



## I. Overview

**Digital Ready** is a program designed to help NYC public middle and high schools enact **digital shifts for student-centered learning**. The program leverages professional development, technology, and partnerships to support student-centered innovations and successful implementation of the Citywide Instructional Expectations, including significant shifts in curriculum, teaching, and assessment practices. Digital Ready is managed by the NYC Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Readiness in partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment.

### Student-Centered Learning

A student-centered approach to learning builds relevance and engagement by putting students’ needs and interests first. Pedagogical shifts and strategic use of technology can improve the quality of our insights into students’ academic and social needs and enable us to personalize learning experiences to address individual interests and learning needs. Starting with the student’s experience can be especially meaningful and effective when combined with rigorous expectations, such as those called for by the Common Core Learning Standards. A student-centered approach can close gaps: between students and their education, between students and their academic success, and between students who “make it” and those who don’t.

## Digital Ready Benchmarks

As a result of their participation in the program, Digital Ready schools demonstrate increased capacity aligned to the following program benchmarks:

- A. Build and strengthen a **strong community of learners** for both students and adults that embraces a culture of innovation, respect for learning and for each other, and personal and academic accountability.
- B. Promote **student ownership of learning** via strategies such as goal setting, curricular choice and self-pacing, peer feedback, project-based learning, digital portfolios, and cultivating growth mindsets.
- C. Reshape and expand the **role of the educator** to focus on developing students through flexible facilitation of learning, fostering independence, providing frequent and timely feedback, and using student work to drive shifts in practice.
- D. Adopt, adapt, and create high-quality **digital resources** that harness a full range of learning experiences and are available 24/7 through a combination of online, off-site, and in-person delivery methods.
- E. Use a **mastery approach** to learning, including school-wide and/or subject-specific competencies, frequent formative assessments, and progress via mastery rather than task completion.
- F. **Partner with external organizations** to offer a range of informal and work-based learning opportunities that allow for exploration of interest-driven pathways that connect to course work.
- G. Use **design thinking** to create and implement student-centered approaches by identifying needs, setting goals, and developing a plan for prototyping, revising, and scaling successful practices.

## Program Levers

Digital Ready utilizes four “levers of change”—curriculum, teaching, assessment, and expanded learning opportunities—to help schools transform into technology-powered, student-centered learning environments. With ongoing support and collaboration from the DR team, schools design, test, and implement their own models, prioritizing and integrating work within each lever to build on strengths, develop new capacity, and maximize success for students and teachers alike.

1. **Curriculum:** Schools adopt, adapt, and, in some cases, create their own high-quality digital resources to deliver through online learning platforms. Curriculum is designed to promote inquiry, active learning, choice, and student ownership; and to teach and transfer skills and knowledge, building toward independent mastery of Common Core-aligned competencies that specify what students will learn and be able to do.
2. **Teaching:** Student-centered teaching builds on the practices outline in the Danielson rubric. Teachers will receive support in engaging their students in digitally-enabled, project-based learning, and work to give students autonomy in pacing and project topic.

Using real-time data about students' learning to inform flexible grouping, teachers can engage all learners, gain deeper knowledge into the needs of each student, use strategic questioning and discussion to communicate with students, teach students to reflect on their learning, and adopt technology tools that empower students to research, produce, and connect.

3. **Assessment:** Digital Ready supports schools in designing competencies that name skills and knowledge students are expected to gain. Mastery-based assessments yield detailed information about progress, and promote students' ownership of their own learning goals. Formative assessments can track progress in a granular, real-time fashion for learners, their teachers, and families. Summative assessments offer opportunities to show independent mastery via richer and more authentic performance tasks, often showcased in digital portfolios. A well-designed set of competencies can also help expand students' learning across classes and outside the classroom.
4. **Expanded learning opportunities (ELOs):** To nurture interest-driven pathways and offer students an opportunity to **Explore, Engage, and Practice** their interests, schools will partner with external organizations to offer a range of informal and project-based learning opportunities. ELOs will provide authentic contexts for learning, opportunities to learn from and collaborate with mentors and peers, and pathways to explore interests that connect back to school-based learning.

## Digital Ready Team

The Digital Ready team, based in the NYC Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Readiness, works closely within and across schools. We provide:

- **Support** in the form of:
  - Assistance with alignment of curriculum to Common Core Learning Standards including a review of existing curriculum resources and planning for adopting and adapting new resources
  - Alignment of practices to the Danielson Framework in each lever
  - Assistance with the integration of the DOE's College and Career Readiness benchmarks
- **Community** through relationships with other school teams working to design and implement their own pathways
  - Monthly lever group meetings for teachers based on specific levers (curriculum, teaching, assessment, and ELOs)
  - Quarterly meetings for all school teams to participate and showcase their work
- **Partnerships** with external organizations that provide youth with various kinds of learning experiences, including organizations focused on digital media and technology, STEM learning, and the arts

- **Technology** opportunities such as platforms or tools procured by the program for schools to prototype to support learning, assessment, communication, and collaboration, as well as guidance in using them purposefully
- **Per session** for teacher participation in professional development, workshops, and participation in lever group meetings

## II. Digital Ready in Your School

Digital Ready helps schools design and implement a change model that affects leadership, staff, and students. Participating schools receive one year of intensive support that includes funding of teachers' PD and collaboration on program goals, as well as regular in-school and off-site meetings and support from DR staff. By the end of the year, schools will have a comprehensive plan to sustain DR practices into the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. Additionally, each school has the opportunity to participate in ongoing community activities in the following year.

### School Leadership

The Digital Ready Team will work with school leadership to define attainable, measurable goals for the 2014-15 school year. Instructional and administrative support is paramount for the success of the program. School leadership must demonstrate active commitment to the Digital Ready framework—using student-centered learning as a path toward student-centered innovations and success with the Citywide Instructional Expectations—and should actively support the school team's work on goals aligned to the program's specified shifts in curriculum, teaching, assessment, and expanded learning opportunities.

**Prior to 2014-15 school year launch:** School leaders must attend two off-site meetings with the Digital Ready team in May 2014, organize their own pre-institute planning meeting with school staff in June 2014, and participate in a week-long summer institute in July 2014. School leaders will appoint appropriate teachers to lead the work of each lever (Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment, and Expanded Learning Opportunities), represent the school during the summer institute, and participate in monthly lever group meetings throughout the school year.

**During the school year:** Principals and appropriate assistant principals work with their school-based Digital Ready team to facilitate biweekly or monthly check-in meetings around goals and progress, as well as a mid-year and end-year full review with the Digital Ready team. Outside of the school building, principals and their school teams will meet with other school teams at quarterly meetings (November 4, 2014, February 2015, and May 2015) where they will showcase their Digital Ready work.

Each quarter, schools will document their progress toward the Digital Ready benchmarks in a 3-5 minute showcase video, shared with other participating schools at a quarterly meeting. School

leadership should oversee this process and provide common time for the school-based team to work on the showcase.

## School Staff

Everyone on staff will be affected by the Digital Ready program. School leadership will select four or more teachers to serve as school-based lever leaders who will each be responsible for one of the program's four levers of change: Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment, and Expanded learning opportunities.

### Important note about **Expanded Learning Opportunities:**

The lever leader in charge of expanded learning opportunities will be a liaison to outside partner organizations. Please keep in mind that some of this communication may be done outside of school time.

Prospective schools must demonstrate the ability to sustain outside partnerships in the school and the willingness to integrate ELOs. An example of the latter is the creation of time in the school schedule for an advisory during which students check in with a school-based coordinator of the student's learning experience out of school.

Lever leaders will:

- Design and prototype new student-centered shifts aligned to school goals and, by the end of the school year, showcase relevant DR benchmarks and student-centered practices.
- Turnkey tested promising practices to other staff members working in similar capacities.
- Collaborate on four videos over the course of the program year to showcase Digital Ready work at their schools.
- Attend a weeklong summer institute, monthly lever group meetings (usually outside of school time), monthly school-based team meetings, and three DR Quarterly meetings. Meetings serve as time to collaborate and share with others in the DR community.

Digital Ready team members will visit each lever leader on a monthly basis to offer personalized, teacher-centered support. This may include observing class, debriefing during a prep period, or meeting after school. With school leadership, all lever leaders are required to attend a week-long summer institute (July 14-18), and three half-day quarterly meetings during the school year.

## Students

Students will be at the center of design in the Digital Ready model. As teachers use the Design Thinking model to plan their courses, students may experience a variety of new practices such as project-based learning, mastery-based grading, and blended learning. A growth mindset will be useful for students, as well as teachers, as different practices are prototyped and tweaked throughout the year. Students will be asked to take a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the year and follow up assessments mid- and end-of-year. Since student-centered learning is the ultimate focus of the Digital Ready, student feedback is required to ensure programmatic success.

## III. Eligibility and Selection, Application Timeline

### Eligibility Criteria

The program is designed for NYC public middle and high schools that meet these eligibility criteria:

- Evidence of investment in digital learning, including infrastructure and professional development
- Progress Report grade of C or higher (if applicable)
- Rating of Proficient or higher on most recent Quality Review (if applicable); or Developing on the Quality Review with an A or B on the Progress report

### Selection Criteria

Ten (10) schools will be selected based on their interest in and capacity for implementing a student-centered learning program, judged by thorough completion of the application and a school visit conducted by the Digital Ready team. Capacity will be interpreted as having a clear instructional and pedagogical focus, strong administrative **leadership** and distributed leadership opportunities for teachers, **infrastructure and community** that support collaboration and communication among staff, **professional learning** opportunities that encourage teacher growth, and an interest in developing and sustaining **expanded learning opportunities** with organizations outside the school.

We will make an effort to select schools that create a balanced community of participants, including schools with particular strengths that align with the program goals, schools with similar visions and/or school populations, and schools that have a successful track record of implementing school-wide programs. Selected schools will be joining the first cohort of 10 Digital Ready schools:

- Academy of Innovative Technology
- Bronx Academy for Software Engineering
- Bronx Compass High School
- Brooklyn International High School
- City-As-School High School
- Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
- Frederick Douglass Academy VII
- Hillcrest High School
- Hudson High School for Learning Technologies
- Satellite Academy High School

## Application Timeline

By applying for this program, principals of accepted schools commit to the following timeline:

- February 14: applications due
- March 14: Round 1 notifications
- March 17-April 18: school visits for Round 2
- April 25: announcement of 2014-2015 Digital Ready schools
- May 6: meeting #1 of all principals, Made in NY Media Center, 30 John Street, DUMBO
- May 20: meeting #2 of all principals, site TBA
- May 21-June 28: at least two school-based meetings led by principal, first to introduce the program to the school staff, and second to convene the selected members of the team and begin planning
- July 14-18: summer institute, site TBA
- November 4: first quarterly meeting of 2014-15

Use the application form provided. Please be sure to answer all questions. When you have completed the application, rename the file with your school name in the title (e.g., school\_name.doc), and email it, along with any additional materials, to [team@digitalready.net](mailto:team@digitalready.net) by **5:00 PM on February 14, 2014**.

We welcome all questions. Please contact the Digital Ready team at [team@digitalready.net](mailto:team@digitalready.net) with your questions and contact information. You can also review our FAQ below.

## Bibliography

For further reading, the Digital Ready team recommends the following resources:

- [Students at the Center](#) series of papers from Jobs for the Future
- [Competency Works](#) clearinghouse from iNACOL, the American Youth Policy Forum, Jobs for the Future, the National Governors Association, and MetisNet
- [Making Mastery Work: A Close-Up View of Competency Education](#) by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation
- [Opportunity by Design: New High School Models for Student Success](#) from the Carnegie Corporation
- [College and Career Readiness Benchmarks](#) from the NYC Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Readiness

## IV. Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Digital Ready?

Digital Ready is a professional development program that helps schools design and implement their own transformation into technology-powered, student-centered learning environments. Participating schools get intensive, school-centered support to set goals and create a customized Digital Ready program. The Digital Ready Benchmarks (see page 2) articulate our program values.

### What will my school receive?

Participating schools receive:

- Direct in-school support from the Digital Ready team to help staff meet their goals and enact on-the-ground changes.
- During the 2014-15 school year, up to 350 hours of per session for school staff to use for DR-related work.
- Targeted software support based on interest and need (e.g., Learning Management Systems and other platforms, assessment and grading systems). Proposal submissions will be required.
- Connections with partner organizations that offer expanded learning opportunities for students for low or no cost to schools.
- Opportunities to share and collaborate with the community of Digital Ready schools.

### What are the Digital Ready “levers of change”?

Digital Ready uses four “levers of change” to drive student-centered innovations in each participating school. The chosen levers are critical parts of each school’s operation:

- **Curriculum** shifts that promote rigor, student ownership, engagement, choice, and digital literacy
- **Teaching** shifts in practice and use of digital tools to promote student participation and deepen learning
- **Assessment** shifts that incorporate elements of a mastery-based approach, in which student progress is measured by the acquisition of skills and content knowledge rather than by time
- **Expanded learning opportunities** that give students learning experiences beyond school curriculum (and often school walls) that connect to and enhance their classroom learning

## What does implementation look like?

Implementation varies by school. Schools develop their own goals for the program based on identified needs and use that to guide their plans for moving through the Digital Ready Benchmarks. The implementation process includes:

- Prototyping
- Measuring, documenting, and sharing results
- Sharing and scaling successful shifts in practice
- Building sustainability of program beyond year one

Each participating school communicates primarily with a designated point person on the Digital Ready team. However, the full Digital Ready team helps each school implement the four levers of change.

## How can schools improve student outcomes using Digital Ready?

[Current research](#) demonstrates that schools that focus on student needs and interests can improve student outcomes. As schools enact their student-centered changes through the Digital Ready work, students will be exposed to new practices that:

- Establish high expectations
- Engage students' interests
- Hold students accountable in a way that may not currently be prevalent in your school

## What indicators of success are schools expected to demonstrate?

The Digital Ready Benchmarks (see page 2) are designed to coordinate the success indicators stated by the Citywide Instructional Expectations, Common Core and the Danielson Framework. The Benchmarks provide a design framework for schools to be successful within the parameters already required by the NYC Department of Education. Schools will be asked throughout the year to reflect and perform self-evaluations on the success of their prototypes, communicate their findings with the rest of the group, and explain how their work supports the Digital Ready Benchmarks.

## What is required of participating schools?

Digital Ready deliverables include:

- **Active involvement** including participation in regular school-based meetings documented with notes and/or evidence of working toward DR goals (e.g., student work, lesson plans, and artifacts that can be collected and archived to show growth); active

communication with DR team and outside partners; and attendance at DR meetings including quarterly whole team meetings, monthly lever group meetings, and monthly one-on-one meetings with program staff.

- **School leadership** must demonstrate ongoing commitment to the school's work on program goals by providing feedback, work time, and timely communication with teachers and DR program staff.
- **Lever leaders** are teachers who lead the work of each lever in their school, share ideas, information, and best practices from monthly lever group meetings to staff at your school.
- **Commitment to the Digital Ready model** as demonstrated by sustained effort to use the Benchmarks as a framework for shaping goals, developing prototypes, and assessing your school change work.

Specific actions and deadlines are personalized for each school in an effort to model school-centered work. Schools are required to provide ongoing evidence that internal goals and deadlines are being met.

### What are the logistics of this program during the school year?

During the school year, you will have a committed Digital Ready point person who will visit your school on a regular basis to support and facilitate DR work. Each month, school-based DR team members will participate in their respective lever group meeting (curriculum, teaching, assessment or ELOs) and deepen their knowledge in order to share work to other staff members. All schools will come together on a quarterly basis to share their experiences, best practices and learning from the previous quarter.

### How can this program be presented to school staff in a meaningful way?

Principals from accepted schools will participate in two kick-off meetings in May 2014. Materials and activities from these meetings will provide program information to share with their staff. The DR program team will also work with you to plan an appropriate introductory experience for your staff.

### How many teachers should join our DR implementation team?

The principal must designate one teacher for each lever of change, for a total of four teachers at minimum. You may also want to add a person with high leverage in your school who would be integral to implementing whole school change, such as your AP or technology specialist, to the implementation team. With the principal, school teams will be made up of 5 or 6 staff members.

## What are the qualities of a DR lever leader?

The ideal Digital Ready lever leader is:

- committed to student-centered learning
- comfortable with taking educated risks
- comfortable with ambiguous and changing situations
- willing to commit time to making change happen at the school

Lever leaders commit to:

- leading the work of that lever of change in their school
- attending a monthly lever group meeting (usually 2 hours) outside of school time
- attending quarterly meetings with other DR schools outside of the school building
- attending regular team meetings in school
- meeting one-on-one with Digital Ready staff at least monthly

**If you have further questions or concerns, reach out to the Digital Ready team directly at [team@digitalready.net](mailto:team@digitalready.net).**