

pioneering

ISSUE 17 • JULY 21, 2016 • EDUCATION REIMAGINED

A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Director

BIG THOUGHT

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• connect. share. discover. lead. •

pioneering

Dear Friends,

Over the past few weeks, we've discovered two great resources that paint a picture of what learning could look like if it were unconstrained by the current paradigm.

The first comes from ReSchool Colorado's newly launched website ([link](#)), which was featured in the last issue of *Pioneering*. If you haven't checked it out yet, we strongly encourage you to do so. One of the most exciting sections of the site is their exploration of the "learner experience." You can follow Katrina, a hypothetical ReSchool learner, from her days as a four-year-old music and dance lover to her life as a 27-year-old accomplished doctor. It is powerful to see what a single day in a learner's life might look like if we truly opened up the how, when, what, where, and with whom of learning.

The second image of the future of learning comes from KnowledgeWorks. They created a fictitious learning ecosystem called Ubique Academy ([link](#)) that represents a fully expressed learner-centered community of learning. You can explore Ubique's website, read their brochure, and even access a presentation to share with families interested in enrolling. Though there isn't yet a real environment that you can visit, I hope someone will be inspired to make this learning ecosystem a reality. And, if it were in DC, my kids would be the first to enroll!

In addition to these great resources, we have a jam-packed issue of *Pioneering* to share with you. It is full of stories, insights, reflections, and resources. Dr. Jim Rickabaugh of the Institute for Personalized Learning shares how a teacher in a traditional school can take the first steps toward learner-centered education. You can also read about how Big Thought is turning Dallas, TX into a playground of learning.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

Warm wishes,

Kelly



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Published by Education Reimagined, an initiative of **Convergence**, 1133 19th Street NW, Suite 410 Washington, DC 20036 (202) 830-2310

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.





BIG THOUGHT

Dallas, Texas



We thrive on a deep-rooted dedication to making sure all children have access to meaningful and creative learning experiences. We want to connect students to life-changing opportunities. —Gigi Antoni, President and CEO, Big Thought

THE “BIG D” IS HOME TO MORE THAN JUST BILLIONAIRES, Fortune 500 companies, America’s football team, international cuisine, and rampant population growth. Dallas is also the home of an organization bearing a similar name: Big Thought.

Ever since their founding in 1987, Big Thought makes the “inaccessible,” “accessible” and brings the “unreachable” within reach for all Dallas youth. Working with—not against—the local school system, Big Thought unlocks what the vibrant city has to offer. By cultivating trust and collaboration within the community at-large, Big Thought sparks kids’ internal drive to learn and discover—developing in them a sense of **learner agency** that translates directly into every aspect of their lives.

So, what does an “unlocked” city look like? How about over 1.7 million learner hours of programming logged. 433 imaginative, **open-walled** learning locations to choose from. Almost 150,000 learners reached. But, most of all—it is that spark we’ve all seen in the eye of a truly engaged learner.

That spark shows up in their Dallas City of Learning (DCoL) summer program, which debunks the myth that learning only happens when school is in session. Capitalizing on the collaborative efforts already underway between Dallas’ businesses and government entities, DCoL creates opportunities for kids to attend classes at their local art studio, discover the complexity of aviation at the Love Field airport, and explore the wilderness of the majestic Trinity River Audubon Center and its surrounding Great Trinity Forest. In fact, wherever a kid’s interest takes them, DCoL builds a bridge to get them there and offers them a way to track their learning through digital badging.

Big Thought’s work doesn’t end with DCoL! Their Learning Partners catalog is an online portal of low-cost, hands-on programs and offerings widely available to individuals, librarians, educators, and staff from many school districts. It offers a place to research programming, book programs with providers, utilize study guide links, and check for TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) programs supporting student learning. Big Thought’s innovative Creative Solutions program enrolls criminally convicted youth into a visual and performing arts program. By partnering with the Dallas County Juvenile Department and Southern Methodist University, Creative Solutions cultivates a new sense of self-worth and direction in kids who’ve done nothing more than hit a bump in the road.

No matter the connections that need to be made or the youth that need to be reached, Big Thought opens up the space for kids to explore and discover who they are and who they want to be. And, when that happens, the possibilities are limitless.

LEARN MORE

[Big Day for Kids in “Big Thought” Program](#)

[Mosaic Mural Transforms Students at Foster Elementary](#)

[At Klyde Warren Park, Teaching Students That Learning Can Be Fun](#)

[New Digital Education Network Spotifies School](#)

[The State Fair of Texas New Curriculum](#)

FACTS & FIGURES

Network

City of LRNG Partner

150,000 learners served

433 learning locations (including schools, community centers, partner organizations)

ELL or Primary Language other than English: 42%*

Students with Disabilities: 7%*

Free or Reduced Lunch: 86%*

*Big Thought predominantly serves Dallas ISD students; these numbers represent DISD population data from 2015.

CONNECT

Websites

[Big Thought](#)

[Dallas City of Learning](#)

Social Media

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Vimeo](#)

For more information contact:

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A Conversation with Big Thought's Sam Williamson & Greg MacPherson

The Education Reimagined team had the chance to catch up with Sam Williamson, Senior Instructional Specialist, and Greg MacPherson, Senior Director of Operations, for Big Thought in Dallas, Texas. They shared with us how Big Thought has grown and blossomed over the years and where they see it heading in the future.



Sam Williamson



Greg MacPherson

Q. What got you first committed to education? What keeps you committed?

A. SAM: What first got me committed to education was an early realization that it was a strategy to combat almost any problem. What kept me committed was discovering I had a knack for facilitating groups, brainstorming sessions, and activities. When these two realizations collided, I saw I had an opportunity to pursue something that I was both good at and enjoyed and that would have the potential to make some change in the world.

A. GREG: I found my way into the informal education field accidentally; yet, in hindsight, the path was actually pretty clear. I was a theatre major and arts aficionado pursuing a path in arts administration. Along the way, that path dovetailed with education, which felt natural to me. There are committed and caring educators throughout my family that continue to serve as role models—my grandmother was a music teacher; my mom was a pre-school teacher; my sister is a current teacher and now a school librarian; and my wife is an elementary school teacher. I enjoyed extracurricular and cross-curricular opportunities growing up that helped me find my spark and my community. Those experiences made learning relevant—fun. They kept me engaged, invested in my future.

I have seen many times that the opportunities I had, and took for granted while growing up, are not available to large segments of our communities. This is unacceptable. I find personal meaning in being part of the solution to make these education opportunities available to youth in our community. You get to see many examples of the positive impact we have. That keeps me committed; it fuels me day after day.

Q. Could you tell us a bit about Big Thought's history? Why did it start? When did it gain significant momentum?

A. SAM: Big Thought began in 1987 as a regional Young Audiences chapter helping to provide arts programming to students in school. Young Audiences of North Texas then evolved as it developed some new partnerships with the city and the school district, and Big Thought was born through that evolution.

A. GREG: We began with a belief that arts would be a powerful tool in helping children. The organization grew to serve children, teachers, and parents in more

ways than our founders could have imagined. Big Thought gained significant momentum through a series of public/private partnerships. Our collaboration with city and county government agencies began in 1994 with Creative Solutions, a partnership with Dallas County Juvenile Department. That was followed by Library Live!—a joint effort with the Dallas Public Library. In 1997, Arts Partners (rebranded as Learning Partners) was born as a citywide partnership that connects the city’s resources with every Dallas ISD elementary teacher and school—150 schools serving 80,000 students.

In 2004, we became Big Thought to reflect our expanded vision and broader scope of work. More growth in the last decade includes Thriving Minds After-School (TMAS) and Thriving Minds Summer Camp (TMS). In summer 2014, we launched a new initiative in partnership with Mayor Mike Rawlings called Dallas City of Learning. These programs allow us to collaborate with hundreds of partner organizations to serve PK-12 youth in school, out of school, on campuses, and in the community.

Q. What is your favorite story to share about your time at Big Thought?

A. SAM: My favorite story to tell about my time at Big Thought would probably have to be the middle school summer camp in 2013. We were charged with creating a new curriculum targeting middle schoolers that got them engaged in 21st century skill-based enrichment courses, while also connecting to historical figures that were integral to the lessons. We ended up creating a curriculum featuring “revolutionaries” that both gave students an opportunity to study figures they idolized, never knew about, or had only heard of, and then explore how *they* could set themselves apart through the work they do. It was a memorable project for sure.

A. GREG: My favorite moments also tie back to our middle school work. In summer 2011 and 2012, Big Thought and Dallas ISD moved two weeks of our four-week Thriving Minds Summer Camp program out of the standard district campus environment and transplanted it to Fair Park, a 277-acre park home to the annual State Fair of Texas—which boasts cultural, sports, and educational facilities. In summer 2011, we converted the Automobile Building into a labyrinth of temporary classrooms hosting over 1,500 youth from every district middle school. So, these kids received ELA, science, and math instruction from their certified teachers in the Automobile Building, then took excursions into the park and engaged in activities at the African American Museum, Children’s Aquarium, Discovery Gardens, and Museum of Nature and Science. Fair Park came alive with learning. Most students knew Fair Park only through the State Fair, so this was a new introduction to its other cultural and educational opportunities. It was such a rejuvenating experience for the educators as they led lessons outside by a fountain or under shade trees.

Q. At its center, Big Thought looks to close the opportunity gap by bringing opportunities to the kids who need them most. How does Big Thought determine which communities to serve? What has the role of those communities been in creating Dallas City of Learning?

A. SAM: Determining the communities to serve is always a challenge. In fact, I might even recommend a rephrasing of the question to ask how Big Thought determines which communities to serve right now, as we do try our best to eventually make our way around to many, if not all, areas of Dallas. The predominant targets are those “program desert” areas where the space needs activation. Since this organization has evolved to be able to provide services to the community through direct services, partnerships, funding, and in-kind support, it allows us to have an exceptionally wide

“The predominant targets are those ‘program desert’ areas where the space needs activation.”

SAM WILLIAMSON

reach for our relatively small staff. Dallas City of Learning has started to play a big role in this work, as it has provided yet another system through which we can expand access to programming beyond just what we can provide ourselves. Still in its relative infancy, [it's exciting to think about what DCoL will be in a few years, particularly as it pertains to the goal of bridging that opportunity gap.

A. GREG: When the organization changed its name to Big Thought, we decided to focus on Dallas County with an emphasis on students attending Dallas ISD. We had already worked with 40 area school districts, but the need in Dallas was so great—86% of 150,000 students identifying as economically disadvantaged. The refocus allowed us to go deeper programmatically for greater, more systemic student impact. We focus our efforts on equity across all geographic areas of the city (Library Live! services all 27 branch library locations, Learning Partners services all 150 elementary schools). Other programs are directed at the program deserts that Sam mentioned, high-density and under-resourced poverty areas. Our role is to support partner organizations already active in those areas, connect additional partners and resources to provide services in those neighborhoods, and provide transportation for youth to explore other neighborhoods and city resources. Dallas City of Learning has become the embodiment of this effort, specifically during summer. The technology platform connected with DCoL allows us to assess the need for partner resources and pinpoint those program deserts. This technology also lets us measure whether our strategies are actually driving more programming to these areas. In summer 2014, approximately 45% of the youth engaged in DCoL came from these high-density poverty areas. This number jumped to 70% in summer 2015.

Q. Where do you see Big Thought and Dallas City of Learning going next?

A. SAM: I see Big Thought and DCoL expanding the network of involved partners exponentially. This expansion will take the 'Dallas' out of City of Learning as the radius of offerings will expand beyond the city's border into new cities and communities that are facing the same issues and deserve a place at the table of this movement.

A. GREG: I see the next phase of Big Thought and DCoL being driven by the principles of connected and blended learning. We have had success in building and engaging a network of partners (schools; city departments; non-profits; higher education; corporations; social services) committed to the work, and we are piloting the digital learning functionality of the DCoL technology platform. In the next phase, the connectivity of the in-person and digital experiences offered through DCoL will deepen and become more directed by the individual interests. As this unfolds, I agree with Sam—the radius of youth and partners engaged in the work will also grow and strengthen.

Greg MacPherson oversees the development of high-quality in school and out of school time enrichment programs for students throughout the city of Dallas. He works closely with parents, schools, community groups and partner organizations to ensure creative learning opportunities are available to children and families. Greg joined Big Thought in 2010 after spending three years with the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA), where he worked with the Thriving Minds initiative and other community programs. Greg was also the director of performing arts and marketing for the Classics Theater & Art for Children. He is a founding ensemble member of Second Thought Theatre, and served two seasons as an executive ensemble member, co-producing the company's shows. Greg holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts and theater performance from Baylor University.

Sam Williamson was born and raised in Denton, Texas. After earning his degree from the University of Texas at Austin in art education he joined the United States Peace Corps, serving as a teacher trainer and mentoring center director in Kiribati and Mauritania. Sam returned and attended graduate school at the University of North Texas to earn his MA in Innovation Studies. As part of this program Sam began worked with Big Thought significantly influencing his thesis research. After earning his masters he was brought onto the staff at Big Thought where he currently serves as Senior Instructional Specialist.



Beginning Your Journey to a More Learner-Centered Classroom

by Dr. Jim Rickabaugh

WHERE DO I START?

THIS IS A QUESTION WE HEAR OFTEN. Once educators grasp the potential impact of placing students at the center of the learning process, they want to know where to start. After all, transforming the focus from instruction to learning can be unsettling, and most of us were trained to deliver instruction, not to focus on nurturing learning.

Obviously, it does not make sense—nor is it realistic—to shift everything at once. In fact, the risk of an all-or-nothing approach is becoming overwhelmed and defaulting back to a focus on tasks and activities, rather than a focus on real learning.

Over our six years of working with educators to personalize the learning experience, we have found that the approach that works best for most is to start by changing one or two practices that move you and your learners in the direction of being learning-centered. Making a few strategic changes can reveal the potential benefits of greater change, while simultaneously acclimating learners to playing a different role in their learning experience.

I recall a fourth grade teacher a couple of years ago who wanted her learners to become more engaged, take more ownership, and show greater agency in their



Dr. Jim Rickabaugh

learning. But, she was struggling because she assumed that unless she changed everything, her students would remain stuck in their old, compliance-driven habits. Following our conversation about limiting the number of things she changed to get started, she made a commitment to spend a month giving her learners more choices in their learning paths. She started with just two options and gradually expanded to a wider range of choices. Eventually, she invited her students to suggest alternatives for how they would approach learning tasks and demonstrate their learning. To her amazement, in just a few weeks, the combination of giving her learners more choices and listening more to their perspectives and ideas was making a dramatic difference in their learning and behavior. Students were completing more of their work, complaining less, showing more enthusiasm, and offering lots of ideas and suggestions to make their learning experience even better.

As the story illustrates, giving learners more choice and voice in their learning are safe and useful first steps (Mitra, 2008). In your classroom, try allowing learners to choose the learning activity or task in which to engage from a list of options. Have conversations with your learners to determine their preferences in approaching a learning challenge. Even a few minutes spent conferring individually with learners can give them greater voice. This process also reveals for learners the potential benefits of playing a more active role in their learning. These first steps become the building blocks toward student ownership of their learning.

As initial steps, providing greater learner choice and voice will not add significantly to your workload or dramatically disrupt the current classroom culture and expectations. Yet, it will open the door and provide an invitation to explore further.

AN “AH-HA” MOMENT

Nevertheless, as educators move in this direction and see the impact it has, they may also worry that it will add to their workload. Early experiences can lead educators to think that full personalization means planning, managing, and assessing each individual learner’s path and progress by themselves.

It is at about this point where many of them experience an epiphany. They begin to realize that the transformation to a personalized or learning-centered approach is about repositioning and building the capacity of learners to play a more active role in—and take more responsibility for—their learning. As learners begin to take greater ownership, they also become more effective learners. And, it builds greater capacity for learning independence.

Last year, we invited a group of teachers, who were transforming their learning environments to become more learner-centered, to speak at a regional meeting of superintendents. They talked about how they are supporting learners to become more active, take more responsibility and ownership, and build independent learning skills. In short, they were positioning learners to build their learning capacity and “share the load.” They described that many of the tasks that we—as educators—have traditionally managed alone now become shared and, in some cases, the purview of learners. They noted how this shift prepares learners for a life of learning—and real life is not usually presented in a well-crafted, perfectly timed lesson. Building these skills, dispositions, and competencies will prepare them to engage and succeed for their future—living and working in a rapidly changing, unpredictable environment where waiting to be told what to do and simply being a good student will not bring them success. You can imagine the response of the superintendents who were

“...in just a few weeks, the combination of giving her learners more choices and listening more to their perspectives and ideas was making a number of differences in their learning and behavior.”

DR. JIM RICKABAUGH

getting their first exposure to personalized learning practices. They could not wait to learn more.

ANSWERING THE AGE-OLD QUESTION, “WHY DO I HAVE TO LEARN THIS?”

So, where can you go after you’ve given learners a taste of having their voice respected and making meaningful choices about their learning? Many educators have found that the next powerful step is to introduce the idea of purposeful learning (Pink, 2009). In the traditional instruction-centered system, purpose is often assumed. The focus is on the next topic in the textbook or the next task or skill to be covered. Too often, when learners ask, “why do we have to learn this?” answers from educators have dodged real purpose and defaulted to “for the test,” “you will need to know it in middle school/high school/college/real life,” or “because I say so.” None of these answers are very effective in supporting real, lasting learning.

Starting with the purpose of learning positions what comes next as being something worth engaging in and giving learning effort to. Purpose can be discovered through dialogue, sharing potential benefits that resonate with learners, or specifically pointing to one or more universal benefits. Helping learners understand “why” is a powerful, potential motivator and invites them to commit to learn, rather than just to comply.



THREE QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

Once the purpose of learning is identified and understood, we position learners to build some of the most important skills they will need for future learning. This sets us up to stabilize and maintain a learning-centered approach. This process can be driven by three key questions.

1. “What am I doing that my learners could do?”

A great place to start is with learning goals. Most educators have traditionally felt responsibility for setting learning goals. Typically, goals have encompassed the entire class, and this has been a part of the workload and a driver of our planning and instruction. Yet, we know that when learners are engaged in setting goals for their learning, they become clearer about their learning, will take greater ownership, and persist more when they struggle. In short, they learn more (Zimmerman et al, 1992). At first, helping learners set goals will require your instruction and support, but, over time, as learners build the capacity to set goals, this task can be shared or, in some cases, delegated to learners with your guidance.

“Helping learners understand ‘why’ is a powerful potential motivator and invites them to commit to learn, rather than just comply.”

DR. JIM RICKABAUGH

2. “What am I doing that my learners *should* do?”

Here, you might consider involving learners in the development of the paths they will follow to move from current knowledge and skills to what they have set as goals for their learning. While educators typically have assumed this responsibility on behalf of learners, having learners participate in building their own path supports a key life skill, while also sharing responsibility for their progress. For example, once the learning goal is set, you might have a brief conference with the learner, during which the instructional support and resources you can provide are presented and clarified. Then, ask the learner what they will contribute to the plan and what commitments they will make to following the plan for their learning. This step not only helps learners to see how they can get from where they are to where they want to be but also allows them to become co-creators and shared investors in the plan.

3. “What else can my learners do that will build their learning and increase their capacity to learn?”

At this point, you can challenge learners to clarify how they know they are making progress. Typically, learners will refer to the activities contained in their learning plans and assume that completing tasks equates to learning. Here, you can coach learners to generate, analyze, and apply formative assessment data for themselves—rather than relying solely on you for information and feedback on their progress. We know that when learners develop the capacity to accurately self-assess, their learning grows and accelerates significantly over learners who do not possess this capacity (Hattie, 2012). Of course, you will also need to monitor, analyze, and apply the information to guide instructional decisions, but now you have an active partner in the work.

Without question, the shift to a learning-centered approach is more of a journey than an event. Starting with small steps and building on experience, confidence, and competence can move your practice from hoping that learners will benefit from your instruction to ensuring that learning grows. Meanwhile, learners begin to play a more active role and take greater responsibility and ownership of their learning journey.

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Dr. Jim Rickabaugh serves as the Senior Advisor to the Institute for Personalized Learning ([link](#)) an education innovation lab dedicated to the transformation of public education. The Institute serves a growing number of member school districts across the country engaged in personalizing learning.

Jim formerly served as the Director of the Institute for six years and as a superintendent in several districts in Wisconsin and Minnesota. He is a board member for both the Wisconsin Education Business Roundtable and the Innovative Schools Network and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Midwest Comprehensive Center.

Jim is the author of *Tapping the Power of Personalized Learning: A Roadmap for School Leaders*, focused on helping educational leaders to engage their staffs in designing and implementing personalized learning ecosystems. Jim is also a co-author of *Five Levers To Improve Learning: How To Prioritize For Powerful Results In Your School*.



Mohtaz in the center with her niece Inaya Refat (10) on the left and her younger sister Neharika Noor (13) on the right.

Technology + Learning

by Mohtaz Mahmuda

WE ARE THE LAST GENERATION.

We are the last generation to be taught cursive.

We are the last generation that remembers the Sony Walkman and the VCR.

We are the last generation that will have to adapt from the pencil to the stylus.

As technology advances, my generation will have to travel farther away from the foundation of everything we learned growing up.

This is a good thing.

As an aunt and older sister, it is odd to see my 12-year-old sister doing the same things I did in ninth grade on the iPad. My 10-year-old niece probably knows more about the device than I do. My 6-year-old niece and nephew have been using iPods and iPhones since they were two, learning from YouTube videos and exploring through children's apps like Osmo.

TECHNOLOGY IS SHAPING A GENERATION INTO THE VISION OF STEVE JOBS.

Children are learning to code with the Hour of Code. They know how to use iMovie, and they are creating complex presentations for school projects. They no longer use big, standardized poster boards to display their work. They're creating interesting, fun, and interactive Prezi and PowerPoint presentations.



Mohtaz Mahmuda

I find myself asking my niece or sister how to use a certain app or how to get a certain effect on my presentation. True digital natives, they are teaching me how to be better connected.

Central York School District's new wave of tech tools and applications has created higher standards for all grades and, therefore, better quality work. Students are not just using apps. They are creating them.

Technology and social media have the power to connect students with people who they might normally never have had the opportunity to collaborate with in person.

Central High School's Improv team was born from a single tweet sent out to someone living in L.A. With one click of a send button, Mr. Hodge was able to start a new comedy-loving community that has connected over 20 students with professionals and rising stars in the industry.

THIS IS THE POWER OF MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY.

More kids are using screens and soft skills to create huge projects and becoming student entrepreneurs.

In our Apollo—mass customized learning—program, students have the opportunity to create their own non-profit organizations by crafting an in-depth outline and researching other groups who share similar interests.

Teachers are more interactive. They have more time to talk to students one-on-one.

They are provided both the tools and the skills used in today's new workforce. Recently, *Forbes* started looking for young people to head their Snapchat. Using and working with social media has become a whole job in itself.

And Central York School District is giving kids more experience for these kinds of jobs than other school districts in the county.

I am a part of the last generation.

But, I am also the beginning of a brand new vision.

Steve Jobs said it best, "If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you."

CALL FOR LEARNER SUBMISSIONS

Thanks Mohtaz! As you can see, the most powerful advocates for learner-centered education are the learners themselves. So, we'd like your help in sharing learners' stories. We want 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)**

“Central York School District's Improv team was born from a single tweet sent out to someone in LA.”

MOHTAZ MAHMUDA

Mohtaz Mahmuda is a believer of the power of the written word and currently serves as the Editor In-Chief of the school entertainment magazine and Managing Editor of the student newspaper at Central York High School. As a journalist, Mahmuda gave a voice to the minorities and immigrants in her school. Mahmuda also serves as Vice President of her graduating class, is a member of her high school's improv team and a member of Model United Nations. Mahmuda continues to passionately advocate the power of the written word. Mahmuda will be finishing her senior year at Central York High School and hopes to pursue her interests in business, marketing, performing, and communications in the future.



Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ([link](#)) “advocates for the use of improvement science to accelerate how a field learns to improve.” Essentially, everything they do is about guiding passionate education professionals to form networking communities driven to solve a specific issue. For example, they helped organize a “Networked Improvement Community” that was passionate about resolving the inefficiencies in the current system’s model for developmental mathematics ([link](#)). By forming this community, they were able to identify ways to provide a healthier environment for all post-secondary learners to successfully complete the required mathematics credits demanded by most four-year universities. While supporting NICs on the ground, the foundation is also dedicated to producing high-quality, freely accessible research publications that provide insight into a wide variety of education topics. Dive into the wealth of resources the foundation has to offer, and discover parallels to the work happening in your learning environment.

The Six Core Principles of Improvement ([link](#))

90-Day Cycle Handbook ([link](#))

Accelerating How We Learn To Improve ([link](#))

AASA

Although their name and organizational structure has changed since their founding in 1866, the **American Association of School Administrators (AASA)** ([link](#)) has always “advocated for the highest quality public education for all students.” Throughout their history, AASA has remained active in the ever-changing landscape of the education field. Staying true to this identity, AASA has become a leader in promoting learner-centered education. Their dedication to this movement and mindset can be seen in their recent publication, *Personalizing 21st Century Education* ([link](#))—which encourages education leaders to make personalized learning their number one priority. Beyond putting pen to paper, these folks are also playing with the big dogs by “serving as the national voice for public education and district leadership on Capitol Hill.” They act as a powerful connecting point between education leaders—who join the conversation through many outlets, including AASA’s *Personalized Learning Summit*—and influential decision makers in Congress. Ultimately, AASA acts as one of the nation’s loudest voices for shifting the focus of education design and has a myriad of tools and resources ready to be explored.

New Superintendents E-Journal ([link](#))

Destination: Equity ([link](#))

#AASASummit ([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.

AASA Digital Consortium

Chicago, IL
July 27-29

[Conference Website](#)

Big Picture’s Big Bang

Orlando, FL
July 26-29

[Conference Website](#)

iNACOL Blended and Online Learning Symposium

San Antonio, TX
October 25-28

[Conference Website](#)

JOB BOARD

Education Reimagined

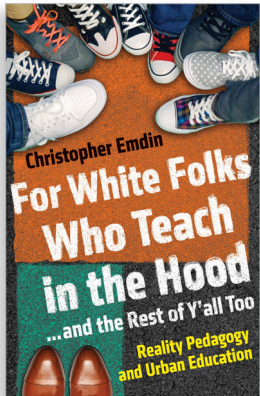
is seeking two new learner-centered staff members to join our team: an Associate Director of Partnerships and Convenings ([link](#)) and an Associate Director of Practitioner Engagement and Learning ([link](#)).

Education Elements is

hiring! They have a Design and Implementation Consultant position available in Washington, DC. Learn more and apply [here](#).

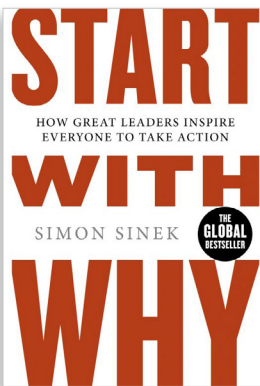


ON OUR BOOKSHELF



For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...And the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education by Christopher Emdin

As the cultural diversity in America's learning environments continues to grow, practitioners must take the lead in making each learner's education personalized, relevant, and contextualized. With over a decade of experience, Dr. Christopher Emdin addresses this need in his newest book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too*. As you flip through these pages, explore the opportunities available in your unique learning environment and see avenues to connect with your learners on a new level.



Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek

Why? A question straight out of every toddler's play-book. And, one that Simon Sinek argues is the most important starting point in transforming an idea from an unoriginal, non-stimulating product to an emotion-grabbing life necessity. Sinek's book *Start With Why* explores how great innovators, like Apple and Southwest, capture their audiences (and the market) with a simple, yet crucial, philosophy that translates to any work (or learning) environment.



The Innovator's Mindset: Empower Learning, Unleash Talent, and Lead a Culture of Creativity by George Couros

The Innovator's Mindset by George Couros invites educators to challenge the old saying, "hold your questions until the end." Instead, he encourages all of us to start from a place of wonder, creativity, imagination, and curiosity. Because "if you want innovative students, you need innovative educators." With Couros as a guide, walk through the pages of *The Innovator's Mindset* to explore what it might take to revitalize learners' imaginations and creativity through nothing more, and nothing less, than a complete mindset shift.

WORTH YOUR TIME

Re-Designing American High Schools for the 21st Century

The first step to grappling with any issue is asking the right questions. Explore how the evolution of inquiry from "how can we teach kids better" to "how can we redesign the learning environment from scratch" can provide new insights on how to create learning environments by and for learners. [Read here](#)

Hamilton: A Story of Us

As Lin-Manuel Miranda steps off the stage in the most decorated Broadway show since *The Producers*, you may be surprised to find this isn't the first time he's stepped out of the *Hamilton* spotlight to give space to other talent. Hear the amazing opportunity over 20,000 NYC learners have received thanks to *Hamilton's* massive influence. [Listen here](#)

No grades, no timetable: Berlin school turns teaching upside down

We all know that pioneers can be found far and wide—and, now we're even seeing them pop up internationally! Check out this innovative learning environment at the heart of the Eurozone and discover how their transition to "no grades and no timetable" is bringing about immeasurable confidence in its learners.

[Read here](#)

“I am still learning.”

—Michelangelo at age 87

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