

# pioneering

ISSUE 9 • MARCH 24, 2016 • EDUCATION REIMAGINED

## A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Director

## MC<sup>2</sup>

Profile of their learning environment  
We Are All Good Learners

## FEATURE

From Industrial Models and  
'Factory Schools' to... What Exactly?

## SXSWEDU 2016

Reflections and learnings

## FROM THE VISION

## LEARNER VOICES

## ON OUR BOOKSHELF

And the winner is...

## UPCOMING EVENTS

## JOB BOARD

education   
reimagined

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## Dear Friends,

The Education Reimagined team has had an incredibly busy, exciting, and energizing two weeks! We attended SXSWedu in Austin, TX; hosted a conversation in Washington, DC on meeting the needs and aspirations of ALL learners; and launched a conversation with Next Generation Learning Challenges on the #NextEdStory.

At SXSWedu, we hosted a panel on the possibility of learner-centered education; a 3-hour summit delving into the questions of how to make the systems shift toward learner-centered education; and a cocktail party co-hosted with NGLC to...well...kick back and unwind! Read our insights and reflections from SXSWedu on page 4.

And, overall, what truly stood out to us throughout the day was the joy of working with leading pioneers in the field and of meeting so many new people working to make the vision a reality. If you're receiving *Pioneering* for the first time after meeting us at SXSWedu, welcome! We're so happy to have you in the community.

We want to give a special thank you to the partners who served as our speakers, facilitators, and co-hosts of conversations: Taylor County Schools, Summit Public Schools, Houston A+, Big Picture Learning, Iowa BIG, KnowledgeWorks, NGLC, Big Thought, EduStart LLC, Destination Imagination, Teton Science Schools, and Dallas ISD.

Also in this issue, we're excited to be featuring Kim Carter's article, "We are All Good Learners." As the Executive Director of the QED Foundation and Chair of MC<sup>2</sup> Charter School, she presented these remarks at our convening last week on how learner-centered education serves those learners most ill-served by the current one-size-fits-all education model. She shared her experience of meeting the needs and aspirations of learners with wide ranges of learning variability. We were inspired by her stories and the work of MC<sup>2</sup>—and wanted to share it with all of you.

Lastly, please read the article that Andy Calkins and I co-authored inviting the images, metaphors, and phrases that reflect the new future of learning. It was originally published in *EdSurge* on March 3rd. We hope you'll answer the invitation through blogs posts, Twitter, and Facebook. Just remember to use #NextEdStory to keep the momentum going!

Warm wishes,  
**Kelly Young**



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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.





## FROM THE VISION

# Creating a Network of Pioneers in Educational Transformation: An Invitation and a Challenge

### LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION IS AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

There is a growing hunger from education leaders, families, students, and communities for an entirely new way to educate children, for a reimagined way to foster thriving, highly engaged learners. They are seeking something transformational. Across the country, many communities and states are ready for a new vision and a fresh conversation.

We recognize the many efforts and leaders already actively seeking to transform the system into a truly learner-centered one. There is no shortage of pioneers experimenting with transformational ideas and practices. This is a realm populated by districts, states, unions, civic leaders, businesses, foundations, non-profits, universities, and individuals all starting from different access points and digging deep in different aspects of the vision. In partnership with these innovators, we seek to build a national, cross-sector network of people and organizations that are consciously and collaboratively experimenting within the new paradigm. This network will:

- Support, recognize, deepen, and learn from current experiments already innovating with one or more of the elements to create learner-centered environments for children
- Catalyze new experiments to explore how the design elements and system components of this vision can work across the full diversity of our country's communities
- Clear structural obstacles, such as seat-time requirements, to allow for local experimentation with the support of district and state actors
- Change the public narrative from one of fixing the current system to one about how to make extraordinary learner-centered learning available to each and every child

This emerging vision offers a North Star toward which to aspire, a language that creates the space of learner-centered learning, and the means to distinguish transformational efforts from those of reform. We invite those excited and interested to join us to engage deeply on the questions still to be answered and explore how this vision might manifest across the nation.

We are committed to accelerating a cultural tipping point where new norms of learner-centered learning will shift the nation to the realization that the current system cannot fulfill on the purpose of education for all kids and that we must, therefore, work together to create a reimagined model for learning. With communities across the nation working to transform the old school-centric system to a new learner-centered one, we see the potential for a society of thriving learners, engaged parents, and inspired educators.

### READERS—YOU ARE THE MOVEMENT!

**It will take courage, compassion, and the actions of many, many individuals dedicated to transformation to fulfill the promise of education that meets the needs of every single child. Let us help make the connections and amplify your efforts. Please join us!**

## 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.

### TLTalkRadio Podcast

with Lynn Fuini-Hetten  
and Randy Ziegenfuss  
April 8, 11:30am ET

[Website](#)

### Massachusetts Education Partnership (MEP) Annual Conference

Panel  
Marlborough, MA  
April 12

[Conference Website](#)

### ASU+GSV Summit

San Diego, CA  
April 18-20

[Conference Website](#)

### Remake Learning Days

Pittsburgh, PA  
May 9-15

[Conference Website](#)

## JOB BOARD

**Education Reimagined** is seeking a highly organized, detail-oriented Operations Associate to join our team. Learn more and apply [here](#).

**Big Picture Learning is hiring!** They have positions available in Oakland, CA; Bronx, NY; Minneapolis, MN; and Belize. Learn more and apply [here](#).



# Reflections on SXSWedu

by the Education Reimagined Team

**TUESDAY, MARCH 8TH.** From sunup to well past sundown, it was a learner-centered Education Reimagined day at SXSWedu! It was all about imagination, possibility, inspiration, and pioneers.

With three events spread out over the day, we created an opportunity for pioneers to spend the day with us—an experience that let them dive deeply into learner-centered education. Want to experience the day via Twitter—see our [Storify!](#)

We started off with a panel featuring Stephan Turnipseed of Destination Imagination and a vision signatory; Dr. Marina Walne of EduStart LLC; and Roger Cook of Taylor County Schools (KY) to lay out the paradigm shift from an Industrial-era, school-centered education system to one that adapts to meet the learner's needs and interests and to showcase an example of where this paradigm shift is being brought to life. Roger Cook rocked the house with Taylor County's radically personalized system.

Having set the stage for learner-centered education, we hosted a 3-hour Summit in the afternoon to dive deeper into how this shift actually happens on the ground. We had a panel of four leading pioneers who shared their journeys toward learner-centered education: Margaret Black of Big Thought (Dallas), Virgel Hammonds of Knowledge-Works, Trace Pickering of IowaBIG, and Michael Hinojosa of Dallas ISD.

Following the panel, with the help of a few more pioneers serving as facilitators, we dove into table conversations, asking these questions:

- Where did you start with learner-centered education, and what had you choose that starting point? Which of the five elements did you start with? Did you start with all five?
- How did the learners benefit from that element/starting point? And what, if anything, did you discover was missing?
- After getting going, what did you add to your model? How did learners benefit from that addition?

This was an opportunity to bring together pioneers at a variety of stages in their journeys to transform their systems. Working in different models, focusing on different elements, and entering from different starting points, they came together to learn from each other and to see themselves as part of a larger movement. It was a bit of an experiment. What happens when learner-centered educators have the space and time, in the midst of a crazy conference, to explore, delve deep, and really listen to each other?

Here's what stood out for us:

### **1. Community engagement is key.**

Throughout the day, we heard again and again how important it is to start with the community. There must be a shared vision and shared ownership among all stakeholders to give the educators, learners, and administrators the space to innovate with how, when, where, and with whom learning happens.

### **2. Educators must be prepared to own and be leaders of transformation.**

There is a huge unlock when educators embrace their role as a learner—it opens up the possibility for them to imagine myriad pathways for each child and to co-create with that learner to make it a reality. This requires a whole host of new skills and dispositions. And, most importantly, educators can't do it alone—they need the preparation, support, and time to delve deeper, try new things, and collaborate together.

### **3. The work of transformation is hard, but the support of a community of pioneers makes it easier.**

Being part of a larger community provides the connection, compassion, and courage for those working day-to-day on-the-ground to bring learner-centered education to life. And, having a protected "space" to innovate and think outside of the box is invaluable.

We finished the day out with a co-hosted cocktail party with Next Generation Learning Challenges. Amidst beer, wine, and guacamole, we continued conversations, sparked new friendships, and reflected on the day's insights and learnings.

*We can't wait to do it all again next year!*

## **WHAT ELSE DID WE DO WHILE WE WERE IN AUSTIN?**

While we were busy hosting a panel, a summit and a party, we did make it to some awesome presentations—below a few highlights of what we heard, saw, and learned.

### **1. When learners are present and speak up Aha! moments fill the space.**

Three learners from Big Picture schools spoke impressively about what it's like to match their passions to their learning. A 4th grader grew enough lettuce to feed her whole school for two weeks and is now combining her love of plants with a self-designed

## **THANK YOU SUMMIT TABLE FACILITATORS!**

**Lizzie Choi**  
**@SummitPS**

**Roger Cook**  
**@TC\_Schools\_KY**

**Margaret Black**  
**Evan Cleveland**  
**Kristina Dove**  
**@bigthought**

**Andrew Frishman**  
**@bigpiclearning**

**Virgel Hammonds**  
**@knowledgeworks**

**Supt Michael Hinojosa**  
**@dallasschools**

**Trace Pickering**  
**Nate Pruett**  
**Troy K Miller**  
**@IowaBIG**

**Nate McClennen**  
**@tetonscience**

**Stephan Turnipseed**  
**@IDODI**

**Scott Van Beck**  
**@houstonaplus**

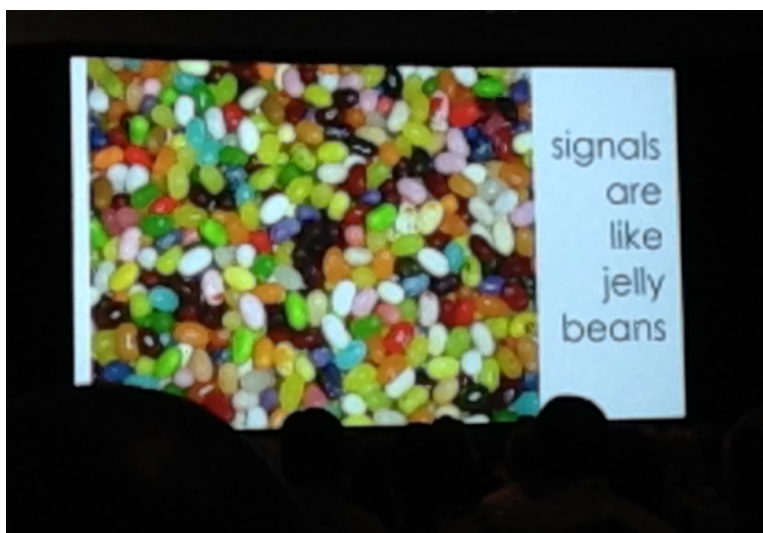
art-making project. A middle schooler confidently stated that he was interested in engineering and entrepreneurship. An older student in Big Picture's College Unbound program talked about having the experience but not having the degree to "prove" it to the world. The program met and supported him where he was—seeing his experience not only as valuable but as countable. This has changed the trajectory of his life.

Another panel, Students on Diversity and Inclusivity in Schools, featured three young people who spoke up passionately about being accepted and seen for who they are. They had plenty to say about the importance of knowing your own story and history. They spoke movingly about identity and acceptance. And, when asked a question from the audience regarding their take on the current presidential primary season—"Honestly, I'm disappointed, America. Is this really the best we can do?"

**2. Tim King's reflections on his journey as an educator at Union Prep Charter School were profoundly moving.** He has created a culture based on respect, responsibility, rituals (if you want to change the dance, you got to change the music), and relationships (we can't educate them if we don't know them). His goal: Change the narrative of African American males. Ten years in, his learners have a 100% college acceptance rate; and Union Prep has grown from one school to a network of schools, launched an innovative program supporting college students, and started a workforce development program. The school creed: We believe. Their mission: Arm them with the swords of intellectual knowledge and shields to protect them from a hostile world.

**3. Jane McGonigal's keynote presentation Think Like a Futurist provided a method for seeing into the future.** How do we do this? By identifying and collecting signals, combining these signals into forecasts to create personal foresight that allows one to play with the future. From Jane's perspective, key to any inquiry about forecasting are the questions we ask ourselves about the signals we pick up.

Questions to consider: What kind of change does this represent? From what to what? What's driving the change? What will the world be like if this signal gets amplified? What if the trend continues and becomes common? Is this a future we want?



*Jelly beans of different flavors put together can create whole new experiences!*

## SXSWEDU CLOSING PROGRAM [\(Video\)](#)

In this moment of opportunity, we need to design a new engine. It has got to be driven by different principles and built out in different ways.

—Paul Reville

One of the biggest barriers that we face to getting personalized learning to scale is actually a mindset. It is our continued belief in the myth of the average person.

—Todd Rose

Could we make learning wilder, wider, inexhaustible, with a reckless disregard for boredom? Could we make it a challenge and a desire, something craveable and ownable?

—Russlynn Ali

When you can connect a passion with peers and community that support and motivate you and connect that to real opportunities in the world, magic can happen.

—Connie Yowell



I grew in the way a fire would if you sprayed gasoline on it. —MC<sup>2</sup> Learner

**MAKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS** (MC<sup>2</sup>) Charter School empowers its graduates with the knowledge and skills to use their unique voices effectively and with integrity in co-creating our global public world. They become citizens of the world. And how do they cultivate these citizens? By uncovering, recovering, and discovering the unique gifts and talents of each learner.

At MC<sup>2</sup>, learning is a team activity. This **socially embedded** practice involves creating learning teams for each individual child, made up of the learner, family members, and an advisor. The team works together to identify a learner's strengths, needs, interests, and passions—encouraging a proactive, self-driven mindset. At MC<sup>2</sup>, the **learner is in charge**. With the continued support of their team, they establish their own goals, manage their own time, seek out regular feedback, and adjust with new understandings. Community partners and mentors are also along for the ride to provide support and opportunities, as appropriate.

None of this learning involves grades—either letter- or age-based. Nor does it pause for a summer break. Running year-round, MC<sup>2</sup>'s **competency-based** system allows learners to work with educators and mentors to design personally meaningful work that meets curriculum standards. No topic or subject is off limits—learners can learn anything at anytime. They start with questions and follow the path of inquiry wherever it leads, combining math, English, history, and science as they go. Learners are then coached in how to communicate their learning through a variety of methods, including projects, portfolios, and presentations. Learners prepare daily reflections and present their progress at quarterly exhibitions, which are open to and shared with the community.

The expression of learner's pursuits go in four basic directions:

- **Personal Life Experiences:** Any experience that enables a learner to learn may be documented for credit.
- **Learning Studios:** Learners working together integrate their knowledge and understanding through a variety of challenge-based activities.
- **Treks:** Field experiences develop learners' skills and allow them to apply learning in meaningful settings.
- **Citizenship Internships:** Learners build academic, personal, and workplace skills through one-on-one relationships with adult mentors in the community.

All of this is grounded in promoting everyone's voice. The whole school—learners, educators, administrators, parents—has input in everything from dress code to attendance policies to the decoration of learning spaces. MC<sup>2</sup> considers itself a laboratory of democratic practice.

Even in its pilot years, MC<sup>2</sup>'s leaders saw the potential for something bigger. In 2007, they launched the Q.E.D. Foundation to share the stories of MC<sup>2</sup>, consult with and provide support to others pursuing education transformation, and develop and disseminate tools and resources for competency-based education. They are bringing the essence of MC<sup>2</sup> to life across the country.

## LEARN MORE

[Igniting Learning at MC<sup>2</sup> Charter School](#)

[MC<sup>2</sup> Design Elements](#)

[QED Foundation Learner Sketch Tool](#)

[A Construction Kit for Personalized Assessment of Competency Based Learning](#)

## FACTS & FIGURES

Public charter, 12-21 years

150 learners

2 schools

ELL or Primary language other than English: 2%

Learners with disabilities: 30%

Free or reduced lunch:

Manchester 50%

Keene (unknown at this time)

## CONNECT

Website

[MC<sup>2</sup> School](#)

[QED Foundation](#)

Facebook Page

[MC<sup>2</sup> School Monadnock](#)

Twitter

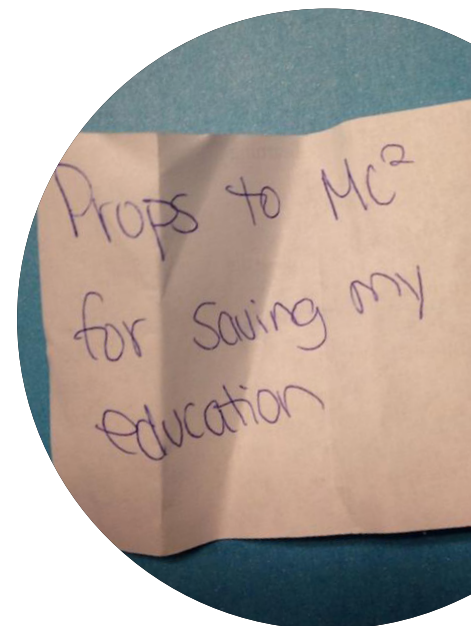
[@MC<sup>2</sup>\\_manchester](#)

[@QEDfdn](#)

For more information contact:

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# We Are All Good Learners

by Kim Carter

**WHEN MY MIDDLE SON ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL**, he was having a hard time navigating the expectations of his teachers and the curriculum. As an informed parent, I requested an educational evaluation. At the evaluation meeting, the psychologist said, with my 14-year-old son sitting there, “I can tell you what his problem is. He’s a passive aggressive underachiever.”

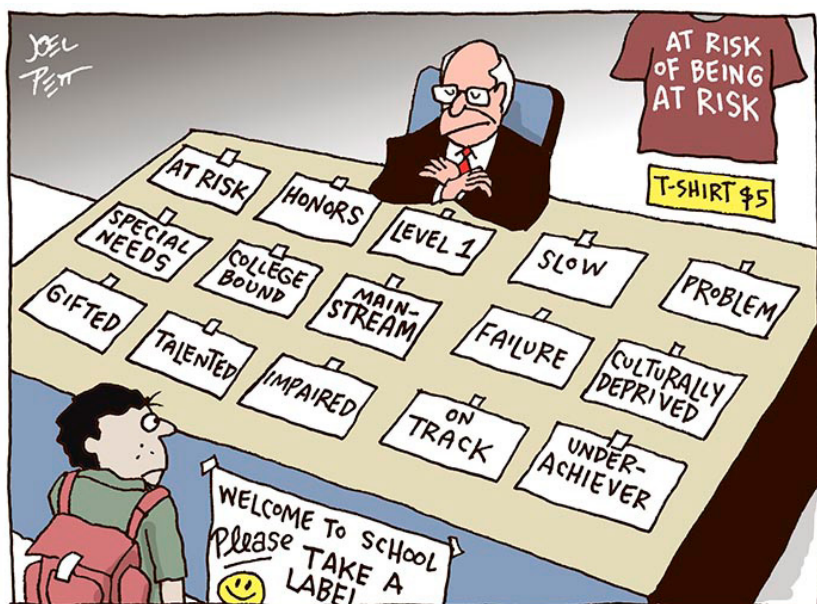
Some years ago, a parent contacted me, eager to have her daughter Anna enrolled. At Anna’s transition IEP meeting, the case manager summarized Anna’s status. Having met and talked with Anna, I was stunned when he opened with a brief sentence about her test results, concluding with the words “mental retardation”. His summary was followed by the recommendation that Anna stay in this special classroom where she could be cared for with all due diligence, with attention paid to developing her life skills. Today, I can tell you unequivocally what her mother already knew: Anna absolutely does not have mental retardation.

Anna is a lovely, capable, talented young woman. As much as I love the intent behind the phrase “exceptional children,” I have to say Anna is not exceptional, at least not in the sense of being marginally capable of learning. She is her own unique self, and she is a good learner.

We are all good learners. Each and every one of us. It’s as simple as that. If we weren’t good learners, we’d be dead. As biologist James Zull states, “Learning is simply what the brain does.”



Kim Carter



© Joel Pett

We're not all good learners in the same way, nor do we need to be. Context is what puts us at advantage or disadvantage. We adults have the ability—response-ability—to create contexts where every learner shines and to intentionally develop agency in learners to select and manage their own contexts.

MC<sup>2</sup> is in its second incarnation, having first been a “school of choice” in a somewhat rural school district in southwestern NH from 2002–2010. Now, it is a public charter school with two campuses in two cities, about 60 miles apart. Over the years, the percent of students identified for special education has ranged from as few as 25% to as high as 45%, most commonly in the mid-thirties.

Identifications include ADHD, anxiety, and emotional disturbance, often co-indicated with a learning disability. We have students with autism, Asperger's, non-verbal learning disorder, dyslexia, high incidence of math, writing, and reading challenges. In fact, they come in with all kinds of labels.

The very first thing we do to begin meeting the needs of our children/young adults is explore with them who they are as learners and begin to build their learning profile. From their enrollment interview—where we ask them to describe their strengths, challenges, interests, and aspirations—into their first learning experience, called MOLO—the MC<sup>2</sup> Orientation Learning Opportunity, we dig past labels. We get curious about each learner's variability; we engage them in activities and games, explore their affinities, and scaffold their first academic inquiry around an area of personal interest.

The Learner Sketch Tool is a foundational element of their learning profile and one that they'll revisit regularly. The **Learner Sketch** is based on the QED's Neurodevelopmental Framework for Learning, organized around the mental processes of learning, such as attention, memory, and language. We call it the Learner Sketch because we continually emphasize how readily they can reshape the picture of themselves, based on strategies, contexts, and motivation, similar to Todd Rose's three principles of the individuality (*The End of Average*, 2016).

Each Learner Sketch self-reported composite picture is one piece in a collection of snapshots in each student's developing Learning Profile. Other snapshots represent multiple perspectives: the sports action shot, the dress-up formal picture, the silly

“The very first thing we do to begin meeting the needs of our children/young adults is explore with them who they are as learners.”

Kim Carter



© QED Foundation

goofing-off quick pic, the family portrait, along with a variety of other contexts, each of which adds another dimension to the entirety of who they are.

Another key structure, developed specifically within and for MC<sup>2</sup>, is our EOD portal. EOD stands for End of Day, and as part of their English credit, students are expected to write daily, maintaining an 80% or better submission rate. All members of their learning team can read and respond to students' EODs. At first, we ask them to simply write something. Then, we encourage them to write to communicate about something that matters to them—to complain, to advocate, to negotiate, to challenge, to celebrate. For many of our students this is the first time—ever—that they have written something to say what's on their mind to an adult, and for almost all, it's the first time adults have taken seriously what they've had to say. This is our north cornerstone for the foundation of pivotal relationships.

Reluctant to say much more than one or two words in person, one of our students with autism used his End of Day reflections to share the myriad things he's making meaning of every day: from the connections between *Hamlet* and *The Lion King*, problem solving to increase his fluency in Italian ("the second I try to open my mouth and speak it, I forget the entire language. I think I'm going to practice speaking it out loud at home"), and ongoing summaries, interpretations, extrapolations, and plain old rants about the daily news, which he follows through a variety of daily news feeds.

There are additional intentional, integral structures and tools. Our **Habits** and the many ways they are integrated into students' daily lives and experiences are pivotal. What is typically referred to as Behavior Management (or Discipline) is a priority area for engagement and development, as we explicitly and transparently teach, coach, and assess students' capacity for assuming increasing agency for goal setting, decision-making, and problem solving.

### SOME OF OUR GREATEST LESSONS HAVE BEEN AFFIRMATIONS: RELATIONSHIPS MATTER.

Elliot Washor, whom I believe originally coined the phrase, Rigor, relevance, and relationships in the 80s, told me he wished he'd said it in reverse order: relationships come first, followed by relevance, and then rigor.

Building trust through relationships is essential, especially for learners and families whose very identity has been compromised and challenged by our insistence on

“...habits and dispositions—social emotional skills—live at the heart of learning; they’re not non-cognitive, and they’re not add-ons.”

Kim Carter

deficit-based labeling and broad-brush generalizations within a very narrowly defined and limited context for learning. When we broaden that context, when we're curious about the ways someone excels (shifting from how good is that learner to how is that learner good), and when we explore the myriad ways to know and to demonstrate knowing, we create space for all manner of accomplishments.

Chris became interested in sewing and discovered a passion for quilting, which became his means for understanding critical passages of American history, as well as for exploring and demonstrating his understanding and application of geometry constructions.

Tabitha began to excel at algebra once she developed her own mental animation, seeing emotions in the numbers and imagining them as lazy—sitting there getting fat or being silly little creatures that bounced around and made squeaking noises when they moved. Adding color, sound, and subtitles for the numbers, she said, helped her understand and get joy out of math.

### WHAT MAKES THESE EXAMPLES, AND MANY, MANY MORE, POSSIBLE ARE:

- a commitment to knowing every learner well—to caring about the success of each child as if he or she were our own;
- a commitment to focusing on assets, staying curious, and uncovering, discovering, and recovering the gifts and talents of every individual;
- recognizing that habits and dispositions—social emotional skills—live at the heart of learning; they're not non-cognitive, and they're not add-ons; they are part and parcel of how learning takes place and many of our most vulnerable learners are vulnerable simply because of our refusal to attend to that reality; and
- assessing to understand learners, not simply to measure what we're looking for.

### SIGNIFICANT, OPEN QUESTIONS STILL STAND:

1. How do we build more flexible, needs-based response systems for meeting students' learning needs and reconceptualize who can help address those needs? For example, for some of our students, their mentors have had a significant impact on their ability to strategize, work through, and even overcome learning challenges.
2. How do we design professional learning programs that catalyze the significant mindset, knowledge, and skill shifts required for educators in this new model of student-centered learning?

First and foremost, before anything else, teachers need to know their learners well. To do that, they need the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to...

- Assess to understand learners
- Develop learning profiles for each learner
- Analyze and operationalize that information in partnership with learners and families
- Leverage that information to motivate and empower learners

As for Anna, most recently she completed a research project on animal abuse; she reads fiction books on grade level; and she is interning at a site where she helps serve youth with disabilities. And my son, the "passive aggressive underachiever"? He is the Director of Success at MC<sup>2</sup> Manchester.

**Kim Carter** is the Executive Director of the Q.E.D. Foundation, an organization of adults and youth working together to create and sustain student-centered learning communities.

With over 35 years of experience in education, she has taught preK through graduate school, and provided training and coaching for administrators, teachers, parents, community partners, and youth in schools and organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom. As 1991 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year and 1996 New Hampshire Media Educator of the Year, Kim has been actively involved in local and national education redesign for over two decades.

Kim is passionate about democratic schooling, educational equity, and learning theory. Her expertise and interests include developing adult and youth capacities for co-constructing learning experiences and co-creating learning communities, designing and implementing highly effective learning and assessments, proficiency based pathways, high school redesign, and leveraging technology in service of all of the above.



## LEARNER VOICES

**Check out the articles and videos 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.



XQ AMERICA

### FROM THE XQ SUPERSCHOOL PROJECT

#### Student Roundtable—New Orleans

How can we make sure we truly understand how learners feel about their own education? The answer is simple, yet often over-looked: “You won’t know unless you ask.” So XQ did—and the answers are wise and urgently important. [Watch here](#)

### FROM BRIGHT MEDIUM

#### What I’m Afraid Of and What I Hope For

What do you see when you think about education in the year 2050? Read about the future through the eyes of Corrine Bobb-Semple, a teenager in Brooklyn, who envisions a path forward that is thoughtful, cautionary, and inspiring all at the same time. [Read here](#)

### FROM THE HECHINGER REPORT

#### How High School Would be Different if Students Could Design It

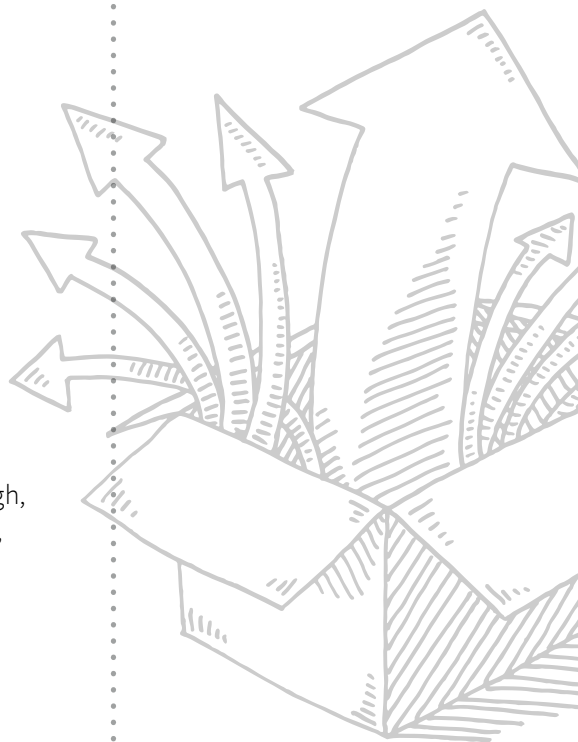
Read about an experiment at the **Brooklyn Lab Charter School** ([link](#)) where learners were asked to design a school of their own from the ground up. And though, yes, they did ask for hoverboards, they also wanted more learner voice and choice, game-based learning, and open-door policies where every learner—and their hoverboards—are welcome. [Read here](#)

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The most powerful advocates for learner-centered education are the learners themselves! So, we’d like your help in sharing learner’s stories. We want to expand this section of *Pioneering* to provide a space for learners to speak their minds, showcase their projects, and be active participants in the process of education transformation.

Please contact us for learner submission guidelines.  
([email](#))

*We promise it's really simple!*





# From Industrial Models and ‘Factory Schools’ to...What, Exactly?

by **Andrew Calkins and Kelly Young**

Originally published March 3, 2016, *EdSurge* ([link](#))

**BY NOW, THEY GO TOGETHER LIKE PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY:** the image of the factory and the corresponding image of the factory school.

Think about it—from mind-numbed kids learning monotonously in identical rows to workers laboring monotonously in identical rows. It has become shorthand for the first part of the story that so many are telling these days about the paradigm shift needed (and beginning to happen) in our nation’s public schools. The “what we’re moving away from” part.

And that’s not the end of it. This industrial-era metaphor also indelibly describes our toolbox of go-to strategies to manufacture the change: mandates and compliance-inducing incentives cascading through hierarchies to produce a commodity (learning, in the coin of test scores).

But what’s the new paradigm of learning we’re moving toward, and the fundamentally different ways in which that might happen? What does the future of schooling—or learning, in general—look like, and how do we say it, succinctly?

Here’s the rub: We don’t seem to have the same kind of powerful images and metaphors for that one, yet.

## Thinking About the Future of Learning and “What Could Be”

Recently, a group of 28 diverse stakeholders—from teacher union leaders to libertarian foundation heads—came together to create one shared vision for what could be, painting a powerful picture of a new system, one that puts learning and learners at the center—far away from the early-20th-century industrial model.

That **vision** is already being expressed in a growing number of student-centered, next generation learning schools across the country. These are schools where learning is the



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non-negotiable, rather than the ways, places, times, and people around whom learning happens. They define learning with a richness that accurately reflects the complexity of life in the 21st century. They intuitively understand that transformation of complex systems, like education or healthcare, can't effectively be done "to" or "for" people; it must be done "by" and "with" people.

And, there is an appreciation in these schools for expanding who has to be engaged in education, as learning becomes the domain of the entire community, not just that of teachers and parents, and as it is recognized to be a crucial lifelong activity—not something confined to what we formerly regarded as the "schooling" years.

But we are not yet communicating effectively about these changes in mindset. Shifting the way we all see learning is a massive cultural change and should challenge us all to find words, metaphors, and stories that naturally prompt new ways of thinking in our listeners.

When you imagine learning freed from the way that our society has defined it over the past century, what images, metaphors, and phrases come up for you? What stories do we tell that help people move toward something exciting, not simply away from something that's obsolete?

### Let Your Imagination Run Wild!

Here's our pitch: Let's get creative and explore new ways of talking about learning, the systems that would support it for every child, and how we get from here to there. Give your ingenuity, inspiration, and experience. We invite you to share your thoughts, ideas, illustrations, images, and stories that reflect the new future of learning, the very nature of the change that's underway, and the learning models currently being explored.

Below, you'll find some of the ways you can participate. There are many other ways to stir good thinking on this question, we're sure. We're counting on you to dream them up, and to suggest them through these channels:

- Post a blog. Put it anywhere you can reach students, teachers, parents, or your next door neighbor and get them involved. Just be sure to use **#NextEdStory** when you share it on social media, so we can all follow along.
- Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat. 140 characters, long-form posts, pictures (they're worth 1,000 words), video—there are a lot of tools to use to engage in this conversation and collaborate to find the **#NextEdStory**.

In need of some sources for inspiration about what schools could look like?

- *Dissatisfied Yet Optimistic: Moving Faster Toward New School Models* [\(link\)](#)
- Resources at XQ Super School [\(link\)](#)
- Core Story of Education (K-12) by the Frameworks Institute [\(link\)](#)
- Examples of school models on the NGLC Resources page [\(link\)](#)

It's time we gathered around where we're going and how we're getting there, instead of so relentlessly focusing on what we're leaving behind. Be the change! Over the next two months, we'll collect and organize the responses and return with a follow-up blog that—we hope—proposes the best crowd-sourced solution.

Until then, we'll see you in the virtual public square to swap ideas and tell some forward-looking stories.

When you imagine learning freed from the way that our society has defined it over the past century, what images, metaphors, and phrases come up for you?

Check out two responses from the field:

**Welcome to the "Era of Expeditioncy"**  
[\(link\)](#)

by Sam Chaltain,  
author & partner  
in Wonder

**Challenge Accepted:  
ReSchool Colorado,  
The #NextEdStory**  
[\(link\)](#)

by Colleen Broderick,  
Chief Learning Designer at  
ReSchool Colorado



## A LEARNER-CENTERED STARTER LIBRARY

Below is a set of books that together make the case unequivocally for a learner-centered future of education. These inspiring books will inform educators and those who care about kids with examples and concrete actions. And, if you want to go further, we've provided links to each author's larger body of work.

### **The End of Average** by Todd Rose

Demonstrates that the concept of the average learner is the myth and serves no one—utilizing insights from the emerging science of the individual. [Website](#)

### **#EdJourney** by Grant Lichtman

An on-the-ground look at bright spots across the country already at work transforming their systems. Revolving around 600+ interviews, this book contains lots of concrete examples for inspiration. [Website](#)

### **INEVITABLE: Mass Customized Learning** by Beatrice McGarvey & Charles Schwahn

Individualized learning—everybody wants it, but how do we get it? The authors show us that mass customization is not only effective and efficient but it is also doable! [Website](#)

### **Building School 2.0** by Chris Lehmann & Zac Chase

Science Leadership Academy founders present 95 theses on how to create the schools we need. SLA [Website](#) Zac Chase [Website](#)

### **Every Child Every Day** by Michael Raible

The story of Taylor County Public Schools' Superintendent Roger Cook's implementation of an anytime, anywhere, have-it-your-way learning model. This book provides insights into what learner-centered education can look like in action, as well as the roles leaders need to play in the process. Taylor County Schools [Website](#) Michael Raible [Website](#)

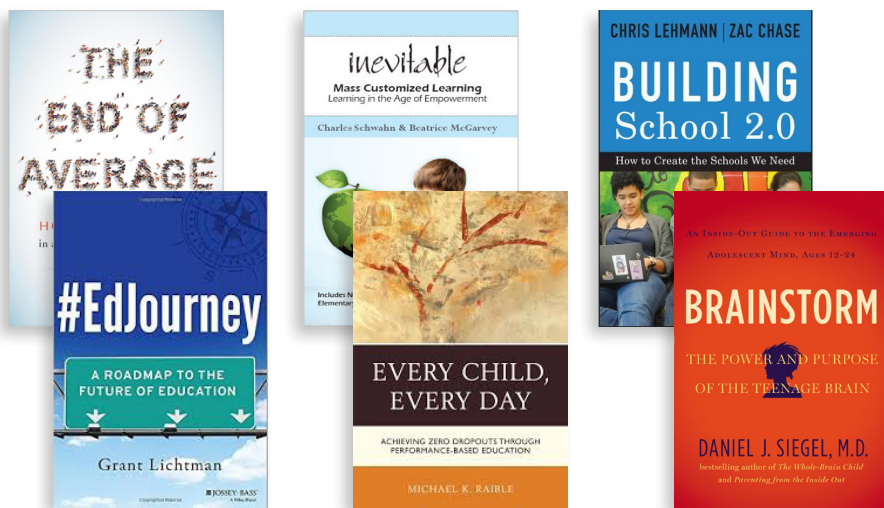
### **Brainstorm** by Daniel Siegel, M.D.

For those dealing with adolescent learners, this book presents a new narrative, backed by cutting-edge science and filled with activities, tools, and resources. [Website](#)



**During SXSWedu we ran a drawing for this Learner-Centered Starter Library and the winner is...**

**Jeffery Mason, a science and technology teacher at Brown-Barge Middle School in Pensacola, FL**



“A lot of people are so used to seeing the outcome of work. They never see the side of the work you go through to produce the outcome.”

—MICHAEL JACKSON

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



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