



Executive Summary | 2016-17

Area: Innovation

Purpose:

The purpose of this executive summary is to introduce the creation of the International Center for Education Research and Practice at the Vista Innovation Center.

Opportunity:

Build a nexus between real-time educational research and classroom practice through a continuous feedback system between and among institutions of higher education, teachers, students and business leaders locally and internationally.

Background:

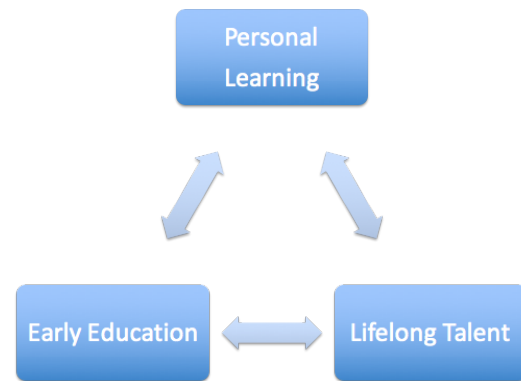
Education is changing. The school landscape in the United States and around the world looks profoundly different when compared to a decade ago. Connectivity, technology and the rise of school choice have created the demand and opportunity for new education models and new education alignments. Vista Unified is far ahead of many school districts in the nation. Personal learning is now a realized vision in more than half of our schools. A Prenatal to Grade 3 (P-3) Continuum is under development. New initiatives, like Talent Cities, are now aligning education and employment in new partnerships with positive early results.

Vista Unified has always understood its role as a model school district. This role and responsibility has led Vista to position itself as a practicing research center. In 2014, Vista and UCSD initiated a three year study around building social capital in school districts -- an important study given the changes school districts are now undertaking. In 2015, Vista engaged in new global research with the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) focused on developing creativity and critical thinking skills in students across the grade span. The only American school district to directly engage, Vista is cooperating with 22 countries around the world. In 2016, Vista and the Chamber of Commerce launched the first Talent Cities pilot highlighting companies that represent future job growth in high priority sectors. In 2017, Vista will pilot a P-3 Continuum with local and national partners to close the achievement gap before it opens.

The creation of the International Center for Education Research and Practice at the Vista Innovation Center formalizes all of these efforts in a research environment where new and significant research can inform and be informed by these advances at Vista Unified, where efficacy and evaluation can formally support new Vista initiatives, and where the story of these initiatives can be told in ways that enable school districts and school systems around the globe to learn from Vista.

The Center is envisioned as a dynamic entity. It will initiate with focus on three interrelated areas. The first is Personal Learning. Vista Unified schools are transforming to student centric learning environments guided by individual Strengths, Interests and Values. While the transformation to Personal Learning is a goal held by many school districts, at Vista Unified, it has already evolved to be

the driver of new alignments with the early education, employer and entrepreneurial communities. With a focus on the four attributes of personal learning (Voice, Co-Creation, Self-Discovery, and Social-Construction) students will become stewards of their own learning and teachers become activators of learning and growth.



Unique in its approach, this Center brings the research capability of UCSD directly to the Vista Unified campus where research and practice come together. The Center design offers a faster, more genuine approach to quality “practical” research providing UCSD researchers with an in-context, on-the-ground approach to understanding families, students and learning. The Center is grounded in design-based partnership as a way to better link research and practice. Design based partnerships are focused on the idea that researchers maintain an eye toward practice and create deep, meaningful, and equal partnerships in understanding educational challenges. This orientation suggests that all Center members are equally engaged and move together in an iterative process of planning, acting, reflecting, and refining. This shared role of finding solutions to support educational issues holds promise particularly in moving beyond traditional paradigms of researchers as generators of knowledge and practitioners as mere technicians tasked with implementing that knowledge. This work moves well beyond outdated modes of researcher as transmitter of knowledge to one that is committed to approaching the work from a mutual “co-constructed” approach in which partners work hand in hand throughout all phases of the project.

This approach which includes a cycle of determining quality research aims, finding research participants, analyzing and interpreting results, and putting those results into practice is faster and more relevant to pressing educational needs. Families will benefit from research faster. It is a win for Vista, the state of California and has national and international implications. The Center will have a solid commitment and requirement to research presentations, peer seminars and open publishing so that results can be used widely.

Structure:

The Center will focus on issues that have global implications; broad application will need to be demonstrated prior to approval. *The Center’s* Advisory Board will be composed of a broad mix of educators, researchers, and entrepreneurs that have demonstrated expertise in the field of education and innovation.

Primary Areas of Focus:

The Center will focus primarily on the areas of educational research related to academic and social development to promote a transformed learning pathway that is student-centric and personalized. Special emphasis will be given to the following areas:

- Prenatal to Grade Three Development
- Literacy and Language
- Teacher Preparation and Support
- Creativity and Critical Thinking
- Strengths, Interest, Values development

- Social Networks and Organizational Growth
- Economic Growth and Talent Aligned Learning
- Brain Development
- Areas of inspiration and special interest: girls in STEAM, women's leadership, dual language

Commitments:

In making this innovative approach come to life in deep and meaningful ways that make a difference in the lives of youth and the community Vista is committed to serving all partners have agreed to a core set of values that reflect our broader partnership commitments. All partners have both co-constructed and agreed to the following as principles that will guide all work and sets of interactions. The commitments include:

1. Commit to contribute to the vision of the district with a focus
2. Commit to equity
3. Commit to honor shared knowledge in both research and practice
4. Commit to positive intent
5. Commit to interdependence--supporting efficiency and effectiveness

