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# 35 High Schools Worth Visiting - Getting Smart by Tom Vander Ark - blended learning, innovations, schools

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by Tom Vander Ark • Nov. 14, 2013 • 4 min read • [original](#)

Last year we published a list of [14 high schools](#) worth visiting. We've visited and profiled some great new schools this year so it was time to update our list. Following are 35 schools that personalize and blend learning; they challenge students with real work and ask them to show what they know. Time to hit the road!

**1. Show & Tell.** [High Tech High](#) in San Diego is probably the best example of a high-engagement cohort model secondary school. Great teachers frame great projects and expect students to show what they know on a regular basis. When you're there, visit [High Tech International](#) across the street.

**2. Mindset.** While in San Diego, visit [Kearny High School of Digital Media & Design](#). The student-centered project-based stresses productive "Habits of Mind."

**3. Better Blend.** [Summit Denali](#) in Silicon Valley uses individualized skill building playlists dished up by the open [Activate Instruction](#) platform to prepare students to standards-aligned project-based work.

**4. 50/50 Blend.** [Carpe Diem](#) in Yuma Arizona (and [Indianapolis](#) & [Cincinnati](#)) is the best example of a 50/50 blend with an effective combination of personalized online learning in a lab setting and workshops taught by master teachers. The 7 [Nexus Academies](#) in the upper midwest share a similar design.

**5. Competency-Blend.** [The Education Achievement Authority \(EAA\)](#) is Michigan's school improvement district (like the [LA RSD](#) and [TN ASD](#)). It operates 12 schools in Detroit including Henry Ford High School. The EAA partnered with the School Improvement Network to develop a [student-centered competency-based school model](#) and a cool platform Buzz.

**6. 3 in 1:** While in Detroit, visit [Cornerstone](#) and see three blended models under one roof—all connected by a spine of character development. Like Carpe Diem, the high school model is a lab rotation model.

**7. Flipped school.** Greg Green is principal of Clintondale High School, also near Detroit. They flipped much of their instruction using content on [Gooru](#). Learn more about Clintondale on [The Flip Institute](#) blog.

**8. Project-Based.** The 130 school national [New Tech Network](#) powered by Echo, a project-based learning management system. [Anson New Tech](#), east of Charlotte North Carolina, integrates related subjects such as world geography and earth science or American literature and history.

**9. Just the Ticket.** The staff at [Leadership Public Schools](#) in Oakland built Exit Ticket, a classroom assessment and competency tracking system. LPS is the best example of a [collaborative and distributed innovation agenda](#) across a network of schools.

**10. Flex.** [Flex model schools](#), like [Silicon Valley Flex](#), use a digital curriculum to support individual progress. [AdvancePath](#) is a national dropout prevention network of high performing academies in public high schools.

**11. Interest-Based Learning.** The 100-school [Edvisions](#) high schools use [Project Foundry](#) and a variety of tools to support project-based learning and authentic assessment. Start with a visit to teach run [Minnesota New Country School](#).

**12. Internships.** The 100-school [Big Picture](#) network does the best job of identifying student interest and creating related internships. We featured [Met East](#) in Camden in a [PBL post](#).

**13. Personal Learning Network (PLN).** New Milford High School Principal Eric Sheninger ([@NMHS\\_Principal](#)) learned a lot from his PLN. Read how he helped [connect his community with social media](#).

**14. Travel.** [THINK Global School](#) students use the latest equipment to “record, report, and share their global education online as they travel the world.”

**15. Challenge.** [NYC iSchool](#) blends computer adaptive learning with challenges that require students to work together to present real solutions to real problems.

**16. Heart.** Mooresville, North Carolina superintendent says, “[It’s not about the machine, it’s about heart](#),” but his students sure make great use of their MacBooks. The innovation in Mooresville is the system-expectations, culture, curriculum, tools, and support.

**17. Expeditions.** [Casco Bay High School](#) in Portland Maine is an [Expeditionary Learning](#) school which keeps the school’s goals “clear, ambitious and essential.” Casco juniors engage in a long term interdisciplinary project that results in demonstration of learning.

**18. Proficiency.** [Poland High School](#), a member of the [New England Secondary School Consortium](#), was an early leader in proficiency-based graduation.

**19. Character.** DSST may be the best high poverty STEM school in the country but it’s also really good at [character development](#). “We’re a values first organization,” said CEO Bill Kurtz.

**20. Journalism.** The nation’s biggest and best journalism program is [Palo Alto High School](#). [Esther Wojcicki](#) asks her students to write at least 250 words every day. Students produce professional quality publications.

**21. Big blocks.** [Reynoldsburg High School](#) has two facilities and four academies including eSTEM featuring [triple blocks](#) on big topics like Energy, Environment and the Economy.

**22. 1:1.** The Chicagoland [Leyden High School District](#) has been a 1:1 leader. Check out tech director [Bryan Weinert's blog](#) for details.

**23. Inquiry.** [Science Leadership Academy](#) is an inquiry-driven, STEM-focused, project-based school formed as a partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and [The Franklin Institute](#).

**24. Entrepreneurship.** Also in Philly is [Springside Chestnut Hill Academy](#), a cool private school with a partnership with Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership

**25. Liberal Arts.** [Chandler Prep](#), part of the [Great Hearts](#) network, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive liberal arts education and [developing young people of character](#).

**26. Alternative.** Eagle Rock ([@EagleRockSchool](#)) in Estes Park Colorado, is a initiative of [@AmericanHonda](#), is both a high school and a professional development center for educators (and a very cool place to visit).

**27. Tutoring.** [Match High School](#), Boston, utilizes individualized tutoring for every student in support of a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum.

**28/29. Art+.** While in Boston, visit [Boston Arts Academy](#) and [Tech Boston](#), two good small thematic “pilot schools” that demonstrated the benefits of autonomy and choice.

**30. E.P.I.C.C. Academy** at [East Hall High School](#) in Gainesville, Georgia, is an dynamic blend launched by [@JohnHardison1](#) and documented weekly on [Getting Smart](#).

**31. Early College.** [Beaverton Early College High School](#) is part of the a network sponsored by [Portland Community College](#) where at risk students can earn a high school diploma *and* an associate degree. (See [Early College High Schools](#))

**32. IB.** The 30 schools of the [IDEA Public Schools](#) prepare south Texas students for college with the rigorous [International Baccalaureate](#) program. Visit the flagship high school in Donna and the K-8 feeder school featuring a lab rotation blend.

**33. Global.** West of Milwaukee is the lovely area of [Kettle Moraine](#) with a big high school that houses some [very interesting charter schools](#) including a performing arts blend and a flex model global studies school.

**34. Application.** There are about 100 next-gen, upper-secondary schools in Denmark with a focus on [business \(HHX\)](#) and [technology \(HTX\)](#) that are worth visiting. While schools in Denmark, get an overview of the [111 vocational programs](#) with job specific training and certification.

**35. Personalization.** While in Scandinavia, don't miss [Kunskapsskolan](#), a Swedish network (described in a [here](#)) uses technology to support individual goal setting.

Thanks to many contributors. Sorry for all the great schools I missed. What school would you add to the list?

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