

# pioneering

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## A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Director

## A+UP

Profile of their Learning Environment

A Conversation with Dr. Scott Van Beck

## REFLECTIONS

Learning that Goes Deep  
by the Education Reimagined  
team

## LEARNER VOICES

A Shared Commitment  
and a Two-Way Street  
by Kushal Kadakia

## TOOLS & RESOURCES

## UPCOMING EVENTS

## ON OUR BOOKSHELF

## WORTH YOUR TIME

education   
reimagined

● connect. share. discover. lead. ●

# pioneering

Dear Friends,

We had a wonderful meeting with Todd Rose and Parisa Rouhani at Harvard University last week to explore how we can continue building the connections between the science of the individual and the learner-centered paradigm. Todd is the author of *The End of Average*—a book you must read, if you haven't already—and Todd and Parisa work together at the Center for Individual Opportunity at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

*The End of Average* debunks the science behind the notion of average, as it is applied to humans. Through a series of riveting stories, it expounds upon the science that shows—in no uncertain terms—that when you design systems for “average” people, you are designing them for no one. We see learner-centered education as the logical extension of this worldview: there is no such thing as an average learner. And, as my last letter noted, if this is the assumption that you start with, your next step is to actually get to know the child in front of you.

One of many great moments in the conversation was when Todd and Parisa shared the importance of understanding that being learner-centered is a paradigm, first and foremost. Todd equated the difference between the school-centered and learner-centered paradigms with the difference between working in classic vs. quantum physics. There may be common words across these two paradigms, but those same words have vastly different meanings. In the next issue of *Pioneering*, I will be sharing an article to further explore this analogy—delving into why it matters that we understand learner-centered education as a paradigm shift and not as a program, intervention, or new way of doing things.

In the meantime, we are thrilled to have 62 pioneering practitioners in town today for our second **Pioneer Lab Challenge**. We can't wait to share what emerges!

Best,

**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





## A+ UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

Houston, TX



There is nothing more important to learning than relationships. —Dr. Scott Van Beck

**DOES LEARNING BEGIN AT THE DOOR OF A SCHOOL?** Does learning end when the last bell rings? At A+ Unlimited Potential (A+UP), the answer is simple: no. For the scholars of A+UP, learning happens around the clock and throughout the entire community—and is driven by the unique passions, inquiries, and interests each learner brings to the table.

Launched by local non-profit Houston A+ Challenge, A+UP is Houston's first "mobile" middle school and currently serves 50 learners. A+UP was born out of the non-profit's commitment to bring innovation to Houston's education system—set up to act as an incubator for its methodology and framework. A+UP exists with the goal to "unlock the unlimited potential of students while exploring the potential of technology to revolutionize learning."

Making this mission a reality has meant nothing short of turning just about everything associated with traditional schooling on its head. It all starts with their proprietary learning framework, G.R.E.A.T. Personalized Learning—which focuses on five key aspects: Growth. Relationships. Empowerment. Anywhere, Anytime. Technology.

For A+UP, growth comes in many forms—academic progress, character development, and interest and passion expansion. Ensuring that all these realms are covered means building and fostering strong, lasting relationships not only between the scholar and the learning coach but also with their family. Together, the three players act as a team—building and co-creating the learner's path forward. And, to support their pursuits and explorations, A+UP provides every kid with high-speed internet, a device, and a personalized online learning platform. So, combining technology with a focus on relationships, A+UP has created a truly **personalized, socially embedded** environment: The kids are self-directed and empowered; the learning coaches act as guides and supports; the parents are tuned in and engaged: and the community's resources are leveraged.

And, that's not all that makes A+UP a non-typical environment. They have abandoned the idea of the "school building" to **bring open-walled** (or anytime, anywhere) learning to life in a big way—calling Houston's Museum District home and using the Health Museum as their base. Their ten community partners include the Houston Metro Rail, The Woods Project, and the Museum of Fine Arts. So, built into each scholar's day and week are trips via public transportation, visits to museums and libraries, adventures into nature, and authentic opportunities to make a difference in their community. The real world isn't some unknown place that they'll experience some day. For these A+UP scholars, it is where their learning is made real—made **relevant and contextualized**—every day.

Founded in 2013, A+UP began as an experiment of sorts—a proof of concept. And, they've been taking ground ever since. Recently granted charter status, they have big plans for the coming years, including three new campuses. In time, going on a "perpetual field trip" might just be what it is like to be a kid in Houston.

### LEARN MORE

[A Virtual Tour](#)

[Unlimited Potential For A Small Middle Grade Flex Program](#)

[Students On 'Perpetual Field Trip' With New Mobile, Tech School](#)

### FACTS & FIGURES

Free Private Middle School  
50 learners served

1 Campus ( 2 new campuses  
launching in August 2016 )

ELL or Primary Language other  
than English: 12%

Learners with disabilities: 12%

Free or reduced lunch: 65%

### CONNECT

Website

[Houston A+ Challenge](#)

[A+ Unlimited Potential](#)

Facebook Page

[A+UP](#)

Twitter

[@APlusUPCharter](#)

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# A Conversation with Dr. Scott Van Beck, Executive Director of Houston A+ Challenge

The Education Reimagined team had the chance to catch up with Dr. Scott Van Beck, Executive Director of the Houston A+ Challenge—the non-profit that launched A+ Unlimited Potential. From their work with traditional public schools to their role as an incubator for A+UP, Houston A+ Challenge has a long history of shaking things up in the Houston education world.



Dr. Scott Van Beck

**Q. We know that A+ Unlimited Potential is only one of the initiatives that Houston A+ Challenge (A+) is working on. Can you share the bigger picture for what A+ is all about?**

**A. SCOTT:** Houston A+ Challenge started back in 1997 with a grant from The Annenberg Foundation. The intention was to improve public schools in Houston. Over time, our focus and our views about what's really needed have evolved: now, our goal is to save public schooling in Houston. In fact, our mission is to be a catalyst for change and a model for innovation in education in the Houston area and beyond, to ensure that every student is prepared for post-secondary success.

**Q. That's a powerful mission. How does A+ think about the change that they are hoping to catalyze?**

**A. SCOTT:** It is important to understand our framework for stronger schools and teachers: G.R.E.A.T. Personalized Learning. This framework is constructed from six equally important imperatives:

- 1. Growth:** Learning is about development in the academic, social, and emotional realms.
- 2. Relationships:** Learning requires strong bonds between kids, educators, and families.
- 3. Empowerment:** Learning should equip and support all kids to be self-directed.
- 4. Anytime, Anywhere:** Learning is a constant—unrestricted by time or place.
- 5. Technology:** Learning can be enhanced and supported by virtual platforms and devices.
- 6. Personalized Learning:** Learning must inspire and unleash kids' passions and interests.

Developed over our 20 years of experience, we bring this framework to bear in all that we do. We see that personalized learning is the future for education.

**Q. Tell us about the work that A+ does to bring your mission and framework to life.**

**A. SCOTT:** Our efforts can be thought of in three mutually reinforcing buckets of work: 1) strengthen; 2) innovate; and 3) connect.

1. Our work in the “strengthen” realm is about making change in the traditional education system. We believe that, until we can fully move to a personalized system, we have both a moral and ethical responsibility to make the current system as productive as possible. So, we offer a wide range of fee-for-service professional learning opportunities to our public schools and educators—all of which seek to strengthen instruction, school culture, family engagement, and technology integration. With our G.R.E.A.T. Personalized Learning framework as the backbone, we run professional learning workshops, organize monthly working groups called academies, and provide customized on-site support to campuses throughout Houston.
2. Our “innovation” stream of work has really taken on a life of its own with A+UP, Houston’s first mobile, personalized learning middle school. This wasn’t our first venture into the innovation realm, though. In years past, we helped to launch the region’s first early college and public international high schools. Now, with two new A+UP campuses opening in August, we’re excited to see our pilot become more than just an incubation test case.
3. Finally, our “connect” bucket of work focuses on convening teachers, administrators, community leaders, families, and learners to explore what public education should mean for kids and families. To do this, we host meetings, informal cocktail hours, and, in partnership with Chevron, a free, public speaker series.

**Q. It sounds like you’re firing on all cylinders! Let’s dig a bit deeper into your “innovation” arm. What inspired A+UP?**

**A. SCOTT:** It originated out of some level of frustration. We didn’t feel like they were moving to learner-centered education fast enough with our consulting work in the traditional system.

Texas has been under the standardized testing edict for years. And, don’t get me wrong, we’re all about standards, but we think that there are personalized paths to standards. So, we launched A+UP with 50 kids in the Houston Museum District. This was our way of showing what our personalized learning framework—our six imperatives—could really mean for kids when it is fully realized.

**Q. That must have been a big leap—from sharing the framework with traditional public schools to actually starting a school of your own. Can you share what you learned?**

**A. SCOTT:** I’d say one of the things that surprised us most was around the role of technology. When we launched, we thought it would be the biggest piece—everything would flow from the tech aspect. But, pretty soon, we realized that the most important aspect is relationships. Technology can enhance, support, and broaden learning—but it isn’t the end of all, be all.

Taking our focus on relationships a step further, we’ve cut out the middle gunk of the education system at A+UP. We’ve simplified. We have three roles when it comes to learning: scholars, learning coaches, and parents. Those three together—they are the decision makers.

“We have three roles when it comes to learning: scholars, learning coaches, and parents...they are the decision makers.”

—DR. SCOTT VAN BECK

This takes kids, in particular, a bit of time to get used to. When you're asking them to be self-directed, they don't always know what to make of it. Our first three months, all the kids were just sitting back and waiting for the adults to tell them what to do—we just had a bunch of people staring at each other. But, once it started to settle in that we did want them to take the reins, we saw a huge change in what was possible.

I'll share an anecdote that highlights both what it means for a kid to be an empowered learner and the adjusted thinking that it demands from the educator. One Friday night, one of our learning coaches was out on a date, and she kept getting text after text from one of our scholars. Worrying that something could be wrong, she read the texts—only to discover that he wanted her to grade his math homework. It was 11pm on a Friday night! But, instead of ignoring him, she slips into the bathroom to grade it. Moments later, she gets another text asking for more homework. Can you imagine this happening in our current system of education?

**Q. It's always inspiring to hear about a kid who is that engaged in their own learning—and with their math homework, no less! You shared that A+UP is based in the Museum District. How are you thinking about expanding the canvas for kids' learning even beyond that?**

**A. SCOTT:** When we designed A+UP, we had a lot of design folks and architects at the table, so this has always been top of mind: How do you ensure that learning can be “anywhere, anytime”?

Houston has a lot of social capital areas that are currently underutilized by schools. We are now identifying them and exploring how to leverage the opportunities they offer. We've also been watching the rail line being built in Houston and think that will be the primary way to connect all of these social capital meccas. Our kids are now using it all the time.

And, we are not only excited about the opportunities for our current cohort of A+UP scholars but also eager to launch new cohorts in different areas around the city. We see all these potential cohort themes that could run through a city the size of Houston—we have museum-based and could look at career-based or transportation-driven. The opportunities are unbelievable!

**Q. With your newly granted charter status, you are now looking seriously at what that expansion will mean for the A+UP model. What are you seeing?**

**A. SCOTT:** Our design team is now thinking at the scale of 5,000 kids. With two campuses opening this August and another in the pipeline for next August, we're on our way. We are also in conversation with those in the traditional system considering what it would mean to have a cohort of their own. For example, a soccer coach at one of our partner schools wants to create a cohort comprised of his players—he wants to spend more time training them and sees opportunities to foster learning pathways out of their passion for the sport. Seeing personalized learning as the future for education, we're eager to see where all of this can go.

“Our design team is now thinking at the scale of 5,000 kids.”

—DR. SCOTT VAN BECK

**Scott Van Beck** has served since 2007 as Executive Director of Houston A+ Challenge, where he leads the Houston area's largest nonprofit working toward public school improvement. Scott oversees the organization's work to improve leadership and performance to strengthen, innovate, and connect public schools across the Houston region.

With more than 20 years of experience as an educator in Houston ISD, Scott most recently served as West Region Superintendent, providing leadership for 60+ schools and 54,000+ students. He started his career as a middle school teacher, later transitioning to assistant principal of Lamar High, principal of Revere Middle—during which time he was named Region IV Middle School Principal of the Year—and the first principal of Westside High. He also has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston in the Executive Education Doctoral program.



## REFLECTIONS

# Learning that Goes Deep

by Monica Snellings and Susan Stancampiano, Education Reimagined

### WHAT DOES A YEAR OF LEARNING AND REFLECTION LOOK LIKE FOR A

**LEARNER?** At the end of the school year, the learners at City Neighbors Middle School—one of three schools in a Baltimore-based charter network—conduct a thirty-minute Presentation of Learning (POL) to show just that. These presentations address challenges, successes, and much more.

We were thrilled to be invited to attend this year's POLs by Bobbi Macdonald, founder and director of City Neighbors Schools. She told us, "These are not big productions. The learners lead, and we keep it simple." We were curious to see how this yearly assessment of learning worked and to discover what POLs might yield for learners.

In preparation for the POL, learners create a portfolio of their work, spend time reviewing what they've learned, and write a series of reflections on the past year and thoughts about the year ahead. During the POL, learners present their work and reflections to their parents, faculty advisor, teachers, invited guests, and guests of the school.

Armed with three-ring binders, the learners entered the room ready to share their year's work. The conversations that followed blew our minds. Learners voiced sincere self-assessment. This held true whether they were looking at a challenge they had faced or a big success they had achieved. The self-awareness and growth in confidence was apparent in each learner we saw.

We observed, listened, asked questions, and filled out rubrics—checking to see that these 12- and 13-year-olds addressed each aspect of the past year. We saw evidence of the learners' deep investment in their work: they lit up as they touched on their passions and interests and expressed real honesty as they shared some of their struggles and questions.



“My big lesson learned this year was to be more open-minded and get comfortable with doing things that I did not want to do,” reflected 8th grader Arianna Townes. Seventh grader Briana Baker, new to City Neighbors as of this year, stood in front of the room—sharing her first ever POL—and shared that art and music were very challenging for her. She had never attended a school that offered art or music classes before: “Singing opened me up more, and I started to become who I am.”

We were thoroughly impressed with the comfort each of the learners had in presenting to a room filled with both known and unknown adults. A feeling of safety seemed to underlie this comfort. Though they might stumble in the presentation—or in their work over the past year—they knew they would not be judged; instead, they would be supported and guided.

We were also charmed by some of the activities that the learners had engaged in over the past year. There were some standouts that had clearly made a big impact on these kids. In each of the presentations we observed, every child pointed to the same favorite: the “Real Life” game. Brianna was astonished, “I did not know bills could be so much!” And, Arianna noted, “It’s like learning while having fun!”

Each child spoke at length about a personal project—one they had planned and executed all by themselves. Bria Smith made a cookbook of 10 dessert recipes from around the world. Along with researching the history of each recipe, she proudly noted her unique twists on each. From the pictures she showed us, her baked goods were so beautiful they would impress Martha Stewart!



Left to right: Bria at work in the kitchen, a page from her cookbook, and showing off her Napoleans.

## PARENTS AND POLs

We were curious to hear what parents thought about POLs. The parents we spoke to believed the POLs to be instrumental to their learner’s increasing maturity and progression on the journey towards answering the question: Who am I? One parent noted that, “At City Neighbors, they find what students are passionate about and run with it.”

We also asked: What was the one thing they felt their kids would take away from their time at City Neighbors? The heart-felt and unanimous response—a firm grounding in social justice and the knowledge that “they have a voice for change.”

We came away impressed by the richness of self-discovery, as well as the depth of the relationships in the room—from advisors who really know their learners and “get them” to parents who are committed partners in learning. POLs might look like a simple process—but we saw just how deeply enriching they are for all who take part.



Arianna with her mom

“My big lesson learned this year was to be more open-minded and get comfortable doing things that I did not want to do.”

—ARIANNA TOWNES





# A Shared Commitment and a Two-Way Street

by Kushal Kadakia

**LIKE MOST KIDS, I WAS BOTH EXCITED AND APPREHENSIVE** in the weeks leading up to my freshman year of college. As the only student from my school district to attend Duke that year, I worried about fitting in and making friends, while my anxious parents fretted about potential laundry mishaps (which thankfully never occurred) and my lamentable cooking skills (which still remain a work in progress). But, when I first set foot on campus, I knew the brochures and email advertisements had been telling the truth.

College looked like everything it was hyped up to be, from the soaring arches and weathered stone buildings, to the kids casually throwing frisbees on the quad and studying on the sun-soaked grass. The first few weeks were a blur of new faces, late nights, and free food. I quickly formed friendships with people from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds—discovering a shared eagerness to explore different disciplines, learn new concepts, and take on the world’s challenges. In that moment, despite coming from different corners of the world, we were all connected by an infectious feeling of possibility.

As a result, the beginning of classes was a little anticlimactic. Taking notes in a cavernous auditorium while a professor wrote out formulas on a chalkboard felt... boring. But, I quickly discovered that “class” in college was not limited to the lecture hall. An introductory course of two hundred kids was sectioned into intimate discussion groups of ten students—turning dry lectures into active debates. The chemistry equations I learned in lecture were brought to life the next day in lab, as we synthesized theoretical concepts into practical lessons in science. From papers to problem sets, my mounting coursework lived up to the expected workload of college classes. As my friends and I worked to balance classes and extracurriculars, I began to notice a different kind of diversity in my peers: their academic backgrounds. Some students had already been exposed to higher-level courses, like multivariable calculus, in college preparatory schools, while others struggled to learn the foreign language of academic writing for



Kushal Kadakia

**Kushal Kadakia** is an Angier B. Duke Scholar at Duke University. In high school, he served on the Superintendent’s Advisory Council and attended Education Reimagined’s Pioneer Basecamp. In college, Kushal researches the genetic causes of heart disease as a POWER and Huang Fellow. He also conducts research on neglected tropical diseases in the Sanford School of Public Policy and international health systems in the Fuqua School of Business. Kushal serves as the Chief of Staff in Duke Student Government and as the Vice Chair of the Honor Council. He has been recognized with the United Nations Inspirational Peace Prize, the Texas Policy Debate State Championship, and the Texas Stockholm Junior Water Prize.

the first time. Seeing the broad spectrum of “college readiness,” I developed a new appreciation for my own experiences in a learner-centered learning environment.

The remarkable transition my school district, Clear Creek ISD (CCISD), made to learner-centered learning is a case study for how we can transform the public school system. Like far too many educators and learners across the nation, CCISD struggled with the challenges of tight budgets, inflexible teaching requirements, and far too many standardized tests. With over 40,000 kids, individualized instruction was not always a practical expectation for teachers. With a state-mandated curriculum, exposure to college classes like organic chemistry was not always possible for students. With publicly-funded campuses, money was not always available for extracurricular pursuits.

But, these circumstances are exactly why the shift towards learner-centered learning is so necessary.

Learner-centered learning is a shared commitment between students, parents, and teachers to foster an environment that can meet the needs of each and every child in spite of institutional obstacles. This approach to education recognizes that each student is unique and does not seek to diminish a child’s potential through standardization. Instead, this framework aims to foster intellectual curiosity and develop portable skills through real-world experiences. Students are taught to think critically, write articulately, and speak confidently. Educators work to instill in learners a willingness to ask the hard questions and the persistence to dig deep to find the right answers.

Of course, teachers and parents recognize that the structure and delivery of learning is often dependent on a student’s educational context. Although we strive for equality of opportunity in education, resource limitations and social diversity contribute to the variation in every child’s learning experience. But, while learner-centered learning will look different for each child, it is still guided by the underlying principle of “students first.”

In my high school, that meant empowering students through technology. Students from all socioeconomic backgrounds were loaned a computer free of charge. This was an incredible achievement for a public education system—one that put a world of information at a kid’s fingertips. With newfound access to online databases and resources, I was able to lead my debate team to win the first state championship in our school’s history.

In my high school, that meant connecting the classroom to the real world. Our Career Technical Education program offered students the opportunity to take career-centered courses, such as accounting, agricultural science, and manufacturing, and then operationalized the curriculum through internships in the field. With the support of our administration, I started a school-based enterprise through DECA, earning \$10,000 over my high school career to help subsidize the cost for students to attend out-of-town competitions.

In my high school, that meant fostering avenues for creativity. Whether it was a commitment to the arts, even in the face of budget cuts, or investment in student-driven projects in robotics, entrepreneurship, and science fairs, learners were taught to reject limits and dream big. With the guidance of my teachers, I was able to win gold medals at the International ISWEEP Science Fair three times.

Looking back, I am immensely grateful to have had dedicated educators who went the extra mile for their student learners. Instead of emphasizing the memorization of facts or the regurgitation of statistics, my teachers challenged me to embrace a global

“Learner-centered learning is a shared commitment between students, parents, and teachers to foster an environment that can meet the needs of each and every child.”

—KUSHAL KADAKIA

perspective, become proficient with multimedia, and extract the practical applications of what I was learning. Those skills are what got me into college and have become a platform for my academic growth at the university level.

But, the biggest impact that my learner-centered high school had on me was helping me to develop my own voice as a student. I learned early on that education is a two-way street. Although I have been blessed with phenomenal teachers and mentors, at the end of the day, it would be up to me to make the most of the opportunities that I have been given. Knowing that I have the agency to shape the process and outcome of my education has been transformative.

As I approached the end of my high school career, I wanted to find a way to give back to a school system that has given me so much. So, when I heard that 40,000 seniors across the state of Texas were ineligible for graduation because of standardized testing, I chose to speak up. I worked with my Superintendent, Dr. Greg Smith, to share these student's stories and presented to ten state legislators at the 2014 Bay Area Schools Consortium advocating for reform. Our efforts worked, and in May 2015, the Governor signed a new law offering a second chance to our students. That June, I was proud to walk the stage at graduation with my peers. CCISD had helped me find my voice, opening the doors to my future.

Since coming to college, I have been able to overload on classes, taken on advanced research opportunities, and serve in student government and the honor council. My achievements are a testament to the foundation that my teachers and I developed together. Engaging in hands-on science fair projects in high school eliminated my fear of taking risks, helping me win multiple fellowships in molecular biology as a freshman in college. Learning to analyze and synthesize a wide range of information while on my high school debate team cultivated a strong work ethic, helping me get research opportunities in healthcare policy and international law. All of this and more has been possible because of the teachers who stretched me, parents who believed in me, and friends who supported me.

Remembering my roots, I went back to visit my old high school after I finished my first semester of college. My high school certainly looked different from college—there was peeling paint instead of pristine marble, overgrown bushes instead of manicured lawns. But the building still felt like home, with students crowding the familiar hallways and teachers standing outside of their classrooms welcoming learners with open arms. As I walked out the double doors of my high school, I smiled fondly at the inscription on the walls: "Once a Falcon, Always a Falcon." Not a day goes by in college that I do not think of my time at Clear Lake High School. My school's educational environment has shaped me into the student, friend, and person that I am today.

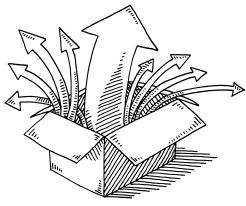
Thanks to that community, I am a learner for life.

“The biggest impact that my learner-centered high school had on me was helping me to develop my own voice as a student.”

—KUSHAL KADAKIA

## CALL FOR LEARNER SUBMISSIONS

Thanks Kushal! 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)**



## CALL FOR IDEAS

# Do you have a GREAT idea that you need help developing?

**Teach to Lead**, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, ASCD, and over 120 educational organizations, wants to help you! They will be holding a **Teacher Leadership Summit** in Long Beach, CA September 24-25, 2016. ([link](#))

**To attend, you must submit your [idea](#) by July 25, 2016.** As space is limited for each Summit, idea submissions will be reviewed and invitations for participation, with registration details, will be emailed to those accepted. If chosen to attend, you can bring a team of up to 5 people for a weekend designed to develop your idea into an action plan you and our team can implement. Each team will be provided with a **Critical Friend** from a Teach to Lead supporting organization who has skills, knowledge and resources to assist you. Teach to Lead provides lodging (if more than 50 miles from hotel), some meals, and registration for participants.

### Summit participants must:

- Have an actionable teacher leadership idea.
- Pay for or obtain sponsorship of your travel.
- Have at least one practicing classroom educator for your team.
- Commit to taking implementation steps following Summit participation.
- Be available to attend the entire Summit (8:00 am Saturday, September 23rd through 12:30 pm on Sunday, September 24th).
- There will be a reception Friday, September 22nd that you are strongly suggested to attend. This is a strategic networking session where teams have the opportunity to meet staff and the Critical Friend assigned to work individually with your team.

“We don’t just want educators to be part of the necessary change—we need them to lead it.”

—JOHN KING  
US SECRETARY  
OF EDUCATION

**TEACH**  **LEAD**®

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## Institute for Personalized Learning

**Institute for Personalized Learning (IPL)** ([link](#)) is committed to “working with their member schools and districts to re-design their educational ecosystem into one that is learner-centered.” The Institute was born out of the Cooperative Educational Service Agency #1 (CESA #1)—a provider of high-quality, cost-effective programs and services for K-12 districts in Southeastern Wisconsin. Back in 2009, CESA #1 brought together a cohort of superintendents to participate in a regional learning community initiative both to examine the challenges of the current education system and to imagine what might be possible if that system were transformed. Out of this process, they emerged with a vision that calls for a system designed around individual learner readiness, strengths, needs, and interests—one that is personalized. The Institute is now taking that vision forward. Operating on an action network approach, they are building paths to support districts and educators to create the conditions that will allow all learners to succeed. Not just for those in Wisconsin, The Institute offers their “honeycomb” change model—which provides a framework for districts to make the shift to personalized learning—as well as professional development opportunities, micro-credentialing courses, and other resources ripe for pioneers across the country!

**Transforming Public Education: A Regional Call to Action** ([link](#))

**Online Offerings** ([link](#))

**Proficiency-Based Micro-Credentials** ([link](#))

## National Institute for Student-Centered Education

Driven by the belief that reforming parts of the system will not be enough to create a new ideal, the **National Institute for Student-Centered Education (NISCE)** ([link](#)) “aims to catalyze support for a vision of education where students—not politics, not tests, not expediency—are at the center of learning, and where all students have the opportunities and resources they need to succeed.” As a program of Schools for Children, NISCE is actively working to change the national conversation around education; they are committed to shifting the focus away from the divisive debates that plague the current system. Instead, NISCE wants to shine a light on the incredible educators who treat learners as the unique individuals they are—and who are changing their practice to reflect that. To do this, NISCE has authored a number of white papers that seek to articulate the elements that make up “student-centered” approaches to learning. They also host an annual INSPIRE Conference, which brings together experts and practitioners to educate, challenge, and inspire those working in student-centered education. Check out these resources, opportunities, and more!

**White Paper: Putting Student-Centered Education in Context** ([link](#))

**INSPIRE Conference** ([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.

**National Forum on Education Policy**

Washington, DC  
June 29-July 1

[Conference Website](#)

**ERDI Summer Conference 2016**

St. Louis, MO  
July 6-12

[Conference Website](#)

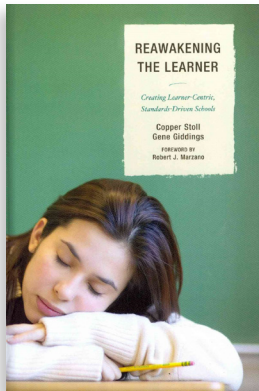
**Big Picture's Big Bang**

Orlando, FL  
July 26-29

[Conference Website](#)

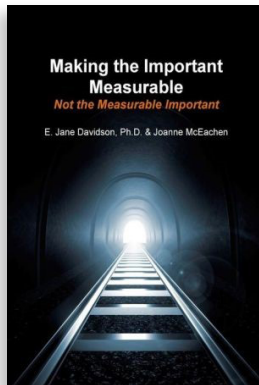


## ON OUR BOOKSHELF



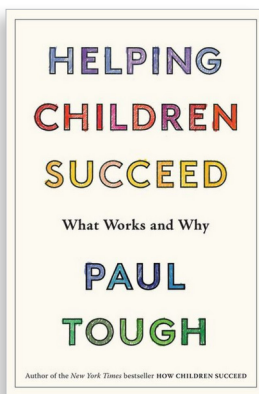
### Re-Awakening the Learner: Creating Learner-Centric, Standards-Driven Schools by Copper Stoll and Gene Giddings

The premise behind Copper Stoll and Gene Giddings' book: Re-awakening the sleeping giant in education. And, who else could that be but the learner? Bringing their combined experience, research, and vision to bear, Stoll and Giddings' *Re-Awakening the Learner* shines a light on the systemic shift required to create a space and opportunity for learners to be involved in every step of their own education.



### Making the Important Measurable, Not the Measurable Important by Dr. E. Jane Davidson and Joanne McEachen

*Making the Important Measurable, Not the Measurable Important* delves into the land of “what-ifs?” With one big “what-if” at the center of it all: What if we truly put learners first? In this mini-book, Dr. E. Jane Davidson and Joanne McEachen share their Learners First™ approach to education—where what really matters to and for learners is at the heart of everything. From new assessment measures to new tracking systems, their call is for a systems-wide transformation.



### Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why by Paul Tough

Following his acclaimed *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough offers *Helping Children Succeed*, which sets out to address the questions that made the latter so intriguing. Taking another look at the impact of poverty on children's mental health and physical development, he shifts his focus to how we can help children develop the skills and ways of being—grit, curiosity, conscientiousness, self-control, and optimism—that empower them to forge their own paths and co-create their own learning.

## WORTH YOUR TIME

### As Number of Homeless Students Soar, How Schools Can Serve Them Better

In the last decade, the number of homeless students has doubled—reaching nearly 1.3 million people. How can learner-centered environments provide an avenue of support for these kids struggling to survive?

[Read here](#)

### Will Teaching Change or Will We Just Keep Complaining?

Our education is a “a spider-web of interdependency,” posits Teacher-Leader Maddie Fennell. What does that mean? For learner-centered education to take root, every strand of that web must transformed.

[Read here](#)

### Beats, Rhymes, & Bunsen Burners: Using Hip-Hop as Teaching Tool

Science. Rap. Anthem. Three words not often found together. That is, unless you know about Science Genius B.a.t.t.l.e.s. (Bringing Attention to Transforming, Teaching and Learning Science) Program, a New York City initiative seeking to inspire in kids a passion for the sciences.

[Watch here](#)

“There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.”

—JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

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



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