

# Transcend

## Creating a Marketplace for Innovation

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PRESENTED BY

### Siegel Family Endowment

We are a foundation focused on understanding and shaping the impact of technology on society.

#### **Our Focus on Learning**

We strive to understand how we can better equip individuals with the knowledge they need to contribute to and engage with a rapidly changing society. Yet, we also recognize that every factor in a learner's education – from broadband access to safe and affordable housing to the development of social-emotional skills – can widen inequality and impact success. Our work supports and shapes programs and solutions that build lifelong learning opportunities and envision an education system that works for everyone, by addressing long standing social and economic inequities.

#### **Schools as Community Infrastructure**

For schools to become the most effective and powerful versions of themselves, it's critical to understand their place within and connection to the communities they serve, and how both systems – school and community – must be strengthened in tandem. Using a multidimensional framing for school allows us to consider their infrastructure needs in a holistic way that elevates the school community's strengths and resources, and identifies needs that remain unmet. By conceptualizing and conceiving of schools as bigger than the buildings in which they operate, we have an opportunity to expand what schools can do, and ensure that they are set up to do that critical work.



PHOTO COURTESY VAN NESS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DCPS



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Sharing resources and frameworks with a motivated network is a powerful alternative to scaling a program.** While growth is an important goal of many initiatives and organizations, many lack the resources to scale themselves effectively. Promoting independent program adoption and implementation is an effective way to grow impact without shouldering the work of growth.
- **The network effects of communicating across communities can be an effective tool for organizing and prioritizing organizational goals and needs.** Communication among engaged stakeholders is a critical component of both amplifying new and innovative solutions, and helping communities develop the collective power to advocate for the resources they need.
- **Moving the needle on education policy can start with helping leaders to reimagine what's possible.** Cultivating and promoting the stories of innovative work is an important strategy for promoting innovative strategies that have the capacity to achieve real change at scale.

## About Transcend

Transcend was founded on a belief that schools must be reimaged using a community-based approach, so all children can thrive in and transform the world. Transcend pursues its mission by directly supporting design processes and then shares the tools, models, and insights from this work across its national network of schools and through engaging top leaders in school systems, philanthropy, and policy.

## Executive Summary

**E**ducation in America is at a crossroads. The old ways of doing things have been overdue for an overhaul for decades, and the need for far-reaching change is only becoming more and more urgent. Decades of systemic inequities, demand for rapidly changing knowledge sets and expertise, and deteriorating physical spaces have all contributed to an educational landscape in desperate need of reconsideration.

At Siegel, we're developing a robust network of partners and grantees who are focused on not only addressing the gaps and shortcomings of our existing education system, but imagining an entirely new range of models, strategies, and modalities for learning. As we shift our focus beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom, we're turning our attention to work that promotes advancement and innovation across the field at large.

Transcend is an organization focused on doing exactly that, and their Innovative Models Exchange is an example of one such project that's designed to amplify the impact of innovative learning models and help communities everywhere achieve the

outcomes they aspire to in their schools. Participants share a range of educational approaches – from foundational literacy programs, to advisory systems, to work-based learning models – with a diverse community of educators and administrators. The Models Exchange aspires to connect these groups so they're able to hone new ideas, refine best practices, and promote new approaches to teaching and learning that have the potential to be replicated in contexts all over the country.

What's more, the Exchange can be complemented by other Transcend initiatives, such as the Transcend Community, which is a network of leaders, educators, and designers of innovative schools and learning environments. Taken together, the Exchange and Transcend Community can become a source of knowledge and support for those who share goals and objectives, and who are equally committed to each other's success. By cultivating multiple ways these individuals and organizations can come together to share needs, opportunities, and ideas, Transcend is facilitating important connections that have the power to strengthen the entire sector. ■

# Program: Innovative Models Exchange

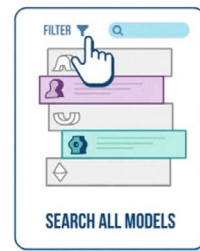
**T**rascend’s Models Exchange is based on a straightforward premise: sharing ideas and best practices directly between school communities is the most effective way to promote progress and innovation across the field at scale.

The Models Exchange aims to match a supply of actionable models with demand from educators, administrators, and other stakeholders. It proposes a range of different innovation types, and the scope of different programs is broad and far-reaching. Models on the Exchange can be categorized across a broad spectrum of different characteristics: from different practices (blended learning, project based learning, etc), to model grain size (closely targeted, to something large, comprehensive, and system wide), to different types of implementation (DIY, closely supported, or somewhere in between).

The Models Exchange is also home to a series of curated collections that are targeted to specific topics of interests. At a moment when teachers and school leaders are strapped for the capacity to meet their community’s most fundamental needs, innovation and problem solving can fall down the priority list all too easily. And while no single intervention will solve all of the problems facing the education sector, this system of sharing ideas and implementation resources can help educators grow their impact as members of an active and growing community. Transcend understands that it’s important to share the burden and opportunity of innovation, and helps people engage with these innovative models in an actionable way.

The majority of the models represented on the platform are also part of the Transcend Community – thousands of members interested in education innovation. Members can use these spaces, alongside Transcend resources like the Exchange, as a sounding board, and a venue to surface ideas and solutions that others sharers might have already encountered and addressed.

## THE INNOVATIVE MODELS EXCHANGE



“Despite innovation across nearly every sector of society, a one-size-fits all approach has governed mainstream schooling in America for more than a century.

This platform was launched to put tools for redesign in the hands of more school communities,” shares Jeff Wetzler, Transcend co-founder. “The Innovative Models Exchange is a free resource for those inspired to reimagine schools but who don’t want to start from scratch. It helps them find, learn, and borrow from innovative programs created by others across the country.”

## Structure: How it Works

Innovative education models can be nominated for inclusion on the Exchange, where they'll be evaluated according to a set of structural guidelines and assessed against five critical criteria:

- 1 Is the model **innovative**? Does it shift learning into a space that's more equitable and responsive to everyday needs, as defined by [Leaps for Equitable, 21st-Century Learning?](#)
- 2 Is the model **in need**? Does it focus on a topic that's of interest to the field? Has feedback from the Transcend Community and other networks confirmed this need?
- 3 Is the model **implementable**? Is it codified to the point where its key details can be communicated clearly? Does it offer *implementation support* to those who want to bring the model to their own community?
- 4 Is there evidence of positive **impact** on learners and the community? Because a lot of innovative outcomes aren't necessarily well measured via traditional outcomes, like academic performance and growth, Transcend aims to evaluate positive outcomes on a case by case basis, and make a meaningful assessment according to the specifics of each model.
- 5 Is the model **inclusive**? Is it designed with inclusion in mind? Has it been produced by and for members of BIPOC or rural communities?

Once models move through this vetting process, Transcend works closely with model sharers to develop content. Finalized entries are posted to the Exchange, where practitioners from any community can explore, gain inspiration, and begin implementing new ideas in their own schools and classrooms. The Exchange offers multiple entry points for model seekers, including a series of "Collections" that organize model sets, as well as curated resources,

according to themes such as "Advisory," "Project Based Learning," and "Blended Learning." These categories reflect both demand from the broader community for resources on specific topics, and supply from participating model providers who are working and experimenting in this space.

For those with a more open-ended set of needs, Transcend offers a diagnostic quiz that can match users with models based on their own self-reported interests. Each of these tools is designed to elevate the most relevant, actionable information, and provide practitioners with ideas that they can put into practice almost immediately.

### User Feedback

Already, users of the platform have touted the benefits to their schools. "There are lots of days where it would be easier to take the path most frequently traveled. But unfortunately, that path is often ineffective in changing outcomes for many youth," said one. "The Exchange creates a sharing platform that empowers folks to try new techniques, directs them to resources, and establishes connections with other innovative school builders across the nation. As educators, we have no time to spare. This platform allows us to work smarter, not harder."

Others spoke of the Exchange's ability to pull together many pockets of innovation into a single place. "This is the collaboration we desperately need in education. Hubs - such as [the Innovative] Models Exchange - will allow us to move from a fractured and antiquated system to a vibrant ecosystem of educators and schools working together to level up the education of all of our children."



PHOTO COURTESY CONCOURSE VILLAGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

# Impact and Next Steps

## Impact

Transcend’s Innovative Models Exchange is demonstrating the enormous potential for scaling a program and its related practices through sharing. It has offered many innovators an expanded platform for their ideas without forcing them to overextend their own time or resources, and is producing mutually beneficial interactions between model sharers and communities looking to innovate. The Exchange provides a critical platform that both meets stated needs for forward-looking policy interventions and ideas, and provides additional leverage for educators who are developing impactful interventions to prevent them from operating in isolation.

The Exchange works in tandem with the Transcend Community (and in particular, with a community of practice among model sharers within this broader network) to create spaces for thought partnership and sharing of expertise and experiences. Many users – on both the supply and demand sides – have arrived with requests for specific expertise or guidance in implementing a new model, and have been able to connect with relevant model sharers easily and effectively.

## Next Steps

As Transcend looks to the future, one key area for potential future growth is tied closely to affecting policy change and using lessons from implementing innovative models to drive policy innovation. Many of the most innovative, high-potential models in the education system require extensive resources and support that aren’t always available to all communities, the Exchange has the potential to raise awareness of this challenge. Transcend’s leadership sees this as an opportunity to push policy-makers to start thinking a lot more imaginatively and ambitiously around how policy can support far-reaching change.

Lessons regarding specific models, or communities efforts to implement them, also stand to inform future conversations about policy. In cases where certain models are limited in their potential or effectiveness by a structural constraint or local regulations, experiences from across the network can provide leverage for new policy interventions that can help educational model innovations gain a foothold in a real and meaningful way. Turning findings from network participants into tools that can impact policy-making at scale is a new focus area for Transcend, and only poised to become stronger as more and more interactions across the network produce more actionable lessons.



PHOTO COURTESY VALOR COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Transcend is also focusing on ways to reduce barriers to entry and implementation for school communities interested in implementing some of the most innovative models on the Exchange. They’re planning to expand their “Sparks Session” programs, which are workshops among educators and administrators that highlight the most innovative elements of new models, and are intended to spark inspiration and get leaders thinking about opportunities to apply innovation in their own contexts in approachable, easily-achievable ways.

One of the primary functions of Transcend’s Innovative Models Exchange is to demystify education innovation. By providing resources and tools that make these ideas actionable in a range of different contexts, Transcend is hoping to acclimate more educators and leaders to the idea of experimentation and innovation in their own schools; interaction and sharing within these communities is a critical part of making that process feel doable and will go a long way towards achieving this broader goal.

## Ways to Get Involved

- 1 **Explore models on the Exchange:**  
[exchange.transcendeducation.org/](https://exchange.transcendeducation.org/)
- 2 **Nominate an innovative model:**  
[exchange.transcendeducation.org/contact/](https://exchange.transcendeducation.org/contact/)
- 3 **Read more about Transcend Education’s Ten Leaps for Equitable 21st Century Learning:**  
<https://transcendeducation.org/leaps-for-equitable-21st-century-learning/>

To learn more and contact Siegel Family Endowment, visit [www.siegelendowment.org](http://www.siegelendowment.org)