

# LAUNCH HIGH SCHOOL

Whole School Design

Blueprint Overview

*Preparation for Opening in Fall 2025*

## Community Design Day

Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn

June 4, 2024

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**THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION**

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LAUNCH HIGH SCHOOL AT FBF

# CRAFTING A SCHOOL DESIGN BLUEPRINT

Launch partnered with Transcend to craft parts of its new high school on Floyd Bennett Field. The process to craft a blueprint consisted of a **community-based approach**, where about 15 community members—including school leaders, educators, students, parents, and community organizations—came together to both learn about the interests of their community and begin to realize these into concrete learning experiences for Launch’s future high schoolers.



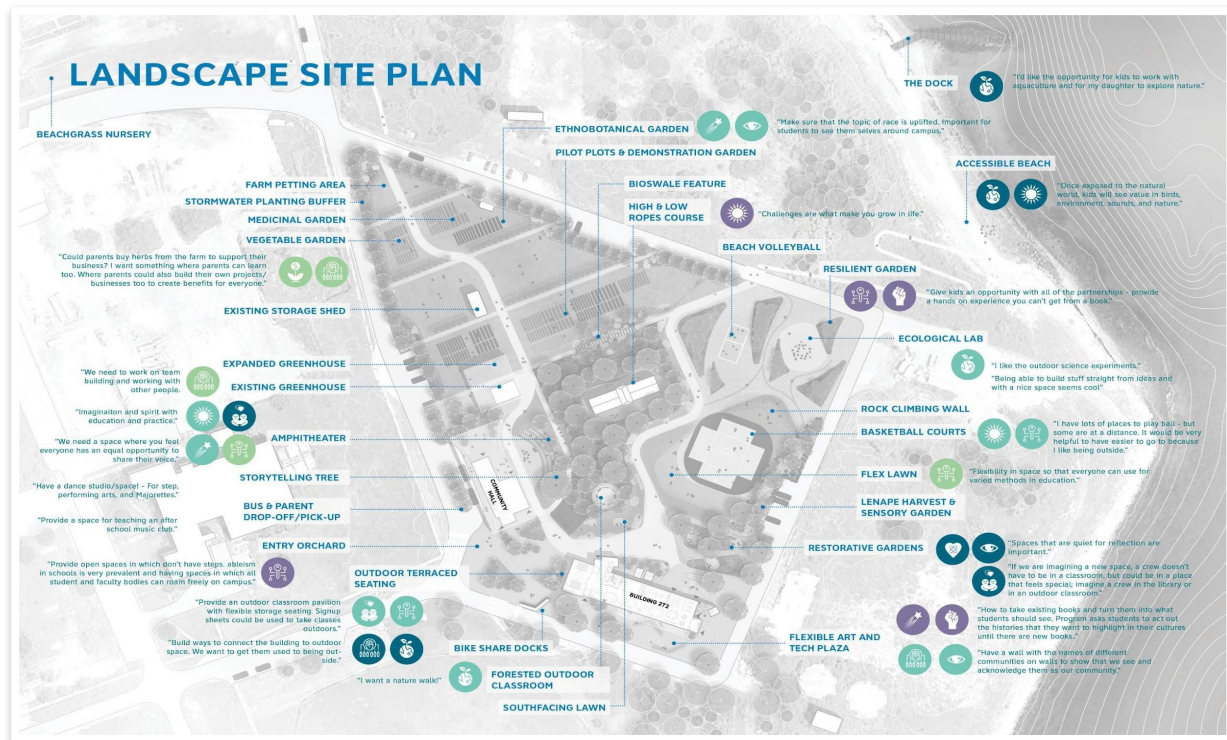
The entire design journey is a two-year process. The following pages illustrate the hard work of the Community Design Team during the first year. And although not complete, these Blueprint parts represent significant portions of Launch’s overall high school design, and importantly, what members of the Launch community want for their young people.

## Parts of this Blueprint

The following pages represent the parts of a Blueprint that Launch’s Community Design Team worked together to craft. It includes:

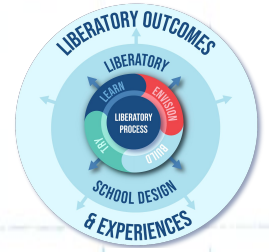
- **Case for Launch High School:** A summary of insights about the local community and school that builds knowledge and appreciation for the community’s past, present, and future as well as an impetus for change. (Jump to page 4)
- **Mission:** The aspirations schools have for students over the long-term as a result of being part of their community. (Jump to page 5)
- **Design Principles:** Core characteristics that describe the felt experience or ethos of the school and are held true across all experiences, in order to achieve the mission. (Jump to page 6)
- **Competencies:** The learning outcomes the school will drive toward to achieve its mission and case for change. (Jump to page 7)
- **Student Experiences (Core Components):** Programmed activities that key stakeholders—such as learners, educators, and families—engage in within the school in order to meet the graduate aims and fulfill the design principles. (Jump to page 8)

# LAUNCH HIGH SCHOOL SITE RENDERINGS



# LAUNCH'S DESIGN JOURNEY

Throughout this process, the Community Design Team leveraged Transcend's process for research and design—Learn, Envision, Build, and Try. Each of these involved specific tasks like learning from community interviews and school visits, envisioning possibilities for student activities, to building experiences.



## Early November 2023

Launch forms a **Community Design Team (CDT)**.

## End of November 2023

The CDT **interviews community members** and drafts a **Case for Change**.

## December 2023

The CDT prepares to embark on **Inspiration School Visits** across the country.

## March 2024

The revision work continues on **Graduate Aims** and **Design Principles**, and preparation begins for **Core Component Working Groups**.

## February 2024

The CDT works on a first draft of their **Graduate Aims** and **Design Principles**.

## January 2024

The CDT **visits schools** and **synthesizes** learnings thus far, revising the Case for Change through that process.

## April 2024

**Core Component Working Groups** visit NYC-based schools to learn about Foundational Academics, Immersive Pathways, and Personal Development at great high schools.

## May 2024

The CDT prepares to share the work from the year and drafts the first version of a **Blueprint Overview**.

## Case for Launch High School

This case for change represents a summary of insights about the local community and school that builds knowledge and appreciation for the community's past, present, and future as well as an impetus for change.

Launch's Community Design Team drafted individual statements after reviewing and discussing the community interviews and learnings they had conducted. These thoughts represent a synthesis of their ideas.

### **A Case for Launch High School**

**We're devoted to cultivating the potential and dreams of our brilliant Black and brown youth in central Brooklyn. They have diverse passions and a relentless drive to achieve excellence.**

Within our vibrant, academically-focused community lies untapped potential. Sometimes, this potential is overshadowed by systemic issues such as racism, economic inequality, outdated academic standards, white supremacist cultures, classism, environmental classism, medical inequality, and resource disparities. Currently, the prevailing education model falls short of leveraging the strengths of our young people's culture, knowledge, and skills. We believe that high school education, especially for low-income BIPOC youth, lacks a culturally relevant, immersive, and student-centered approach, which directly impacts our young people's well-being.

**Our vision is to create a world-class learning environment that addresses systemic inequities and prepares young people to tackle the biggest issues of tomorrow.**

We want our students to be empowered and ready to tackle real-world challenges, specifically around environmental sustainability and social justice. People of color and low-income communities are projected to disproportionately feel the impact of climate change in New York City, and these same communities also face acute systemic inequities. We believe that our young people are the change agents of the future, so they will need to learn about and work to solve these specific challenges.

As change agents, our young people will need to develop the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to better their lives and those of their community. We believe that experiential learning opportunities—those that are hands-on experiences focused on real-world problems—can best prepare our students to tackle issues facing their community.

**To realize this vision, we aim to build a transformative, student-centered learning environment that is supported by community expertise—a *learning ecosystem*.**

We recognize the need for a new learning model to offer opportunities that go beyond the conventional, empowering our youth to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. We must first center on student choice, voice, and support. We must ensure that education aligns with our young people’s worldview and equips them with the skills to navigate the challenges of the future. This involves creating an educational environment that resonates with their interests and is appropriately challenging, allowing for exploration, and fostering curiosity, care, and confidence. We strive for our young people to become visionaries: the thinkers and ideators of their tomorrow.

We can achieve this by fostering *learning* through the support of our entire *ecosystem*. We want our school to be a place where young people learn about relevant, real-world challenges from experts in our community, and together, build a vibrant and rigorous hub where learning moves beyond classroom walls. We hope this learning ecosystem breaks down barriers between school and community, empowers students to make positive change, and pushes for a more equitable and inclusive education.

## Launch’s Mission

The mission of a school is what you aspire to be true for students over the long-term as a result of being part of your school community. It’s the impact your school community aspires to achieve.

Launch's mission is for students to develop the knowledge, skills and character to disrupt inequities in society and build a better world.

# Design Principles

Design principles are core characteristics that describe the felt experience or ethos of the school and are held true across all experiences, in order to achieve the mission.

Launch's Community Design Team had learned a lot from various school environments and their own community about what felt characteristics they hoped for the high school. The design principles below represent a synthesis of those learnings, reflections, and ideas.

## Launch High School's Design Principles

*"We hone the power of joy in a learning environment where everyone feels like they belong and deeply learns directly from our community to achieve social and environmental liberation."*

Our school design is rooted in the following four design principles:

- **Power of Joy.** We work to hone the power of joy in everything we do including our activities and culture, all of which we believe positively contributes to well-being and supports each of us in reaching our full potential.
- **Everyone Belongs and Grows.** All community members feel known and valued—we recognize each other's humanity, work to support each other, embrace challenges and failures as learning opportunities, and create spaces for reflection, self-awareness, and self-love while working together toward common goals.
- **Deeper Learning Rooted Here.** We value and believe in deeply meaningful, real-world learning experiences that happen everywhere—especially in our local context—and that allow us to pursue unique passions, make decisions for our futures, and be change agents to make a positive impact on the local and global community.
- **Liberation Through Action.** We champion liberation for ourselves and our world by taking ownership of our learning journeys and focusing on our collective power and role in both environmental justice and disrupting systems of inequity.

# Competencies

Competencies are often also called learning outcomes, and they represent the knowledge, skills, and mindsets schools will drive toward to achieve its case for change.

Launch's Community Design Team looked through many learning outcomes frameworks and ultimately decided that **reDesign's Future9 Competencies** framework includes the just-right set of competencies their high schoolers should develop.

## Launch High School's Competencies



### **BUILD COMMUNITY**

I can **nurture my relationships** and **connections** with others to **build** and **sustain** my **community**.



### **DESIGN SOLUTIONS**

I can **identify challenges** in the world around me and **design ways** to **address** them.



### **ENGAGE IN INQUIRY**

I can **pursue answers** to **meaningful questions** through **primary** and **secondary** research.



### **EXPRESS IDEAS**

I can **develop** and **communicate** my **ideas** with **purpose** and **clarity**.



### **LEARN INTERDEPENDENTLY**

I can **lead my own learning** while **collaborating** with and **contributing** to the learning of others.



### **NAVIGATE CONFLICT**

I can **process my feelings**, **attune** to others, and **contribute** to **constructive** resolution.



### **READ THE WORLD**

I can **engage** with **diverse ideas** and a **range of media** to **understand** and **critically examine** the world around me.



### **REASON QUANTITATIVELY**

I can **reason** through, **represent**, and **communicate** **mathematical problems** and **approaches** to **solving** them.



### **SUSTAIN WELLNESS**

I can **develop practices** to **support my own well-being**, **embrace** **difference**, and **foster** **intercultural** competence.

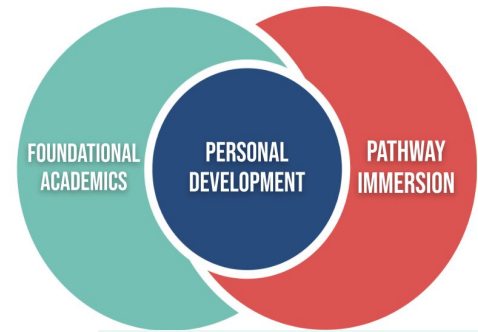
From reDesign's Future9 Competencies Framework, 2024



# Student Experiences

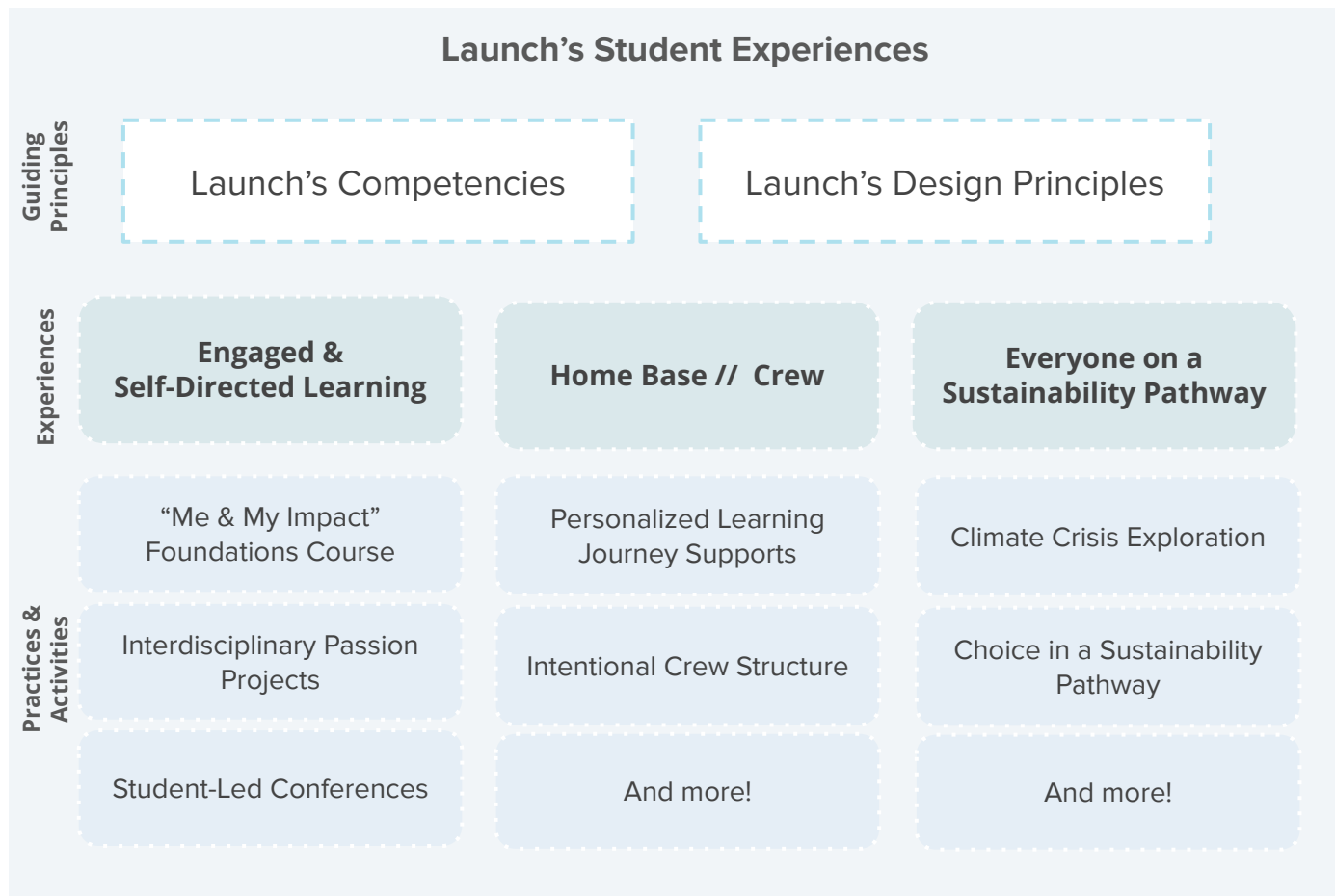
Student experiences are comprised of activities and practices that key stakeholders—such as learners, educators, and families—engage in within the school in order to meet the graduate aims and fulfill the design principles.

Launch’s Community Design Team formed **three working groups** to learn about how high schools across New York City envision experiences for their own students. **The working groups were focused around three components of school: Foundational Academics, Immersive Pathways, and Personal Development.** Each core component inspired various student experiences.



The experiences below are in first draft format. They represent the CDT’s initial thinking—there’s lots of great and exciting work to be done here!

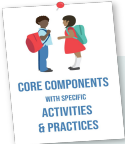
The student experience at Launch is closely linked to its overall design, including the Case for Change, Competencies, and chosen Design Principles. Each student experience reflects these.





**Competencies**  
Engage in Inquiry  
Design Solutions  
Learn Interdependently

**Design Principles**  
Power of Joy • Everyone Belongs and Grows •  
Deeper Learning Rooted Here • Liberation through Action



## Engaged & Self-Directed Learning

Across four years, alongside the foundational content they're learning in Math, Science, English and History classes, students will have dedicated spaces for exploring their own passions and applying content in relevant ways.

### Portfolio Development

- Intro to Design Thinking/Inquiry Mindset to ground passion projects going forward
- In early years, students are introduced to competency-based learning and what it will mean for how we do school
- Students build a container to hold work artifacts over the four years of high school

### Interdisciplinary Passion Projects

- Help students more deeply explore potential areas of passion
- 2-week Expeditions/Intensives in Freshman/ Sophomore year around passion projects, with weekly classes for the semester leading up to them to prepare for the Expedition
- Modeled after APEX block at Crosstown High, topics pitched by students and co-led by students/staff; always based in designing a solution to some challenge
- See Pathway Immersion for the equivalent experience Junior/Senior year

### Student Led Conferences

- Include mentors/guests who may be involved in your passion projects/Expeditions
- Graduation requirement
- Students reflect and present evidence on progress toward competency development
- Expectations scale up across grades 9-12, starting with students presenting the progress they're making in Foundational Academics and their passion projects, and starting Junior Year also including their sustainability pathway they're pursuing

### Key Structures & Supports to Consider

- Schedule that allows for 2-week Intensives
- System for teacher load that allows for co-developing Interdisciplinary projects that students have pitched
- Partnerships that will host Expedition work



## Competencies

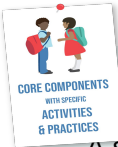
Build Community, Learn Interdependently, Express Ideas,  
Design Solutions, Sustain Wellness

## Design Principles

Power of Joy • Everyone Belongs and Grows •  
Deeper Learning Rooted Here • Liberation through Action

## Home Base // CREW

A small peer group of students in the same grade level that stays together for all four years of high school, with the same Crew Advisors, meeting daily in early grades and less often (to make room for personalized pathways) in upper grades.



### Personalized Learning Journey design supports

- At least two adults paired with each CREW, serving in specific roles in addition to Crew Advising- academic coach, social-emotional coach, career coach (modeled after the staffing model at Bronx Arena HS)
- Goal setting and progress tracking across these three areas

### CREW Structure:

- Intention setting
- Check ins on whole child
- Conflict Resolution teaching and practice and building racial equity mindset
- Identity Exploration, including place-based identity (starting off with storytelling/ history of the land we're on)

**Buddy CREWs** across grade levels to build cross school connection and have experiences together as a community

### Small & large immersive experiences for physical exploration:

- Exploring FBF- deeper learning / connection to place
  - 9th grade- navigation challenge hike / scavenger hunt
  - 12th grade- your CREW has to sail it's own boat somewhere
- Adventure or Wilderness Trip (*Signature Experience*)- Have the NPS partnership send our home bases to national parks across the country

### Key Structures & Supports to Consider

- CREWs would stay together and you may have more interaction with your academic coach in early years; by 12th grade you are having more interactions with your career coach
- Transparent and easily accessible tracking system that is both aligned to school wide outcomes (Competency criteria) and personalized to each student

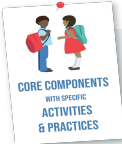


## Competencies

Build Community, Design Solutions, Engage in Inquiry, Learn Interdependently

## Design Principles

Power of Joy • Everyone Belongs and Grows •  
Deeper Learning Rooted Here • Liberation through Action



## Everyone is on a Sustainability Pathway

After two years of building foundational knowledge of the climate crisis, the green economy, and the range of Sustainability Pathways you can pursue at Launch HS, students choose one pathway to pursue in their final two years of high school.

- ❑ Choose one of the established pathways– TBD but for example, aligned to the Certified Training Programs [Runway Green](#) will offer: *Aquaculture, Green Construction, Solar Installation, Ocean Engineering, Marine Biology Research* (where possible, these pathways could include a CDOS/CTE option that counts towards the “4+1” Regents Diploma option; otherwise, career-connected credential/Badge)
- OR
- ❑ Create your own pathway: “Your Passion + Sustainability” (Independent Study/Choose Your Own Adventure, which includes entrepreneurship to support sustainability)

**Climate Crisis Exploration** course(s) during Freshman/Sophomore year, including intro to the content in all established sustainability pathways, and the Green Jobs each pathway prepares you for

**Choose a Sustainability Pathway** by Junior year. Draft a Vision Statement– *how is this pathway at the intersection of your passions/what brings you joy, where your skills lie, and the impact you want to have in the climate crisis?*

**Pathway-specific coursework** to support earning career credential, with some of the credits earned through work-based learning/internships OR Individual Learning Plan for students who’ve chosen to create their own pathway, where students identify how they’ll learn the content they need, accumulate credits (through online courses, dual enrollment, work-based learning/internships, etc)

**2-week Expeditions/Intensives** in Junior/Senior year within students’ sustainability pathways (i.e. inquiry into a sustainability-related challenge that you’re designing a solution for); see Foundational Academics for the equivalent experience Freshman/Sophomore year

**Presentations of Learning**, including a final POL Senior Year where students share final Vision Statement (revised from what they drafted at start of Junior Year), their takeaways from their sustainability pathway and declare their post-secondary pathway– whether or not it’s in the same field as the pathway they’ve studied at Launch, name which competencies they’ve developed that will be applicable in their next steps

### Key Structures & Supports to Consider:

- Scales up in schedule across 9-12, towards more choice in how you use your time
- Foundational Exploration course(s) coded as interdisciplinary so that it’s still credit-bearing
- Staffing that allows teachers to build capacity as internship coordinator for one pathway + support from experts in the field
- Use of online courses from places that specialize in areas within this pathway
- Structure for creating your own pathway
- Partnerships that will deliver content in the Climate Crisis Exploration courses, teach pathway-specific coursework and host Expeditions/Intensives

# Picture this! A week in the life of...

## Aminata, a 9th-grade aspiring artist.

Aminata wanted to enroll at Launch High School the moment she learned about its incredible new facilities and promise to integrate her passion for storytelling through art with the **fight against climate change**.

Aminata meets with her Crew every day. It's a consistent time where she gets support on work, **checks in on her progress**, works together with friends, and **develops a personal pathway plan**.

### Crew

This week in this foundational course, the Dean at Launch is giving a presentation on the **pathways** Aminata can choose from and how a range of careers can support a green economy. She's considering choosing creating her own pathway and maybe taking art classes her senior year at the **nearby college**.

### Climate Crisis Exploration

This week's science class on **oyster farming**—a collab with Billion Oyster Project— actually features Aminata's **English** teacher! They're working on a persuasive writing project to go along with their findings from the nearby oyster reef.

### Core Subjects

Aminata takes after school classes with a **local potter**. She's hoping to pitch a passion project around producing clay planters for the Launch sensory garden. She'd spend the upcoming 2-week intensive with friends in the pottery studio daily. If that's a success, maybe she can **apprentice** with her in the next few years...

### Pottery Club

Before leaving for the weekend, Aminata makes sure she stops by the main office to get all of the forms she needs for an **upcoming 9th-grade Expedition** on the national park grounds in a few weeks. It'll be great to spend two entire days outdoors!

### 2-Day Expedition

## Derrick, a 12th grade entrepreneur.

Derrick aspires to be a product creator and business owner—he's hoping to launch his skincare line soon. The **eco-friendly business pathway** has taught him just how much environmental sustainability is the future, especially in the beauty industry. He has taken the most rigorous curricular programming at Launch and is excited to go to college in the Fall!

Derrick's Crew has been there for him since 9th grade. They are peers that he can count on, and **all deeply know each other's hopes and dreams**. Though he sees them fewer times a week senior year, they are as close as can be. They're planning a social with the 9th grade Buddy Crew they mentor.

### Crew

Derrick's counselor suggested he take **AP Chemistry** to drive improvements to his skincare line. At the same time, he's spending his **passion project** time **building a business plan** for when he's ready to launch his product. He has done lots of research and has questions he'll want to ask during his business internship.

### Passion Projects

In his **two-week intensive**, Derrick and the other students in the Green Entrepreneurship pathway will work to solve the environmental challenge they've been focused on this year—green transportation to Floyd Bennett Field. They are ready to pilot the ride share service they've designed in the bus they've converted to use vegetable oil.

### 2-Week Intensive

Through an industry fair held during his Sophomore year, Derrick connected with the CEO of a Brooklyn-based eco-friendly clothing brand. Derrick asked her for some career advice and soon started working there! He has been **interning** with this company after school ever since.

### Internship in Brooklyn

Derrick's latest **portfolio** is filled to the brim with artifacts from his past projects, as well as industry credentials he's earned. For his **presentation of learning** later this year, he'll be presenting around how the work in his portfolio demonstrates the competencies he's developed over the last four years and how he'll apply them.

### Presentation of Learning

## Partners

### About Runway Green

Runway Green is a non-profit, public-private partnership that is reimagining education and workforce development, creating pathways for New York City students and families to thrive in the green economy and build a better world.

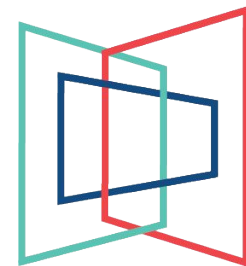


In partnership with the National Park Service, we are developing an unprecedented education and workforce development ecosystem on some of our region's most ecologically rich parklands at Brooklyn's Floyd Bennett Field.

For more information, visit: <https://www.runwaygreen.org/learning-ecosystem>

### About Transcend

Transcend is a national nonprofit that supports school communities to create and spread extraordinary, equitable learning environments. The organization was founded on a belief that we must reimagine schooling, using a community-driven approach, so all children can realize their infinite potential.



Transcend pursues its mission by partnering directly with schools on design journeys while also sharing powerful models, tools, and insights across the sector. To date, Transcend has worked directly with hundreds of schools and systems in over 30 states, and has influenced thousands more. Ultimately, Transcend strives to fuel significant leaps in education so all young people can thrive in and transform the world.

For more information, visit: [www.transcendeducation.org](http://www.transcendeducation.org)