

# pioneering

ISSUE 8 • FEBRUARY 25, 2016 • EDUCATION REIMAGINED

## A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Director

## CITY NEIGHBORS

Profile of their learning environment

## FEATURE

These Misconceptions are Keeping School  
in the 1960s

## A VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Ed Jones, *Hacking High School*

## SXSWEDU 2016

Special Insert

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## WORTH YOUR TIME

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education   
reimagined



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Dear Friends,

Last issue, I wrote about some principles that we see are guiding learner-centered pioneers as they create learning environments that fit their particular learners' needs and community's circumstances:

- Transformation cannot be done to or for people; it must be done by and with people.
- Complex systems change demands partnership and collaboration across diverse stakeholders in and outside of education over time.
- Inventing out of our traditional system toward a new one requires high levels of trust among all of the stakeholders involved.

In fact, these principles are not only applicable at the level of the transformation of the individual learning environment. They guide our theory of how this transformation will happen at all levels—learning environment, community, policy, and system. While this inherently means that the starting point for this transformation is at the local level—the community—it does not mean that localities can do it alone.

So, what does it mean? What role is there for state regulators and policymakers, especially in light of the new ESSA?

It means that the role of policy is to clear the obstacles so that local pioneers can create, invent, and iterate. This does not mean that legislation needs to mandate new systems. Instead, policymakers could consider allowing their pioneers to opt into zones that provide them with the freedoms to experiment with learner-centered education.

We know that that is a big leap—leaving the space for those on the ground to create, learn, and iterate, rather than coming in with a preconceived answer. So, what's the first step?

1. Know who your pioneers are. Have a way to see and recognize those transforming, rather than reforming, the education system.
2. Visit and learn from pioneers. Ask them about the results they are getting and what obstacles are standing in their way.
3. Keep the conversation going to learn how policies are affecting them. Provide the space for them to share what is and what is not working.

Just as we will need collaborative iteration among local stakeholders to create new learning environments, it will also take collaborative iteration among local and state players to create the ecosystems in which pioneers can thrive and spread.

Warm wishes,  
**Kelly Young**



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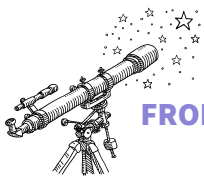
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Nathan Luft

Published by Education Reimagined,  
an initiative of **Convergence**,  
1133 19th Street NW, Suite 410  
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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.





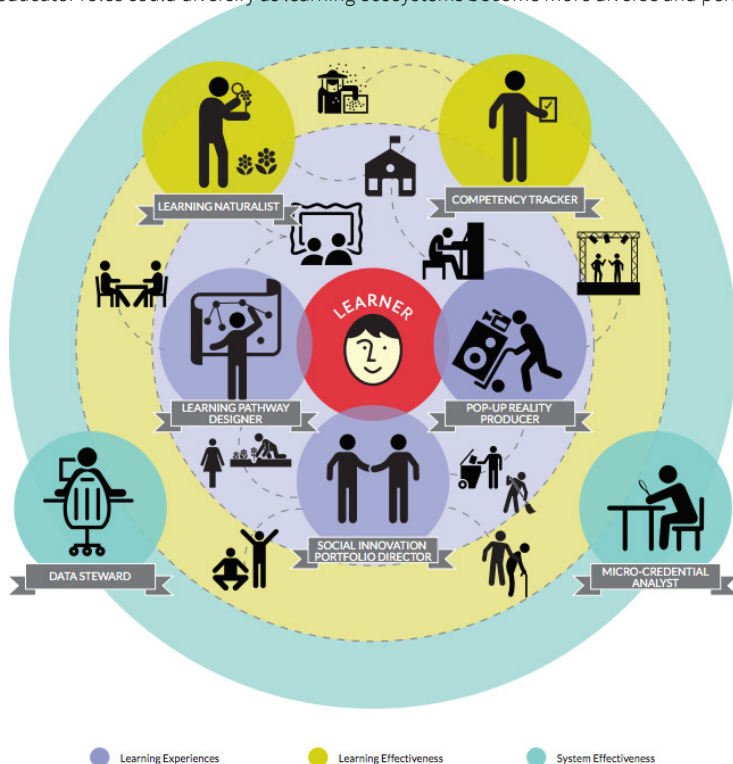
## FROM THE VISION

# Components of a Learner-Centered Education System—Adults in the System

**ADULTS IN THE SYSTEM** hold diversified and specialized roles to facilitate and guide learning in formal and informal learning environments, virtually, at home, and in the community. These reimagined roles for professional educators, in particular, take advantage of the emerging science around effective instructional practice, ensuring that educators are themselves equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to guide, instruct, encourage, and support learners. Deep expertise in pedagogy and child development is valued, as well as expertise in a particular discipline, body of knowledge, or skill set. Educators, both individually and collectively, are empowered to take leadership responsibilities along with other key stakeholders (e.g. families, communities, employers, social service agencies), while opportunities for professional development continue to support them in their own growth. The institutions that prepare, support, and elevate professional educators are transformed to serve them in their reimagined roles.

Furthermore, the reimagined roles for adults in the system offer families, businesses, social service agencies, community groups and members, and other interested parties the opportunity to play meaningful roles in the system. Creating coordinated and networked teams, which include all of these varied roles, provides learners with the supports necessary to ensure that they achieve competency and mastery in agreed domains.

This graphic illustrates possibilities for future educator roles as forecast in “**Exploring the Future Education Workforce: New Roles for an Expanding Learning Ecosystem**” ([link](#)). These illustrate ways in which educator roles could diversify as learning ecosystems become more diverse and personalized.



KnowledgeWorks | [www.knowledgeworks.org](http://www.knowledgeworks.org)

## 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.

### Mid-Atlantic Conference on Personalized Learning

#### Keynote

Baltimore, MD

Feb. 29-Mar. 2

[Conference Website](#)

### Twitter Chat

#### From Factory Model to... What?

Follow #NGLCchat

Mar. 3

7-8PM ET

Join the March #NGLCchat and help us come up with the best metaphor to describe the future of learning. If the factory model represented education in the industrial age, what metaphor captures the 21st century, networked, personalized learning model of education?

### SXSWedu

#### Panel & Summit

Austin, TX

Mar. 7-10

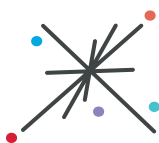
[Conference Website](#)

### Remake Learning Days

Pittsburgh, PA

May 9-15

[Conference Website](#)



## CITY NEIGHBORS SCHOOLS

Baltimore, Maryland

I love this school. I wake up happy! —City Neighbors learner

**WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR EVERY STUDENT TO BE KNOWN, LOVED, AND INSPIRED?** This question drove the design of Baltimore's City Neighbors. From the hallway design, to the maker mentality, to their pod model, the learner is celebrated in everything City Neighbors does.

Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, learning at City Neighbors is deep, passion-driven, and active. Learners grapple with big questions through a myriad of long-term, intensive projects. These projects not only foster learning aligned with State Content Standards but also inspire learners to be creators, explorers, problem-solvers, and risk-takers. **Personalized** to their interests, the projects provide the time and space for learners to delve deeply into topics that compel and intrigue them. This exploration takes them down paths that are both **relevant** and **contextualized**. Learners are challenged to synthesize and demonstrate their discoveries and learnings. And with City Neighbors' arts-infused model, these demonstrations of learning employ visual arts, music, movement, drama, puppetry, poetry, and storytelling. Operating as rotating gallery space, the walls of City Neighbors' hallways come alive with learning.

Guided by their belief that the environment is the third teacher, City Neighbors has redefined the use of hallways, classrooms, and walls—every square foot of physical space engenders a culture of collaboration, independence, and high academic achievement. They've incorporated their values of trust, transparency, and joy into every nook and cranny. Glass is infused between classrooms and hallways to support passive supervision and fluidity of learning; benches and alcoves line the halls encouraging collaboration and conversation; and the cafeteria, lobby, outdoor stage, and village squares act as communal spaces for meetings and events.

Family is a word often heard at City Neighbors, and not just to mean parents and children—it characterizes the relationship of the entire school community. United behind a commitment to diversity and inclusion, no voice at City Neighbors is ignored or left unheard. Parents, educators, and leadership act as collaborators and co-creators to take on the essential work of the school. Their governance model brings all the players—learners, parents, educators, leadership—to the table as a unified Board of Directors.

Perhaps the best expression of City Neighbors' **socially embedded** family ethos is the pod. What's a pod? Sixteen learners, one educator, and four years together. Kids gather every day for a two-hour block of time in spaces designed like living rooms with couches and coffee tables. In addition, each learner has their own desk to use however they please. Each day, pod cohorts gather to discuss whatever is on their minds. When problems surface they are supported to work them out collaboratively and constructively. This time and space together encourages learners to develop **agency** for themselves. Pods are learning spaces, social spaces, and hanging out spaces.

At City Neighbors, relationships are at the core; kids have countless ways to learn and express themselves; and space organically creates community. Welcome home.

### LEARN MORE

[VIDEO Space to Learn](#)

[VIDEO 3 Schools on a Rainy Day](#)

[A Smarter Charter: City Neighbors](#)

### FACTS & FIGURES

Charter

800 learners (K-12th grade)

3 schools

Learners with disabilities: 25%

Free or reduced lunch: 70%

Graduation rates: 100%

College enrollment: 93%

### CONNECT

Website

[City Neighbors Schools](#)

Twitter

[@CityNeighbors](#)

For more information contact:

Bobbi Macdonald, Executive

Director of City Neighbors

Foundation

[bmacdonald@cityneighbors.org](mailto:bmacdonald@cityneighbors.org)



# Our Guide to All Things Learner-Centered at SXSWedu

We are looking forward to learning, engaging, and exploring with education pioneers from all across the country.

**With so much to do at SXSWedu**, we've created a guide to the learner-centered presentations, keynotes, panels, and summits that we are most excited about!

## MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2016

### HELPING DIFFERENT KINDS OF MINDS SOLVE PROBLEMS

Temple Grandin

Keynote  
Instructional  
Strategies

**11:00AM - 12:00PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Ballroom D

### THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM

Shanna Peeples

Panel  
Instructional  
Strategies

**12:30PM - 1:30PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Room 16AB

### A "CAR-TALK" FOR THE ED SECTOR

Dennis Littky, Elliot Washor

Core Conversation  
Educational  
Equality

**12:30PM - 1:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon A

### THE PARADIGM SHIFT OF A GLOBAL CLASSROOM

Anders Enström, Brian Jones,  
Dr. Ayelet Segal, Liz Meredith

Panel  
Instructional  
Strategies

**2:00PM - 3:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon E

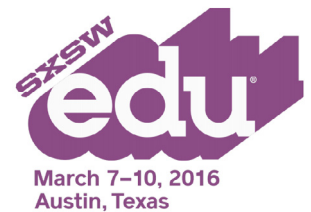
### STUDENTS UNFILTERED: DIGITAL IN THE CLASSROOM

Elana Golub, JoAnna Zalkovsky,  
Matt Bilotti, Zak Malamed

Panel  
Continuing  
Education

**5:00PM - 6:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon J



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[@EdReimagined](https://twitter.com/EdReimagined)



## TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016

### REIMAGINE EDUCATION: ABANDONING AGE-BASED LEARNING

Dr. Marina Walne, Roger Cook,  
Stephan Turnipseed

Panel  
Instructional  
Strategies

**11:00AM - 12:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon E

### INDIANA JONES AND THE JOURNEY OF INNOVATION

Scott Ellis

Featured  
Implementation

**11:00AM - 12:00PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Room 18ABC

### INVITING THE PUBLIC BACK INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Troy Miller

Future15  
Implementation

**2:50PM - 3:05PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Room 15

### TRANSFORMING EDUCATION WITH LEARNERS AT THE CENTER

Kelly Young, Margaret Black, Michael  
Hinojosa, Trace Pickering, Virgel Hammonds

Summit  
Leadership

**3:00PM - 6:00PM**

JW Marriot, Salon 3

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2016

### HOW TO THINK (AND LEARN) LIKE A FUTURIST

Jane McGonigal

Keynote  
Gaming

**9:30AM - 10:30AM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Ballroom D

### DESIGN THINKING THE WHOLE SCHOOL

Alex Owens, Jasmine Araujo,  
Josh Densen

Problem Solving  
Learning Spaces

**11:00AM - 1:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Room 408

### WHAT IF EVERYONE WANTED TO BE A TEACHER?

David Rosenberg

Core Conversation  
Leadership

**11:00AM - 12:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon A

### WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION: BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

Michele Rusnak, Paul Cruz, Sherrie Raven,  
Yesenia Garcia-Herrington

Summit  
SEL

**11:00AM - 2:00PM**

JW Marriott  
Salon 2

### EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY: ACHIEVING ZERO DROPOUTS THROUGH PERFORMANCE-BASED EDUCATION

Roger Cook

Book Signing

**12:00PM - 12:30PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Level 3 Aritum  
Landing

### TWO PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Emily Lammers, Gates Bryant, Sparky Zivin

Debate  
Instructional  
Strategies

**12:30PM - 1:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon C

### GIVING HOPE: OVERCOMING ODDS WITH BLENDED LEARNING

Crystal Hill, Gayle White Wallace, Kimberly  
Moritz, Robert Rayburn

Panel  
Educational  
Equality

**12:30PM - 1:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon D

### STUDENTS AS GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS THRU 3 BIG PIVOTS

Homa Tavangar

Core Conversation  
Cognitive Process

**12:30PM - 1:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon A

### PROJECT DESIGN: IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL LEARN

Bob Lenz, Jennifer Cruz

Summit  
Instructional  
Strategies

**12:45PM - 2:15PM**

JW Marriott, Salon 1

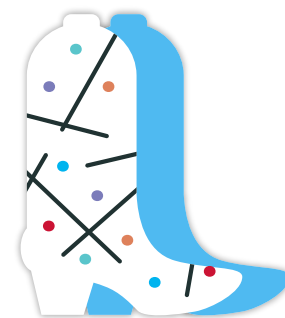
### BRAIN SCIENCE AND THE FUTURE OF TEACHER TRAINING

Glenn Whitman

Workshop  
Cognitive Process

**1:30PM - 3:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Room 412



## PLEASE JOIN US FOR A TEXAS-STYLE COCKTAIL PARTY

Co-hosted with  
**Next Generation  
Learning Challenges**

Immediately following  
our summit, kick back  
and join us for great  
conversation, guacamole,  
and some Shiner.

**Cedar Door**  
201 Brazos Street

**RSVP**

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2016 (CONTINUED)

### ARE THEY LEARNING? COMPETENCY-BASED STUDENT VOICES

Anthony Thorne, Bernard Bull,  
Briana Corona, Connor Gorske

Panel  
Continuing  
Education

**2:00PM - 3:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon E

### 10 & CHANGE: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE FOR BLACK BOYS

Tim King

Featured  
Leadership

**2:00PM - 3:00PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Room 18ABC

### MUSEUMS GIVE TEACHERS CONTROL TO CREATE

Ashley Naranjo, Brian Ausland, Darren  
Milligan, Melissa Wadman

Panel  
Instructional  
Strategies

**3:30PM - 4:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Room  
400-402

### DRIVING STUDENT VOICE IN EDUCATIONAL DESIGN

Ashley Simon, Courtney Brousseau,  
Cynthia Erenas, Owen Brown

Panel  
Leadership

**3:30PM - 4:30PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown Salon G

### YOU MATTER! CREATING A STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

Dana Grossman Leeman

Future15  
Educational  
Equality

**4:00PM - 4:15PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Room 15

### FACILITY DESIGN DIRECTLY IMPACTS ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Aaron Jobson, Adrian Swain, Gina Silveira

Workshop  
Learning Spaces

**4:00PM - 6:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Room 410

### PBL? IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PLAN

Bob Lenz, Jennifer Cruz

Summit  
Leadership

**4:45PM - 6:00PM**

JW Marriott, Salon 1

### HOW TO MAKE A PLAY IN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Matt Akin, Pat Deklotz, Sara Schapiro,  
Valerie Truesdale

Panel  
Implementation

**5:00PM - 6:00PM**

Hilton Austin  
Downtown, Salon E

## THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2016

### OPENING REMARKS

Paul Reville

Closing Program

**12:30PM - 12:45PM**

Austin Convention  
Center Ballroom D

### THE END OF AVERAGE

Todd Rose

Closing Program  
Cognitive Process

**12:45PM - 1:15PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Ballroom D

### RETHINKING HIGH SCHOOL—ACTIVATING INNOVATION

Russlynn Ali

Closing Program  
Educational  
Equality

**1:15PM - 1:45PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Ballroom D

### LEARNING AS A LIFESTYLE: PASSION, PEOPLE, PURPOSE

Connie Yowell

Closing Program  
Educational  
Equality

**1:45PM - 2:15PM**

Austin Convention  
Center, Ballroom D

# These Misconceptions Are Keeping School in the 1960's

by Shawn Cornally

Originally posted in [ThinkThankThunk](#)

**AS I FROTH THROUGH THIS POST BELIEVING THAT I'M IMPORTANT,** I'd like to remind myself that this is the Hubble deep field and each of those is an entire freaking galaxy, so, scope, Shawn.

No.

I'm angry because the system of schools is based on fear—fear from parents that, without the repetitive yet ineffective experience of school, kids won't be “successful;” fear from teachers that some magical administrator will judge their coverage of standard A.1.34.3; fear from students that we won't validate their naive assumption that they're an “A-student.”

No one is an “A-human.”

So, I'd like to share a few misconceptions that have come from the assessment crucible that is Iowa BIG.

## MISCONCEPTION 1:

**Colleges care what you cover in high school.**

Nope. We gathered the admissions directors of the major institutions in Iowa, and guess what they said? Don't worry about coverage, just make sure the student can think, handle adversity, and can ask a question without blushing. Also, bonus, it'd help if they had a passion for something other than just getting out of high school.

My favorite quote from a Regents admissions admin, “We have to reteach everything anyway, do you think even the best high schools from across the state align what they cover?”



Shawn Cornally



## MISCONCEPTION 2:

### High school should make college easy.

Ha! This is the fake promise of every AP course (although not made by every AP teacher, please note the difference). The overlap between content in high school and content in college—in something even as well planned out as a physics major—is miniscule.

## MISCONCEPTION 3:

### Research paper-type assignments trump strategic communication in English.

Strat comm is the new English, deal with it. Recently one of my students was derided by their counselor for getting English credit at Iowa BIG. Her point was that the student needs more practice at writing MLA-style papers and 5-paragraph essays, rather than writing: press releases, constant emails to professionals, research summaries, website copy, and short pitches and speeches promoting her project. You pick.

## MISCONCEPTION 4:

### Computer programming comes after basic math instruction.

How many times can I link this? Being able to code software solutions is the new math. Algebra II died with the 17th century. Why? Because those techniques answer questions that are still questions, but computers answer them better and in more interesting ways. No, there's no research showing that pre-calc II is somehow better quantitative weight lifting than anything else. So saddle up. I'd recommend using: Processing, Java, JQuery, and getting into the open source community with GitHub et al.

## MISCONCEPTION 5:

### Economy of scale in student body size.

Grouping teenagers is a huge mistake. Not because they'll, like, kiss and stuff but because the psychology of teens is deleterious in numbers. All of the hallmarks of adolescence: fear, identity finding, risk taking, pathological acceptance seeking; they all get amplified when there are more teens than adults in a group. In other words, almost every school. BIG has the luxury of being located in a business space. While our student to teacher ratio is 33:1, the building's adult to minor ratio is often 1:1 or better. I cannot explain how this changes every type of student, from your burned out school-hater to your valedictorian; it re-norms them.

## MISCONCEPTION 6:

### More class time = more learning

This one surprised me, but it'd make a good *Freakonomics* chapter. In the chronic model of school, where students attend the same classes every day, the economic value of that class time is positive but low. Just like any high volume product, you tend to tolerate its existence and take it for granted, like apples or rice. Changing the economics so that traditional direct instruction time is available but is significantly rarified causes students and teacher to pack it better. Acute educational experiences are also easier to remember and easier to tie to emotional responses that get encoded in memory.

“Strat comm is the new English, deal with it.”

Shawn Cornally

**MISCONCEPTION 7:**  
**Teachers can differentiate well on their own.**

Man, there are a lot of teachers with ulcers. Somewhere along the way, we convinced every teacher that they're the god of their classroom, and as that benevolent force, you have to create every experience for every kid. The combinatorics on that are obviously staggering. Utilizing a community-focused curriculum goes a long way into changing this. When the ideas for initiatives come from outside the school, and graduate from chintzy to economically valuable, suddenly the teacher can be free to respond to students instead of getting stuck on the low-creativity cycle of daily lesson planning.

**MISCONCEPTION 8:**  
**Grades motivate learning.**

Grades motivate getting grades (and the contrapositive). That is all.

**MISCONCEPTION 9:**  
**Economics classes should be a semester long.**

And by "Economics" I mean, look at every class you offer and decide how much content is actually best delivered with direct instruction on chronic timing. There are a lot of students who can't do simple supply and demand thinking because the semester had to be filled with wonky theory from the mercantilist era.

**MISCONCEPTION 10:**  
**You know what students need to know to be successful.**

The most important thing about BIG is that we know we're wrong. We don't know what a student should know. We can't predict the future. When working with a group, we allow the needs of the group to dictate the instruction and curated content we provide. This has two effects: I like my job and am happier, and the students are never hidden from the planning of learning.

“Somewhere along the way, we convinced every teacher that they’re the god of their classroom, and as that benevolent force, you have to create every experience for every kid.”

**Shawn Cornally**

**Shawn Cornally** is Headmaster of **Iowa BIG** in Cedar Rapids, IA. In addition to facilitating competency-based, learner-powered learning experiences at BIG, he is developing a software suite dedicated to assessment-for-learning and managing a local media company's efforts to catalyze educational transformation. Shawn has also written for *GOOD magazine* and *Edutopia.org*, while blogging his success and failures at *ThinkThankThink*.



## 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.



Photo credit: Ted.com

### FROM TED

#### 4 Inspiring Kids Imagine the Future of Learning

Sugata Mitra believes in the potential for kids to drive their own learning. So, he invited the world to “ask kids big questions [to] find big answers.” See four kids’ TEDtalk responses to the question—What do you think is the future of learning?

[Read here](#)

### FROM EDUTOPIA

#### Classroom Redesign: Students Take On the Challenge

Middle school teacher Heather Wolpert-Gawron challenged her learners to create the ideal learning environment. The results inspired her to think about the classroom as a 360-degree learning experience. [Read here](#)

### FROM SOCIAL CREATIVES

#### If students designed their own schools...

Monument Mountain Regional High School’s Independent Project is a one semester school-within-a-school program that gives learners total control over their school days.

[Watch here](#)

### FROM MEDIUM

#### Incremental vs Revolutionary Transformation: How School Innovation Works, the Case of New Tech Schools

[Read here](#)

“When trying to dramatically change systems like education, it is often better to introduce a whole series of aligned changes all at once so that the whole system is disrupted.”

Paul Curtis

NEW TECH NETWORK





# The Teachers Guild

**The Teachers Guild** ([link](#)) is a professional community dedicated to empowering educators to imagine creative solutions to the biggest challenges in education today. An initiative of IDEO's Design for Learning Studio and Riverdale Country School, the Guild encourages educators to use design thinking to bring their ideas to life through coaching and idea sharing. Coaches leverage their "Design Thinking Superpowers"—strengths such as brainstorming, synthesis, and prototyping—to guide the development of ideas and train educators to harness their own creativity. Educators can share their ideas and explore those of others through the Guild's online solutions platform or by participating in Collaborations—large-scale projects that invite educators to brainstorm together and design solutions through a multistage process. From opportunities to plug into their latest projects to practical teaching tips and insights, The Teachers Guild's website has plenty to offer.

**Design Thinking for Educators** [Sign up to download the free toolkit here.](#)

**Tips for Ideating** ([link](#))

# Mount Vernon Institute for Innovation

**Mount Vernon Institute for Innovation (MVIFI)** ([link](#)) is an R&D lab and transformation design studio comprised of a team of leaders and education designers who transform schools through a people-centered approach. MVIFI evolved out of the ideas and leadership of the Mount Vernon Presbyterian School and now enjoys a symbiotic relationship as an amplifier and accelerator of the school's work. The Institute promotes design thinking (dt) as a problem-solving tool through the people-centered "DEEPdt" framework. DEEPdt—Discover, Empathize, Experiment, Produce—stresses the connection between designer and user as a means of focusing on the roots of a problem and forming creative and relevant solutions. MVIFI shares its ideas through a variety of media, including a blog, podcasts, publications, and social media. It convenes educators and stakeholders to discuss and exchange ideas at events, such as the Council on Innovation and fuse Summer Conference. It also offers customizable consulting options, including demonstrations, coaching, workshops, and more. MVIFI's online resources are an excellent starting point to discover how design thinking can impact the learning experience.

**The DEEPdt Playbook** ([link](#))

**To learn more about fuse Conference and other MVIFI events,** [click here.](#)

**For more information about DEEP design thinking** ([link](#))

## JOB BOARD

Job opening to share with the learner-centered community? Send any job description [here](#), and we will include it in the next three issues.

• • • •

**Education Reimagined** is hiring! We are seeking an **Operations Associate** to join our team. Want to contribute to the acceleration of the learner-centered movement? [Apply today!](#)

**50CAN** is seeking applicants for their **Education Advocacy Fellowship**. This year-long, paid fellowship is grounded in advocacy training, policy courses, one-on-one mentoring, and expert support to help you build a movement in your state. Submission deadline is **Monday, March 14**. [Learn more and apply here!](#)

**The American Alliance of Museums** is recruiting for the two-year **Ford W. Bell Fellowship for Museums & P-12 Education**. Submission deadline: Monday, March 14. [Apply here!](#)

**The Khan Lab School** (CA) is seeking applicants for four positions.

[Lead Teacher English/Humanities](#)

[Lead Teacher STEM](#)

[Lead Teacher Elementary Associate Teacher](#)

**City Neighbors Foundation** is seeking **two new school leaders** beginning 2016-17. Full job description available [here](#).



## A VOICE FROM THE FIELD

**Ed Jones** is a leading, hands-on expert in high school transformation. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Hacking High School: Making School Work for All Teens*. He is bootstrapping *A Statewide Laboratory for Student-Driven Learning* and looking to test a new High School OS. Before turning to K-12 transformation, he worked in some of the nation's highest technology centers and had his work recognized by the chief technology officer of DARPA (the leading US technical research agency).

# An iOS/UBER/Crowdsourcing Shift for High School

by Ed Jones

**WHAT IF WE TRIED SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR EDUCATION?** Something that's worked before in other realms? What if we tried trusting people? Including...teens.

If you're reading this, you know about competency-based learning. The future of high school is to let learners choose what competencies they'll master from a far larger list—a list from which they also choose how, where, when, and from whom they master these competencies.

### Trusting—And Benefiting From—The Crowd

We of 2016 are accustomed to a new age of trust. An age not just of trusting your Uber driver but of trusting diverse strangers via AirB&B, HelpX, CouchSurfing.com, and even that ancient service—Ebay. People working both together in crowds and alone with great lent power have changed the world for twenty years now

In 1990, nearly no one envisioned that volunteers and free contributors would build entire computer operating systems, programming stacks, and code libraries...Or that strangers would help fund \$5 billion a year in projects and programs via Kickstarter and its kin. Certainly, no one anticipated that crowds of strangers could solve massively complex protein-folding mysteries via games like Fold.IT.

When I code web pages, I use millions of dollars of software; I pay for none of it. Nearly all of it comes free from the sharing economy of volunteers and free contributors. (Many volunteers, in fact, are teens). I fully trust those contributors. As do governments, hospitals, and corporations. Who knew?

Giving power and responsibility and trust to individuals can be done in ways never before envisioned. How do we now bring this disruptive power to innovate high school learning?

### Give power at the point of Teen Choice.

Where do teens actually have choice in learning once they're already enrolled in a public school? Where do they themselves (not parents) make a decision? Where do teens— at some level—contract to provide something (effort) in return?



Ed Jones

Today, when teens agree to contracts about their learning, it's nearly always at the course-level: "I agree to take Band first period, Ms. Tipton's Psychology second, Spanish II third," etc. Or, "I'll load my courses in the morning so my free period is in the afternoon." And lately, "I'll take two dual-enrollment classes when I'm a senior."

For most teens, course choice is the only point of consumer choice. Teens can't choose if they go to school and only rarely can they choose where they go. The when—and for how long and how fast—constraints are usually set by adults. The what is almost always limited to content/skills the school wants to teach. To give teens more power, we should give them far more choices at the level of the semester course. 2016's connected world offers an opportunity to give teens this fine-grained control. How?



### Custom Learning Contracts

Sophomore Andy McCauley grew popcorn. His personal learning plan spanned from planting to marketing his product as a retail business. For this, he earned high school credit in agriculture, business, botany, and engines and machines. Unusual?

I believe the future of school can be found in Custom Learning Contracts (thanks to KnowledgeWorks for the name). Custom learning contracts can obliterate the old time/place/staff restrictions—transforming the learner's day.

Such custom contracts already exist in Ohio. Thousands of teens have used them to change up their own learning experiences.

Custom Learning Contracts can be remarkably simple or quite rich and detailed. In the simplest contract, MJ might agree, "I'll take and pass OSU's MOOCulus online class. I'll get extra help if needed from the help community there." Or, Bekah might agree, "I'll take the Improv class at the community arts center". Demari might commit, "I'll complete the Algorithms section at Khan Academy" and "I'll complete Code Camp next summer hosted by Girls Who Code." The contract need document little more.

Yet, we believe true innovation will come when contracts can become more complex. Olivia's might combine bits from several sources, as well as leave time for a good bit of student-initiated exploration—perhaps from a SOLE option, like School in the Cloud.

"His personal learning plan spanned from planting to marketing his product as a retail business. For doing it, he earned high school credit in agriculture, business, botany, and engines and machines."

Ed Jones



## An Expanded Learning Ecosystem

Before they can propose such contracts, learners must know of the options available. They need a way to find and evaluate these and many more great learning opportunities. Too, teachers, parents, administrators, and the public need a way to quickly make sense of what the student will learn. Mentors are also key.

Andy McCauley's first challenge was finding land to grow the popcorn. Grant Douglass, a local school board member, stepped forward with two acres of land in Ross County. Douglass also served as Andy's mentor throughout the project.

Obviously, projects as unique as Andy's won't be the main path to scaling custom high school learning. It will be far more common to include drawing lessons at the local art center, welding at a nearby factory, running a theodolite with a land surveyor, or taking a MOOC on Justice from Harvard/edX. If we build ecosystems around these contracts—if we make them a possibility for tens- and hundreds-of-thousands of teens—we can truly change how all students approach their education.

## A Half-Built Option

Such was the vision when custom-learning contracts became a universal option in Ohio in 2010. Called Credit Flexibility, every student has the right to present a plan to a teacher or administrator and elect to learn in a fashion of their own design. How was the envisioned option to work?

From the beginning, the state's design team recognized that students, teachers, parents, and districts would need sustained community help if this were to be of use to students at scale. They called for "an 'open source' platform where sites submit and reviewers access, rate, and share" courses and custom plans..."to provide consistency or quality assurance." **But, it was never built.**

## Learning Blueprints—And Blueprint Exchanges

In 2011, I began looking deeply at the credit flex opportunity. From the beginning, it seemed clear: This should never be just a gifted option. To give many students such wide-ranging options, teens must be able to share with each other—and with adults—the learning contracts they envision.

Four years of research later, we'd iterated to a result, dubbed the Learning Blueprint. In such a blueprint, students and others document a basic (normally semester's or quarter's) learning path. Learning Blueprints can be simple or complex.

The Learning Blueprint would be the unit of exchange necessary to transform high school. Elaborate or simple; using Open Badges or no; including experiences of in-person, online, independent, or a combination of learning, Learning Blueprints offer a vetted template for students to craft their personal custom learning contract.

Where will these blueprints be exhibited and found? We generically call them Learning Blueprint Exchanges. One prototype can be found at [badgehs.com](http://badgehs.com); in time, many will evolve to meet different cultural community's needs. Regardless of the platform designs, Learning Blueprint Exchanges will be where both teens and adults evaluate, rate, and share all different kinds of learning blueprints. And, as this innovative approach rapidly evolves, we believe Open Badges can help document and aggregate achievements. By sharing custom learning contracts, teens themselves can evolve the next generation high school.

"Before they can propose such contracts, learners must know of the options available."

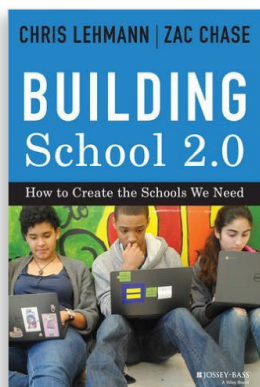
Ed Jones

Interested in reading more about this new way of organizing learning?

Check out *Hacking High School: Making School Work for All Teens* [here](#).

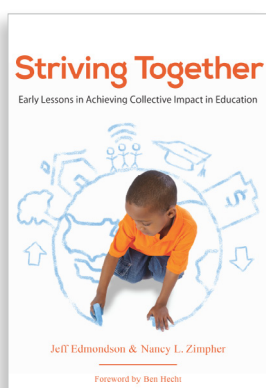


## ON OUR BOOKSHELF



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

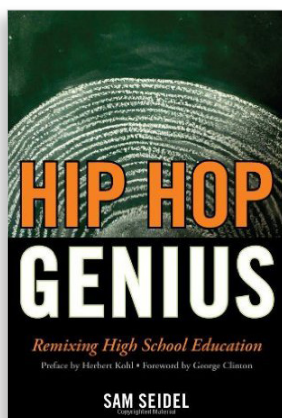
What will the schools of the future look like? In *Building School 2.0*, Science Leadership Academy founders Chris Lehmann and Zac Chase imagine how we can change learning environments to meet the changing nature of our lives and the new technology that surrounds us. They offer 95 propositions for increasing and improving the use of learning technologies, designing learner-centered classrooms, and encouraging educators to serve as mentors in the learning journey. *Building School 2.0* is a practical and powerful resource for educators and other stakeholders at any stage of education transformation.



### **Striving Together**

by Jeff Edmondson & Nancy L. Zimpher

StrivePartnership founding director Jeff Edmondson and chair Nancy L. Zimpher believe everyone in the community has a stake in the success of every child. In 2006, they joined with a diverse group of community leaders to explore a transformative approach to improving education. This led to the development of a framework for collective impact. *Striving Together* chronicles the early stages of this development and draws from Edmondson and Zimpher's experiences at pioneering sites around the nation. They provide tools for inspiring community action and creating collaborative solutions—offering a starting point for the transformation journey.



### **Hip Hop Genius: Remixing High School Education**

by Sam Seidel

Can hip hop transform our education system? In *Hip Hop Genius*, Sam Seidel explores this question by introducing a vision of a system that harnesses the resourceful creativity and swagger of hip hop to remix the way we think about learning design. He shares stories of learners at the nation's first hip hop high school and invites us to think about the implications of leveraging kids' interests, passions, and skills. Hip hop is just one path—but imagine the possibilities when you let kids' dreams and imaginations come into their learning experiences in truly meaningful ways.

## WORTH YOUR TIME

### **How the Idea of a 'Normal' Person Got Invented**

*The End of Average* author Todd Rose takes us through the history of how the concept of the “Average Man” became a sensation and how the societal order—and systems—that it produces often only serve to obscure the reality of the individual. [Read here...](#)

### **Making the Shift from Community Engagement to Community Collaboration**

With a responsibility to prepare learners for a world more complex than ever before, it's crucial that environments embrace their community's collective wisdom. How can we create avenues through which community voice is heard and acted upon in concrete ways? [Read here...](#)

### **Reining in the Checklist Mindset**

It's important for learners to avoid rushing through their competencies for the sake of fastness alone—a “checklist mindset.” Here are a few strategies for avoiding this common pitfall. [Read here...](#)

### **Deeper Learning Through Personalized Learning**

At Minnesota New Country School, learners are constantly engaged in deeper learning and are given the voice and choice to let their interests and passions drive their education. Explore New Country's project-based learning process—from project conception to completion. [Watch here...](#)

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

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