DEEPER LEARNING is at the heart of the Digital C-Change.

- Deeper learning is learning that is engaging and purposeful.
- Deeper learning includes content knowledge as well as the development of 21st century skills: collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.
- Deeper learning is student-centered, personalized, and differentiated to meet the individual needs of students.
- Deeper learning is produced through the purposeful use of a variety of instructional strategies. Strategies that engage students in authentic problem solving (e.g. inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and design challenges) should be a regular part of the instructional mix.
- Deeper learning produces innovative students who are college and career ready.
- Deeper learning is catalyzed when technology is used to activate the 21st Century skills C’s.

Components and conditions needed to sustain deeper learning:

- **Balance**
  - The school community strives for an instructional balance between preparing students for standardized tests and developing 21st century skills that are equally crucial to their future success.
  - A variety of assessments is used to measure student achievement; including rubrics, performance-based assessments, and traditional assessments such as Standards of Learning tests.
  - The curriculum provides for a whole-child approach to learning across a variety of disciplines.

- **School and Classroom Climate**
  - The school community cultivates a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment in which students experience a sense of belonging.
  - Schools are positive, welcoming communities built on a foundation of mutual respect and social equity.
  - Students exhibit a high standard of citizenship in both face-to-face and online interactions.
  - Students and staff exhibit collaboration and communication skills that contribute to a positive school climate.

- **Professional Growth**
  - Professional growth is developed through active participation of each staff member within a professional learning community.
  - Division and school leaders commit to staff professional growth through planning, funding, and program evaluation.
  - Multiple delivery modes and differentiation are employed to meet individual needs of staff.
  - Professional development incorporates job-embedded approaches such as instructional coaching and professional learning communities.
  - School and division professional development priorities are aligned with the teaching and learning goals of the division.
  - Building for teaching capacity involves a personal commitment to a deep understanding and demonstration of content knowledge, best practice pedagogy, and skill with engaging use of technology.
  - Professional development builds staff capacity to meet current as well as future challenges.

- **Support Tools and Services**
  - School facilities and operations support environments in which children thrive.
  - Staff exercises ethical and transparent stewardship of public funds and resources.
  - Technology services support the instructional program and business functions of the school system.

- **Learning Culture**
  - Leadership is team-oriented and visionary.
  - Student and school success are celebrated.
  - Resilience toward problem solving is fostered by viewing failure as a learning opportunity.
  - Collaboration through communities of learning is a primary conduit for skill growth for students and adults.
  - Adults exhibit a positive attitude and optimistic expectations regarding student potential.
  - Intellectual curiosity is modeled by adults and cultivated in students.
  - Opportunities are created for continuous learning.
  - Adults and students practice evidence-based decision making.
  - Adults and students are accountable to themselves and the learning community for their contribution to student achievement.
The Digital C-Change Strategic Framework is effective and meaningful in promoting consistent, sustained improvement only to the extent that it leads to change in schools, cohorts of teachers and staff, and individual classrooms. RCPS believes that reform relies on the work done individually and collaboratively by teachers, staff, and leaders in each school to put into practice the ideals of the Digital C-Change Strategic Framework through goals adopted at the school and classroom level. Individual teachers and staff understand the nature of 21st century classrooms and accept responsibility for the professional growth needed to make it happen. Teachers and staff then join together within professional learning communities (PLC) to develop common goals and plans and mutually support their implementation within the PLC. The collective work of teachers within PLCs serves as the primary conduit of change implementation required by the overall School Strategic Plan which is developed through the continuous assessment of needs within the school in alignment with the Digital C-Change Strategic Framework. The Strategic Planning Process represents the cycle of continuous improvement expected at each school and is an internal and external means of accountability to stakeholders, including accountability within the Roanoke County Strategic Planning process.

RCPS Strategic Planning Process

School divisions and local schools are required by the Code of Virginia to adopt comprehensive, long-range plans for continuous growth and improvement. In RCPS, the Comprehensive Plan and its various components described within this document are designed to meet the state requirement. At the school level, the School Strategic Plan serves as the required blueprint for long-range continuous improvement. The School Strategic Plan and the district Comprehensive Plan, however, also serve a second purpose. The continuous cycle of study, implementation, and evaluation of these plans provide evidence to our stakeholders and outside accrediting agencies of our purposeful planning, data-based decision making, and accountability for student achievement and organizational effectiveness. This process of internal and external accountability is known as the RCPS Strategic Planning Process.

Although the School Strategic Plan for each school aligns with the overall goals of the school division as articulated by the Digital C-Change Strategic Framework, the RCPS Strategic Planning Process is designed to allow for a degree of differentiation among the 27 schools within RCPS. Since evidence collected at each school is likely to reveal strengths and concerns particular to that school, each school’s strategic plan goals should reflect priority areas for growth to be addressed by the plan until sustainability is reached in the priority area or new evidence suggests the need to change priorities.

The integrity and credibility of RCPS Strategic Planning Process is maintained internally at each school though shared responsibility for the evidence-based identification of priorities, the development and implementation of action plans, the evaluation of progress, and ongoing revisions to the plan. The Strategic Planning Process is guided by engaged school leaders, but is only effective in realizing growth to the extent that stakeholders are meaningfully involved and the focus of change remains on individual classrooms within learning communities of professionals working collaboratively. The strategic plan for each school is a more than a document that is created but only reviewed every three years, it provides much of the day-to-day, purposeful focus for identified areas of growth. As such, the School Strategic Plan goals should be reviewed and revised at least annually based on evidence collected as measures of ongoing progress.

The integrity and credibility of RCPS Strategic Planning Process is also maintained though a review process that is external to each school. Each year, school leadership works with a liaison from central administration to review the planning and implementation process that the school has followed during the school year, as well as progress the school has made toward achievement of the chosen goals. The role of the liaison is to serve as a catalyst for reflection and a resource for suggestions and support. In the third year of the school improvement cycle, the principal of the school should schedule dates for a visit from a review team that is external to the school, but comprised of a principal and staff member from designated schools as well as the central administration liaison. The purpose of the visit is to allow the visiting team to meet with school leadership and stakeholder representatives to review the school’s data, goals, and improvement process. Empirical and anecdotal evidence of progress toward meeting the chosen goals should be presented along with plans for future direction. The review team will be especially interested in observing a clear alignment of school goals with the Digital C-Change Framework, what data were used to identify priorities, how the staff was organized to implement the School Strategic Plan, and how the School Strategic Plan resulted in change within individual classrooms to produce student achievement. The review team will provide feedback, including commendations and recommendations for strengthening the school continuous improvement process.

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1 See DuFour and Fullan (2013) to learn more about the importance of PLCs and how to use them to change and sustain school learning culture.