper Learning Review: Executive Summary
April 2013

In 2010, the Hewlett Foundation made a significant eight-year commitment to focus its education strategy primarily on the long-term vision that all students in the United States would be able to acquire the knowledge and competencies they need to be successful in 21st century work and civic life. Over the past several months, The Bridgespan Group has conducted a review of the Deeper Learning strategy at the request of the Education Program. This document provides an overview of this review, which focused on an assessment of the progress made to date through Deeper Learning investments, a determination of the main risks to its success, and the development of a set of high-impact, actionable recommendations for how the Hewlett Foundation might evolve its Deeper Learning strategy to minimize risk and maximize impact in the years ahead.

Looking back: An assessment of the progress to date of the Deeper Learning strategy

In the first few years of its strategy, the Hewlett Foundation invested most heavily in defining and building commitment to Deeper Learning (DL), and in supporting the design, adoption, and deployment of aligned standards and assessments. This approach targeted the points of leverage – standards and assessments – most able to lay the groundwork for its long-term vision. The early focus also leveraged the impact potential of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) movement. The strategy also aimed, though more lightly, to develop the K-12 system's capacity for teaching in ways aligned to its long-term vision.

Given this early focus, the Hewlett Foundation catalyzed significant progress in policy and assessments, and developed broad credibility as a field-builder for the concept of DL. Through its policy work, seven states included references to DL or its components in their federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver applications. Moreover, policy efforts led to the creation of the 12-state Core to College network, a promising effort to build and sustain alignment of K-12 and post-secondary decision makers in those member states, particularly around the CCSS and its assessments. Through this work, the Hewlett Foundation has developed significant wisdom and credibility – powerful assets to leverage in the future. In the design of assessments, the Hewlett Foundation has seeded progress for testing significant aspects of DL within the assessments of the CCSS as well as supporting other assessments that measure an even broader range of DL competencies; and has undertaken efforts through the Automated Student Assessment Prize (ASAP) to address cost bottlenecks in high-quality assessment. Lighter work in the development of teaching capacity has focused primarily on developing criteria and standards of quality to inform the design and adoption of tools and programs that support teachers in improving their practice; and identifying and supporting scalable examples of teaching and learning aligned to the Education Program's long-term vision. While the progress in developing teaching and learning aligned with the Hewlett Foundation's vision is less pronounced, the Hewlett Foundation has a set of deep relationships on which to build as it evolves its strategy going forward.

This progress gives us confidence that the Program is well on track to meeting its 2017 outcome goal: more than 8 million students will be assessed on DL outcomes by 2017, which lays the groundwork for those students ultimately learning those DL competencies. Overall, however, the Hewlett Foundation may be more limited in meeting its ultimate outcome: that students are taught, and learn, DL. The field has made limited progress in improving teaching and learning in the manner, and to the degree, required to develop DL competencies in many more students.
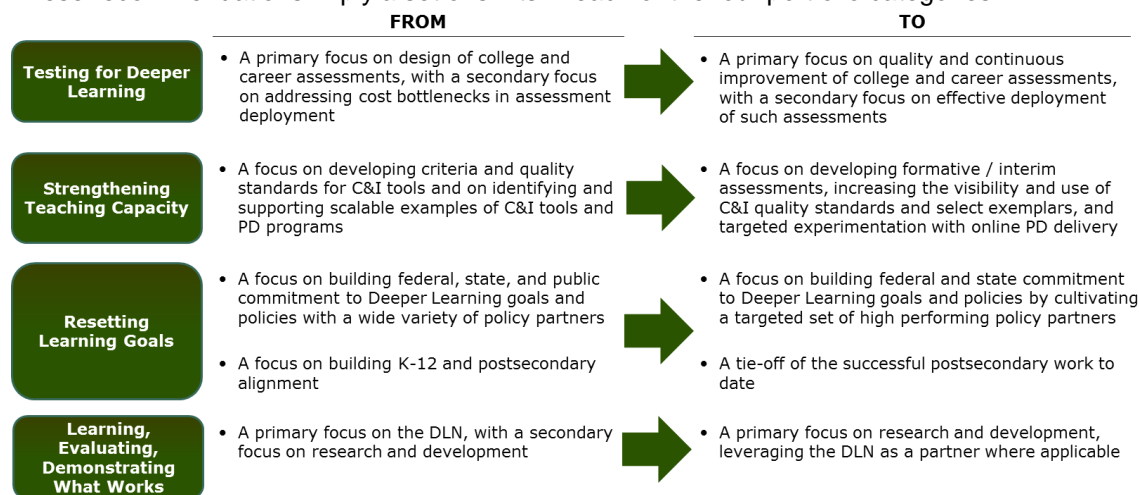
The key risks facing the Hewlett Foundation's 2017 outcome goal and long-term vision

During our review, we identified three risks facing the Hewlett Foundation's short-term outcome goal and long-term vision. The first risk is that assessments of college- and career-readiness fail to meet their full potential for quality and scale, in part due to a lack of field commitment to DL. A second risk is that states, districts, and schools use improved assessments, but fail to support teachers to make the significant shifts in practice that the higher, more rigorous standards of the CCSS and DL require. Finally, there is a third risk that the competencies not covered by the CCSS and consortia assessments fail to reach scale. These risks guided the development of recommended investments which met a set of criteria: that they all directly mitigated one or more of these risks, that they maximized impact, and that they were feasible.

The recommendations span all four portfolio categories. In *Testing for Deeper Learning*, recommendations include a continued focus on the quality of college- and career-ready assessments as well as support for the adoption and deployment of such assessments. In *Strengthening Teaching Capacity*, we recommend investments in the development of high-quality formative and interim assessments, continued development of quality standards or rubrics for curriculum and instruction (C&I) tools, and support for targeted experimentation with online delivery of professional learning. In *Resetting Learning Goals & Requirements for Schools*, we recommend continued cultivation of national and state-level DL champions, and support to states to share knowledge on the instructional reforms needed to ensure DL. Finally, in *Learning, Evaluating, and Demonstrating What Works*, we recommend a research and development agenda that will provide the field with required knowledge to advance the full set of DL competencies at scale.

Implications of recommendations for grant making

These recommendations imply a set of shifts in each of the four portfolio categories:

	FROM	TO
Testing for Deeper Learning	• A primary focus on design of college and career assessments, with a secondary focus on addressing cost bottlenecks in assessment deployment	• A primary focus on quality and continuous improvement of college and career assessments, with a secondary focus on effective deployment of such assessments
Strengthening Teaching Capacity	• A focus on developing criteria and quality standards for C&I tools and on identifying and supporting scalable examples of C&I tools and PD programs	• A focus on developing formative / interim assessments, increasing the visibility and use of C&I quality standards and select exemplars, and targeted experimentation with online PD delivery
Resetting Learning Goals	• A focus on building federal, state, and public commitment to Deeper Learning goals and policies with a wide variety of policy partners • A focus on building K-12 and postsecondary alignment	• A focus on building federal and state commitment to Deeper Learning goals and policies by cultivating a targeted set of high performing policy partners • A tie-off of the successful postsecondary work to date
Learning, Evaluating, Demonstrating What Works	• A primary focus on the DLN, with a secondary focus on research and development	• A primary focus on research and development, leveraging the DLN as a partner where applicable

Process used to guide the development of forward-looking recommendations

To support our review, we articulated a theory of change for how the field could credibly achieve the Hewlett Foundation's long-term vision and make the most progress toward its 2017 goal; its development was based on extensive secondary research and interviews with more than 20 experts. We then identified the three major risks to this theory of change as described and developed a set of recommended investments that would credibly mitigate each of the risks. We then tested the field-level theory of change, the risks, and the proposed investment ideas with a set of critical friends. These critical friends – leading experts who are also important allies of the Hewlett Foundation – shared reactions. We then honed the investment ideas to take into account their fit and feasibility for the Hewlett Foundation team, given time, resource, and relationship constraints.