Phase 2: Implementation

Progress, Impact, & Emerging Learnings

"Phase 2 took us from the conceptual to the actual: we were having to think more concretely; activities for the public, students and staff took shape and were implemented; and it encouraged us to look ahead at substantive challenges waiting on the horizon."
The second year of the Homegrown Talent Initiative kicked off in July 2021 at an in-person – yes, in-person – team lead retreat in beautiful Buena Vista, Colorado. Adorned in masks, socially distanced, a strict no hugging or handshaking policy in place, and fresh mountain air sweeping through the room, the year of implementation kicked off during a persisting global pandemic.

What also persisted was the relentless commitment each HTI team had to their students, colleagues, partners, and communities. Moreover, communities committed to each other as peers and to the promise of the Homegrown Talent Initiative – access to high-quality learning experiences, building homegrown stewards of their local aspirations, diverse stakeholders at the table, and a strong educonomy.

HTI superintendents, principals, project coordinators, and other key staff grounded themselves in the work, shared fears about the impacts of the pandemic, and gained momentum and inspiration as they looked ahead to the uncertain school year. Seven teams (8 districts) were awarded a total of $750,000 to bring their career-connected visions to life across rural Colorado.

Phase 2 of the Homegrown Talent Initiative brought patience, agility, and innovation. It also brought setbacks, turnover, and mental health concerns. The courage and perseverance to overcome – to thrive and not just survive – continues to leave us in awe.

Colorado Succeeds and the Colorado Education Initiative have witnessed what’s possible when communities build authentic relationships, keep students at the center, commit to radical collaboration, and have the supports and guidance to innovate and build long-lasting structures for the future of their educonomies. We are thrilled to share a recap of year 2 of this special project.

This recap includes an overview of key goals and activities throughout the 2020-21 school year, impact data, individual community updates, emerging learnings, and what’s ahead for HTI, none of which would have been accomplished without an ecosystem of critical friends:

To our philanthropic partners: Thank you for your catalytic leadership and commitment to this project. Your unwavering support, excitement, and contributions make this work possible.

To our extended HTI Central family of thought partners, including Gretchen Morgan, Griff Wirth, Matt Klausmeier, Katherine Novinski, and the Center for Reinventing Public Education: Thank you for the expertise, intentionality, and support of this project and the communities we engage. Your collaboration and contributions truly make the difference.

And to the rural communities who trust us to support and guide them along this journey: You are exemplars in an education system long overdue for change. Your commitment to ensuring all students have high-quality experiences that lead them to success in education, career, and life is an inspiration.

With humility, excitement, & eagerness,

Colorado Succeeds & Colorado Education Initiative
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Section 1:
General Project Information
HTI is rooted deeply in the context of local community assets and needs, deploying a community-led design thinking process to develop a profile of a graduate and career-connected learning experiences. Through HTI, rural communities have the resources and technical assistance to create partnerships, build empathy, and understand existing assets and barriers in order to develop high-quality work-based learning programs that meet the diverse needs of their students, families, and businesses.

A 3-year project, nearly $2M in direct investments to rural communities, and robust external evaluation and learning agenda.

To achieve a new vision for rural Colorado, we need to support actions that create agile learners, educators, and systems. The Homegrown Talent Initiative helps enable the conditions through community engagement, durable mechanisms for cross-sector collaborations, and philanthropic support to seed new innovations.

To facilitate this, HTI utilizes the Career-Connected Learning Continuum, developed by Colorado Succeeds and its partners. This framework was explored in-depth with the cohort to support their understanding and ability to design high-quality learning experiences within their unique contexts.
Theory of Change

The project’s external evaluation partner, the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), developed a Theory of Change for the Homegrown Talent Initiative during Phase 1. This framework has driven CRPE’s research agenda as rural communities are implementing programming and beginning to demonstrate outcomes of the HTI process. In addition to rural communities becoming champions for systemic change and serving as proof points for high-quality, career-connected learning, it is the goal that this Theory of Change will serve as a proof point and a model that can be replicated across diverse communities nationwide.

Rural communities drive systemic change through collaborative partnership

Enabling Conditions:
- Rural districts work together in partnership to share learning
- State policy supports rural initiatives
- Funders provide financial support to support implementation
- Nonprofits provide technical expertise to support implementation

Goals
- Coloradoans have hope for their future and are pursuing a meaningful life as they define it.
- Colorado communities are thriving socially and economically.
- All youth are graduating with the skills they need for post-secondary success.
- The K12 system has the resources and programs to deliver high-quality learning that reduces gaps in opportunity and attainment.
- Sustained and responsive community partnerships across K12, higher education, civic, and industry, act as the drivers of local and state change.

 collusion community strategy for redesigning learning

Communities create and sustain a shared vision of success for all students, with special attention to those furthest from opportunity, via site-based exemplars, profiles of a graduate, and implementation plans, which together set out a new vision for career-connected learning.

The K12 education system is redesigned to connect students with real-world opportunities and deepen their engagement in learning.

Local industry connects to the education system in a sustained and responsive partnership to inform programming and offer work-based learning opportunities.

Higher education connects to the education system in a sustained and responsive partnership to align credits and credentials.

The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) is a nonpartisan research center who envisions a public education system that truly prepares every student for the challenges of the future. To support this effort, CRPE studies efforts to rewire the system for school coherence, ongoing improvement, and excellence for every student – from the classroom, to the school, to policy implications. Learn more at CRPE.org.
Leadership Structures

- **Equity**: Formal and informal structures to elevate the voices of those who are furthest from opportunity, so their views influence the content and processes of your work.
- **Leadership**: Regular local HTI core team meetings; Monthly HTI Central (CEI + CS) coaching opportunities.
- **Change Management**: Regular and clearly communicated meeting structures are in place to facilitate the effective management of the implementation cycle; Structures for evaluation, data collection, and sharing learning exist and are reaching all constituent groups.
- **Movement Building**: Strategic communications through earned media, social media, school + community outlets; Interactive dialogue with school boards & community stakeholder groups (councils, chambers, etc.).
- **Learning**: Full participation in all HTI cohort meetings to share successes, learn from others, and manage knowledge and progress towards goals.
- **Educonomy**: Systems for management and expansion of partnerships with industry and higher education; Continuous identification of new strategies to expose students to career-connected learning and experiences.

Leadership Dispositions

- **Equity**: Ensure meaningful means of influence from learners & families furthest from opportunity. **→ Most challenging for team leads**
- **Innovation**: Ability to pivot if findings aren’t good or results are mixed, especially for target audience; Piloting small versions of program ideas as tests to surface and solve problems for students and partners; Communication with broader community before, during, and after tests to ensure stakeholders learn alongside the project; Look for existing programs that can be adapted or eliminated to create efficiencies or have greater alignment or impact.
- **User-Centered**: Let business and learner feedback drive sensemaking and problem-solving; Persistently keep work centered on the graduate profile. **→ Most resonates with team leads**
# Roadmap Recap

## Phase 1: Explore & Design

### Community Teams Formed
**June-Aug 2019**

CS and CEI develop RFP process that identifies 8 rural teams based on overall readiness, leadership, and capacity.

Strategic planning for Phase 1 begins in preparation of HTI cohort kickoff in September.

### Empathy Building
**Sept-Nov 2019**

A kickoff convening & site visit to exemplar Cañon City support teams in understanding the Career-Connected Learning Continuum, build empathy, design thinking, and short-cycle innovation.

### Exploration & Pre-Design
**Dec 2019-Feb 2020**

Individual community site visits conducted to engage stakeholders in the graduate profile design process and develop small-scale WBL tests.

Convened a Team Lead Retreat focusing on strategic technical assistance such as business and higher ed partnerships, policy & advocacy, and communications.

### Design & Testing
**March-May 2020**

Teams ran small tests to inform the development of an implementation plan for the 2020-21 school year.

Site visit to exemplar St. Vrain to learn about district-wide change, building a robust continuum of supports, and formalized student-centered implementation plans.

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## Phase 2: Implementation

### Pre-Implementation
**July-Aug 2020**

July 2020 Kickoff Retreat to navigate impacts of COVID, prepare for stakeholder engagement, and 90-day plan.

Monthly coaching and key progress indicators established.

### Fall Implementation
**Sept-Nov 2020**

Implementation begins with monthly coaching supports.

Data Tracker evaluation tool developed and implemented.

Fall Retreat focused on grad profile integration, evaluation, equity, & 90-day plans.

### Winter Re-Launch
**Dec 2020-Feb 2021**

Mid-Year Evaluation conducted, unlocking second half of implementation funds.

Virtual Career-Connects launch.

Ongoing coaching and technical assistance to support semester 2 implementation and scale.

### Evaluation
**June 2020**

Data Trackers and Phase 3 plans evaluated to inform funding decisions.
Section 2:
Phase 2 Impact Data
HTI team members were surveyed after each major engagement over the course of the year. At the conclusion of Phase 2, a final survey was administered. Most respondents are considered team leads – superintendents, principals, and coordinators – with some representing other key staff roles within the core design team.

There was a variance in total responses throughout the year, with 10 for both the Summer and Fall retreat surveys, and 26 for the Spring retreat survey (along with a more diverse representation of team members). The Phase 2 year-end survey saw 23 responses, 12 considered team leads and 11 representing other key staff.

This section highlights key insights, reflections, impact achieved, and knowledge gained during Phase 2, as well as a comparative analysis from Phase 1 to Phase 2.

Impact of Cohort Activities

Data reflects averages across surveys disseminated post-retreats in the Summer, Fall, and Spring.

90% of respondents felt retreats were a good use of their team’s time and/or increased momentum and energy.

99% of respondents felt continuing the cohort model over Phase 2 was valuable or extremely valuable.

94% of respondents felt site visits (virtually or in-person) to their community to be valuable or extremely valuable.

99% of respondents felt continued progress monitoring (coaching on mindsets, structures, and processes) with HTI Central coaching teams was valuable or extremely valuable.

This cohort sustains our team and inspires me as a leader. I walk away energized from every conversation with CEI, CS, and the district teams.

Most Desired supports in Phase 2

- Communications & Marketing
- “In the Weeds” Technical Assistance for Career-Connected Learning
- Ongoing Coaching & Accountability

Most Valuable components of Phase 2

- Site Visits (virtual & in-person)
- Graduate Profile Supports
- Individual Coaching
- Asynchronous Connections with Cohort Districts
Phase 2 Impact Data

For most post-retreat survey questions, HTI Central noted a slight decline in satisfaction from Summer to Fall, decreasing the overall annual average. This trend has supporting data associated to the switch to virtual retreats and overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Most Valuable component of retreats**

- **Team Time**
- **Collaborating with and Learning from Cohort Districts**

**Least Valuable**

- **Having to Convene and Stay Focused Virtually**

> Summer Maloney, Holyoke, receives implementation funding at the kickoff retreat in Buena Visit (July)

**The COVID Factor**

Teams were asked how their participation in HTI supported their ability to navigate learning and educational experiences during the pandemic:

> “HTI helped *keep us grounded and moving forward.*”

> “Phase 2 *kept us on task for the greater mission of expanding pathways for students in a year when the day-to-day operation of a school during a pandemic demanded our attention. We would not have come as far as we did without the regular check-ins.*”

> “The flexibility to navigate through COVID without the consistent pressure to meet deadlines…at our own pace. We were struggling to keep on task before COVID hit, then it really pushed us back. *We made such progress this spring, which was due to the flexibility we were given previously.*”

> “Grateful for CEI, Colorado Succeeds, and the district teams! It's this work and the connections we have with each other that give us the strength to keep going!”

**COVID-19!**

Re-entry, logistics, student and staff well-being

**What Kept HTI Teams Up at Night?**
Phase 2 Impact Data

Career-Connected Learning

To what extent did this phase of HTI foster the creation of and/or strengthen existing career-connected learning opportunities for your students?

- Phase 1
- Phase 2

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Great Extent Moderate Extent Small Extent

Net Promoter Score

Phase 1 NPS = 76

Phase 2 NPS = 79

Students from East & West Grand participate in exciting local internship opportunities.

To what extent did this phase of HTI increase your school community’s ability to create more equitable outcomes for students?

- Phase 1
- Phase 2

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Great Extent Moderate Extent Small Extent

Teams noted that while they are hyper aware of the work that needs to be done, the year was primarily focused on continuing to build structures and systems.

Key barriers referenced included transportation and communication.
Phase 2 Impact Data

Power of a Plan

HTI teams were asked throughout Phase 2 to assess their belief in the impact of their community’s implementation plan pertaining to the following:

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- ...is a key lever for engaging marginalized communities
- ...will support economic recovery in our region
- ...increases our ability to improve equitable outcomes in our system
- ...sets us up for long-term sustainability

Influence of the Graduate Profile

Data from Phase 2 Year-End Survey, n=23.

I feel confident that...

Students are motivated to develop our graduate profile competencies... **83% to a great or moderate extent.**

Teachers are incorporating our graduate profile into instructional experiences... **57% to a great or moderate extent.**

Local business and community partners integrate our graduate profile with work-based learning experiences provided to students... **56% to a great or moderate extent.**

Our graduate profile is driving change for our students’ education experience... **83% to a great or moderate extent.**

*The structure that [HTI Central] has in place for supporting districts in their HTI work is the most effective school change initiative with which I have engaged.*
Phase 2 Impact Data

Engaging the Educonomy Percentages reflect to a great and moderate extent

To what extent HTI team members felt the strategies implemented during Phase 2 aligned to the needs of their educonomy stakeholders:

- Community Partners 91%
- Students 100%
- Families 82%
- School Board Members 73%
- Higher Education Partners 78%

Leveraging State & Local Policy Conditions
Data from Phase 2 Year-End Survey, Team Leads Only, n=12.

- 59% My awareness of local & state policy conditions, relevant to what we are implementing with HTI, increased to a great or moderate extent.
- 67% My ability to take advantage of local & state policy conditions, relevant to what we are implementing with HTI, increased to a great or moderate extent.

“I appreciate all the resources and assistance that is provided to our community. Through our continued engagement in the HTI process, I have already seen monumental changes happening within the community that strengthen us, and I am even more excited to see what is next.”
Baseline Student Survey Data

HTI Central supported each district in developing and administering student-level surveys in Spring 2021. Many questions were consistent across the cohort, with some customized to reflect their unique contexts. The below analysis was conducted by CRPE and represents initial findings using this baseline data. Note that not all questions pertained to HTI.

Generally, HTI’s rural students don’t think school is very useful.

48% of youth said what they learn in school is useful to their daily life.

But, they do think school is preparing them for the future and are optimistic about their own future.

76% said classes and adults in school are preparing them for the future.
71% said that what they learn in school is useful for the future.
92% think they have a great future ahead.
91% believe they will get a good job.

Students turn to family first to learn about careers and discuss their futures, and most HTI students grades 10-12 plan to go to college or work after high school.

Graduate Profile

43% of youth said they were familiar with the graduate profile.

- Percentage reflects average across all communities, while the individual community data varied from 25% to 67%.
- HTI Central also noted that while students may be aware of both the visual and competencies that encompass their graduate profile, they may not be familiar with the term “Graduate Profile,” which may have led to lower ranking of awareness.
3 in 5 HTI high school students accessed career-connected learning opportunities during the 2020-21 school year.

- Those who did were more likely to participate in career exposure and exploration activities than career experiences.

HTI students are generally satisfied with the career-connected opportunities provided.

And students indicate there is still room to improve the relevance of career-connected learning opportunities.

During the activities you participated in, to what extent did they help you...
Section 3: Community Updates
Community Updates

Throughout the 2020-21 school year, Homegrown Talent Initiative districts alongside their larger school communities continued to reimagine educational experiences so that all students have access to high-quality learning experiences and numerous pathways to success beyond high school. Despite the innumerable challenges the pandemic posed for all schools and communities, incredible progress and hope persisted.

This section outlines key updates for each community, including their “breakthrough moves” across core HTI elements including the graduate profile, career-connected learning, and systems change; as well as their Phase 2 implementation priorities, progress data and reflections. Data was compiled from ongoing check-ins and team lead retreats, mid-year and year-end data trackers (HTI evaluation and reporting tool), Phase 3 implementation plans, and the Phase 3 kickoff retreat (July 2021).

Cohort-Wide Analysis on Phase 2 Progress

- **Graduate Profile:** Overall success and depth of integration aligned with communities who had greater engagement from students, teachers, and partners. However, more supports and time needed to collaboratively translate traits into practice (e.g., career-connected learning & curriculum).

- **Career-Connected Learning:** Internship programs excelled, with growth in opportunities offered, partnerships, and alignment to graduate profiles. New courses and concurrent enrollment also grew across all teams, though more training is likely needed to strengthen strategic partnerships with higher ed and leverage braided funding opportunities. COVID was a barrier to career exposure activities such as career fairs & guest speakers; this will be a key priority during Phase 3, especially for younger students.

- **Innovation & Equity:** Teams recognize there’s more work to be done to reach all students – especially those furthest from opportunity – with innovative and personalized learning experiences. New equity strategies developed over the school year in some communities, including equity task forces or committees and school culture surveys.

- **Student Engagement & Agency:** Teams who intentionally engaged students in the design and feedback process felt more confident in their implementation plans overall.

- **Parent & Family Engagement:** Noted as a key priority for Phase 3 and sustaining the work long-term, teams are exploring how to upskill staff on engaging diverse families.
Community Updates

Cohort-Wide Analysis on Phase 2 Progress

- **Change Management & Leadership**: Teams spent significant time establishing clearer roles and responsibilities across their core implementation teams, including several with new subcommittee structures that led to tactical progress and increased collaboration. More integration of teachers is needed along with continued communication of “the why” to support buy-in from all stakeholders.

- **Community & Partner Engagement**: These efforts were generally successful despite COVID limitations (e.g., many communities kept trying to engage in relationship building but found it challenging to deepen through actual experiences). Industry partnerships for internships and other career-connected learning grew for each team, while higher education partnerships continued to vary.

- **Evaluation**: Teams were more tuned into evaluation overall with increased ability to analyze and reflect on data, use trackers, and identify evaluation needs for next school year.

- **Communications & Marketing**: Even with provided technical assistance, teams continue to name this as a capacity/expertise barrier, with an awareness of the importance of consistent communications with all education stakeholders. However, there remains a disconnect as to when and how.

- **COVID Factor**: Across all teams, COVID barriers also presented opportunities, including more time spent testing ideas, soliciting feedback, and engaging others in the process.

**Communities differed in the number of programs they implemented, with most prioritizing internships and industry-based certifications.**

![Bar chart showing the number of new and expanded programs implemented by different communities.]

- Clear Creek: 3 new, 4 expanded
- Durango: 1 new, 2 expanded
- Holyoke: 1 new, 2 expanded
- Elizabeth: 1 new, 4 expanded
- Fremont: 2 new, 4 expanded
- East Grand: 1 new, 5 expanded
- Montezuma-Cortez: 0 new, 2 expanded
- West Grand: 1 new, 2 expanded

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**Homegrown Talent Initiative**

**REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION**
Community Updates

Original Phase 2 Implementation Plans

- Develop and implement 5-6th grade career exploration program
- Shift ICAP to 7-12th grade Seminar with guided curriculum, pathways, capstones, and career fairs
- Expand internship program and industry partnerships
- Create new Career & Post-Secondary Center for student and family engagement

- Develop pathways program including exploration, CTE, certificates, and work-based learning opportunities
- Align Graduate Profile to career-connected learning curriculum/pathways
- Steward community partnerships to support strategies

- Develop and implement 8th-12th Pathways program and curriculum, including postsecondary opportunities
- Adapt to flexible schedule allowing for in-person, virtual, and out of school career-connected learning
- Expand certificate programs and concurrent enrollment

- Enhance work-based learning through job shadow, mentorship, internships, and capstones
- Build leadership capacity with students and staff
- Provide regionally-coordinated, industry-aligned CTE opportunities

- Build district-wide career-connected continuum of career exposure and Graduate Profile skill building
- Expand CTE credentials, certificates, and concurrent enrollment
- Explore P-TECH and Project Consultancies
- Engage in the Rural Innovation Zone – a multi-district regional partnership

CTE: Career and Technical Education
ICAP: Individual Career and Academic Plan
P-TECH: Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools
Clear Creek School District

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress
Clear Creek School District (CCSD) continues to develop strong community partnerships. From sharing the graduate profile with businesses and community members to attending county commissioner and chamber of commerce meetings, the district is collaborating across the community to increase out-of-school learning for students.

As the pandemic forced all districts to adjust their HTI plans, Clear Creek saw this as an opportunity for business partners and teachers to think outside the box in ways to provide career-connected learning opportunities for students. CCSD is proud of this agility and will continue to seek out new and creative opportunities moving forward.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

• Clear Creek is one of the few HTI districts who has been able to consistently focus on a PK-12 strategy. This has allowed the entire team to see the big picture – this isn’t a project, it’s “the work.”

• CCSD deployed an intentional and easy-to-understand vision to build empathy and gain buy-in with stakeholders – “best educators, empowered leaders, visionary district.”

• They’ve focused on integrating multiple initiatives and grant programs, including HTI, their RISE Education Fund grant, and a 21st Century Learning grant.

• The district is also prioritizing social emotional learning, mental health and school culture, and equity and inclusion as part of their larger vision.

Career-Connected Learning

• Premier new program, Project Bike Tech (PBT), launched with 16 students, with over half of them earning level 1 bike tech certificates. PBT became a unique opportunity for students to live out the graduate profile – kids had to adapt, think critically, be resourceful, and problem-solve.

• New course offerings such as journalism and financial literacy were well received, with 44 students completing it.

• Increased participation in CTE and concurrent enrollment was seen, with 16 students total participating through Warren Tech and Red Rocks Community College. Enrollment for Warren Tech is even higher for 2021-22, with 25 students enrolled or on the waitlist.

• While several other programming plans were put on hold due to COVID, it forced the team to think differently about how to provide real world experiences to students; it inspired teachers to engage in the process of experiential and career-connected learning in their classrooms. GradCap (new graduation requirements with capstones), an internship program, and a new Career Connections class will be priorities for 2021-22.

Graduate Profile

• COVID allowed Clear Creek to spend intentional time making the profile the heart of the work and was a primary area of progress.

• This work included robust community input to become part of the culture and “the why”; and student engagement to bring it to life and provide confidence and validation for students demonstrating traits.

• CCSD also developed a diversified leadership structure for implementing the graduate profile, with school leaders at each level leading their plans, which has supported change management and teacher buy-in.

Phase 2 Team Leads:
Karen Quanbeck (“Q”), Superintendent
Becky Dancer, Project Coordinator
Chris Gould, Secondary Principal
Andrew Wolff, RISE Navigator

Learn More About the Communities
Durango High School

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

Durango has built upon already-strong CTE offerings to develop 11 pathways across a variety of industries. The district will continue to grow these opportunities with the construction of a new Innovation Center, supported by a community funding measure passed in 2020. Durango has also pursued a distributed leadership model, with no single HTI coordinator, unlike their HTI peers. This has allowed them to engage a larger group of stakeholders and diversify awareness, knowledge, and responsibilities of their HTI process.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

- With several leadership and staff changes since the start of HTI, Durango has had to navigate uncertainty of roles and effective communication and collaboration across teams. A major area of pride and progress is their new shared leadership structure, which has allowed them to propel much of the work forward in less time.
- Additionally, the leadership changes and new structures provided important insights into sustainability early on, which has driven Durango’s intentional focus on engaging a diverse set of stakeholders along the way.
- Durango High School (DHS) engaged students, teachers, parents, and partners through a series of Zoom panels to capture their voice more deeply in the work. This resulted in rich discussion of career-connected learning opportunities students desire and the importance of aligning programs to community and regional workforce needs. Learn More.

Graduate Profile

- After staff turnover, the Durango team started a new empathy-building process with key stakeholders to revise their graduate profile. Now, it serves as their North Star and a symbol of validation for partners.
- The revision process gave the Durango team a new confidence in themselves, reflecting that it takes courage and a degree of risk to take on an agile vision and new implementation efforts, but learned so much in doing so.
- Teachers began integrating the skills and professional behaviors into the classroom, translating everything into real-world experiences and applicants. The team plans for deeper implementation in 2021-22, including embedding the profile into a new advisory course and employing curriculum-aligned rubrics.

Career-Connected Learning

- Durango piloted a new internship program (slide 34-35) in Spring 2021 with 19 students and 32 businesses. Critical feedback was collected from students and partners, which has informed how the program will be implemented long-term. 78% of students were satisfied with all aspects of their experience; 92% of businesses felt it was a good use of their time.
- Nearly 400 students completed community service-learning, nearly 900 students completed at least one AP course, and 30 students participated in a leadership program.
- Durango will focus on bringing their new Innovation Center to life in the coming year, along with CTE programming and pathways opportunities in partnership with higher ed partners Fort Lewis and Pueblo Community College.
Elizabeth School District

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

When starting HTI, Elizabeth School District (ESD) knew their current school schedule was not compatible with most work-based learning opportunities. To address this challenge, Elizabeth piloted new schedule options in early 2021. With significant input and feedback from students, families, and teachers, they settled on a schedule that best suits external opportunities for students (e.g., concurrent enrollment, internships). ESD has also spent the last year creating a library of career-connected learning videos to expose students to different industries. Students led all aspects of this video production, from initial brainstorming to filming, editing, and publishing.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

- One of the first HTI communities to prioritize a new schedule to provide additional flexibilities for students to engage in career-connected learning experiences, the Elizabeth team facilitated a robust engagement process with students, teachers, and parents. An interdisciplinary committee conducted research and developed three pilot schedules. After testing commenced, nearly 500 surveys from students, teachers, and parents resulted in the selection of a new schedule for 2021-22.
- Elizabeth will continue to focus on building business partnerships through a strong foundational relationship with the Chamber of Commerce along with strategic communications and engagement with parents.

Graduate Profile

- Elizabeth’s student-designed graduate profile came to life with building-sized wraps hung proudly outside the school. Their key focus over the last year was visibility of the profile, along with creating a 3-tier marketing plan including external building wraps, visibility within the school, and visibility within every classroom.
- ESD also worked with teachers to map what each skill looks like at each grade level in order to develop a teacher toolkit that supports aligning the profile with curriculum and experiences in the classroom K-12.

Career-Connected Learning

- Twenty-eight students earned certificates in the new Adobe program, with plans to roll out certificate opportunities in culinary arts, business, and Certified Nurse Assistant courses in 2021-22.
- ESD works closely with Arapahoe Community College to align concurrent enrollment offerings with ICAP plans to ensure transferable credits; nearly 20 students were enrolled at Pickens Tech for welding, cosmetology, culinary arts, and auto mechanics.

- A new pathways program was developed with significant teacher buy-in and enthusiasm. The program will include 18 pathways, each with real-world examples, a breakdown of coursework, graduate profile alignment, and career exploration opportunities.
- Elizabeth piloted its new internship program with 20 students and more than 25 business partners, noting those who participated saw more relevance with what they are learning in school.

Learn More About the Communities
Fremont RE-2

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

Fremont has wholeheartedly integrated the graduate profile across the district. Their board of education updated graduation requirements to align with the skills and competencies of the graduate Profile, and their counseling program is centered on it as well. Fremont has also made a concerted effort to expand CTE and concurrent enrollment opportunities for students, from flexible scheduling to partnerships with Pueblo Community College Fremont Campus and neighboring school districts Cañon City and Cotopaxi.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

• With 100% turnover in the counseling department and half of their core team out due to COVID (including their HTI Coordinator), the Fremont team had to navigate project management in new ways. It pushed them to prioritize their work more intentionally and empowered Principal Melendrez to lean into his intuitive ability to manage college and career activities.

• Further, a Principal Advisory Committee was developed to increase communication and feedback between the school leader and students. The 2021-22 school year will focus on engaging families in similar ways.

• Despite the pandemic preventing many of their work-based learning plans, Fremont continued to have strong communication with business partners, including through many virtual calls to solicit feedback on plans and keep momentum for next school year. The team has 24 strong partnerships, including 5 new during 2020-21.

Career-Connected Learning

• Fremont worked towards their goal of “actualizing system design to scale for all students” by realigning and submitting their CTE pathways for CDE approval. It includes certification opportunities recognized by the Career Development Incentive Program (CDIP).

• Nearly 100 students participated in concurrent enrollment during the 2020-21 school year in partnership with Pueblo Community College – an increase over previous years – and the team hopes to refine their process and materials in order to engage more students in the opportunity.

• The team met individually with all juniors and seniors to introduce them to project elements, including the graduate profile, scholarships, and internship opportunities.

• The new PaICE (internship and work study) program was implemented with 16 students, 100% of whom reported that it was a good experience and increased their understanding of their personal interests and pathways.

• Fremont also honed-in on early exposure in middle school with a career-connected elective wheel that will align to CTE pathways in high school.

Graduate Profile

• Fremont’s Board of Education adopted new graduation requirements aligned to the graduate profile as well as career-connected learning, effective for the class of 2021.

• While there’s more work to be done to get full teacher buy-in, the Fremont team worked closely with staff K-12 to break down each profile characteristic and determine what it looks like in each grade.

Phase 2 Team Leads:
Brenda Krage, Superintendent
Dan Melendrez, Principal
Roe Ann Collette, College & Career Center (retired)
*New Coordinator for 2021-22
The Grands – East & West Grand

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

East and West Grand (the Grands) have been partners since day one of this project, with the two districts collaborating and sharing resources to increase opportunities for all students in Grand County. The two districts share an HTI coordinator who, among many other responsibilities, has placed 62 interns with 58 business partners across the two districts. Although this partnership is strong, each district is pursuing HTI programming specific to the needs of their district. West Grand is introducing a capstone project for all seniors and has intentionally integrated the graduate profile competencies into the mission and vision of the district. East Grand has changed graduation requirements and increased concurrent enrollment to encourage more work-based learning and introduced a post-secondary workforce readiness class required of all sophomore students.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

• Both East & West Grand implemented new policy and procedure changes. These included scheduling flexibilities for internships, increasing graduation requirements, providing more concurrent enrollment opportunities, and adding a required postsecondary workforce readiness class.
• The Grands leaned on each other through persisting challenges of the pandemic and wildfires. They’ve noted that the ability to collaborate so deeply to share resources, ideas, and challenges has been a huge asset.

Career-Connected Learning

• A new internship program was the highlight of the school year for the Grands. Its robust framework, one that is not reliant on an individual staff member, allows for long-term sustainability. In this first year, 62 interns across both districts had work-based learning experiences with nearly 60 business partners. Learn More.
• The Grands purchased a shared food truck that will engage students across all pathways, including business, fine arts, culinary arts, welding, construction, and marketing. The mobile experiential learning hub will travel between communities and engage students, families, and community stakeholders along the way!
• Partnership continued with the nonprofit Grand County Higher Ed to navigate bringing higher ed to Grand County. The group secured a grant that will allow for more exposure during high school and provide additional staff capacity for higher ed initiatives.

Graduate Profile

• West Grand focused heavily on the implementation of its Learner Profile. It has now become who they are as a school; it represents the overall vision while being student-driven.
• Strategic integration within staff structures, curriculum, and career-connected learning will be a key priority during the 2021-22 school year for both districts.

Learn More About the Communities
Holyoke School District

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

Holyoke School District (HSD) has spent the last year diligently collecting feedback from students and business partners to better understand the skills and opportunities the district should offer. This feedback has shaped course offerings and student skill development offered by the district. HTI has encouraged Holyoke to re-center student interest, business relationships, and community need at the heart of their work-based learning. Another aspect of Holyoke’s HTI work focused on creating grade level skill examples for each attribute on their graduate profile. This resource helped get teachers understand the goal and purpose of the graduate profile and allowed them to more easily incorporate these skills and competencies into their instruction.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

• Holyoke revised its Seminar Class implemented for every student grades 7-12 to incorporates he graduate profile, social-emotional learning, and career-connected learning – ALL staff and ALL students have access, eliminating previous equity barriers. A “Tenacity Curriculum” will be added in 2021-22 that focuses on pre-internship skill-building across the graduate profile and other essential skills.
• HSD conducted a “course fair” in lieu of a career fair that allowed the team to have game-changing 1:1 conversations with every student. This process reinforced the need for student voice to ensure diverse needs are met. This also led to many conversations about “the why”, and Holyoke is now thinking deeply about innovation and student agency and how to provide more diversity in scheduling, experiences, and pathways.

Career-Connected Learning

• Holyoke turned underutilized space into a new Career & Postsecondary Center that supports Seminar, weekly presentations from the Northeastern Junior College (NJC), concurrent enrollment and industry certification courses, and student and family events.
• Over 40 internships were completed across 10 pathways, with the internship program being approved for graduation requirements along with industry certifications and capstone. 97% said internship was a good use of time; 97% were satisfied with the experience; 89% felt it aligned to schoolwork and career pathway of choice.
• Holyoke is an exemplar in business engagement and has found ways to incorporate them into every key strategy to maximize impact of the mutually beneficial partnerships.
• HSD has engaged in a robust partnership with NJC that has led to increased and more strategic offerings for independent study, concurrent enrollment, CTE and certifications, and aligned NJC pathways.

Graduate Profile

• With the help of COVID, the team was pushed to more intentionally engage teachers and students with the graduate profile and core competencies, which led to more significant buy-in and understanding.
• Priorities for 2021-22 include a diversified leadership structure for integration of the profile, a focus on daily ways to demonstrate the competencies both personally and academically, and regular student and teacher surveys.
Montezuma-Cortez

The Highlights: Phase 2 Priorities & Progress

The Montezuma-Cortez High School (M-CHS) team spent intentional time integrating HTI learnings and community feedback into all aspects of their instruction and school culture. The M-CHS Graduate Profile represents a vision for their students – connected, professional, and future oriented – and they are building their school system and culture around these ideas as the foundation. This expanded system includes include comprehensive behaviors, expectations, and guidelines to frame everything from student advisory periods to internship agreements. Establishing this strong baseline has allowed Cortez to bring the community deeply into this work and clearly outline to students and families their commitment to expanding student opportunity and building essential skills.

The Details: Breakthrough Moves

Systems Change

• M-CHS secured a project coordinator in Spring 2021, along with a RISE grant and coordinator. This added capacity has been game-changing for the small team who continuously faced challenges due to COVID.

• As a result of this added capacity, a new 25-person core team was developed that includes teachers, business partners, the local economic development council, and community leaders. This has re-engaged and reinvigorated the entire team and supports navigating a long-standing communication barrier between school and community.

• Pandemic challenges pushed them to innovate and develop long-term flexible scheduling options such as in-house online course offerings taught by M-CHS teachers so students can participate in full-day internships while keeping up with schoolwork.

• The team focused intently on communicating and reinforcing “the why” to ensure long-term sustainability of change efforts. This included clear messaging, a student and community ambassador team, providing incentives to champions, and conducting professional development for teachers.

Graduate Profile

• In addition to the final grad profile, the team translated it into a foundational presentation for students, board members, and community partners. It came to life by representing the overall relationship between school and the community; providing both a promise and a process to which students can align; drives diverse content and experiences; and gives students, parents, and partners clear goals and outcomes to strive for.

• The M-CHS profile was also translated into Spanish, Ute, and Navajo, and curriculum and work-based learning are being aligned to the profile along with a “grad profile skill builder” toolkit for students and teachers.

Phase 2 Team Leads:

Chad Wheelus, Project Coordinator
Eric Chandler, Principal
Katie Zdanowski, RISE Coordinator

Additional teachers, business partners, and community leaders (25-person core team!)

*New Superintendent for 2021-22 school year

Career-Connected Learning

• The team developed robust “Panther Tracks” pathways, aligned to viable industry needs and growth areas in the Southwest region and statewide.

• Structures for 2021-22 internships are in place, albeit some remaining pandemic limitations. Students will participate in a career awareness platform, create individualized work-based learning plans with flexible scheduling, and have access to paid summer internship opportunities.

Learn More About the Communities
Section 4:
Promising Trends & Emerging Learnings
Promising Trends & Emerging Learnings

Throughout the last two years, Homegrown Talent Initiative has been working with eight rural communities across Colorado to build work-based learning and career exploration opportunities to meet the needs of students, families, schools, business, and industry in these regions. The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) has been following these efforts, and recently released their emerging learnings on HTI.

CRPE highlighted three keys to HTI’s persistence and success despite pandemic challenges:

1) Graduate Profiles and community involvement are integral components of district change and programs;
2) Direct support from technical assistance providers – primarily Colorado Succeeds and Colorado Education Initiative (CEI); and
3) A focus on systemic change and district policies to support work-based learning.

In addition to these learnings from CRPE, Colorado Succeeds and CEI are encouraged by the following trends in HTI communities as this work transitions into its third year of programming.

Resiliency & Agility

HTI districts have demonstrated incredible resiliency and agility in the face of unparalleled challenges. These districts began planning new career-connected learning before the pandemic and had to drastically alter their plans over the year. From pivoting in-person career fairs to video interviews and surveys with business partners, to finding creative ways to allow internships to move forward, these districts demonstrated their commitment to expanding opportunities for students and building strong relationships with their local communities. Further, this perseverance and innovation led districts to pursue opportunities they did not originally envisioned, such as a flexible schedule or virtual learning, many of which they have continued.

4 districts were awarded grants totaling $1.98M through the RISE Education Fund to continue implementing HTI-aligned activities, leveraging the skills, knowledge and programs developed through HTI.

Student-Informed Programming

School districts have used the last two years of HTI to build relationships like never before, soliciting input on graduate profiles, internship offerings, and skill development for students. Student voice has been a key success factor, with districts asking students what types of opportunities interest them, from career exploration videos that interviewed local business leaders to individual surveys and career counseling with staff, these districts focused on a student-centered approach to their work.

150+ high school students participated in 1:1’s to discuss new career-connected learning opportunities and how they align with student interests, postsecondary and career pathways, and the grad profile.

Rural Collaboration

Collaboration has taken two crucial forms: district-district support and local community partnerships. Cross-district knowledge sharing, troubleshooting and collaboration among the HTI cohort helps districts learn from one another, develop new ideas, and gain insights into how other districts have piloted a schedule change or are introducing concurrent enrollment opportunities. It is regarded as one of the most valuable elements of HTI.

98% of HTI district teams find the HTI cohort model valuable, particularly citing the opportunity to learn and implement alongside peers.

Districts are also working closely with local industry in their area to ensure work-based learning programs not only meet student interest, but also industry and workforce needs, and develop essential skills in students. This collaboration across the educomony has led to robust support, as businesses have now started approaching school districts with work-based learning ideas and commitments to support.
Promising Trends & Emerging Learnings

Homegrown Talent Initiative has learned a great deal about the strengths, needs, and unique assets each of these communities through our partnership with these districts. These promising trends and emerging learnings are just the beginning of positive change when schools, families, businesses, and communities come together to reimagine what’s possible. Here are a few additional factors HTI Central continues to watch:

Implementation

Key Success Factors:

• **Leadership Buy-In:** Leadership alignment and ongoing engagement remains key to successful implementation
• **Collaboration:** “Partner by all means” – now more than ever
• **Profile of a Graduate** continues to anchor and drive the work forward; serves as the new definition of success
• **Evolved Leadership:** Leaders are showing greater mindset flexibility; thinking more responsively in response to COVID and supported as a result of HTI (e.g., design thinking, student-centered approach)
• **Project Coordinator:** Clear need and role for project coordinators, with all teams having secured this position or in the process of hiring
• **Student-Centered:** Student leadership in implementation
• **All-In:** Level of commitment, communication, and collaboration among team leads correlates to overall implementation progress

In normal circumstances we underappreciate the partnership that is required to do the work. But now, in crisis, it’s become essential. We have to do it together.

- Douglas Bissonette, Superintendent, Elizabeth School District

Barriers Faced:

• **Stakeholder Engagement:** Maintaining a diverse design team (educators, industry, higher ed, community partners) to drive local change; less engagement among these partners overall in Phase 2, primarily due to COVID
  - Educators, especially those not involved in Phase 1, lack involvement in HTI and thus may not have strong commitment to goals
  - Higher education, outside of concurrent enrollment, needs more engagement
  - While industry participation is still positive, involvement in the design/vision process is minimal compared to Phase 1
• **Budget:** Opportunities to spend implementation dollars reduced due to COVID (e.g., no in person events, site visits, etc.); teams reallocating for greater impact in second half of school year
• **Family Engagement:** Especially for students furthest from opportunity, this will be a key focus for supports in Phase 3.
Promising Trends & Emerging Learnings

HTI Structures

What’s Working:

- **Coaching**: Coaching continues to be an integral element of HTI, with 100% of team leads reporting it is of extreme value. Dedicated pairs from CEI/CS meet monthly with leads from each team to provide individualized support on implementation, leadership, and systems-change.

- **Coordinator-Connects**: New in Phase 2, HTI staff is providing dedicated monthly coaching to HTI coordinators, which allows for a deeper dive into project management, evaluation, and change-management.

- **Project Management**: Teams continue to report that having the cohort structure, process, and clarity from HTI staff is key to staying committed, accountable, and progressing forward. Additionally, CEI and CS refined its overall project management structure, with staff from both organizations maintaining oversight of all project elements as well as streamlining tasks and roles across project components.

- **Evaluation**: The creation and introduction to a new evaluation protocol, the HTI Data Tracker, has proven to be a needed and valuable addition to the work. Teams received training on how to personalize the tool and input implementation efforts, and communities successfully submitted Mid-Year Evaluation Reports using the trackers.

Without your support, challenging, and thought-partnership, we would have lost momentum.
- Elizabeth Bauer, Principal, West Grand High School

Lessons Learned:

- **Responsiveness**: Offering truly responsive support in a time of crisis by learning to balance strategy and outcomes with patience, flexibility, and grace.

- **Momentum-Building**: The inability to convene in-person and with full community design teams likely contributed to lack of engagement/momentum at the school and local level. Rebuilding will be necessary in Phase 3.

- **Grad Profile Implementation**: While the graduate profile remains an anchor to HTI, some communities were not prepared for implementation (moving beyond empathy-building and design). Long-term expectations should be provided early on.

- **Equity by Design**: Schools need ongoing support to truly implement across a line of difference regarding justice, equity, diversity, & inclusion.
Promising Trends & Emerging Learnings

Theory of Change

Halfway through the three-year project, HTI Central and its external evaluator CRPE revisited the Theory of Change with key emerging learnings in mind. These include assessing the overall model and vision for rural communities; examining the investment strategy with sustainability and scale in mind; and learning from local innovations HTI teams are exploring that could have statewide policy and advocacy implications.

Sustaining the Model & Impact:

• **Multi-Sector Approach:** Increasing high-quality career-connected learning experiences, but requires intention. For example, K-12 leadership is pivotal, with early buy-in and continued engagement; and industry partners engaged as peers leads to more opportunity.

• **Strategic Supports:** HTI’s supports are driving change – the graduate profile provided a tangible vision for community engagement; flexible technical assistance built capacity; and a regional cohort provided support and built-in accountability.

• **Educonomy:** HTI’s holistic approach is leading to innovations such as merging school redesign with economic development, but is harder to translate into action. Communities need modeling, technical assistance, and ongoing support to advance an equitable and inclusive educonomy.

• **Empathy-Building:** This process continues to demonstrate long-term impacts, such as the momentum built around the graduate profile.

• **Leveraged Resources:** HTI’s resources have catalyzed communities to leverage local and state funding, like seeking bonds and mills to sustain efforts long-term; or pursuing immediate support for aligned work in response to the pandemic through the RISE Education Fund.

Local Innovations:

• **Flexible Scheduling:** Districts are implementing flexible schedules to overcome outdated seat time and student count processes and increase the number of opportunities for students to engage in work-based learning, especially virtually.

• **Graduation Requirements:** Districts are offering flexibility to accommodate cohorts impacted by the pandemic and seeing long-term value in a permanent shift.

• **CTE Teachers:** Upskilling staff to become WBL Coordinator Certified and sharing CTE staff across districts are a few ways communities are solving for CTE teacher licensure and overall teacher shortage issues in rural CO.

Statewide Implications:

• **Seat Time:** Seat time flexibilities continue to be a solution to increasing opportunity for students as well as solving for teacher licensure issues. Increasing school board awareness and knowledge is also critical.

• **Incentives for Industry:** Industry partners have been valuable in both the design and implementation process for HTI; though, there are barriers to entry for many businesses. Recognizing and rewarding industry partnerships through competitive advantages could incentivize more industry partners to participate, thus expanding career-connected opportunities for students.

• **Higher Ed:** Community college service areas & concurrent enrollment instruction flexibilities must be addressed.
Section 5: Looking ahead
Looking Ahead

Phase 3: Scale & Sustain

**Pre-Implementation**
**July-Aug 2021**
- Phase 3 Kickoff & Team Lead Retreat!
- Finalized Implementation Plans & Budgets
- 2021-2022 School Year Begins

**Fall Implementation**
**Sept-Nov 2021**
- Coaching & Peer Networks Begin
- Fall Discovery Site Visits
- Graduate Profile, Career-Connected Learning, and Policy & Advocacy Supports
- Communications & Storytelling

**Winter Re-Launch**
**Dec 2021-Feb 2022**
- Mid-Year Evaluation
- Team Lead Retreat
- Continued Coaching & Supports

**Spring Implementation**
**March-May 2022**
- Coaching & Peer Networks Continue
- Spring Discovery Site Visits
- Graduate Profile, Career-Connected Learning, and Policy & Advocacy Supports
- Communications & Storytelling
- *Student Surveys

**Discovery Site Visits:**
- Expanded site visits to promote active collaboration and networked learning across the cohort, elevate key successes and challenges, and share best practices with regional relevance.

**Final Deliverables**
**June 2022**
- Year-End Evaluation
- Final Deliverable Presentations & Celebratory Convening

Cross-Cohort Implementation Priorities & Needs

**Career-Connected Learning:**
- Stepping up career exposure and exploration activities + need for more innovative ideas.
- More support needed around concurrent enrollment, certifications, CTE structures and partnerships.

**Stakeholder Engagement:**
- Engaging parents and families and reaching a more diverse group of students and providing more opportunities to meet diverse needs/interests.
- Marketing & storytelling!

**Graduate Profile:**
- Introducing or re-establishing “the why” across diverse stakeholders.
- Adding depth to the implementation of the Graduate Profile → Translating the vision into practice and integrating across all activities/curriculum; Getting larger buy-in / engagement from teachers.

**Systems Change:**
- Integration of opportunities and braided funding → RISE, ILOP, CDIP, waivers, etc.

Opportunities to Engage | More Details to Follow!

**Discovery Site Visits:** Each community will host their own Discovery Day, with several others in the cohort visiting. A great opportunity to see HTI in action!

**Celebratory Convening:** See the first HTI cohort showcase their impact through innovative mediums and celebrate as a key stakeholder of the 3-year project!
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