Grades 7-12

# PODS

*Intrinsic Schools*

PODs flex time, space, and people to provide opportunities for deeper and broader learning that is more personalized to achieve stronger and more equitable outcomes.

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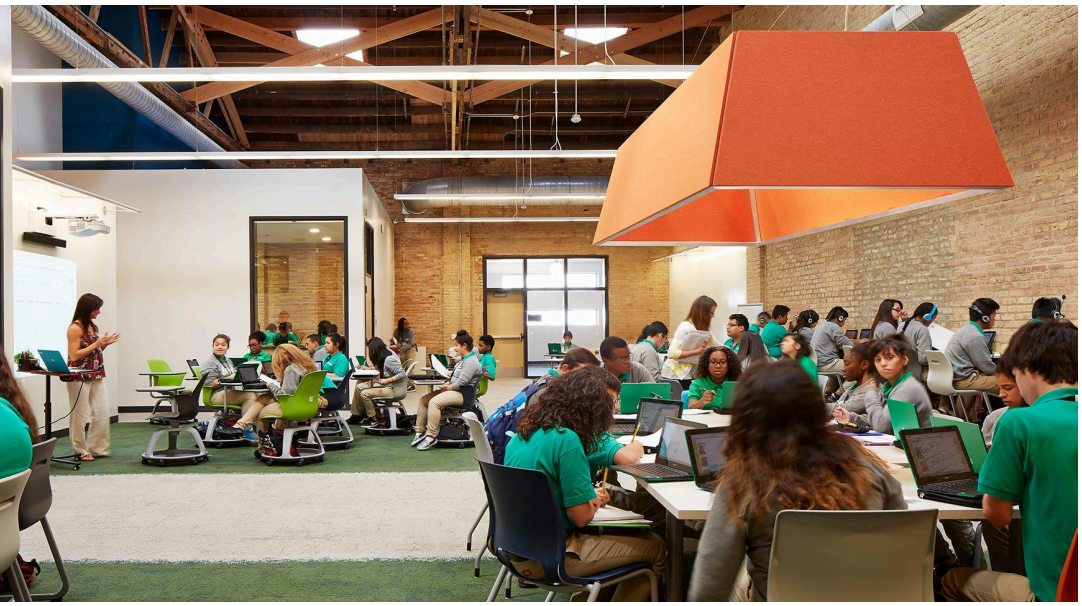
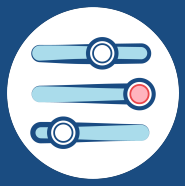
## OVERVIEW

Recognizing that every student is different, Intrinsic designed PODs to flexibly leverage time, space, staff, and technology to meet students where they are and encourage independence. PODs involve big, flexible classrooms that allow teachers and students to make class exactly what it needs to be every day. Each POD has three teachers and upwards of 60 students, who rotate among teacher-led instruction, independent learning time, small-group work, and project-based learning – all based on the individual needs of each student. Instruction in PODs is coupled with self-reflection and goal-setting to support students as they build a solid academic foundation and engage in work that closely mirrors postsecondary expectations, while fostering independence and agency.



PODs are implemented in Intrinsic's two Chicago campuses serving 1800+ students. There, they strive to accelerate growth among all learners, as measured on NWEA MAP and the P/SAT Suite of Assessments. Intrinsic offers school visits and a resource toolkit to other schools interested in implementing the PODs model. ▸ PODs Overview

## What Makes This Model Innovative?



### Customization

PODs allow students to engage in a variety of learning modalities based on their individual strengths, needs, and goals.

### Active Self-Direction

Students learn in independent and self-directed ways, often by leveraging technology. Students also develop and reflect on goals and personalized learning plans to practice and build agency.

### High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities

All students are supported and celebrated as they progress toward their individual goals, regardless of their different experiences and learning styles.

# DESIGN

## Goals

The POD model is designed to help students learn and practice four key academic skills, preparing them for success in college, career, and life.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Think** | Find, discern, and analyze information from multiple sources across multiple perspectives. |
| **Solve** | Inquire into and access the current state, and craft innovative and optimal solutions, both independently and collaboratively. |
| **Communicate** | Write, speak, listen, and present in ways that are compelling for a given audience. |
| **Reflect** | Evaluate processes routinely and seek to improve the Think-Solve-Communicate cycle. |

## Experience

The POD model leverages five core learning modalities, which are combined in unique ratios in pursuit of students' learning goals. 📑 POD Plays Engaging in a variety of learning modalities is critical in order for students to build the academic and agency habits and skills they need to experience postsecondary success and engage in world-changing endeavors.

- **Goal-Setting / Mentoring**: Students plan for, set goals on, and pursue, in increasingly customized ways, a progression of skills, knowledge, and/or mindsets.
- **Self-Directed Learning**: Students study, practice, and advance their learning in independent and self-directed ways often by leveraging technology to learn new skills and master content.
- **Small Group**: Students work together in groups of fewer than 10 students to learn specific skills together, grapple deeply with concepts and texts, and learn/support individuals in the community.
- **Large Group**: Students work together in groups of more than 10 students to pursue individual and collective learning goals. These can include a variety of formats, including Socratic discussions, cultural explorations, election simulations, art projects, skits/plays, circuit training, and seminars, among many others.
- **Student Production**: Integrated throughout their experience, students have opportunities to lead (student-directed conferences, community exhibitions), produce (projects, speeches and multimedia presentations, performances), and dive deep into immersive and expeditionary learning (capstone projects, passion tours, clubs).

## Supporting Structures

The model can be integrated into a school's existing overall model, but will require some shifts in the physical space, adult roles, and daily schedules, as well as investments in technology.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

**PODs are curriculum agnostic and can be aligned with any rigorous curricular materials.**

The POD model does not require a specific curriculum and can be used with any rigorous curriculum that supports the development of aligned knowledge, skills, and mindsets. However, the selected curricula must be "podified," or adapted to match the core learning modalities of PODs.

All instruction in PODs leverages the five core learning modalities. See an illustrative example of how the five modalities are used in a 9th grade Biology class: 📑 Sample Modalities

**POD teachers must co-teach and co-plan to personalize student learning and drive their own professional development.**

Each POD has upwards of 60 students and 3 teachers, including one special education teacher. POD teachers may take on multiple roles, including POD

## ADULT ROLES, HIRING, & LEARNING

lead, SDL guide, small group facilitator, large group facilitator, interventionist, and mentor. ▸ Teaching Roles POD teachers work together to provide small-group instruction, adjust instruction based on student learning data, oversee independent student work, build relationships with students, and support other POD teachers. POD teachers learn daily from one another by observing each other across the POD and conversing informally about common challenges. POD teacher teams create internal capacity for teacher development when first-year teachers are strategically placed to co-teach with a veteran teacher. Although these newer teachers are responsible for different content areas, they benefit from sharing responsibility for students with a seasoned teacher.

POD teachers must have daily common planning time to co-design the flow of experience in the POD to meet the needs of all students. In addition, POD teachers have course team meetings biweekly with a coach to assess alignment of assessments and instruction and to identify and respond to gaps in student thinking. This includes data analysis, unit unpacking, looking at student work, and unit debriefs. Lastly, all teachers participate in professional development activities, including professional learning communities and observation and feedback sessions.

## SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

**Block schedules are critical to enabling a deeper student learning experience for students as well as a regular co-planning cadence for teachers.**

POD blocks meet for 85 min 4 days/week at the middle school level and for 90 min 4 days/week at the high school level.

Teacher schedules must have dedicated common planning and learning time for POD teams. The personalization in PODs is only possible with daily common planning time for POD teachers, so they can respond to real-time data. Intrinsic students have a shortened day on Wednesdays, which gives staff two hours to review student data and engage in PD.

Finally, student schedules must include mentoring/goal-setting time, either within instructional time or during other spaces (e.g., Advisory).

**Open and flexible space will best enable the customization of learning to different student learning needs and goals.**

The physical space of each POD is open and flexible: there are areas for quiet individual work, small group instruction, collaborative work, group projects, and large forums. Each POD is composed of 4 core parts: Ocean, Coastline, Shade, and Boards. 📑 POD Layout

- **The Ocean** features soft blue riser chairs that resemble waves,

## SPACE & FACILITIES

where teachers and students can engage in small-group discussion. A room for big ideas, connections, and discussion.

- **The Coastline** wraps around the perimeter of the room and is where students complete independent work. Depending on the course, students have a menu of options for independent work on the Coastline. This is where personalization meets progress at their fingertips.
- **The Boards** (there are at least two board spaces in every POD) are areas for teacher-led instruction for groups of 10-15 students. They support technology-enabled, teacher-led instruction.
- **The Shade** is a large orange shade that hovers above tables designated for students to engage in peer-to-peer and small group work or projects.

While open, flexible space is ideal for the physical layout of the POD, it is possible to make the POD model work by creatively using multiple classroom spaces.

## TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

**PODs require 1:1 devices, internet access, and ed-tech platforms for self-directed learning.**

Technology plays a critical role in PODs. Students spend a portion of PODs in Self-Directed Learning time (SDL), which requires access to a 1:1 Chromebook, a wireless connection, data tracking and sharing systems, and ed-tech partnerships and tools to enable students to engage in personalized learning activities, track their progress, and access resources aligned to their needs. It's critical for teachers to have access to real-time student data during their daily common planning time so they can personalize PODs to meet the needs of each student. In addition, Google products and other tech systems are leveraged to ensure a smooth and streamlined experience for students and staff. While technology plays a critical role at Intrinsic, classrooms remain relatively low-tech (e.g., you won't see smartboards) in order to be as flexible as possible in PODs to meet each student's individual needs.

For Math SDL, Intrinsic uses:

- Imagine Math
- IXL
- Khan Academy
- Summit Learning

For ELA SDL, Intrinsic uses:

- Independent Reading
- Khan Academy
- Summit Learning
- iLit for English Language Learners

BUDGET & OPERATIONS

**POD's co-teaching model may have budgetary and scheduling implications.**

The POD model has two important budgetary and operational implications. With 3 teachers in 1 classroom – even with 60 students – there is a smaller teacher-to-student ratio than in a traditional setting. Intrinsic has solved this by having each POD teacher teach 3 POD blocks (180 total students), but this creates other ripples for master scheduling and other teacher loads.

There may be implications for different pay structures for POD teachers and singleton teachers or for teachers who play specialized roles within a POD (e.g., team lead).

# IMPLEMENTATION

## Supports Offered

Intrinsic offers the following supports to help you implement their model.

### School Visit

*Free*

Intrinsic hosts 100+ in-person visits each year for colleagues in the education sector – administrators, principals, teachers, nonprofit staff, and policymakers. Intrinsic provides an overview of the model, tailored discussions, and materials.

**Learn More**

## Reach

| 1,800+ | 83% | 19% | 230+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students | Free or Reduced Lunch | Student with Disabilities | Visitors Annually |

## Demonstration Sites

The following sites are examples of learning communities that have successfully implemented the model.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Intrinsic Belmont Campus**<br>Chicago, IL<br>7–12<br>Charter | **Intrinsic Downtown Campus**<br>Chicago, IL<br>9-12<br>Charter |

## Impact

- 100% of Intrinsic seniors have a strong postsecondary plan in place by May 1 of each year. On average, 58% enroll in 4-year college, 34% enroll in 2-year college, 7% enter the workforce, and 1% serve in the military. 🖥️ Intrinsic, 2019
- Intrinsic students make significant growth in math, reading, and college-entry exams (Illinois Network of Charter Schools, 2018):
  - NWEA MAP Reading Growth percentile: 64
  - NWEA MAP Math Growth percentile: 78
  - SAT Cohort Growth percentile: 89
- Intrinsic students outperform peers in the district and state in college readiness as measured by early college coursework, postsecondary enrollment, and graduation rate. 📑 Intrinsic via Illinois State Board of Education, 2019

## Contact

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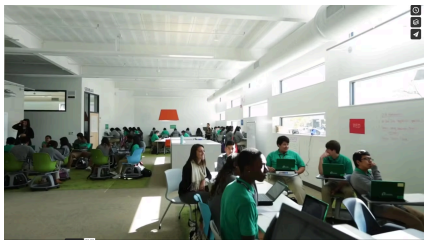
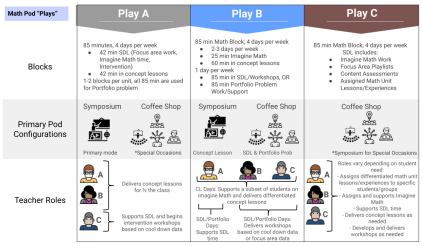
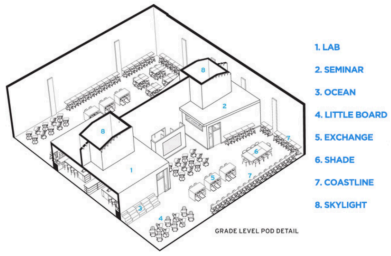
# RESOURCES



[Intrinsic Schools: Changing the Way We Teach]
An overview of Intrinsic's POD model that blends technology, flexible space, and personalized instruction to provide every student a path to college and career.

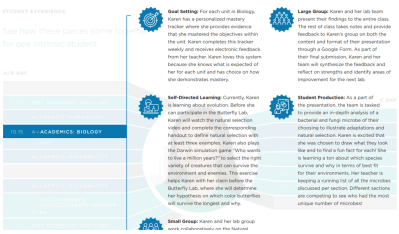



[POD Plays]
Examples of prebuilt arrangements that balance the five modalities, time, physical space, and adult roles to personalize the learning experience for all students.



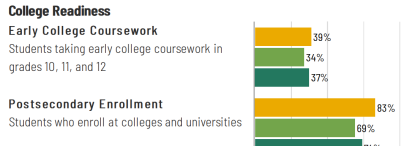

[POD Physical Space Layout]
A blueprint of the physical space layout of PODS.

[Teaching Roles in PODs]
Learn about the roles of POD teachers that allows students to receive personalized instruction while fostering teacher development through co-teaching.



[Sample Modalities (Biology)]
A sample "day-in-the-life" illustration of how a student might experience the five modalities in Biology class.


[Intrinsic Results]
Intrinsic's website highlights the outcomes their model is yielding.




[College Readiness Data]
Data visualization showing Intrinsic students outperform peers in the district and state in college readiness.