

# pioneering

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# pioneering

Dear Pioneers,

Kids all over the country are getting ready to answer the question: What did you do this summer? If you ask my kids, they'll say, "Nothing." In fact, that is their answer to most questions these days... However, they would tell you they had a great summer, the highlight of which was a one-week camp in Telluride, CO. That week, they came home every day with huge smiles and actually wanted to tell me about what they had done.

What made this camp so unique? I suspect it had a lot to do with the adventure and freedom of it all.

The kids spent the week rock climbing, paddle boarding, biking, and swimming—trying things they had never done before. All the while, being allowed to take risks—even if it meant they might get scratched up a bit. My son, Tucker, laughingly told me about when he went head over heels over the handlebars of his bike while going down a mountain trail for the first time. My six-year-old daughter, Olivia—who went into the camp decidedly refusing to do anything requiring a climbing harness—ended up climbing higher than any of her fellow campers and loving every minute of it. Throughout all of this, the counselors were certainly ensuring the kids' safety. But, they were also (just as importantly) letting the kids lead the way and discover new paths for themselves.

After that week in camp, my kids were more energized, talkative, and confident—less dependent on "screens" to avoid being bored, bored, bored. For example, when they saw a climbing boulder in the center of town, both immediately began scaling it. In the past, we would have had to coax them to even consider it. Now, they were the ones jumping to do it, confident they could make it up and back down with ease.

It left me wondering: What if all learning experiences (not just those that happen in camps) left kids feeling this same level of empowerment, ownership, and excitement? In this issue, you'll read about a network of learning environments that bring this sense of freedom, adventure, and closeness to nature to life every day, all year long: Teton Science Schools in Wyoming and Idaho. You'll also learn about a national summit that took a district by storm, hear from five learners who got to share their thoughts on education with a group of 40 attentive superintendents, and walk down two different state paths toward competency-based education.

Happy reading!  
**Kelly**



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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.





# TETON SCIENCE SCHOOLS

Wyoming and Idaho



TSS is deeply rooted in the outdoors as place anchors and enriches our understanding of the world.

**A REIMAGINED VISION OF EDUCATION:** The simplest way to express the dream of Ted Major—founder of Teton Science Schools (TSS) in 1967—when he began to take learners outside the classroom to teach science.

Fast forward a half-century, and you'll see the TSS vision coming alive across not only the four campuses throughout Northwest Wyoming and Idaho but in learning environments around the country and world. TSS directly runs six program areas: Journeys School, Teton Valley Community School, Teacher Learning Center, Wildlife Expeditions, Field Education, and the Graduate Program. Together, these programs are not only transforming the way learning is happening but also changing how education and communities are related to each other. TSS “connects people, nature, and place through education, science, and stewardship.”

Journeys School and Teton Valley Community School incorporate place-based learning with an experiential, multi-aged, interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum. After 15 years of developing local curriculum through these two environments, TSS is now in the early stages of developing a global, digital network—connecting learning environments from around the world with the possibilities of incorporating one's place into the learning experience. This digital network expands upon TSS' current work at the Teacher Learning Center, which invites educators from near and far to explore, learn, and experiment with place-based strategies that they can take back to their own communities.

If that was all TSS did, it'd be safe to say their hands are full. But, that's not even the half of it. Through a partnership with the Grand Teton National Park, they invite members of the local, national, and international community to partake in their Wildlife Expeditions and Field Education programs. These programs shine a spotlight on the interconnectedness of ecological landscapes and the power of place to engage and learn for those of all ages.

There is a unique cohort of adult learners who dive into this interconnection for an entire year. The TSS Graduate Program allows participants to earn 32 credits through a partnership with the University of Wyoming and other universities. As educators, they learn to become future leaders in place-based education with alumni in public and private schools, as well as non-profit organizations, around the world. The **open-walled** philosophy that guides all of the TSS programs envelops the Graduate Program and challenges learners to link curriculum and community to increase understanding, agency, and impact.

Each stakeholder—learners, parents, educators, graduate students, or community members—has an essential role in positively impacting local places and making Teton Science Schools' mission come to life. Their powerful contribution can be seen in the non-stop innovation of TSS' programs. As of this writing alone, they are getting ready to kick off two more pilot programs and have plans for others in the works. We can't wait to see where their journey takes them next.

## LEARN MORE

[Combine Science and Awe to Address Climate Change](#)

[Teton Science Schools Connect Classrooms to Communities](#)

[Colter Fifth Graders Become Fish Researchers](#)

## FACTS & FIGURES

4 Campuses

6 Program Areas of Focus

12,000 learners served per year

Grand Teton National Park Partner

5,000 Annual kWh of Renewable Energy

## CONNECT

Website

[Teton Science Schools](#)

Social Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

For more information contact:

[info@tetonscience.org](mailto:info@tetonscience.org)



EDUCATION REIMAGINED ON THE ROAD

# A Tale of Two States

**HOW DO SCHOOL-CENTERED SYSTEMS TRANSFORM** into learner-centered environments? Can a state make it happen, and, if so, how? These are a couple of the questions with which Colorado and Illinois stakeholders—from all levels of education—are grappling. And, they're going about their quest for answers in very different ways.

Last week, I had the pleasure of attending a small, collaborative meeting in Chicago to explore what these two states have been up to—*Supporting Competency-Based Pathways in Illinois and Colorado* (sponsored by [Achieve](#), with support from [The Carnegie Foundation](#)). I got to be a fly on the wall as district leaders, state officials, and higher ed representatives from both states reported on their respective strategies for supporting routes to competency-based education. They shared their many hopes, challenges, and questions—it was a day of new ideas, emerging partnerships, and much reflection.

## ILLINOIS' PATH

Illinois is focusing its efforts on the policy track. In 2012, the Illinois P-20 Council created the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Committee to develop recommendations that would ensure every Illinois graduate is prepared for life beyond high school ([link](#)). The diverse group of 89 participants included agency, community, and business leaders, as well as representatives from teachers' unions, state- and district-level education departments, and higher education. Interestingly, competency-based learning was not even in this group's initial scope; rather, CBE emerged organically from discussions about what students need to be prepared for post-secondary paths.

Thankfully, four years of brainstorming and negotiations were rewarded. In May 2016, both the Illinois House and Senate unanimously passed *HB 5729: The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act* ([link](#)). The Governor signed it into law on July 29, 2016. Rather than mandating CBE, part of this bill establishes a pilot program for districts interested in implementing competency-based high school graduation requirements. Participation in the pilot is limited to 12 districts per year in the first two years of



Julie Renkoski

implementation and is set to expand to 15 districts per year after that. These pilot districts can seek waivers from some state laws, as needed. Gathering with us just two weeks after the bill had become law, the Illinois participants' smiles and passionate presentation showcased their excitement that their hard work had paid off. The next step, they shared, is to inform districts about the pilot program and see how many of them show interest.

## COLORADO'S PATH

Colorado, on the other hand, is beginning with district interest. As participants explained, local control is highly valued in their state, so taking on competency-based education and other learner-centered practices must be field-driven. Thanks to the 2007 law *HB 07-1118* ([link](#)), each district already has the authority to develop its own unique high school graduation requirements, so long as they meet or exceed the state's minimum guidelines ([link](#)). Essentially, this means that districts may choose to adopt a proficiency-based diploma. Still, the state goes beyond granting flexibility—it provides three levels of resources to districts interested in CBE. For those just getting started and wanting to learn more, the state offers the Achieve Study Group, through which districts access informational webinars and sign up for site visits to districts with well-established competency-based systems across the country. Next, a district can engage with the Great Schools Partnership ([link](#)) for training on initiating competency-based learning. For districts that are already implementing CBE and desire higher levels of sophistication, the state offers targeted coaching through the Great Schools Partnership. It was clear that the Colorado principals and district leaders in the room saw these resources as pivotal in their pursuit of CBE and were grateful for the state's trust, flexibility, and support.

## A COMMON HURDLE: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Despite their differing strategies, similar challenges and questions emerged from all district leaders in attendance. One that stuck out to me involved stakeholder communication and engagement. There was a common theme of encountering push-back from stakeholders of all types—parents, teachers, leaders, and even students themselves. Focused and undeterred, these individuals were not without proposed solutions, but, as I listened, I couldn't help feeling that their ideas would fall short.

Then, one struck a chord with me. A participant wanted to reimagine community engagement by moving from a method of "decide and defend" to true collaboration, through which the community would be genuinely involved in decision-making processes. Making the shift from school-centered to learner-centered education is a giant leap, and everyone involved needs to see the possibilities of going to the moon. Seeing beyond the school-centered atmosphere necessitates a paradigm shift.

## CONVERGING THROUGH A PARADIGM SHIFT

At Education Reimagined, we know the shift from our inherited school-centered model of education to one of learner-centered learning cannot be made by implementing a list of practices. Instead, it requires a true paradigm shift. Let me say that again and shout it from the mountaintop—it requires a paradigm shift. It entails removing the old lenses we didn't even realize we had on—impacting how we view the world, education, and, most importantly, the learner. Only then can we step into a new way of seeing, thinking, and acting.

We have heard from pioneers all over the US how difficult it is to communicate with someone operating in a different paradigm—not because one of you is right and

“It requires a paradigm shift.... Only then can we step into a new way of seeing, thinking, and acting.”

**Julie Renkoski**

the other is wrong. Rather, you are standing on two completely different geometric planes and operating under two completely different sets of assumptions and possibilities. To further exacerbate the disconnect, you may even be using the same words and terms to mean entirely different things. Operating in a common paradigm is key to effective communication and action.

Colorado and Illinois are pursuing different tactics to support competency-based learning, and it's clear that excitement is building. Still, they are both encountering barriers rooted in stakeholder engagement. Is it possible that all the stakeholders—from state-level leaders to teachers, parents, and the students themselves—are operating in different paradigms? It is becoming ever clearer to me that—whether a governing body begins with policy to encourage learner-centered learning or with freedom for pioneers to innovate—there is no way to bypass a paradigm shift. No

.....  
**Julie Renkoski**, Research and Mapping Consultant for Education Reimagined, was privileged to spend seven years as a teacher, which allowed her to experience both the joys of kids and the limitations of the school-centered paradigm. Her passion for education has been reignited by the possibilities of learner-centered learning, and she looks forward to the day when it's a reality for every child and adult.



## SXSWedu PanelPicker is Live!

**Vote for my  
PanelPicker®  
Idea**



**Voting has begun** for SXSWedu 2017! Education Reimagined has two submissions in the mix. Learn more, and cast your vote today!

**Learner-Centered:  
Getting Started**

[Vote Here \(link\)](#)

**It's A Paradigm Shift.  
So What?**

[Vote Here \(link\)](#)



# Starting the Conversation Off Right: When Learners' Voices Are Heard

**Education Reimagined** was eager to hear from five learners from East Leyden High School who had the last-minute opportunity to participate at the AASA Digital Consortium, which was hosted by Google in Chicago last month. For each, it was their first exposure to being front and center in the education design conversation. Their reflections on what it meant to have their voices truly heard and valued are inspiring.

**FOR THE FIVE OF US**, what initially began as a three-day volunteer opportunity at Leyden's Symposium, suddenly became a grand opportunity. On that Thursday morning, Mr. Markey, East Leyden's principal, gathered up all the volunteers, and announced that our superintendent, Dr. Polyak, wanted to give us the chance to go to Google's offices. None of us were entirely sure why we were invited. After going through security and receiving our name tags, we were brought inside a conference room—not knowing what to expect.

We sat in the back of a well-lit room with large windows for a period of time until some of Google's staff asked us to find a seat among the sea of superintendents. With that, the butterflies began to kick in. These are our individual experiences of what unfolded next.



**URIEL MARTINEZ, 16:** *Uriel Martinez is a junior at East Leyden High School and is deeply interested in science—mainly learning about physics, chemistry, astronomy, and biology.*

**The opportunity to give educational insight** from the student's perspective to individuals at the head of education was not one I ever expected to have. After Kelly Young introduced how the shift in thought about gravitational theory from

Newtonian physics to general relativity was analogous to a paradigm shift in teaching within the classroom, I volunteered to further elaborate the parallel. I was hooked from that point on. I got to answer questions from the superintendents at my small group table, like "What are you frustrated with at your school?" and "What is the role of technology at your school?" I emphasized the periodic absence of individualized learning within the classroom and the lack of ability to have students learn what they are really interested in.

After hearing my point of view, the group of educators at my table agreed on moving towards student-centered learning and giving kids the opportunity to explore topics they are invested in, as well as giving them opportunities to aid their community by volunteering.

Hopefully, my participation in the Digital Consortium will bring us one step closer to education leaders having conversations with students and embracing a paradigm shift from traditional education to one that focuses on the student—encouraging collaboration with others and making an impact in the community. And, eventually, coming up with innovative ideas that are just as radical as those brought forth by Einstein and Heisenberg.

“After hearing my point of view, the group of educators at my table agreed upon moving towards student-centered learning...”

**Uriel Martinez**



**NATHANIEL MARTINEZ, 14:** *When not occupied with school-related activities, he is learning about the Olympics and science—primarily meteorology and, more specifically, severe weather.*

**Sitting down with a group of superintendents**, the design process began. We started with the basics—discussing what a student should ideally experience while at school. At first, I was nervous to speak with the superintendents, but through this open discussion, they made me feel like my voice actually mattered.

The superintendents and I were invested in this conversation—trying to build a functional school system for all. This really opened my eyes to what superintendents are trying to do for their students. There is so much work that goes on behind the scenes. As students, we aren't exposed to what the superintendents do, but in a way, the opposite is also true.

With this meeting of students and administrators, we were able to bridge the divide. The administrators, unless told otherwise, think of school as they experienced it. I was their eyes and gave them a refreshed vision of the current school system.

Although this experience was incredibly insightful, I believe we need more variety of students speaking with administrators. There were nine students from two schools that day. There is no way you can get the full view of the school system with those numbers. You need students from the city, rural areas, suburbs, and of differing intellectual levels to really get the full picture. I am incredibly grateful that I was allowed to meet with superintendents to help in any way I could to improve the school system.



**ALAN RAMIREZ, 16:** *Alan is a junior at East Leyden High School. He is currently enrolled in four AP classes and is involved in after-school activities like songwriting club and snowball club—a club dedicated to the prevention of drug and alcohol use. He also does theatre all year long.*

**My group was asked to** come up with an outside-the-box idea that could be incorporated into school systems for the improvement of our high school experience. The first thing my group began to do was ask me questions about myself and my learning experiences. They wanted to get to know me and get the point of view of students. I really liked that they included me in the conversation as if I was a superintendent, too. And, they seemed to really enjoy seeing things from my perspective.

We soon realized that the answer was simple and an example was already occurring within the event—include students in processes they aren't regularly involved in. A small scale example brought up was, if an English teacher chooses the year's reading material on her own, the students might not enjoy the reading that is given to them. However, if the teacher were to consult students on this particular choice, they'll choose something that interests most of them.

We left with the big idea of wanting to get students involved a bit more in school design processes. This was a really great experience because I was able to see through the lens of the superintendents, and they were able to see through the lens of the students. It was an amazing opportunity, and I enjoyed the event very much.

“As students, we aren't exposed to what the superintendents do, but in a way, the opposite is also true.”

**Nathaniel Martinez**

“We left with the big idea of wanting to get students involved a bit more in school design processes.”

**Alan Ramirez**





**ALYSSA GUILLU, 16:** *Alyssa is a junior at East Leyden High school. Alyssa is involved in marching band, theatre, Key Club, Think Tank, and History Honors Club. Alyssa started a UNICEF chapter at her school and volunteers at her local hospital.*

**This was one of the first experiences** I've had in which I was surrounded by such highly influential members of the education system. Sitting as the only student in a group full

of superintendents felt very intimidating at first, but as the design thinking process started, I slowly became more comfortable sharing my ideas with them.

The superintendents seemed very interested in the suggestions I had to offer about the education system and how I felt about my education overall. This made me feel like my opinions really mattered. One of the superintendents even told me that it was refreshing to hear a student's point of view, as it is something they don't often get the chance to do.

As we began prototyping, we found that learner-centered education was the main theme of our ideas. We continued to build our ideas from this theme and worked to create a potential system that allows the student to choose their own educational path.

Overall, working with superintendents to create a potential educational system that was solely learner-centered not only made me feel like my voice was heard, but also that I had the ability, as a student, to influence change.



**LESLEY AYALA, 17:** *Lesley is a senior at East Leyden High school. She is a Guided Study Mentor who assists students on the journey to bettering their educational performance. She also takes part in Students Against Destructive Decisions (S.A.D.D.), runs for Leyden's cross country team, and is an player on Leyden's soccer team. Once she completes high school, she plans to pursue a law degree.*

**When Leyden's superintendent needed a group** of students to attend the Google conference with AASA, I quickly ran for my phone to let my mom know I was about to get on a bus with over thirty superintendents. She gladly replied, "Okay, good luck!"

When asked to sit with the superintendents at the conference, I quickly made my way to the closest table, introduced myself, and received a couple of smiles in exchange. I attentively listened to the instructions given by Kelly Young and the Google presenters—nervously thinking to myself, "Oh boy. What did I get myself into?" Easing my nerves, the superintendent sitting next to me kindly asked if he could ask me the first set of questions. During the Q&A, I made the point that if students are advised to pursue a major based only on the size of their future paycheck, it limits their exposure to careers that might contain their true passions.

What I initially thought would be the most awkward thirty minutes of my life, unfortunately, flew by too quickly. Opportunities like these do not come frequently, and I wish it could have lasted longer. I'm still grateful for the opportunity to participate at the conference in Chicago's Google Office. It was a superb experience to express a student's standpoint to the leaders of our education.

"They seemed very interested in the suggestions I had to offer...this made me feel like my opinions really mattered."

**Alyssa Guillu**

"...if students are advised to pursue a major based only on the size of their future paycheck, it limits their exposure to careers that might contain their true passions."

**Lesley Ayala**



# Taylor County School District Hosts Personalized Learning Summit

**JOIN US AS TAYLOR COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT** superintendent, Roger Cook, shares how an innovative learning environment can expand their reach via a national learning summit. Roger's story is likely to resonate with many learner-centered pioneers—humbly underestimating the local and national interest in their innovations.

I came to Taylor County School District with a vision for a Wheel of Learning that is held together by six spokes—Self-Paced, Project-Based, Peer Led, Virtual, Cardinal Academy, and Traditional Learning. Each spoke provides a different choice of learning style to maximize the learning potential of each unique learner. Additionally, learners are able to accelerate and move at their own pace; a system of teaching and learning that places learners in grade-level content areas based on mental capacity rather than chronological age.

Cook's competency-based, personalized learning approach has not only delivered a lasting impact on the learners in his district, but his work has become a national example of how public school districts can transform their systems into learner-centered environments.

When we started hosting district leaders from across the state and nation, the demand grew at such an overwhelming rate, we needed to find a better way to get our system in front of more eyes. I called my team together, expressed my vision, and they helped make it happen. From there, the Personalized Learning Summit was born.

Cook had modest expectations for this pilot summit. Even if just a handful of people expressed interest, it would provide an “off-season” opportunity for leaders to learn about Taylor County's approach, all while being far less constrained by their inflexible schedules during the typical school year.

I originally expected 20-40 people to attend, considering this would be its first year and it was taking place during the peak of summer vacation season. However, we had over 200 people in attendance, including presenters, our panel, and our student ambassadors.

The summit afforded Cook and his team the opportunity to peel back the system's intricate layers that are less visible through simple classroom observation. Every

Above: Roger shares his vision for performance-based education with over 150 attendees from 12 states.



Above: Parent Student Panel

stakeholder within the Taylor County community was able to shed light on the questions all districts have when assessing whether or not they would like to commit to education transformation in their environments back home.

We had individual hour-long sessions led by our own teachers that focused on each spoke of the wheel. This included live demonstrative teaching where our attendees could actually see how the different methods of teaching and learning work; how our teachers move around their classrooms with the ability to sit one-on-one with students and focus on each individual need. Although having the opportunity to direct a variety of questions to our front-line leaders, we needed the voices of our parents and learners represented. Our parent/student panel provided our guests with the opportunity to ask questions and get real life answers about the concerns our parents and learners had at the beginning of the transformation process. This panel showed other superintendents, principals, board members, and teachers that it is normal to have some concerns in the beginning, but, with the right leadership and plan of action, this innovative way of learning will enhance their learners' success in the future.

After it was all said and done, Cook couldn't help but feel optimistic about the positive impact the Taylor County framework will have on other districts this school year. The energy in the room was euphoric and the positive reviews they received in their anonymous, post-summit survey further proved the event's value.

I'm proud of our teachers, staff, parents, students, and board members that made this event possible. Without the collaboration of our team, this vision would not be possible. I'm excited for the school districts that attended the summit, and I look forward to hearing their success stories of Personalized Learning and Performance-Based Education for their students.

As the stories roll in and the calendar turns over to a new year, we look forward to hearing about the impact TCSD has made around the nation and what they have in store for their second annual Personalized Learning Summit. And, we can't wait for this idea of local environments hosting national learning summits to catch on!

What did the attendees have to say? They were excited to hear from students about their experiences, witness live teaching demonstrations, and talk one-on-one with Taylor County teachers.



## Schlechty Center

Transforming organizations. Redefining roles. Increasing engagement. These three codependent objectives are the guiding principles at the **Schlechty Center** ([link](#)). At the Center, they believe every aspect of the education system should “function as a learning organization [where] the core business is to ensure that every student, every day, is provided challenging, interesting, and satisfying work.” Furthermore, they see that “the transformation of schools calls on all who work in and around schools to change their mental models regarding their roles and—based on these changes—to learn to do things they have never done before.” With all of this at their backs, The Schlechty Center brings a personal approach that isn’t often seen in the consulting business. They are driven by a desire to learn about the unique environment they are assisting—never coming in with a predetermined prescription or answer. Because their leaders were once active members at various levels of the traditional school environment, they share a direct understanding of how professionals desire to be trained and led in transformative work. Explore whether the Schlechty Center might have something to offer to your journey toward learner-centered.

**What the Schlechty Center Offers** ([link](#))

**Tools For Change** ([link](#))

**The Engagement Connection** ([link](#))

## Mastery Collaborative

**The Mastery Collaborative (MC)** ([link](#)) is a transformational program sweeping through the heart of New York City. Born from the Model Redesign team in the NYC Department of Education’s Office of Postsecondary Readiness, MC is working to change the game of learner assessment. MC is primarily influenced by CompetencyWorks’ definition of competency education and has outlined five shifts that are necessary to transform from the traditional assessment framework to mastery-based assessment ([link](#)). Using this criteria, MC has provided support for 40 public middle and high schools, which are designated as Living Labs and Active Members. The Living Labs are the leaders in NYC PS mastery-based education, as they have made the shift to competency-based pathways school-wide. Active Members are in the piloting stages of mastery-based education, relying on community-gathered resources—like those from the Living Labs—and MC guidance to drive the program to its fullest potential. With so many diverse learning environments contained in one city, you are likely to discover ideas that jibe with your environment no matter your location.

**Mastery Collaborative Wiki** ([link](#))

**Mastery-Based Learning in Action Videos** ([link](#))

**Mastery Collaborative Newsletters** ([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](#)

### 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](#)).

#### Education Elements

is hiring! They have a Director of Marketing position available in San Carlos, CA. Learn more and apply [here](#).

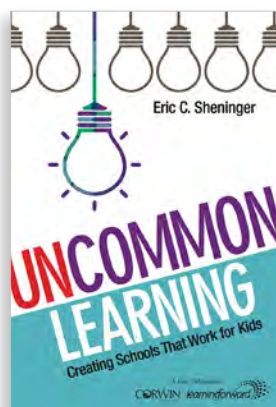


## ON OUR BOOKSHELF



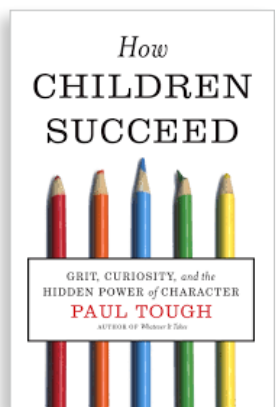
### Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood by A.S. Neill, Edited by Albert Lamb

A.S. Neill was a man ahead of his time. Back in the early 20th-century, he had already grown frustrated by England’s grammar school system. So, he built what might be the first example of a truly learner-centered environment—one governed for and by learners. To share the insights, learnings, and mistakes he’d accumulated over his 50 years of experience, Neill authored *Summerhill*. Now a classic, this revised edition includes previously unseen excerpts and reflections from one of Summerhill’s learners.



### UnCommon Learning: Creating Schools That Work for Kids by Eric Sheninger

What some consider an encore to his previous work, *Digital Leadership*, Eric Sheninger’s *UnCommon Learning* combines his professional experience as a high-school principal with his travels as an international consultant helping educators find the signal (transformation) in the noise (reformation). Sheninger painlessly carves his way through the thick walls of school-centered culture and brings light to the applicable strategies for redesigning the learning environment you work in.



### How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character by Paul Tough

Having just welcomed his first child into the world, Paul Tough began his reporting for *How Children Succeed*. Through his research, he discovered all he wanted was for his son “to be able to deal with failure.” Ignoring the false notion that “the faster a child develops skills, the better he does on tests, the better he’ll do in life,” Tough focused on a seemingly unreported reality that tied dispositions, rather than knowledge and skills, to success.

## WORTH YOUR TIME

### Teaching with the World Peace Game

“What do you want to do?” This question sent John Hunter on an incredible teaching journey to bring learner agency to every child that entered his environment. Listen to the story of the World Peace Game.

[Listen here](#)

### How Feeling Respected Transforms a Student’s Relationship to School

Lack of control and the demand for compliance can strip away a learner’s most basic sense of humanity. Explore the research that is looking transform the relationship between educator and child. [Read here](#)

### Knowing Everything Makes Everything Boring

The end of July marked Big Picture’s annual Big Bang conference. Throughout the week, one of their learners documented the events and conducted powerful interviews that dove into the personal experiences of learners and facilitators alike. Come for the reporting, stay for the wisdom unearthed.

[Read and watch here](#)

“Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.” — **PLATO**

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