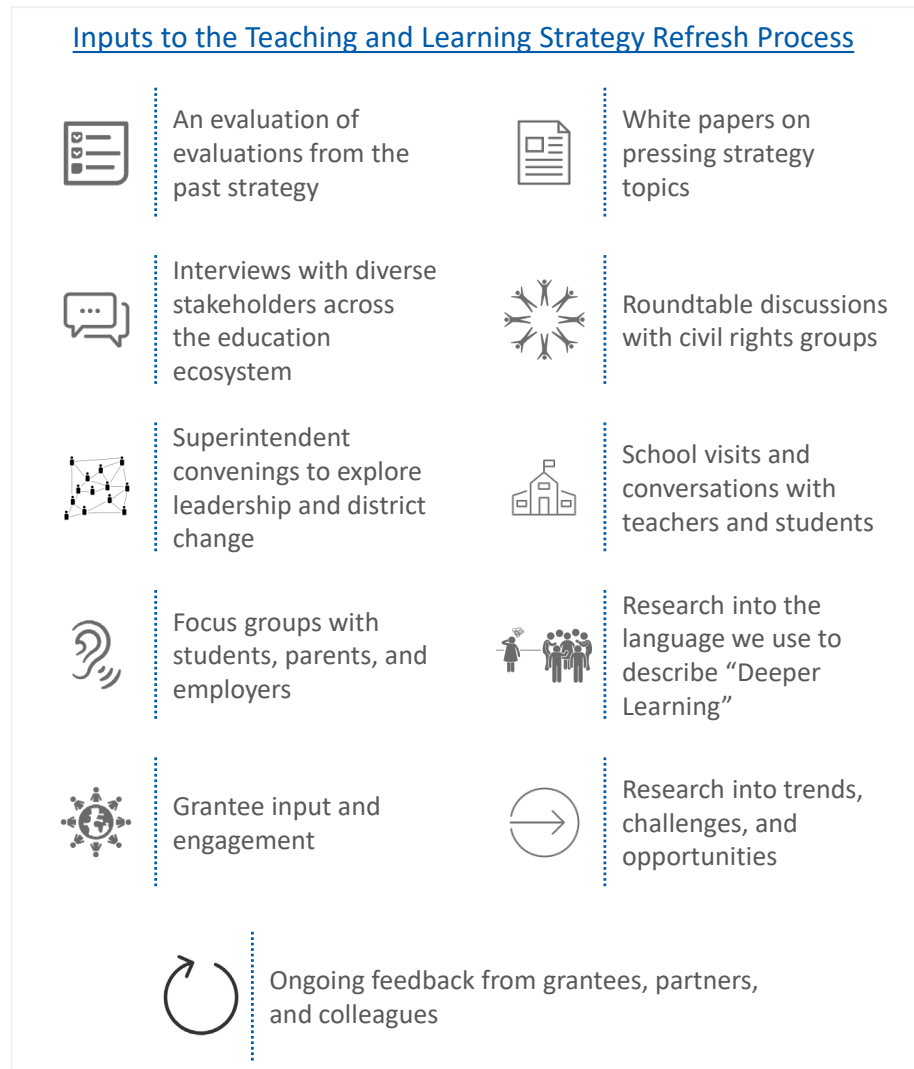**Overview of the Hewlett Foundation's Teaching and Learning Strategy Refresh Process**
March, 2019

In 2018, the Hewlett Foundation completed an intensive, year-long strategy refresh for its K-12 Teaching and Learning work, known formerly as the Deeper Learning strategy program area. This proved an invaluable learning experience for our team: one that affirmed our work in some areas, forced healthy questioning in others, and brought us into contact with a broad array of new friends and fresh ideas. This document summarizes the main inputs to our strategy refresh process, and samples what we learned from each of them.

We sought to conduct a refresh process that modeled our values around learning deeply, listening to the beneficiaries of our work as well as other voices typically excluded from the public education discourse, and being transparent about where we came out. Of course, the real learning and listening has only just begun. We are tremendously grateful for the contributions that many individuals and organizations have made to this strategy. Please continue to ask us questions, provide feedback, and offer new ideas as we all continue to learn together in the years ahead.

Inputs to the Teaching and Learning Strategy Refresh Process

An evaluation of evaluations from the past strategy

White papers on pressing strategy topics

Interviews with diverse stakeholders across the education ecosystem

Roundtable discussions with civil rights groups

Superintendent convenings to explore leadership and district change

School visits and conversations with teachers and students

Focus groups with students, parents, and employers

Research into the language we use to describe "Deeper Learning"

Grantee input and engagement

Research into trends, challenges, and opportunities

Ongoing feedback from grantees, partners, and colleagues

An evaluation of evaluations from the past strategy

To help synthesize lessons from our past work, we asked the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) to conduct an "evaluation of evaluations" covering several dozen evaluations that the Education Program commissioned between 2012 and 2017. The findings were naturally diverse, yet we heard an overall theme that while proof-of-concept evaluations for deeper learning made sense in the strategy's early stages, we also under-emphasized *learning* and *improvement*. This learning orientation will be more central to our evaluation work going forward, especially as we move into place-based work and other new areas for the Education Program.

White papers on pressing strategy topics

To address key questions about our work, we asked several grantees and thought leaders to provide brief position papers. These topics ranged from equity in public policy, to the changing nature of work, to innovation and technology, to OER and deeper learning, and more. While these topics took on different weights in our new strategy, it was quite instructive to digest such a breadth of nuanced views on issues that are too often reduced to sound bites or slogans.

Interviews with diverse stakeholders across the education ecosystem

Detailed interviews were core to the strategy refresh, helping us better understand where our past work has added unique value to public education, where it has fallen short, and where we might find the greatest future opportunities. We conducted some of these conversations ourselves; in other cases we relied on our partners at FSG and Hattaway Communications to do candid third party interviews. All told, we heard from over 60 individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including researchers, teachers, school leaders, policy experts, business groups, direct service nonprofits, funders, advocates, and parent and community organizations. Our goal was to hear both from our closest partners and from groups that historically have disagreed with us or may not have been focused on the same outcomes as we were.

Roundtable discussions with civil rights groups

One critique we heard of our past work is that we could have done more on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) over the past eight years. While DEI was a strong focus in all facets of our refresh process, we made particular efforts to interview and convene a number of civil rights organizations to hear their perspectives on the state of public education today and Hewlett's role therein. We listened carefully, and have already formed several new partnerships that are strengthening our work.

Superintendent convenings to explore leadership and district change
On three occasions, once at the beginning of our strategy refresh and twice towards the end, we convened different groups of district superintendents and chief academic officers to hear their perspectives on leading systems. We took particular interest in the role that leadership plays in supporting deeper learning-type practices, and explored how district leaders can go beyond piloting to actually spreading these practice within their systems. Furthermore, given the role of place in our new strategy, we heard valuable feedback from superintendents on how philanthropy can most productively engage with school districts in ways that honor local context, accelerate existing efforts, and build the capacity of systems to sustain improvements over time.

School visits and conversations with teachers and students
There's no substitute for spending ample time inside of schools – something our team will remember as we move forward in our work. In the course of this refresh, our team visited multiple schools, across a range of grade levels, geographies, and governance structures, to get a closer look at how deeper learning practices are understood and enacted in diverse contexts. We heard several times, for instance, how hard it is for teachers to shift their practice toward deeper learning, and about the importance of context and systems in supporting teachers to do so. But we were also encouraged by the range of settings in which new forms of learning have already taken hold – our challenge now is to spread such promising practices throughout surrounding systems.

Focus groups with students, parents, and employers
As another means to stay close to the actual work, we held a range of focus groups with students, parents, and employers to understand their hopes for education. We were struck here by the commonalities. While the exact words used might have varied, we heard remarkable agreement that schools should help students to think analytically, work well in teams, adapt to new challenges and problems, and work effectively with new facts and information. Success in our strategy will hinge in part on our ability to *keep listening* to these and other stakeholders as we explore how to strengthen their influence in shifting local systems.

Research into the language we use to describe "Deeper Learning"
We knew going into the refresh that the term "deeper learning"—which we had been using since 2010—had both pros and cons for our work. To get clear on what is most helpful to the field, we worked with Hattaway Communications and Univision to hold interviews, roundtables, and focus groups with a number of audiences to understand how different groups talk about teaching and learning. As with our other focus groups, we heard a great deal of alignment around what folks

aspire to from school, but a wide variety of terms used to describe similar concepts, along with some healthy skepticism toward education jargon ("deeper learning" included). Going forward, we will use the term more sparingly and only when it's helpful to broaden the tent.

Grantee input and engagement

Less a single input than an ongoing theme, our grantees – who know the most about our work – had a great deal of valuable guidance for us during the refresh. For instance, when we asked for feedback on our past work, grantees gave us high marks on advancing the state of knowledge and influencing public policy, but lower marks regarding our understanding of the social, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that affect our work. At other junctures of the refresh we sought grantee input from interviews, hosted a Twitter chat, and asked grantees for candid feedback on key aspects of our strategy as they began to emerge.

Research into trends, challenges, and opportunities

As a backdrop to these other inputs, our team and our partners at FSG assembled a great deal of secondary research to help us learn from the past, explore new ideas, and situate our work against today's context. We examined, for instance, recent developments on issues that have been central to our past work, such as supporting teacher practice or the use of assessment for learning. We also investigated topics further afield that may feature in subsequent years of our strategy, such as reducing school segregation and promoting democratic cultures within schools. We commissioned a literature review by Public Agenda that brought together polling trends about American attitudes towards K-12 public education. Finally, we spent considerable time exploring historical lessons from philanthropy's engagement in education, particularly when it comes to working effectively in place. We plan to carry all of these learnings forward.

Ongoing feedback from grantees, partners, and colleagues

At multiple points of the refresh process we sought out candid feedback, knowing this would strengthen our strategy. Sometimes this meant laying out a rough draft of our emerging thinking, and asking small groups of grantees or others partners to tell us what made sense and what did not. In keeping with the Hewlett Foundation's internal culture of learning we sought input from our colleagues from other program areas, giving us insight on how folks outside the education space might interpret our strategy, and helping us cut down on jargon. We plan to continue this emphasis on feedback loops and seeking input as the actual strategy unfolds – this type of learning together will be vital to the success of our shared work.