

# pioneering

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## A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

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• connect. share. discover. lead. •

# pioneering

Dear Pioneers,

Last week, I spent a day in Chicago meeting learner-centered pioneers working inside and outside the education system. I met with Matt Bruce of the Chicagoland Workforce Funder Alliance (CWFA), Jean Garrity of LEAP Innovations, and Adrienne Scherenzel Curry of After School Matters. I also had the privilege of presenting to 40 educators and administrators from Oak Park Unified School District who are looking to pioneer learner-centered education in their elementary and middle schools.

What became clear to me is how isolated pioneers are from each other—even when they live in the same city. They are essentially hidden from each other’s view. While there are opportunities for those working in education to meet, these gatherings always draw a mix of school- and learner-centered folks. So, conversations about transforming the current system become indistinguishable from those about reforming it. And, as I’ve shared before, when this happens—real communication is lost. For example, when you hear “personalized learning,” you can’t tell who means differentiation of the same content vs. starting with the learner’s unique interests, needs, and circumstances and building a pathway from there.

It made me think: What a contribution it would be if pioneers in communities, cities, or regions could see each other, begin to share common language, and start to work together. Education Reimagined is committed to illuminating the field so that learner-centered pioneers know they are not alone and can truly relate to each other as being up to the same thing—regardless of the model they are working in or words they use. In this way, they can be in community with each other as collaborators, peers, mentors, mentees, allies, cheerleaders, and critical friends. They will know they are in good company discovering what it takes to make learner-centered education available to the learners in their community and beyond.

We imagine a day when local and regional gatherings emerge organically for those learner-centered pioneers who wouldn’t normally come together (or even know about each other). We can’t do this alone. If this is your vision too, let us know! Perhaps, together, we could illuminate and gather the pioneers in your city or region.

Warm wishes,  
**Kelly Young**

**P.S.** We hope you enjoy this issue of *Pioneering*. With a Q&A from Chicago City of Learning leader Sybil Madison-Boyd; reflections from our own team on XQ: The Super School Project’s big reveal (congrats to the winners!); and a piece on what the maker movement has to offer to learners across the country; this issue is packed with powerful stories, learnings, and insights. Enjoy!



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**Connect. Share. Discover. Lead.**  
We seek to accelerate the growth of the movement dedicated to transforming education in America. We invite those excited and interested by the possibility of learner-centered education to discover more, join a growing movement, and begin a journey to make this a reality in diverse communities across the country.





# CHICAGO CITY OF LEARNING

Chicago, Illinois

“Chicago City of Learning is a great platform because students can learn new skills and are also given the opportunity to showcase them.” – AIMEE RODRIGUEZ

**IN 2013, CHICAGO BECAME A NATIONAL EXEMPLAR** for how local government, public and private companies, and burgeoning youth can become interconnected through the simple goal of providing equitable and robust access to summer learning activities. Rather than testing the waters with a pilot-esque program, the mayor’s office went all-in and helped orchestrate over 135,000 learning activities across the city. And, not too long after, The Digital Youth Network at DePaul University jumped at the chance to expand these opportunities beyond the summer months—launching Chicago City of Learning (CCOL).

Three years later, there is a new, never-before-seen energy running through the Windy City streets—connecting the city’s youth to thousands of unexplored spaces. Stakeholders from all occupations, positions, and perspectives are able to support and build off of each other’s unique strengths and ideas—creating a true learning ecosystem for Chicago’s youth.

This is a “collaborative, not competitive,” ecosystem. Chicago’s learners are exposed to a “campus of learning”—a completely **open-walled** experience. If a child has an interest in Earth and Science, he can head out to the Chicago Botanic Garden and discover the magical connection between nutrient-rich soil, garden fresh produce, and cooking healthy meals at home. If another learner is itching for an opportunity to take her Designing + Making game to the next level, she can explore the Frederick C. Robie House and put her maker hands to the test in the LEGO Studio—comparing her skills to the legendary Frank Lloyd Wright.

This would all just be fun and games. But, each of these learning opportunities is tied to a **competency-based** digital badging system, which allows learners to document and see their learning on a personally customized learner profile. This profile readily displays the learner’s future, in progress, and completed competencies.

As CCOL cleverly puts it, learners can change their interests “as often as they change their avatar”—claiming their newly discovered identities as their future goals shift and evolve. If a learner dips into graphic design and realizes her passions are more aligned with the backend coding that makes design applications come to life, she can refocus at the touch of a button. By simply hopping on her CCOL portfolio and reprioritizing her interests, she reveals a brand new set of **personalized and relevant** learning activities happening around town.

At a remarkable pace, CCOL has built an interactive ecosystem that seamlessly connects the physical to the digital. CCOL’s innovative model is sweeping the nation—offering other cities a roadmap to create their own playgrounds of learning—and adding to the learner-centered education transformation.

## LEARN MORE

[We Built This City of Learning](#)

[Chicago Youth Participate in Thousands of Summer Learning Activities](#)

[Mayor Emanuel Announces ‘Summer of Learning’ Initiative](#)

## FACTS & FIGURES

**Network**

**Established June 2013**

**Over 30,000 programs made visible to date**

**1st city-wide initiative of its kind**

**Over 70,000 active accounts**

**Over 120 organization partners, including several city agencies**

## CONNECT

**Website**

[Chicago City of Learning](#)

**Social Media**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)



# Chicago City of Learning: A Conversation with Sybil Madison-Boyd

The Education Reimagined team had the opportunity to catch up with Digital Youth Network's Learning Pathways Program Director, Sybil Madison-Boyd. Her work involves leadership in the Chicago City of Learning initiative, which launched in 2013. With so much rich information to share, we'll let Sybil do the rest of the talking.



Sybil Madison-Boyd

**Q. Chicago City of Learning (CCOL) is only in its third year of existence, but its growth has been accelerating at an exponential rate. How did CCOL start out? What is the relationship between CCOL and Digital Youth Network?**

**A.** The idea for CCOL actually emanated from the city's response to the teachers' strike in the Fall of 2012. At this time, many of the city's youth-serving agencies and organizations came together to support youth while school was not in session. The idea was that this same network of organizations could unite again to support youth engagement in robust learning during the summer and prevent summer learning loss.

Although we certainly experienced some failures, the successes of the first summer supported the need for a year-round focus on connecting youth to "24/7 learning," and Digital Youth Network (DYN) was ultimately asked to be the local steward of CCOL.

In the beginning, we were clear that CCOL was an infrastructure for supporting a connected learning ecosystem, but our initial message didn't express this clearly. We initially introduced CCOL as a digital badging initiative, so we have spent a lot of time refocusing our message to the learning itself and how we make the city's informal learning opportunities visible. We are enabling youth to connect in- and out-of-school learning in ways that support their pathways to college and careers. For us, digital badges are simply a *tool* that serves to connect learning that is taking place 24/7 and across multiple spaces.

**Q. It's great to see how readily you and your team recognize the successes and challenges CCOL has faced. Particularly given Chicago's size, what other challenges have you faced?**

**A.** The scale of the work is overwhelming. Our goal is to make all informal learning opportunities visible, so that's a job that takes a lot of time for us. Not only to find organizations and bring them on board but also for organizations to integrate the time it takes to participate, while already managing a packed workflow. We are constantly working on how to sustain and expand this community of youth-serving organizations, which we affectionately named "Chi-Y.O.U."—Youth-Owned-University.

As we begin to get better data about where these learning opportunities are available in the city, we can get better at responding to this information. We have begun to identify "learning deserts"—places where particular programs are noticeably absent. For example, last summer, we started to look at where Chicago's coding programs

were and discovered many were not free and most were located downtown and/or in more affluent neighborhoods. In response, we applied for and received funding through Best Buy to bring coding programs to some of those “learning deserts.” Our DYN Design Lab is a van that brings laptops, wi-fi, and mentors to neighborhood parks, libraries, and organizations to engage youth in coding and making. We know as we continue to get better at populating the learning ecosystem, we will continue to identify concerning trends, and we look forward to supporting community stakeholders in developing innovative approaches to addressing those concerns.

**Q. Although you are continuing to push for more and more growth, how does it feel to be part of something that is already growing so quickly? How would you say your team’s experiences have prepared you for this moment in time?**

**A.** This work has been really exhilarating for our team. We have been humbled by the commitment of the 100+ youth-serving organizations that have partnered in this work. We have been inspired by the possibilities to help the city get exponentially smarter about how they are connecting every Chicago youth to existing learning opportunities. And, we are continually challenged to work in ways that result in Chicago’s youth connecting to robust, informal learning and translating those experiences and achievements into new opportunities.

DYN was uniquely prepared to lead this work. We had past experience implementing innovative, large-scale initiatives like YOUmedia ([link](#)), which resided in Chicago Public Library spaces and was eventually scaled across the country. Overall, DYN started as an after-school program trying to address the digital divide between kids from less and more resourced communities through interest-based learning and digital media making. We have long believed the experiences youth have in informal settings equip them with dispositions, knowledge, and skill sets that should be recognized and leveraged in formal academic arenas. As early adopters of digital badges, we gave youth the “capital” to show off their achievements in formal settings. The composition of our team enables us to bring a diverse set of expertise and experience to the huge task of leading a city-wide initiative with so many moving parts. We have felt honored to be in the position to support the city in this ambitious effort.

**Q. As you and your team work to inject Chicago’s energy and vibrancy into kids’ learning experiences, what have you been most excited about? Is there a story that stands out to you?**

**A.** Our team has been most excited about youth more easily exploring their interests all over the city. We also get really excited about the portfolio of experiences we’re enabling youth to build—a portfolio that helps them keep track of their participation and achievements and that points them to more opportunities to engage broadly and deeply.

One story that stands out to me happened during our very first summer. One of our partner orgs was doing a 5-day architecture program that involved redesigning a specific public area in the city. Youth worked all week long with architects from Chicago and Canada, working through a complete cycle of the design process and, ultimately, presenting their ideas and prototypes at a culminating celebration. I attended the celebration, and one of the program mentors told me about a young African American male participant who attended a local charter school and knew about the program because his teacher had found it on the—at the time—Chicago Summer of Learning website. She said, on the first day of the program, it was pretty clear he struggled with math—he stood out among his high school peers as needing a great deal of support. However, he also stood out among his peers as having superior design thinking skills. We talked about how important it was

“This work is not only about creating better learning environments, it’s about creating a community for learners to thrive.”

**Sybil Madison-Boyd**

for both him and his teachers to know this. Especially if he was seen—and saw himself—as a remedial math student at school. That perception was limiting his ideas of what he could do. In that moment, we were both amazed at how this initiative both connected this young man to an opportunity he might not have known about otherwise and provided him with digital badges that could communicate back to his teachers what he was capable of accomplishing.

**Q. What a great story! Could you go further in explaining how this young man's learning—and that of others—is reflected back to the school system?**

**A.** Youth's CCOL accounts are actually digital portfolios that keep track of their participation in and accomplishments from programs that CCOL partners provide. In partnership with Chicago Public Schools, every PK-12 student has an account waiting for them to set up, so they can build their portfolio from a very young age.

Youth can share the contents of their portfolio in a couple of ways right now. Any badge that has been earned can be shared via email and/or social media, printed out as a physical certificate, and/or downloaded. Just recently, in partnership with Chicago Public Schools ([link](#)), we introduced a new feature where youth can now publicly share their entire portfolio—as opposed to single badges or experiences. Part of our job with youth is to increase their “badge literacy” so they understand what kinds of data are packed inside any badge they earn and why and how to share a badge with others.

In addition to youth-driven methods of reflecting learning back to schools, we are engaged in partnerships with the district and teachers in which students' participation in out-of-school programs and online learning pathways is recognized in the classroom. In partnership with the Chicago Public School's Office of Civic Engagement and Service Learning, we work with CCOL organizations whose high school programs meet the criteria for the district's service learning requirement. After a formal application and approval process, these organizations' badges are then endorsed by the district and “unlock” service learning credit for the youth who earn them. We also have developed online pathways that connect in-school and out-of-school learning. For example, our Young Author Playlist ([link](#)) is designed to support the development of creative writing among 7th-12th graders. We have partnered with teachers who use the playlist as a core or supplemental activity in their curriculum, such that youth engagement online “counts” in class.

**Q. What new things does CCOL have in store for the next five years?**

**A.** Our beloved Brother, Mike Hawkins' response to this question would be “Revolution!” We are excited about the work to come. After three years, we feel we have reached a threshold that enables us to develop and grow the work in deeply meaningful ways. CCOL is not a household name yet, but we have enough partner organizations, active account holders, and a strong partnership with the school district and city agencies to build deep connectivity for our youth across organizations, learning spaces, and opportunities. This really addresses the opportunity gaps we see across kids, schools, families, and communities.

Our vision for the future includes developing a truly open data platform for informal learning opportunities, strengthening the utility and power of youth's portfolios as documentation and recommendation engines, increasing the interconnectivity of informal and formal learning in partnership with schools, and using CCOL data to help the city, organizations, educators, caring adults, and youth to get smarter about utilizing, distributing, and accessing the city's rich learning resources. There's a lot of work to do, and we're excited about doing it in collaboration with numerous partners!

**Sybil Madison-Boyd** is the Director of the Learning Pathways Program at Digital Youth Network in DePaul University's College of Computing and Digital Media. Her work addresses barriers to equitable educational outcomes for urban youth through systems change and innovative reform. For the past 20 years, this work has been in partnership with school district administrators, principals, teachers, social workers, and youth, as well as with government and civic institutions and leaders. Dr. Madison-Boyd received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology, with honors, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her doctorate in Clinical Psychology, with a focus on Community Psychology, from the University of California at Berkeley.



# XQ Super School Winners Announced!

by Demi Edwards and Paul Haluszczak

On September 14th, XQ: The Super School Project ([link](#)) revealed the 10 Super Schools that will receive \$10 million over the next five years for their #RethinkHighSchool proposals. We loved watching the events unfold and can't wait to see what comes next!

While following XQ: The Super School Project this past year—including their big reveal of the winners—the amount of community engagement we witnessed has been inspiring. To break into a space that is clogged with discussions on reformation, rather than transformation, and gain the attention of world figures like President Barack Obama and Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, XQ America has added tremendous fuel to the learner-centered fire. It is an understatement to say we are excited to see what the Super Schools accomplish in the next year and the work XQ will continue doing moving forward.

With over 10,000 applications received, XQ sparked a nationwide conversation: How do we reimagine the possibilities of education? Leaders everywhere were invited to put aside what they thought they knew about education and weave a brand new tapestry that expresses learners' needs in the 21st century.

On the day of the big reveal, the Education Reimagined team was proud to see education leaders we've written about, spoken to, and had the pleasure of meeting face-to-face be awarded such a coveted prize. Our beloved Bertie Simmons took the stage to accept the prize for Furr High School. We smiled ear-to-ear when seeing Big Picture's Elliot Washor standing proudly with the New Harmony team. When Iowa BIG was announced as a



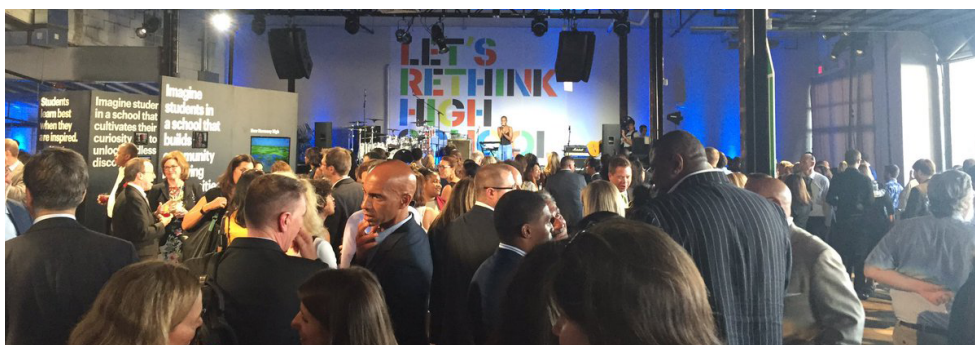
Demi Edwards



Paul Haluszczak

surprise recipient of a five-year \$1 million grant, there was cheering in our office—sorry co-workers! And, for those we don't yet know—we can't wait to meet you, hear about your aspirations, and see what you make possible.

- **Furr High School** ([video](#)). Where learners will become environmental-change agents.
- **Design-Lab High** ([video](#)). Where learning is made visible and design thinking leads the way.
- **New Harmony High** ([video](#)). Where learning will happen in the middle of the Mississippi River...on a barge, of course!
- **Powderhouse Studios** ([video](#)). Where the time and space of learning are being transformed.
- **Brooklyn Lab High School** ([video](#)). Where the charging stations for learning are endless.
- **Summit Elevate** ([video](#)). Where learners' interests guide the way.
- **Grand Rapids Public Museum High School** ([video](#)). Where the barriers between education and community disappear.
- **Washington Leadership Academy** ([video](#)). Where virtual reality is no longer beyond our grasp.
- **RISE High** ([video](#)). Where learning is mobile, connected, and supportive for kids who are homeless or in foster-care.
- **Vista Challenge High School** ([video](#)). Where personalized learning is scaling up.



Only ten schools made the final cut. But, when we think about all the ideas surfaced, partnerships born, and commitments revitalized, we see the real hidden power that XQ unleashed.

As one leader stated, “If I don’t get this grant, we’re going to make these changes anyway.” That one statement expresses everything that this call for proposals has made possible. Encourage education leaders in every community to aspire for something greater than the current system. Motivate them to elevate their environments above the current paradigm and enter a new frame of thought to discover what learners really need to succeed. Empower them to know there is a larger community of leaders, thinkers, inventors, and challengers just like them—hungry for transformational change in education.

Once again, with over 10,000 applications submitted for the XQ grant alone, we know there are thousands of leaders forging ahead with their reimagined learning environment regardless of the prize money. We also know these leaders deserve a stage for their ideas to be shared. Are you one of these leaders? We want to know about you. Reach out to us on Twitter [@EdRemagined](#) or email us [here](#), so we can get to know each other and spread your ideas across the nation!

“To know that this is a commitment that we are going to have the privilege of making is like nothing else I've every felt in the entire world.”

**Erin Whalen, Team Leader/  
Founding Assistant Principal,  
RISE HIGH**





## LEARNER VOICES

**Check out the articles below.** They might just challenge your assumptions of what kids are capable of creating and doing if we let go of the current Industrial-era paradigm and move towards learner-centered education.



Photo credit: Hawkeye Huey from *Business Insider*

### FROM STUDENTS AT THE CENTER HUB

#### A Space To Be Heard

When learners speak, there should be no end to our listening. Take a deep dive into Salim's personal story as a panelist at the Big Bang conference in Orlando. [Read here](#)

### FROM ENTREPRENEUR

#### How This 14-Year-Old Entrepreneur Is Making Adults Question Their Life Choices by Being Ridiculously Awesome

There's nothing more frustrating than trying to improve your craft but not having the right tools to do it. Like Newton needing to reveal the inner workings of calculus to further his discoveries, explore how this 14-year old lacrosse player turned her frustrations into a booming business. [Read here](#)

### FROM BUSINESS INSIDER

#### Five-Year-Old Photographer Becomes Instagram Star

When we talk about a learner's "voice," we aren't limiting ourselves to a child's vocal expression. Their voice can be heard through multiple mediums. Explore how the visual expression of one five-year-old photographer brings new insight to how a child views the world. [Read here](#)

### FROM PARENTS.COM

#### Kids to the Rescue: 4 Brave Kids Save Lives

Children are born with an innate sense of empathy toward others. As they go through life's various challenges, they have an opportunity to expand or contract this piece of themselves. Learn about their capacity to care through four heroic stories and reflect on ways you can create the space for your learners to discover their connection with the world around them. [Read here](#)

“People don't treat me like a kid; people treat me like I'm a business woman.”

**Rachel Zietz**  
**ENTREPRENEUR**



## A VOICE FROM THE FIELD

# In a System Focused on Numbers, Learner-Centered Education Infuses Humanity and Sparks Possibility

by Michelle Carlson

Over the years, I have had the pleasure of working with teachers and students from all different backgrounds, but I am especially drawn to supporting those assisting students who are considered “more difficult to reach.” These students provide a uniquely bountiful wealth of knowledge for those of us engaged in reimagining education.

“As students, we spend our whole lives trying to create ourselves for someone else—for the system. Then, when we graduate and we’re out on our own, and someone asks us who we are or what we’re interested in, we have no idea how to answer because there wasn’t any room for that kind of discovery in school.”

These are the words of first-year college student, Ericka. Ericka grew up in a school-centered system that made her feel like a failure. Rather than existing as a singular incident, failure became an identity. The school experience that was meant to serve as the springboard to her future left her feeling powerless instead.



Michelle Carlson

Fortunately, during Ericka’s junior year in high school, she became a Makerspace Ambassador—part of a program I created in early 2015 at the Tehama County Department of Education. The program was focused on helping young people discover their passions and dive deeply into personally defined learning goals, supported by adult and peer mentors. As a participant, Ericka rediscovered the joy in learning, and more importantly, she found herself:

“Passing is how we’re measured and graded and, if we can’t pass the tests, we must not be good at anything. That’s what we’ve always thought. . .until we met you. You saw something in us that we didn’t even know was there. You told us we were good at something. You gave us a way to believe in ourselves and to know that, even if we aren’t good at passing tests, that doesn’t mean we aren’t smart. Now, we know we are smart and that we can do things. **We know we can have the future that we want for ourselves.**”

Ericka and the other Ambassadors illustrated the power of learner-centered education in a big way. Their achievements and extraordinary personal growth have since led to the formation of Leaders For Sustainable Change, a non-profit we are establishing to extend the reach of these successes to youth and adults on a national scale.

This is what learner-centered education is about—every student being provided with the environment and support to learn in ways that are joyful, meaningful, and *personally relevant*. The students who are falling through the cracks or have been written off entirely are now given the space to begin the journey toward the future they want.

## EXPERIENCES AS A STUDENT COME FULL CIRCLE—FUELING A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

As an adult, I look back on my own school experiences as *that kid*—the one who questioned everything and demanded more from the system. I was always being told to fall back into line and play by the rules. I wasn’t falling through the cracks because I struggled academically. Rather, I was *diving* into the cracks, desperately seeking opportunities to be heard and to be given assignments relevant to real-world experiences. To put it simply, I wanted to be afforded the humanity of a learner-centered education.

It was these experiences that brought me to education eight years ago. I wanted to work inside the system by creating the change I thought kids deserved and society demanded. I pushed that envelope as far as its walls would allow, and upon reaching the boundaries, I took a leap of faith and founded Future Development Group, LLC (FDG) [\(link\)](#). As Sir Ken Robinson would say, I found my personal Element. I am passionately devoted to supporting this learner-centered movement through teaching, speaking, and writing about its immense power.

## AUTHENTICALLY VALUING STUDENTS LEADS TO REMARKABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO BREAK THROUGH BARRIERS

Stemming from my previous work with the Ambassador Program, I most recently jumped at the opportunity to help develop a collaborative partnership between FDG, County Probation, and the Tehama County Department of Education to launch a maker-space inside the local juvenile detention facility [\(link\)](#). To the best of our knowledge, it is the only one of its kind in the country. As such, our work garnered enough interest to be featured in the 2016 reMAKE Education Summit [\(link\)](#).

“As students, we spend our whole lives trying to create ourselves for someone else—for the system.”



Photo from Tehama Juvenile Hall Makerspace (Courtesy Michelle Carlson)

During our presentation, Deputy Probation Chief, Mike Coley, illustrated the program's impact by sharing "there are only three inches of concrete separating the makerspace from the rest of the juvenile hall. I'm not exactly sure how to explain it, but when we cross that threshold, everything is different—in a really good way. Once we're in the makerspace, everyone recognizes this is a place to be inspired, creative, and collaborative."

The students who spend time in there tell us they don't normally speak to each other in the other areas of the facility, but they do in the makerspace. In working on projects, they get to observe others' work, and in the process, they realize they have more in common than they ever knew before. One student said, "I like to draw, and I never realized how many other kids in here liked the same things until we were all doing them in the makerspace, together."

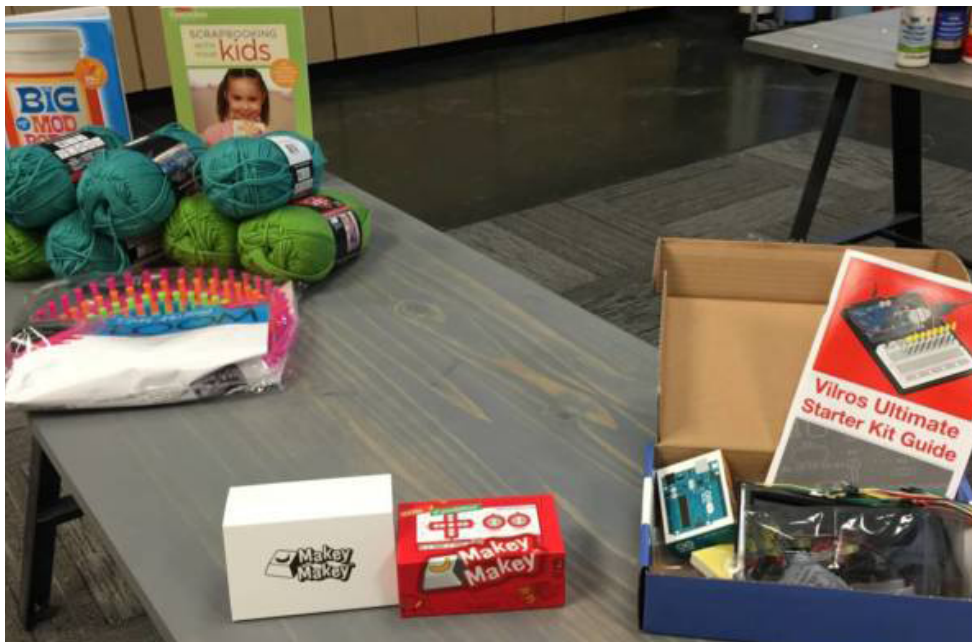
Other students have shared how their time in the makerspace has helped them deal with feelings of hurt, anger, and fear. They say it makes them want to reach out and help others, so others can share in the positive feelings that come from being empowered.

These remarkable moments of student growth are born out of the convergence between learner-centered and maker education: intrinsically motivated, hands-on, minds-on learning. This space allows learners to discover what makes them unique and special, while at the same time recognizing the things that make us all the same: the need for power, value, and belonging.

Understanding and honoring these basic tenets of humanity allows us to create environments which empower and inspire *all learners*, far beyond what standards, assessments, and grades will ever bring us. The fact is, the carrot and the stick were the foundation of the industrialized system, and they, along with all of the other elements that made that system function like a well-oiled machine, are no longer effective or relevant in the 21st century.

The paradigm shift from traditional education to learner-centered education takes a certain amount of willing suspension of disbelief (defined as a willingness to suspend one's critical faculties and believe the unbelievable). It also takes a certain amount of audacity, strategy, and a truly innovative approach to change.

“Now, we know we are smart and that we can do things. We know we can have the future that we want for ourselves.”



Carlson said it's important that makerspaces have a variety of materials so students can choose what inspires them. (Courtesy Michelle Carlson)

Through my various roles in education—both inside and outside the system—I've researched, explored, and put into practice many different teaching philosophies and styles. In that time, some fundamental elements have emerged, allowing FDG and our collaborative partners to develop successful strategies that bring about positive and lasting change in schools. Change not only good for students, but also for teachers, school leaders, and the communities in which they live.

Now that we've had some time to test these strategies, our next steps will be to take the successes we've created locally and turn them into the seeds of a national movement for change. Nationwide, this is an exciting moment of growth toward an education system that affords every single young person the opportunity to experience joyful, learner-centered education, allowing them to find and pursue their dreams on their own terms. I believe this is possible, and I will work tirelessly with other passionate educators and leaders to bring this movement to the forefront.

Author, speaker, and consultant, **Michelle Carlson**, is an internationally recognized leader and change agent in education. As Founder and CEO of Future Development Group, she leads the charge—with other passionate educators—to building a better, brighter future for all. She is, above all else, a social entrepreneur, believer in the power of “we,” and lover of all things making.



## Shadow A Student Challenge

What is the best way to know how your learners experience your learning environment? Beyond the numbers, how can you determine your vision is being lived out in your children's everyday learning? For educators across the nation, the answer came in the form of truly walking in their learners' shoes by participating in the **Shadow A Student Challenge** ([link](#)). Currently, over 1,500 practitioners across all 50 states have taken the challenge. Their stories are both parts unique and rather similar. Unique in that every learning environment expresses a completely different combination of challenges brought on by the irreplicable diversity in their learners' backgrounds. Similar in that the school-centered paradigm brings about disengaged learning and painfully long lectures no matter where you look at its application. Regardless of the paradigm in which you lead, every learner deserves to not only have their story told but also actually lived out in person. What do you think you would learn if you took the challenge? In fact, why not sign up today and share your story with us!

**How It Works** ([link](#))

**Share Your Story and Follow Others** ([link](#))

**Principal Blogs** ([link](#))

## GlassLab Games

There are few things that universally represent a "typical" American kid, but with over 90% of kids between the ages of 2-17 years old actively participating in video games, this might be the most universal—even more than social media use. With so much time spent in this virtual space, how can education leaders bring this fun and familiar tool into the learning environment? **GlassLab Games** ([link](#)) took hold of this question and never looked back. Building their platform on the principles of deep learning, failing forward, immediate feedback, using "not-so-standardized assessment," and transformative learning, GlassLab Games wants to "empower youth to claim their path to 21st century success through high-impact digital games." By researching and developing engaging game environments that can be used anywhere with an internet connection, they provide a new learning space for learners and educators alike. Let your imagination run wild and explore how GlassLab Games could supplement the learning in your community.

**The GlassLab Games Approach** ([link](#))

**Blazing New Trails** ([link](#))

**Game Catalogue** ([link](#))

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars! We will be speaking at some and hosting workshops at others. In all cases, pioneers will be front and center! Join us.

#### iNACOL Blended and Online Learning Symposium

San Antonio, TX

October 25-28

[Conference Website](#)

#### Teach for All Global Conference

Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

October 25-27

[Conference Website](#)

#### City Neighbors' 6th Annual Progressive Education Summit

Baltimore, MD

November 12

[Conference Website](#)

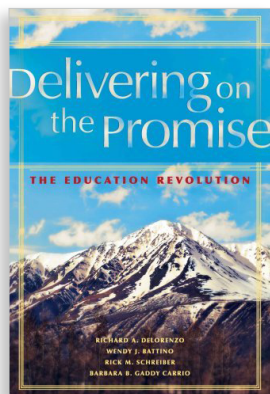
### OPPORTUNITY BOARD

#### Education Reimagined

is seeking two new learner-centered staff members to join our team: an Associate Director of Partnerships and Convenings ([link](#)) and an Associate Director of Practitioner Engagement and Learning ([link](#)).

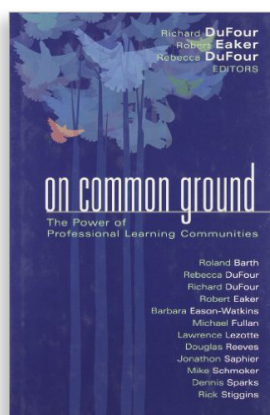


## ON OUR BOOKSHELF



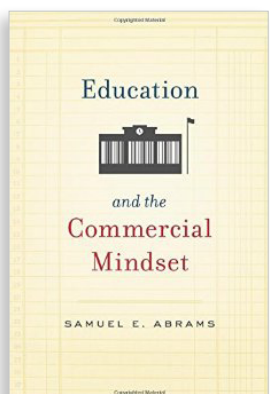
### **Delivering on the Promise: The Education Revolution** by Richard A. DeLorenzo, Wendy J. Battino, Rick M. Schreiber, and Barbara B. Gaddy Carrio

With all of the momentum from XQ's Super School Project, there is no better time to get your hands on *Delivering on the Promise*. Rethinking education has been in the works ever since it became a formal institution, and there are models around the country that provide incredible insights as to how anyone can reimagine learning in their communities. Discover how this transformation culminated in one particular district at the turn of the 21st century.



### **On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities** edited by Richard Dufour, Robert Eaker, and Rebecca Dufour

It can't be overstated enough how the transformation of any learning environment will present leaders with challenges never seen before. However, when these stories are gathered and solutions shared, a common North Star begins to shine. *On Common Ground* expounds this idea by providing education leaders with practical strategies to move their communities beyond the predispositions holding them back. By developing Professional Learning Communities (PLC), sustainable efforts to transform education for your learners can occur. Investigate how PLCs could be a catalyst in your search for transformational solutions.



### **Education and the Commercial Mindset** by Samuel E. Abrams

Stemming from a common debate among educators across the nation and the significant rise and evolution of for-profit education institutions, Samuel Abrams invites readers to explore how learning can remain a public good, while incorporating private business-like strategies. Abrams acknowledges the fact privatizing education alone fails to address the school-centered paradigm we are stuck in. Through this insight, he molds the idea of a private market economy within the landscape of public education—exploring ways this institution can incorporate private business strategies to garner more talent to enter the education niche, develop more telling assessment techniques for learners, and bring autonomy all the way down to the learner.

## WORTH YOUR TIME

### **What Kids Wish Their Teachers Knew**

Have you ever asked kids what they wished you knew about them? Discover the hidden secrets (some heartbreaking, others heartwarming) a single question and an attentive ear can reveal. [Read here](#)

### **Can Teenage Defiance Be Manipulated For Good?**

In the world of children, an act of defiance is predominantly seen as an act to be condemned. But, what if we shifted our lens? What if, rather than smoldering the rebellious flames, we fanned them into productive, agency-building energy? [Read here](#)

### **Preschool Suspensions Really Happen and That's Not Okay with Connecticut**

With minimal vocabulary at their disposal, toddlers' physical actions are their dominant form of expression. Acknowledging this reality, the state of Connecticut has taken drastic action to curb suspensions resulting from the violent behavior of their youngest learners. [Read here](#)

### **The Hidden Epidemic of Teen Hunger**

Educators are constantly battling the hidden hardships their learners face outside the traditional learning environment. This reality provides another point of reflection on our need to transform education to work for kids and not against them. [Read here](#)

“Just wait. Just wait and watch and see what we do. It is going to be amazing.”

— **BERTIE SIMMONS, PRINCIPAL,  
FURR HIGH SCHOOL, XQ SUPER SCHOOL**

Read past issues of  
**PIONEERING : A LEARNER-CENTERED PUBLICATION**  
[www.education-reimagined.org](http://www.education-reimagined.org)



AN INITIATIVE OF CONVERGENCE

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