

The 2051 Challenge Incubator

Draft Report

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1.0 Why Must Independent Schools Innovate?

The exploding capacity of digital technology as well as new research on teaching and learning are impacting what and how students learn. It is well documented that student potential can be enhanced by personalized learning – an approach that recognizes and values differences in how they learn and are assessed. Now, student ability to find and critically evaluate information is at least as important as mastery of knowledge. Further, we create opportunities to develop their attitude and capacity to contribute to a society that increasingly values innovation through constant learning and problem solving, collaboration and superior communication skills. Traditional school organization, student/teacher relationships and access to information must evolve to reflect these new approaches.

Concurrently, population demographics, increasing tuition fees, the nature of parent demands and competition for students due to the availability of educational alternatives are putting financial and strategic pressures on independent schools.

2.0 The CAIS Response – Project 2051 – July 2015

Consistent with the CAIS mission, vision and values, 22 academic and 22 business leaders from 44 different CAIS schools came together in July 2015. They examined 22 international schools that have demonstrated exemplary innovative improvements to the student learning experience while managing cost per student. They looked to identify the areas of innovation and determine how they could be programmatically and financially supported in the long term. Participants were to return to their schools with a clear sense of the imperative for innovative change and possible areas for school improvement. The findings (“WHERE” is innovation taking place and “WHAT” are they doing?), including the imperative (“WHY” innovate?), are outlined in [The 2051 Project - Addressing the Dual Challenge](#) And a summary follows:

2.1 Academic Program

When asked about opportunities to innovate within the academic program, participants identified the following:

- Timetable – flexibility in scheduling
- Experiential learning opportunities – exchange and co-op programs
- Online micro-school – extending the CAIS Academic Program
- Blended learning and the use of technology
- Personalized learning
- Project-based learning
- Self-directed learning
- Learning environments
- Assessments – students, parents, and faculty
- Collaborative faculty PD

2.2 Business and Operations

When asked about opportunities to innovate within business and operations, participants identified the following:

- Enrolment
- Tuition
- Boards facilitating strategic choice surrounding innovation
- Flexible and adaptive financial plans
- Partnerships
- Extended course offerings
- New hires designated to develop and initiate innovation initiatives
- Leveraging the collaborative business culture of shared resources
- Leveraging technology to reduce costs
- Faculty structures and salaries

2.3 Discussions and Questions

Participants were encouraged to identify the most important challenges and questions confronting Boards, Heads and Leadership Teams as they plan for the future. Among the challenges and questions raised:

- How best to ensure that the Board, Head and Leadership Team – already challenged to find adequate capacity for strategic planning – allow for the opportunity and time needed to address and confront these important issues?
- Are some schools in danger of over-servicing their communities – especially considering the attendant costs?
- Where should our strategic attentions be: short-term, medium-term and long-term?
- How afraid should we be, especially considering the ease with which online schools can be created, and as we consider the many public schools that offer excellent education?
- Where are CAIS schools' continued strength and permanence most at risk?
- To what extent are CAIS schools already innovating? How well are schools managing their innovation initiatives? Are these strategies being appropriately shared?
- As schools develop innovative strategies, how will Heads and Boards articulate and share these strategies to help their schools achieve sustainable competitive advantages? How will success be measured?
- What proportion of a school's resources should be allocated to this task of identifying and funding strategic innovations?

- As we innovate, how can CAIS schools best collaborate with other CAIS schools, some of which are competitors?
- How can CAIS schools ensure that these innovations create value for their communities – including students, academic staff and parents – now and in the future?

2.4 Insights and Conclusions

There were a variety of insights and conclusions, including:

- Strategy and innovation are two different ways to plan. Organizations are mostly built for ongoing operations with clear destinations, not to execute significant, foundational innovation.
- Strategic planning is routine, analytic, focused on existing performance indicators, and assumes the future looks like today.
- Innovative planning is disruptive, creative, focused on new insights, and assumes the future is dynamic.
- Innovation is an imperative; threats to our schools are imminent; the status quo will not solve future issues and challenges; if we don't act, there will be actions taken by the larger community that we have no control over. As one participant noted: "The burning platform is as important as the compelling vision."
- Independent school expenses will continue to increase at a rate above inflation, with the estimate being the Consumer Price Index plus 2%.
- Data suggests that by 2019 roughly 50% of high school courses will be delivered online in some form or fashion.
- The entire school community – teachers, students and parents – thrives by creating win-win-win relationships. It's important to build continuous trust, secure engagement early in the process, look at problems from others' perspective, and over-communicate.
- We should continue to investigate non-traditional revenue streams, including online initiatives, facility rentals, etc.
- As schools begin to focus on innovation initiatives, they must determine their strengths and weaknesses.
- How schools implement innovation will vary from institution to institution.
- Both academic and business leadership is critical to successful innovation.

- In the new CAIS Accreditation Standards, schools are required to have an innovation strategy: “Standard 11, Indicator 5: The School is aware of and continues to search out new approaches to education and implement those aligned to the mission of the School.”
- CAIS schools have more in common than we think, and there is strength and power in our numbers.
- Student-driven passion – self-directed, project-based – can be a powerful force.
- We should leverage connections within CAIS to enable students to learn on a national and international scale.
- Schools around the world are embracing various forms of innovation. Great schools of the future will create strategies that focus on educational and technological innovation as well as business model innovation.

3.0 The 2051 Challenge Incubator

3.1 What Progress Have We Made and How Can We Accelerated Innovation in CAIS Schools?

To measure progress, support and further promote innovative change in CAIS schools, the 2051 Challenge Incubator was hosted by Selwyn School in Montreal prior to the April 2017 National Leaders Conference. There were three learning outcomes for participants:

1. Understand how Project 2051 encourages and drives innovation in CAIS schools
2. Learn from the innovation stories from an exemplary international school and nearly 50 participating CAIS schools (effective strategies and challenges in managing change)
3. Understand and apply a framework to support and drive innovation in participant schools.

3.1 The Pre-Work to the Challenge Incubator

Building relationships and a support network was a key outcome of the July 2015 Project 2051 gathering. To integrate 19 school leaders new to the 2051 process with the 29 previous participants, all submitted a brief biography that is posted on the CAIS website.

To meet participant outcomes, [Grant Lichtman's](#) definition of innovation was shared with participants, “Innovation is the process of that realignment through creation and implementation of new ideas that bring value to your school community.” With this understanding of innovation, participants were asked to complete an inventory of an innovation previously implemented at their school within the framework of [John Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change](#). Completing this reflection familiarized school leaders with the Kotter model, outlined the process (the “HOW”) of innovation, identified challenges and barriers to innovation and tied the change to the school’s value proposition.

To further accelerate the innovation process participants identified the urgency and successful outcome of a planned strategic innovation in their own school.

The table summarizing the participants' previous innovation and a planned innovation can be found in [Appendix 1](#). The Pework Template can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

3.2 The 2051 Challenge Incubator – The Launch

To launch the Incubator, Chip Kimball, Superintendent and Tim Stuart, Executive Director of Strategic Programs from the [Singapore American School](#) presented their story of innovation through conversation and an extensive video, chronicling their approach, the risks and challenges they faced and the progress made in changing the culture of an already successful school. An account of their journey [Wild and Thoughtful Innovation](#) is published in the NAIS Spring 2017 Independent School journal. Chip and Tim's biographies can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

On Saturday, facilitators, Justin Medved (The York School) and Garth Nichols (Havergal College) established a mindset of optimism, open-mindedness, collaboration and risk as participants gathered in groups based on the previous innovation in their school. Participants shared their accounts in the context of each of Kotter's 8 steps, while Advisory Board members and Tim Stuart supported their discussion and helped record both general and specific steps in their process. These steps were posted for the next step in the incubator.

The detailed Program and Responsibility Chart can be found in [Appendix 4](#) and the Working Placement is in [Appendix 5](#).

The areas of focus in participants' previous innovation were:

- Strategic planning
- Timetabling/scheduling
- Project based learning
- Collaborative faculty professional development
- Extended course offerings
- Learning environment
- Blended learning
- Personalized learning
- Whole school programming
- Global education
- Online micro school
- Experiential learning

Participants were then re-grouped based on the planned innovation identified in their pre-work submission. Facilitators distinguished the differences between change management and leadership and asked participants to develop posters, maps, statements, charts as they worked both independently and collaboratively through the Kotter 8-Step model on their planned innovation. Both facilitators and participants frequently reviewed the posted steps generated in the morning session. An individual innovation road map that consolidated actions in each of the 8-Steps was the final outcome of an intensive day of thought, learning and collaboration.

The areas of focus in participants' proposed innovation were:

- Personalized learning
- Timetable and schedule
- Self directed learning

- Enrolment
- Learning environments
- Collaborative faculty professional development
- Project based learning
- Faculty compensation
- Recognizing student success
- Leveraging technology
- Strategic planning
- Extended course offerings

On Sunday morning, participants posted their innovation road maps and were encouraged to identify 3 CAIS schools to visit, 2 non-CAIS resources to explore or share with the group and 1 new insight into change leadership gained through the experience. Images of the road maps can be found in [Appendix 6](#).

The 2051 Challenge Outcomes and Next Steps

Thanks to Anne-Marie Kee's vision; the guidance of the Advisory Board and our facilitators, Justin and Garth and the hard work and enthusiasm of participants we now have:

- 49 accounts of meaningful and successful innovative change in CAIS schools
- The inspiring story of the strategies and leadership demonstrated at the Singapore American School
- A core group of school leaders familiar with a highly-regarded model of change leadership armed with and action plan for further innovative leadership
- A network of positive relationships and a keen desire to share this with other CAIS schools and their own Heads of School and Chairs.
- Affirmation of the importance of supporting innovative leadership by Dan Sheehan (Vice Chair of the Board of Governors, St. Michaels University School) and Grant Lichtman (author and former school leader), who presented at the 2017 National Leadership Conference.

Our task now is to sustain the momentum generated by the 2051 Project and Incubator and continue to provide support to develop innovative leadership for all CAIS schools.

- Gather and prepare the resources and participant contributions from the Incubator.
- Complete a full report of the 2051 Challenge Incubator to share with all CAIS schools.
- Establish a network for participants and other CAIS schools willing to support colleagues by sharing their work and expertise.
- Input was gathered from the Heads and Chairs October 2017 conference. A summary can be found in [Appendix 7](#)

The value and volume of work completed by participants representing a breadth of leadership in CAIS schools was extraordinary and has made clear that our schools have much to contribute to a growing understanding of educational innovation worldwide. We must continue our efforts to build collaborative efforts and expertise within and across our member schools to ensure our teachers and our programs can best prepare students for rapid change and challenges in the years ahead.