



Cisco's Global Education group is actively engaged in the work of transforming education systems to meet the needs of 21st century learners, educators, and organizations. This transformation will require a shift in the way teachers teach, leaders lead, and students learn.

# Case Study



## District Transforms Pedagogy to Help Students Learn at a Deeper Level

When the Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS) became part of the Cisco® 21st Century Schools Initiative (21S) in 2005, the district was in need of systemic change. Students had lost their motivation to learn and test scores had reached a plateau. Teachers wanted to engage students in new ways, but were not sure how to begin. “Our students were not learning at a deeper level,” explains Superintendent Dr. Diane Roussel. “We knew that we would continue to get the same results unless we adopted 21st century pedagogical methods throughout the district.”

The goal of the 21S program is to help school districts transform learning and raise student achievement through the use of technology. With support from 21S, JPPSS began a systemwide transformation of teaching and learning strategies; engaging staff and students to dramatically retool processes and practices

### Jefferson Parish Public School System

**LOCATION:**

Greater New Orleans area

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS:**

87

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS:**

±44,000

**GRADES:**

Pre-K through 12

**SCHOOL STRUCTURE:**

Suburban

**PERCENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH:**

75

## The 21S Holistic Approach to Education Reform

After Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, Cisco unveiled an initiative, known as the 21st Century Schools Initiative (21S), to help rebuild the devastated Gulf Coast schools and communities. In addition to equipping each school with instructional technologies and advanced networking equipment, the focus of 21S is to develop a blueprint for 21st century education based on a holistic approach to education reform, supported by Cisco's business experience in management and system change.

21S is a multiphase initiative that aims to create a sustainable, scalable, and replicable model of education reform that will extend beyond Mississippi and Louisiana. The 21S model incorporates transformative technology, tools, and training; backed by the expertise of a dedicated technology and business partner. Support for every implementation is provided by an onsite Cisco Fellow.



The goal was to deliver relevant, challenging, and rewarding schoolwork to each student. To manage the implementation of this new way of teaching and learning at every school, JPPSS hired Beth Wren, a 20-year district veteran who had previously served as teacher, administrator, and school principal.

### A New Way of Thinking about Teaching

In partnership with the Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform—a 21S program supporter—JPPSS teachers learned to develop engaging schoolwork based on the values of the district and its schools, parents, and students. “The primary philosophy is that the student is the ‘customer’ of the schools,” says Wren. “Teachers become designers of schoolwork as well as leaders in engaging students in that work.”

Each school formed a team of administrators and teachers to plan and implement the new teaching and learning framework. The teams worked with consultants to learn about the change process, and completed self-assessments to codify core beliefs and values that would serve as a foundation for the transformation. They identified teaching successes and gaps, analyzed lessons, assessed student work, and discussed opportunities for improvement. Principals evaluated teachers’ understanding of expectations and how to meet them.

The superintendent and other district staff began to meet regularly with principals to ensure that district and school programs, processes, and policies supported the creation and delivery of engaging work, and to facilitate any necessary changes. Principals were required to attend a workshop designed to help them develop the skills needed to lead their schools in implementing the new pedagogical framework.

To help build teacher consensus, Wren suggests forming large planning teams so that teachers can be included in the planning process. “Teachers, principals, superintendents, and administrators must all be unified behind the new pedagogy,” she says.

### Designing Work Based on Student Feedback

As part of the new approach, teachers engage in ongoing collaboration during daily planning periods. They present work they have designed and provide feedback to each other—a dramatic shift from conventional teaching methods. “Teachers aren’t used to critiquing each other,” notes Wren. “It’s important to provide a safe and collegial environment for providing constructive coaching and criticism.”

In addition, teachers engage students in the process of designing and redesigning schoolwork, and using technology to create relevant, hands-on, interactive learning experiences. Teachers request feedback from students to modify lessons as needed.

The ability of teachers to understand and adapt to student learning styles is critical. “Today’s students do not engage traditionally. They can send text messages from underneath their desks while making teachers believe they are learning,” Wren explains. “We need to take these skills into account and use them in combination with 21st century pedagogy and curriculum to engage students.”

Principals began visiting classrooms daily to informally discuss lessons with students and determine their level of engagement. “If students don’t like the work, they won’t learn,” Wren explains. “If we design work based on the types of activities they like to do, they can learn anything.”

## Measuring, Improving, and Scaling New Methods

JPPSS is moving into the next phase of implementing its new pedagogy. The focus is on measuring results, modifying lessons to incorporate changing needs or new ideas, and scaling the framework. Wren is gathering and analyzing statistics on the types of lesson designs that are used most often, determining best practices, and evaluating the impact of design workshops.

Assessments show that student, teacher, and parent satisfaction have increased. Achievement test scores and student attendance rates have improved, and discipline referrals have decreased. “Some teachers thought that designing student-focused work would result in classroom-management problems,” Wren says. “But we found that when the students feel that the work is authentic, there are no discipline issues.”

Student enthusiasm for the changes extends to the district’s special-needs population. The process is designed to create work that appeals to every student. Teachers in this area simply focus on their students’ characteristics to design the work. “In some ways, special-needs teachers have always designed work in this way,” notes Wren. “The framework gives them a specific model for differentiating their lessons.”

## Meeting Customer Needs, Producing Desired Results

At JPPSS, 21st century teaching and learning methods are meeting expectations at all levels. Teachers now consistently provide relevant content to students based on community and district values, and the improvements in pedagogy have enabled teachers to develop meaningful lessons that integrate technology into classroom activities. “We’re getting positive feedback from students, parents, and teachers, and test scores are improving,” says Wren. “Teachers and principals frequently tell me that their jobs are fun again.”

For more information about Cisco Global Education, please visit our website at <http://www.transformgloaleducation.org>.



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Beth Wren  
20-year District Veteran

# Cisco Recommended Ecosystem Partners for System Transformation

## Information on Integrating Technology

- **Metiri Group**  
([www.metiri.com](http://www.metiri.com))  
Education consultant that provides a broad range of services that empower educators to advance effective teaching and learning, use technology in powerful and meaningful ways, and foster 21st century skills.
- **November Learning**  
([www.novemberlearning.com](http://www.novemberlearning.com))  
An organization that promotes the effective use of information and communication technologies to support and enhance learning for children and communities
- **Partnership for 21st Century Skills**  
([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org))  
An advocacy organization that is focused on infusing 21st century skills into education; Cisco is a founding member
- **WIDE World – Harvard Graduate School of Education**  
(<http://wideworld.pz.harvard.edu>)  
Offers online learning programs for professional development and using technology in classrooms

## Online Content and Tools

- **Discovery Education Streaming**  
(<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com>)  
A digital video-on-demand and online teaching service to help improve students' retention and test scores
- **ePals Global Community**  
([www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com))  
A community of collaborative classrooms engaged in cross-cultural exchanges, project sharing, and language learning
- **History Channel**  
([www.history.com](http://www.history.com))  
Television station that offers free programming related to history and culture
- **Jing Project**  
([www.jingproject.com](http://www.jingproject.com))  
An online resource that offers free software that allows teachers and students to capture and share videos and other content
- **NASA Education Program**  
([education.nasa.gov](http://education.nasa.gov))  
Program that provides activities and information related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
- **National Geographic**  
([www.nationalgeographic.com/education/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/education/))  
Online resource for lesson plans, activities, and information related to geography, history, culture, animals, and other topics
- **Ning**  
([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com))  
An online platform that allows individuals and groups to create their own collaborative networks
- **Promethean Planet**  
([www.prometheanplanet.com](http://www.prometheanplanet.com))  
An online resource that includes lessons and professional development materials related to interactive whiteboards
- **Smithsonian American Art Museum**  
(<http://americanart.si.edu/index3.cfm>)  
Provider of education resources such as state standards-based, multidisciplinary lesson plans that span the fields of art, design, science, technology, history, culture, and language arts



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