
STRATEGIC POLICY PLAYBOOK

DRIVING INNOVATION IN
EDUCATION FOR ALL
STUDENTS

SYNOPSIS

In 2005, government leaders in North Carolina saw an opening to combat educational inequality in their state. Many students living in rural North Carolina lacked access to the same quality of education as students in Charlotte or Raleigh, simply because of their geographic or economic circumstances. This was unacceptable. Education is the way by which citizens achieve the American dream, yet so many were being left behind. On top of that, the current system—built around standardization—had hindered creativity, critical thinking, and motivation, and limited the potential of students and teachers alike.

Then-Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue envisioned a future in which all learners would have access to the same quality of education—through the strategic use of technology as a tool to enable and facilitate personalized learning. To achieve this vision, the state education system would need to fundamentally transform. Rethinking the traditional education system meant defining new roles and guidelines for the state, districts, and schools, in order to foster and support innovation. Perdue posed this pivotal question to state leaders: “What must be done to fully integrate technology into the education system?”

The answer? Strategic policy change, beginning with the General Assembly’s establishment of the Business Education Technology Alliance (BETA), a diverse team of partners from the business, technology, government, and education communities. These players joined together in 2002 with a shared mission to put technology in the hands of every learner in North Carolina and to prepare and empower teachers to be innovators in the classroom. Through technology, teachers and students would have a way to gain unlimited access to tools, information, and resources to improve teaching and learning. This innovative and personalized approach could remove barriers to learning, enhance teaching, and ultimately create a stronger workforce that could impact every community.

Within five years of its creation, the BETA commission made great progress in transforming the state education system, including getting all 115 school districts connected to the same high-performing broadband network, NC Research and Education Network (NCREN). North Carolina’s success is the result of collaborative public-private partnerships, strategic support from both sides of the legislative aisle, and ongoing commitment to making change an official part of the system. These efforts guided the development of North Carolina’s digital infrastructure and the delivery of education into the 21st century, where every kid has a shot at success. It serves as a model to other state leaders and changemakers in both the domain of personalized learning and for any multi-year, complicated change process.



NORTH CAROLINA'S PATH TO INNOVATION

Improving education through the use of technology is oftentimes done class-by-class or school-by-school. But this type of work is typically not sustainable and rarely connects to larger state initiatives. North Carolina was eager to change this. The state would instead embark on a journey to change the education system, with players both inside and outside of the system, by using technology as a way to provide a free and equitable public education to every learner. The state rethought how it could best support schools and districts in driving educational innovation. Its role would be to enable and empower forward-thinking teachers and administrators to use their school and district resources to innovate while the state secured sustainable funding, advocated for critical policy changes, and provided technical and administrative support. Teachers are the best stewards of change as they are on the ground, working directly with students. With proper resources and support, teachers would drive changes to the teaching and learning landscape in North Carolina.

Digital learning advocates sought to influence state budget and policy priorities by proving the impact of technology on learning. They established pilot sites to test new technology, fostered critical local partnerships, and worked tirelessly to build support among school leaders and the general public. The success and impact of their work was undeniable and quickly garnered the support of many public officials.

TECHNOLOGY COULD LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD.

The vision of the stewards of this initiative was simple and has served as the foundation for a decade's worth of educational reform in North Carolina. They believed technology could level the playing field. No matter where a student lived, no matter the school she attended, no matter her economic circumstances, she had access to the same courses, materials, and highly qualified teachers as any other student in the state. To make this a reality, advocates had to influence the system, both from the bottom up and the top down.

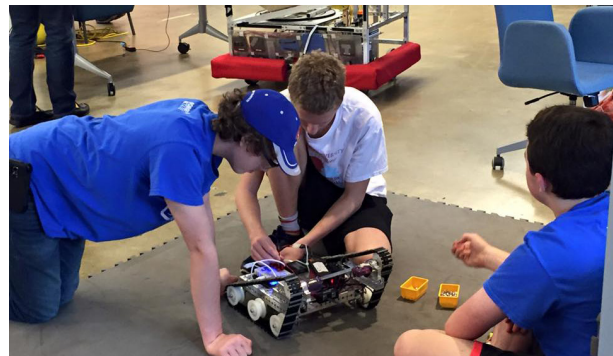
Becoming Part of the System

In 2002, the General Assembly established the Business Education Technology Alliance (BETA), which reported to the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. BETA named Bev Perdue, then lieutenant governor, as the chair. Perdue enlisted the help of Myra Best, then executive director of BETA, to explore what it would take to fully integrate technology into education. Perdue brought all relevant stakeholders to the table, including legislators and business leaders, to build this vision together. The group developed recommendations to reach this vision and pledged their support for its implementation.

One of the early recommendations of the BETA commission was the creation of the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS). BETA viewed the NCVPS as the opportunity to realize its vision and expand education access to all learners in the state. An early evaluation of the school, however, was disheartening. Although they were inundated with enrollments, the evaluation confirmed that the NCVPS was not reaching the learners and schools it was meant to support. Without reliable, high-performing broadband connectivity, students and teachers in rural parts of the state could not take advantage of the online courses offered through NCVPS. It became clear that BETA's vision to put technology in the hands of every learner would not happen if they did not expand broadband connectivity to every school and district. So BETA, with the support of its legislative members, asked the General Assembly to fund a feasibility study for developing regional technology networks to support the K-12 system. Their efforts were successful. The legislature appropriated \$150,000 to conduct the study and \$150,000 to launch the NCVPS.

The feasibility study, "Developing Regional Education Networks," was presented to the General Assembly in 2006. It recommended that the state expand the number of schools with broadband, selectively build out networks for rural and underperforming schools, and develop a scalable model for implementation. Based on these recommendations, the legislature passed Senate Bill 1741, allocating \$6 million in nonrecurring funds to support implementation of the initiative.

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Connecting the Schools

BETA recruited Phil Emer, Director of Technology at the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, a new institute at North Carolina State University, to lead the first phase deployment of a K-12 network infrastructure. Emer and a team skilled in technology networking planned a comprehensive nine-month pilot program that fostered the support and momentum for a larger statewide initiative.

As expected, school districts were initially skeptical. They were convinced money would stay in Raleigh and that digital did not and could not work for them. Emer and Best fought to reframe this narrative among school administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers, explaining that the problem was “not how the content was being delivered; the problem was the digital connectivity.”


Once Emer and his school team launched the connectivity pilots, chatter raised in their favor. He recalls that local support really took off because they “delivered early and established credibility.” Local leaders could finally see BETA’s vision for technology in education and the opportunity it presented to elevate teaching and learning in their schools. Just as important, they saw that the state was committed to funding this change.

Emer’s team conducted site surveys at more than 2,500 schools across 115 school districts in the state to assess their needs, map their proximity to existing networks, and run connectivity pilots in four regions. Emer maintained an open line of communication with Best, who regularly ran interference when problems arose, and reported progress to BETA, the General Assembly, and SBE. He and his team collected data, listened to feedback, and continuously made adjustments to their work, incrementally improving their efforts. This constant data collection and feedback loop

LOCAL SUPPORT REALLY TOOK OFF BECAUSE THEY “DELIVERED EARLY AND ESTABLISHED CREDIBILITY.”

allowed BETA to demonstrate success early and gradually, clearly justifying continued funding from the state.

With data and feedback from the districts and the pilots in hand, Emer’s team drafted the Connectivity Implementation and Operating Plan which outlined a roadmap for building the necessary architecture to support public schools. The plan included recommendations to:

- ▶ Share an education backbone that made use of existing core networks, primarily the NC Research and Education Network (NCREN) managed by MCNC, a nonprofit organization that provides low-cost internet connectivity and network services;
 - ▶ Connect local last mile service providers and regional internet service providers to this shared backbone;
 - ▶ Establish an E-Rate service bureau to help districts apply for and obtain federal funding;
 - ▶ Establish a network engineering services group to provide schools with ongoing technical support and consulting; and
 - ▶ Allow districts to opt-in and voluntarily participate.
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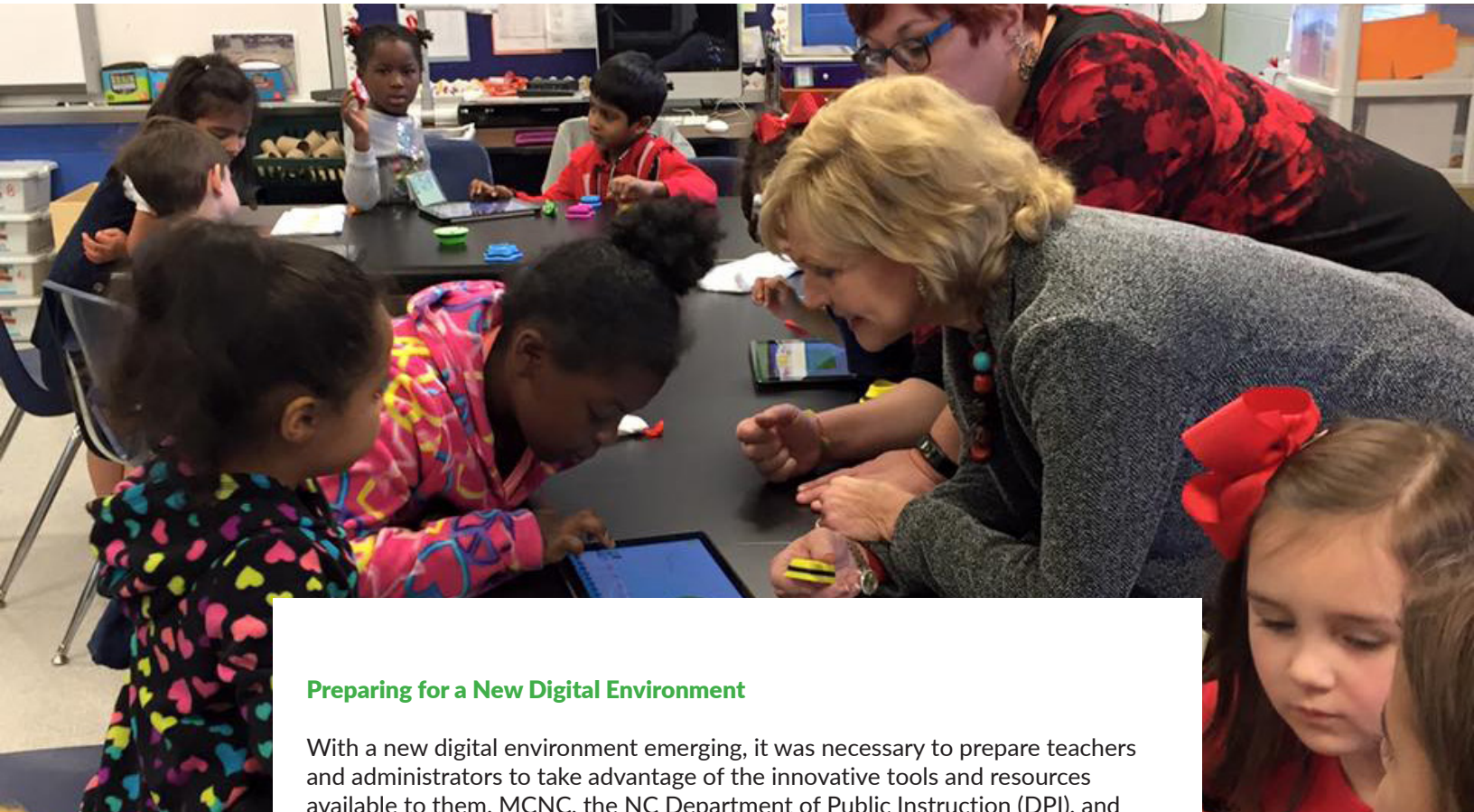
In 2007, the plan was presented to and approved by SBE and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. This was not an easy sell. At the time, technology in education was just emerging and many policymakers were uninformed. Many were skeptical, as they previously had bad experiences with funding technology projects that exceeded budgets by millions of dollars and achieved little to no impact. To gain support, and ultimately funding, the team had to teach legislators about the technology and its potential impact.

They were successful. The General Assembly allocated \$12 million in recurring funds to continue the implementation of the School Connectivity Initiative (SCI) based on the pilot results and the recommendations outlined in the implementation plan. Within a year, the General Assembly expanded funding for the SCI by \$10 million, for a total of \$22 million in recurring funds to complete the implementation phase and increase schools' abilities to use updated technology in the classroom. BETA was able to grow funding for this initiative because it proved its impact through the pilot and regularly reported its progress to the appropriate decision makers. The success of the initiative and the impact of technology was clear; the General Assembly continued to support the work.

ALL 115 PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN NORTH CAROLINA VOLUNTARILY CONNECTED TO NCREN.

By 2009, all 115 public school districts in North Carolina voluntarily connected to NCREN, where they could access content and administrative applications from the state and gain access to a high-performing internet connection. In this same year, NCVPS emerged as one of the largest and fastest growing state virtual schools in the country. They had 15,721 course enrollments during the 2008-2009 school year, growing to nearly 60,000 enrollments by 2016. Participants in a number of NCVPS Advanced Placement courses passed their tests at a higher rate than both state and national averages. The learning was happening, and North Carolina was seeing evidence of success.





Preparing for a New Digital Environment

With a new digital environment emerging, it was necessary to prepare teachers and administrators to take advantage of the innovative tools and resources available to them. MCNC, the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and University of North Carolina launched one of the nation's first technology training programs for educators in 2009. This yearlong program was created to help education leaders develop the core competencies they need in today's learning environment and to ensure they are using technology in the most effective and productive ways. The inaugural class of 34 Certified Educational Chief Technology Officer (CeCTO) students graduated in 2010.

Despite changes in party control in the governor's office and the state legislature, digital learning has remained one of North Carolina's top education priorities. It officially became a part of the state system in 2012 with the creation of the General Assembly's Digital Learning Environments in Public Schools Committee, co-chaired by newly elected Representative Craig Horn, and the creation of SBE's Special Committee on Digital Learning in 2013. Rep. Horn immediately began introducing legislation that would continue the implementation of technology in education. With the infrastructure in place, the focus shifted to what technology could deliver in terms of access and opportunity, including expanding human capacity, generating data, improving assessments, and prioritizing digital resources for instructional management. New legislation was enacted to replace funding for textbooks with funding for digital materials and to allocate state funding to configure Wi-Fi in every classroom by 2018. These changes continue to guide the state toward its ultimate goal of putting technology in the hands of every learner and teacher so that they have unlimited access to the tools, information, and resources they need to succeed.

Looking to the Future

North Carolina has differentiated itself as both a strategic partner and state leader in digital learning. But there is still much to be done. By 2013, seven years into SCI, a survey of North Carolina schools and districts revealed that only 22 percent of schools had a digital learning-ready Wi-Fi connection. The state added \$12 million in recurring funds to the initiative and leveraged the modernized E-Rate program, which allowed more flexible use of funding, to improve schools' internal Wi-Fi networks. To date, more than 70 percent of schools are equipped with a Wi-Fi network that enables digital learning in the classroom. By summer of 2018, all schools in the state are expected to be digital ready. This milestone will give teachers across the state more opportunity to leverage the state's resources and be more innovative in their approaches to teaching. North Carolina remains ahead of the curve in providing unlimited bandwidth and equitable internet access to all K-12 public schools with sustained funding from the state and strategic use of the E-Rate program. With the connectivity and funding in place, teachers can drive change from the ground up.

North Carolina's digital advocacy work remains focused on its ability to fundamentally transform the fabric of the classroom through the use of technology. Recognizing that all students learn in their own ways and require different levels of support, the state remains committed to delivering personalized learning options to students and expanded instructional opportunities for teachers and instructors. Personalized learning and technology in education sets up individuals, communities, and the future workforce for success, and ensures that everyone is equally well-prepared and educated.

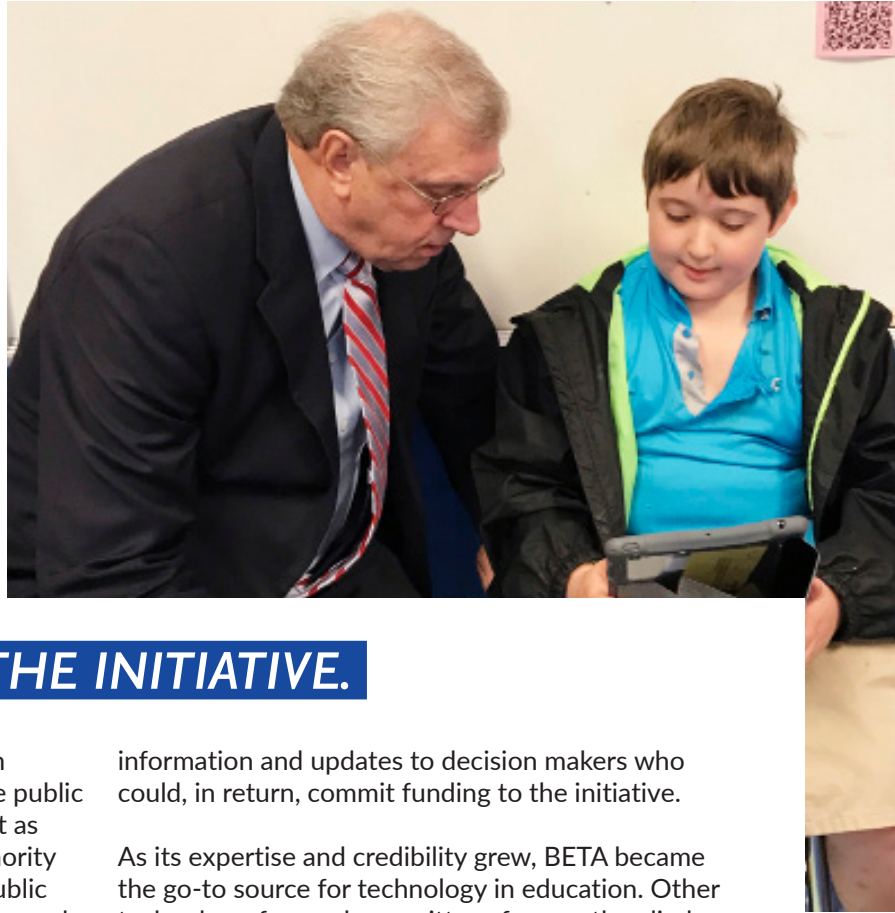
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THE STRATEGIC POLICY PLAYBOOK

The state's role in digital learning, or any public interest initiative, must be about creating the conditions that allows these efforts to take off and flourish. North Carolina recognized early that equity in education depends on merging the diverse interests and resources of public and private institutions, and sustaining support through future changes in government leadership. This playbook was created based on the successes of North Carolina's strategic digital learning initiatives to serve as a guide for other state leaders to achieve the same level of impact in their home states.





PLAY 1: PREPARE FOR THE INITIATIVE.

New initiatives must first start with a big vision generated by one or a group of individuals. The public sector must then understand its capacity to act as a strategic partner and establish a level of authority within a policy-driven state system. In many public education systems, reform has historically happened at the school-level, which makes it difficult to scale efforts and hold individual schools accountable. Reform must begin at the state-level in order to effectively influence policy. Once the initiative has become an official part of the system, the original vision will likely transform to get and keep all stakeholders involved, although the core purpose of vision should remain.

In the case of North Carolina, the creation of the BETA commission as an entity independent of the Department of Public Instruction was critical. BETA was created by the General Assembly and was required to report to the State Board of Education and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. This reporting structure lent credibility to the initiative and did not confine its work to DPI's agenda. Instead, BETA could really affect change as part of the education system, including securing state funding for the initiative. Given that technology was so new and unfamiliar, BETA established an ongoing evaluation process to collect data and analyze progress. This strategic data collection and analysis plan afforded them the flexibility to adjust course throughout the work to ensure success. By regularly using data to check and modify work and reporting progress to the General Assembly and SBE, BETA was able to provide

information and updates to decision makers who could, in return, commit funding to the initiative.

As its expertise and credibility grew, BETA became the go-to source for technology in education. Other technology-focused committees frequently relied on BETA for support. They ultimately formed a partnership, led by BETA, that allowed all technology stakeholders to jointly inform the policy process. This level of collaboration resulted in the elimination of several legislative committees and the consolidation of state work around technology. BETA's strategic reporting and communications plan allowed for a transparent and fluid exchange of information. This plan helped BETA gain credibility and retain ongoing support for its work.

Key questions:

- ▶ What entity is responsible for managing the partnerships?
- ▶ Does a new entity need to be established?
- ▶ What level of authority does this entity have within the broader system?
- ▶ Does this entity have the expertise required to negotiate with the private sector and other partners?
- ▶ How is information communicated through this system?
- ▶ What information will be shared, with whom, and by what means?

PLAY 2: ENSURE CONSISTENT, QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP.

It is equally important to identify the leader who can drive the project forward. This person should have the authority and responsibility to assign work, bring partners to the table, negotiate business, work with the legislature, evaluate progress, and be accountable overall for the success or failure of the project. The leader should bring in the right people with the right skill sets to execute the recommendations of the group.

Governor Perdue was this leader. She had the prestige to draw attention to their work and generate support from business, community, education, technology, and government leaders. Perdue was the ideal advocate who had influence, passion, a strategic vision for the future, and a reliable team to lead the work.

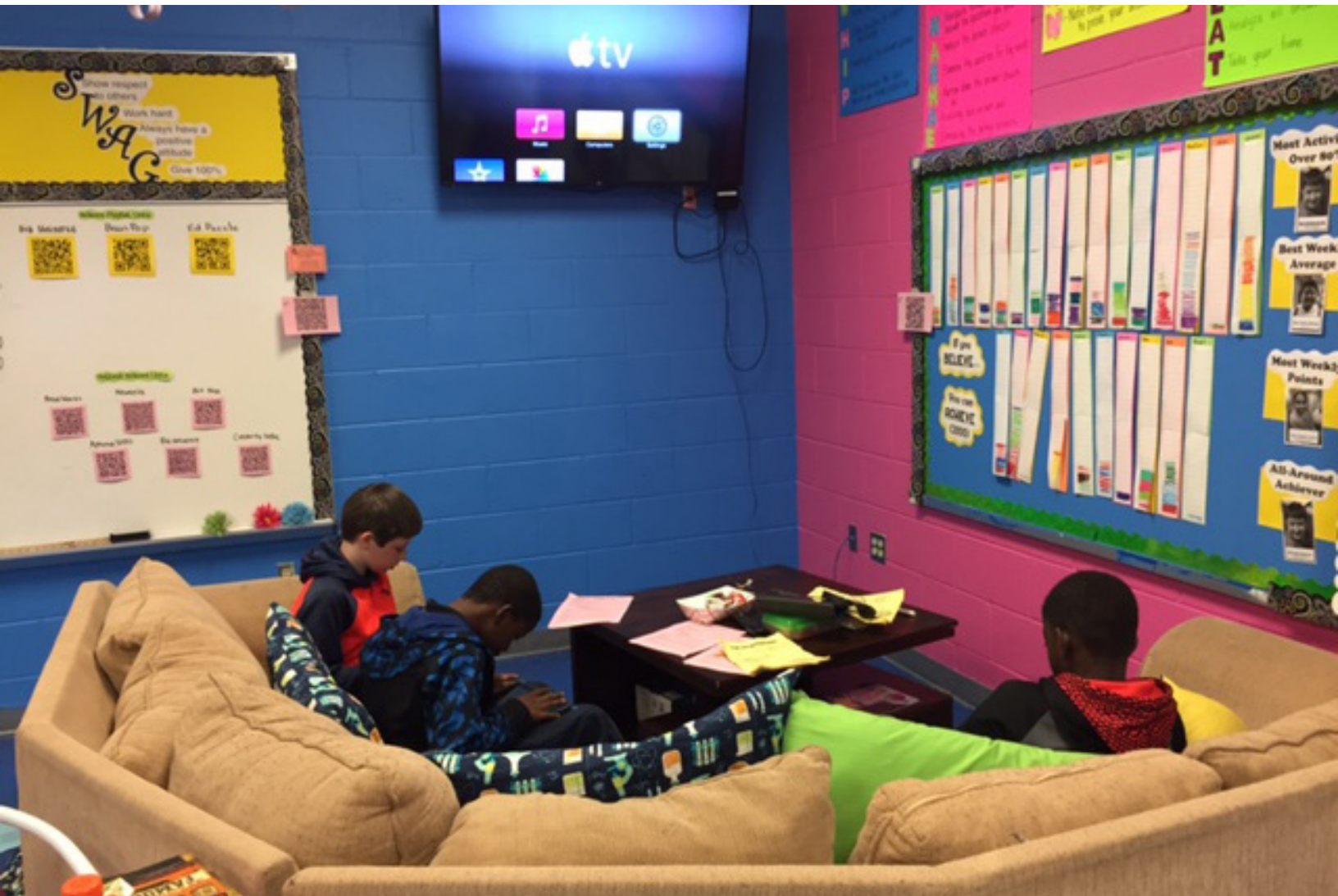
She put together a team that could execute the vision. Best, then executive director of BETA, was a master navigator of the bureaucracy, building support with the right stakeholders, negotiating agreements, and ultimately securing funding and continued support for their work. Emer worked the technical side of the initiative to convey, in simple language, the network needs of public schools and the potential impact of technology on the future of learning. Together, this team was able to speak the language of all stakeholders and generate both public and private sector support for the digital learning initiative.

Good leaders persist and are in it for the long haul. They are committed to generating and sustaining support from all stakeholders. They are capable of finding people with the right skill sets to carry out the work.

Key questions:

- ▶ Who is the primary leader?
- ▶ What level of authority does the leader have and to whom does she report?
- ▶ How is the leader held accountable for outcomes?
- ▶ How does the leader hold the team accountable?
- ▶ What other experts and parties are needed to support the work?





PLAY 3: ESTABLISH A SHARED VISION.

Every great movement in history had a vision. People want to see and embrace a shared vision. Creating the vision is no easy task and involves building consensus among all parties and partners involved. The vision for North Carolina was clear—everyone should have access to a high-quality public education and technology could make this happen. Furthermore, as technology evolves, learning could be personalized to the specific needs of each student, and teachers and instructors could access the appropriate resources to make this possible. This vision was one that every stakeholder could get behind. How can the state bring education to the people in such a way that it leads to a highly educated and productive workforce? The answer was simple: technology, the right partners, and government support.

Key questions:

- ▶ What is the ideal outcome?
- ▶ Does this vision reflect the interests and needs of the public?
- ▶ Will all necessary stakeholders get behind this vision?
- ▶ If not, who or what could impede progress?
- ▶ How may this vision evolve over time?



PLAY 4: UNDERSTAND THE KEY PARTNERS AND PLAYERS.

Public-private partnerships involve for-profit, government, nonprofit, and public interests. Each sector plays its own role and has its own goals that must be met. The private sector seeks a positive bottom line while the nonprofit sector is mission-driven. Government roles are often split along party lines and must also accommodate two different schools of thought. North Carolina's digital learning initiative cut across all sectors and party lines. Whoever came to the table, it was imperative to keep everyone focused on the shared vision and remain transparent about the risks and rewards for each player involved.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

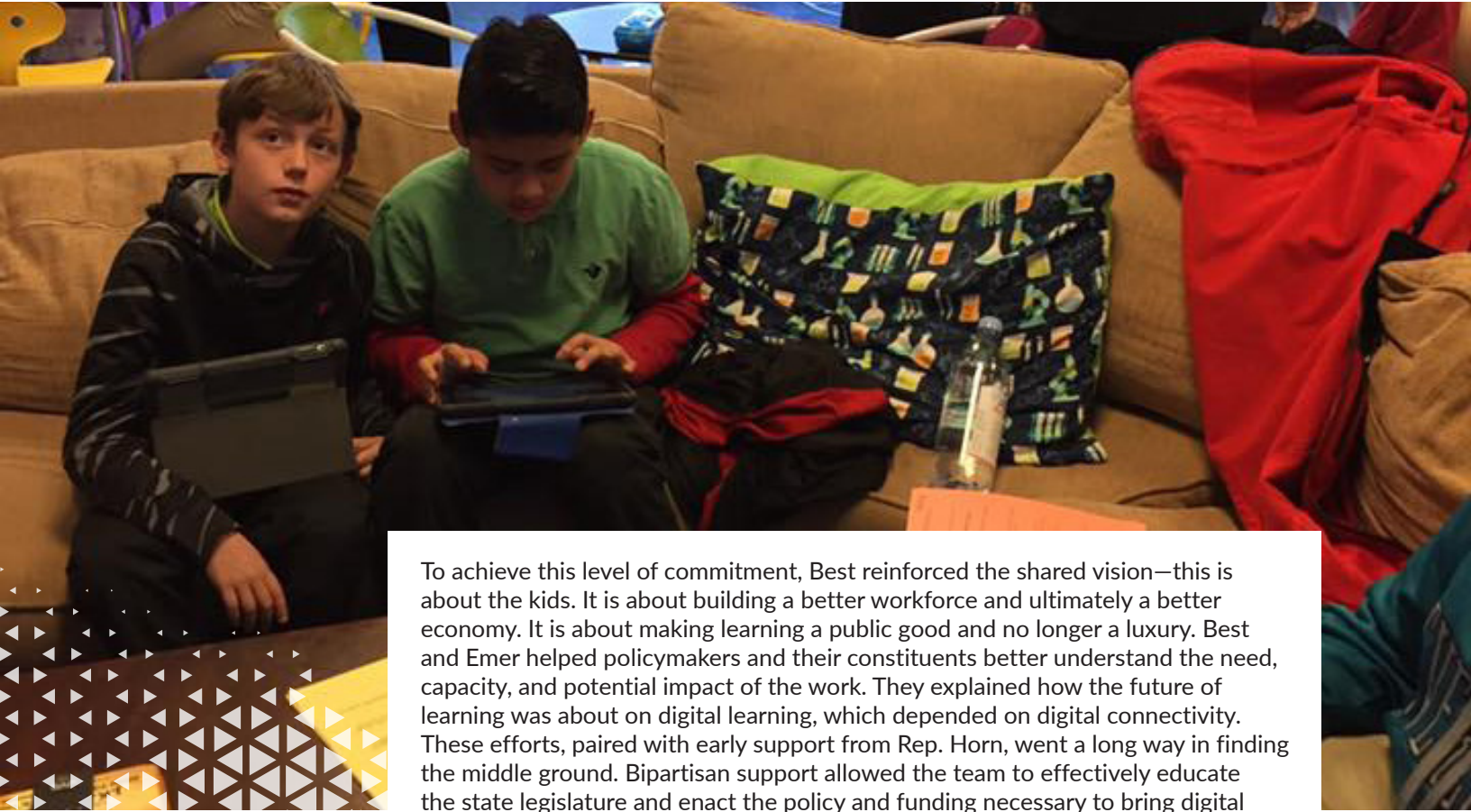
North Carolina relied on support from technology and telecommunications providers. Any effort to expand network infrastructure across the state would create direct competition with, and therefore pushback from, the telecom providers.

Rather than competing head-on with providers, the state invited them to the table. Together they worked out a mutually beneficial agreement. The state and MCNC, a nonprofit service provider, would build out the middle mile and in exchange, allow the telecom providers to provide last mile services to schools. This deal would greatly increase their customer base and give them the opportunity to reach areas that they had previously been unable to connect. It was not an easy sell to bring providers to the table but an effective strategy motivated them to stay.

Bipartisan Collaboration

In general, education policy has fallen along party lines, as is the case in numerous policy areas. The team wanted to safeguard its work against changes in government control. Therefore, legislators were critical stakeholders and all parties had to be included in the work. It was important for them that digital learning remain focused on teachers and learners and transcend party loyalties.

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To achieve this level of commitment, Best reinforced the shared vision—this is about the kids. It is about building a better workforce and ultimately a better economy. It is about making learning a public good and no longer a luxury. Best and Emer helped policymakers and their constituents better understand the need, capacity, and potential impact of the work. They explained how the future of learning was about on digital learning, which depended on digital connectivity. These efforts, paired with early support from Rep. Horn, went a long way in finding the middle ground. Bipartisan support allowed the team to effectively educate the state legislature and enact the policy and funding necessary to bring digital connectivity to all schools.

Stakeholder Collaboration

North Carolina also had to address the concerns and hesitations of the beneficiaries—the schools, districts, teachers, parents, administrators, and students that stand to benefit directly from the work. All partners worked together to educate the stakeholders about the benefits of technology in education. They allayed fears that this was an attempt to get rid of teachers or institute more state control at the local level, or would cost the schools and districts a lot of money and resources. The team convinced the constituents that its focus is on the kids; therefore, the work will only elevate the quality of the educational experience for all parties involved.

Key questions:

- ▶ Who are the partners and parties involved?
- ▶ What are the concerns and hesitations of each party involved?
- ▶ Does the vision create the opportunity for mutual success?
- ▶ Is the political environment friendly to bipartisan collaboration?
- ▶ Are the parties willing to come to the table and contribute meaningfully to the work?
- ▶ What conflicts may arise? What is the best way to prepare for them?
- ▶ Are the rewards compelling enough to encourage participation?

PLAY 5: CREATE A STRATEGY TO REACH THAT VISION.

The vision is not useful without a clear strategy. No one step leads to the vision. Instead, the team should identify the steps to be taken, the value of each step, the intermediate outcomes, and the roles and contributions of each player. The completed strategy formalizes the engagement and commitments promised from each party. The strategy also promotes a commitment to information and resource sharing, and the achievement of the milestones.

All parties must also agree on the formal decision-making, implementation, and evaluation processes, and institute a system of checks and balances to evaluate progress and hold actors accountable.

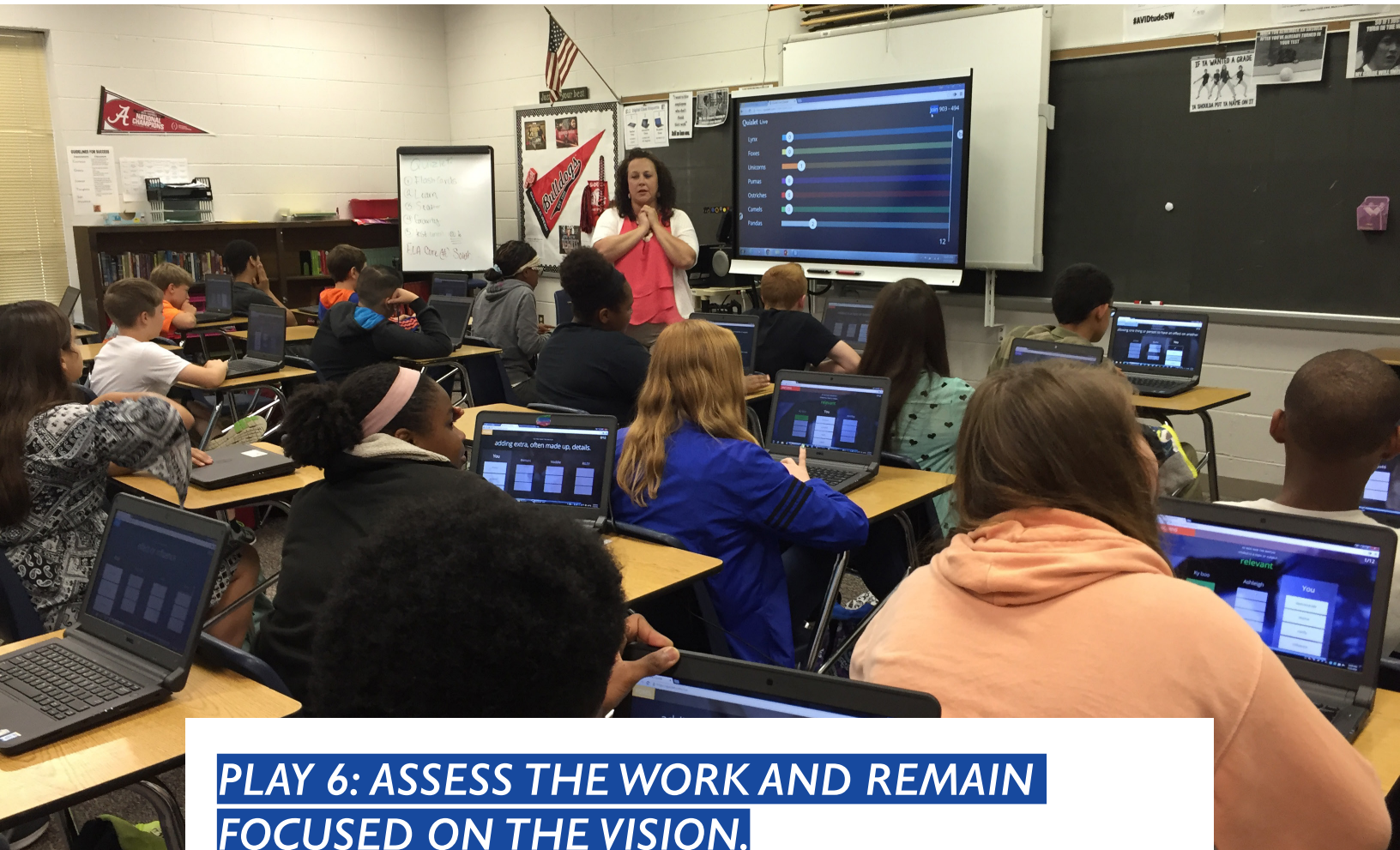
North Carolina's digital learning roadmap had a series of actions that needed to be taken, and it identified intermediate milestones. For example, BETA had to be established, a leader identified, a vision created, and a pitch for funding successful, before a team could be pulled together to evaluate feasibility. Similarly, North Carolina identified a number of intermediate outcomes that served as meaningful milestones, such as connecting all 115 districts to the NCREN backbone, on the way to the larger vision of technology fundamentally transforming education. All steps, resources, intermediate outcomes, and the vision, were shared and agreed upon by the members of the team.

Key questions:

- ▶ What is the current state of the project?
- ▶ What are the desired intermediate outcomes?
- ▶ What steps must be taken to get there?
- ▶ What is the desired future state?
- ▶ What is expected of each player?
- ▶ Can the players agree to a strategy?
- ▶ Are any players overburdened or overcommitted?
- ▶ What are the state's available assets?
- ▶ How can the effort build on the existing system and leverage available resources?
- ▶ What are the best approval and evaluation processes?
- ▶ How are leaders and players held accountable?
- ▶ What are the formal decision-making procedures?

THE TEAM SHOULD IDENTIFY THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN, THE VALUE OF EACH STEP, THE INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES, AND THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF EACH PLAYER.





PLAY 6: ASSESS THE WORK AND REMAIN FOCUSED ON THE VISION.

Identify the data that will be needed to prove outcomes early. The team needs to ensure the data is valuable and can show impact. This data and transparency is critical to maintaining and sustaining legislative support and funding, retaining and building confidence and trust from the public, and encouraging momentum and enthusiasm among partners. The data is also used to make informed decisions that will contribute to, not derail, projects.

BETA used enrollment data for NCVPS, connectivity and data usage by districts and schools, a map of the resources and existing infrastructure across the state, and a number of other data points, to focus efforts, demonstrate need, and secure funding. It also used anecdotes and outcomes data to gain trust from the targeted schools and districts. By seeing how other schools have benefited from connectivity or E-Rate support services, more schools became eager to participate.

Key questions:

- ▶ What data will need to be collected?
- ▶ When and how will the data be collected?
- ▶ Who is responsible for collecting and analyzing data?
- ▶ How will the data be used?
- ▶ What are the benchmarks?
- ▶ How will data and outcomes be communicated?



SUMMARY

The digital-learning initiative in North Carolina has been successful for over a decade because of these six principles and an enduring vision for the future of education.

- ▶ Play 1: Prepare for the initiative.
- ▶ Play 2: Ensure consistent, qualified leadership.
- ▶ Play 3: Establish a shared vision.
- ▶ Play 4: Understand the key partners and players.
- ▶ Play 5: Create a strategy to reach that vision.
- ▶ Play 6: Assess the work and remain focused on the vision.

Governor Perdue and the BETA commission recognized early on that cross-sector and bipartisan support were necessary to success. Those in power would inevitably change, so creating a mechanism to ensure a sustained vision was critical. Accordingly, at the center of this diverse group of individuals, viewpoints, and business interests, was a shared vision and abundant support and resources to transform the state education ecosystem to one that supports innovation. It fundamentally shifted North Carolina's education system from a traditional, standardized system to one where schools can become engines of innovation.

To develop sustainable policies that enable education innovation, states must rethink their vision for education and the system that supports it. North Carolina made, and continues to make, policy decisions to transform the education system. Early on, the state viewed technology as the way to fulfill its constitutional responsibility of providing a free public education. The first step was making the legislative decision to connect every school to a high-performing network that would give them access to high-quality courses and content. As schools across the state became connected, teachers and administrators gained a better understanding of how technology could facilitate teaching and learning. A strong interest in personalized learning emerged and called for broader policy changes that would allow teachers and schools to test and experiment with new teaching methods. Because North Carolina's education system had been transformed to embrace and manage change, it would be easier to gain state-level support for the risks associated with innovation in education. North Carolina is now positioned as a "test bed" for education innovation unlike any other state in the country.



**THIS IS NORTH CAROLINA'S STORY.
WHAT WILL BE YOUR STORY?**

Every state has the opportunity to write its own story for change and innovation.

The Strategic Policy Playbook, developed by digiLEARN, is the first step in guiding leaders through the transformation of their education ecosystems. digiLEARN is a nonprofit founded by Governor Perdue that is dedicated to increasing personalized learning opportunities for students, expanding instructional opportunities for teachers, and cultivating an innovative economy for education technology entrepreneurs and startups. It serves as the front line for research and development of new learning models, tools, and content needed to help every learner succeed. The leadership of digiLEARN transformed North Carolina's vision for education innovation into a reality by convening diverse stakeholders, building collaboration, and developing strategic and sustainable policy initiatives. One example is bringing unlimited bandwidth and technology infrastructure to 1.5 million students across 3,000 public and private schools.

digiLEARN's objective now is to help others achieve similar success stories by partnering with state and education leaders across the country to realize their own visions and strategies for the future of learning.



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DIGILEARN BOARD MEMBERS



The Honorable Beverly Eaves Perdue, Chair and Founder

Bev Perdue is the chair and founder of digILEARN: Digital Learning Institute. She is the first woman governor of North Carolina (2009-2013) and Lieutenant Governor (2001 to 2009). She is a strong advocate for education and led the state's efforts to infuse technology throughout education for all citizens, birth through post-secondary.



The Honorable James Geringer, Vice Chair

Jim Geringer, the director of policy and public sector strategy of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), was governor of Wyoming (1995-2003) and in the Wyoming Legislature (1983-1994). Governor Geringer is a founder and current chair of Board of Trustees for Western Governors University, a non-profit online university founded and supported by 19 U.S. governors that certifies competency-based education.



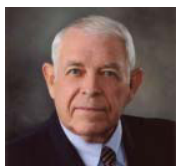
The Honorable Bob Wise

Bob Wise is president of the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance) and former governor of West Virginia (2001 to 2005). Prior to his governorship, Governor Wise served in the U.S. House of Representatives for eighteen years. He is recognized as one of the nation's renowned education policy leaders for his vision of higher quality education standards and achievement for all students.



The Honorable Craig Horn

Craig Horn is a member of the NC House of Representatives where he serves as Appropriations chair and co-chair of the Digital Learning Environments Committee. He sponsored recent legislation to further digital learning by requiring the use of digital media in public schools, digital licensing standards for teachers and administrators and development of a statewide budget plan for scaling wireless in all public schools.



The Honorable Joe Tolson

Joe Tolson is a former member of the North Carolina House of Representatives. During his five terms, Representative Tolson has served as Appropriations chair and co-chair of the Joint Information Technology Committee.



Susan Cates

Susan Cates is the chief operating officer of 2U, Inc. Cates leads a number of core functions critical to the growth of 2U's university partner programs, including enrollment services, educational content production, student recruitment, and student and faculty support and placement.



Terry Holliday

Terry Holliday is the board chairman of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Dr. Holliday has more than 40 years of educational experience ranging from classroom teaching to educational leadership in district, state and national roles.

**Michael H. Levine**

Michael Levine is the Founding Director of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, an independent non-profit organization based at Sesame Workshop. The center conducts research, and builds multi-sector partnerships to scale innovation and investment in promising educational media technologies for children. Dr. Levine has been a frequent adviser to the U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, writes for public affairs journals, and appears frequently in the media.

**Tom Miller**

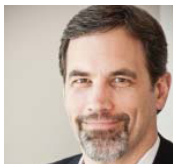
Tom Miller is the executive director of the Entrepreneurship Initiative at NC State University and leads its mission to empower students to become entrepreneurial leaders. Dr. Miller is also vice-provost for distance education and learning technology applications.

**Jane Smith Patterson**

Jane Smith Patterson is president of Jane Patterson and Associates providing consulting services about information technology and broadband deployment, adoption and use to companies in this country and abroad. She served as executive director of the e-NC Authority.

**Rick Stout**

Rick Stout is the Superintendent of Onslow County Schools. In his 29 years as an educator, Rick has served in the role of a teacher, coach, assistant principal, assistant superintendent of finance and human resources, and assistant superintendent of instruction and auxiliary services. He is an advocate for 21st century learning, presenting locally and nationally regarding technology innovation and Early College partnerships.

**Tom Vander Ark**

Tom Vander Ark is author of *Getting Smart: How Digital Learning is Changing the World* and CEO of Getting Smart, a learning advocacy firm. Tom advocates for innovations that customize and motivate learning and extend access. He is also a partner in Learn Capital, an education venture capital firm investing in edtech startups.

**John Wilson**

John Wilson, a long-time special education teacher and association leader, became executive director of the National Education Association on November 1, 2000. The nation's largest teachers union, NEA also represents education support professionals, higher education faculty, school administrators, retired educators, and education students who plan to become teachers.

**Jessie Woolley-Wilson**

Jessie Woolley-Wilson is the President, CEO and Board Chair of DreamBox Learning. Jessie supports the broader K12 industry by serving on the boards of several educational organizations including the International Association for K12 Online Learning (iNACOL), Camelot, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and Islandwood.

**Myra Best**

Myra Best currently works as project director for digiLEARN: Digital Learning Institute. She served as special advisor to Governor Bev Perdue on e-learning and education innovation (2009- 2012). In her role, she led policy and budget initiatives for education innovation and coordinated the e-Learning Commission.



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