

pioneering

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A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Executive Director

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education 
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● connect. share. discover. lead. ●

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Dear Pioneers,

Last week, half of our team was down in Austin for another year of SXSWedu. We were so glad to see so many of you at the cocktail reception co-hosted with our friends from [Next Generation Learning Challenges](#) and [The Learning Accelerator](#). The welcoming and relaxing environment provided the space for insightful conversations to be had after a long day of visiting booths, special talks, and multi-hour summits.

We were also excited to make lots of new friends at our Tuesday Summit on “It’s a Paradigm Shift. So What?” The highlight of the Summit was the amazing young learners who joined us from McComb School District in Mississippi ([link](#)), Houston A+UP ([link](#)), Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in NYC ([link](#)), and Iowa BIG in Cedar Rapids, IA ([link](#)). They took the stage as our featured, learner panel where they shared their amazing stories about what learner-centered education has provided them. Afterward, they helped attendees design skits that showcased what an unconstrained day of learning could look like if we reimagined the notions of “school.” We want to send a special thank you to all of the adults in those communities who made their travel and participation possible!

After coming back to DC for a brief moment, I was back in the air just before we were hit with a small snow storm on Tuesday. I was on my way to Greenville, South Carolina where I had the pleasure of attending the [TransformSC](#) Spring Conference. TransformSC is a growing network of schools and districts focused on real-world, anytime-anywhere learning, real-time information, and students advancing when ready. The pioneering spirit was present everywhere.

I was especially pleased to meet Marie Watson from Red Bank Elementary School who is a leading light in South Carolina. It just so happens you can read Red Bank’s profile in this issue, along with a piece that Marie authored about Red Bank’s journey to engage parents in the transformational process. Groups like TransformSC are critical to accelerating the transformation of education, as they normalize a new conversation, support practice networks, and influence policy makers. Thank you for inviting me to join the conversation!

We have a great issue lined up this week and look forward to sharing about the outcomes of our second Pioneer Lab meeting in our next issue!

Enjoy!

Warm wishes,
Kelly Young



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Connect. Share. Discover. Lead.
We seek to accelerate the growth of the movement dedicated to transforming education in America. We invite those excited and interested by the possibility of learner-centered education to discover more, join a growing movement, and begin a journey to make this a reality in diverse communities across the country.





“My thinking as a teacher has transformed from being the one with the power for students' learning to the one who inspires students to acquire their own power for learning.” – JENNY SZALWINSKI, TEACHER

THE TRANSFORMATION AT RED BANK ELEMENTARY BEGAN in 2009 at a voluntary summer retreat. Starting with the question, “What’s wrong with education today?” a group of educators launched an inquiry of discovery. And, over time, this quest landed them on their ultimate wondering: “What if we decided to change everything?”

Although fears of failure and the unknown were certainly present, the possibility of this new future of learning trumped all. With the support of district leaders, Principal Marie Watson and her team of educators began exploring the potential of a **competency-based**, learner-centered environment.

Fast forward to today, and Red Bank has positioned itself as a leader in education transformation—preaching to “just get started,” make progress along the way, and keep in mind that this new field of learner-centered education is about the journey, not the finish line. Red Bank views a learner’s mind as a developmental puzzle that should always be recognized for its unique strengths and weaknesses. Red Bank leaders understand the inefficiencies of age-based cohorts and standards-based design. They ask, if a learner isn’t developmentally ready to learn the basics of language or the foundations of mathematics, how can they possibly move on to more advanced study?

Starting with learners as young as four years old, they are met where they are. No matter how fast or slow a learner picks up new knowledge and skills, once “it” clicks, they are supported to jump into the next possibility. All of this happens through **personalized, relevant, and contextualized** pathways that are designed for each unique learner.

Imagine two learners: one whose fluency in math is moving along more slowly than his grasp of language and another, who’s a natural at all STEM-related work but struggles with reading comprehension. Throughout the day, each learner has the opportunity to not only learn how to lead but also how to be led. In the morning, the young, aspiring polyglot helps his friend with her Spanish vocabulary. And, in the afternoon, they flip roles as the future doctor shows her friend a new way of adding improper fractions. Both learners take **agency** over not only their own learning but also that of their peers, cultivating a **socially embedded** culture of collaboration.

The leaders at Red Bank Elementary remain humble in their transition, acknowledging they aren’t able to go as quickly as they want. But when looking back at that summer retreat 8 years ago, they are reminded of how far they’ve come. They are an example to all educators of what can come from “just getting started.”

LEARN MORE

[Red Bank Elementary: Five Big Takeaways](#)

FACTS & FIGURES

Public School

580 Learners

69% Poverty index

Rural Lexington County, South Carolina (Lexington County School District One)

\$23,616 per capita income for learners served

CONNECT

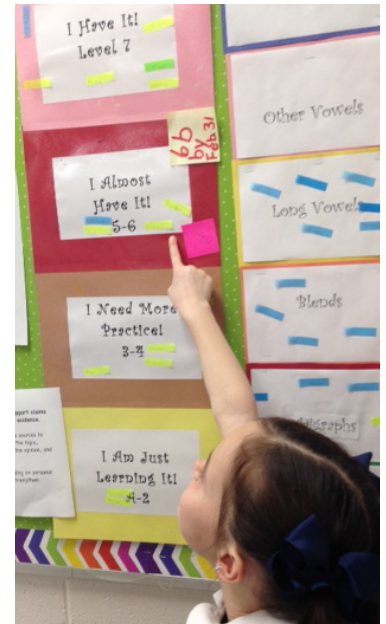
Website

[Red Bank Elementary School](#)

Social Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)





Red Bank Elementary School is located in Lexington, South Carolina, on the rural fringe of the capital city, Columbia. The school has a population of 580 students with a 69% poverty index. Through teacher collaboration about six years ago, a grassroots movement ignited the transformation to a student-centered learning environment. Marie Watson has been principal of Red Bank Elementary for 13 years.



MARIE WATSON

How to Artfully Enroll Parents in Learner-Centered Transformation

by Marie Watson

“The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed—it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.”

– KEN ROBINSON, *THE ELEMENT: HOW FINDING YOUR PASSION CHANGES EVERYTHING*

Why does a child repeat a grade in school? Why does a child have to be a “first grader” because he is six years old? What does a parent really know about what a child is learning when scores are averaged?

These are the questions the faculty and staff at Red Bank Elementary asked ourselves when we started to question the outdated, factory model of education. Upon realizing the system was no longer effective for this generation of learners, we began looking for ways to make changes that carried significant weight. The traditional system was never built to meet the needs of every child. And, chasing change without clear goals or district and community support would have resulted in the same old, same old.

While anticipating all that would be required to recreate school was intimidating, the thought of what could possibly happen if our parents and community revolted was downright frightening! After thinking, reflecting, and taking baby steps, we realized that parents and community members were just like us. They simply needed to consider the same questions we had asked ourselves. We needed to artfully enroll them.

We started with articles in our school newsletter meant to challenge parents' thinking about how school is traditionally designed and run. Since we didn't know how many parents actually read the newsletter, we included a section where the parent could sign and return a slip of paper and their child would be included in a drawing for lunch with

“After thinking, reflecting, and taking baby steps, we realized that parents and community members were just like us.”

MARIE WATSON

the principal. We quickly realized more parents had been reading our newsletter than we anticipated, encouraging us to continue using that medium of communication.

Moving beyond the newsletter, we started to include brief presentations at school-sponsored events to get parents to think about why school is structured the way it is. We asked: Why do we go to school from August to June? Did you ever have a time when you were given a grade and it included extra credit for something that had nothing to do with the learning? What does it really mean to get a “B” in math? We didn’t provide the answers but simply asked the parents to think. It turns out, they started coming to the same realizations we did. We also tried hosting Parent Coffee Chats to involve parents in more intimate discussion, but they weren’t well attended. Yes, failures were bound to happen!

To bring the discussion directly to the students, we covered a wall in our hallway with learning progressions in each of the content areas. This allowed parents, staff, and students to see how each moment of learning is built upon the next and why there is no reason to wait for the next opportunity in learning once the foundation is set.

Furthermore, a data wall was created using assessment results. Rather than displaying the results by grade level or age, we presented a continuum from the lowest to the highest scores. The resulting display demonstrated that children were learning at different rates and were all over the continuum, regardless of age or grade level.

Although the Parent Coffee Chats weren’t successful, a similar invitation was offered to our business partners to discuss the need for change in education. Our business leaders were especially interested in providing transparency of learning, creativity, opportunities for collaboration, and the ability to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways. With our wall displays up for all eyes to see, they were completely supportive and donated funds to support professional learning for our educators.

As we moved forward, bit by bit, to abandon the former ways of school, we involved students directly. Student-led conferences were crucial in helping parents realize their children could truly know themselves as learners, talk about their strengths and weakness, and verbalize the next steps in their learning. Through this process, parents began to understand that a child may be at the beginning stages of, partially proficient with, or proficient with the learning. Making this change through the student-led conferences paved a smooth transition to burying the A-F process of averaging that all of us had experienced as students. Just before releasing the new progress reports, parent sessions were offered, so that everyone could understand what was being provided. Out of nearly 600 students, only ONE parent made a complaint about the change, and by the end of the year, this same parent drafted a letter thanking us for providing a wonderful learning environment for her daughter. These preliminary steps led to a victory with our parents. They began to support the transformation and appreciate that every child would be met at the place of learning that is uniquely theirs.

While Red Bank Elementary has not “arrived,” we have made tremendous progress and host many visitors who want to learn about our work to begin this journey. We have kept up our courage and continue living into new visions. This journey has been one of asking questions, not knowing all of the answers, living into the answers, and finding more questions to ask. We have come to know, by heart, the way of stepping into unknown territory with the promise in the words of Rainer Maria Rilke (1903), “Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers which couldn’t be given to you now because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then...you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

“Student-led conferences were crucial in helping parents realize their children could truly know themselves as learners, talk about their strengths and weakness, and verbalize the next steps in their learning.”

MARIE WATSON

Marie Watson is a lifelong resident of South Carolina and is from a family of educators. She began her career as an art educator, and she believes her work with students in creating—starting with a blank sheet of paper or a lump of clay—has benefited her work in reimagining school. Marie has served as the principal at Red Bank Elementary School for 14 years, and she loves watching her learners as leaders and creators. She is proud of her son, Ben, who is also an educator teaching Classics at the University of Oklahoma.



INSIGHTS

Reflections from SXSWedu

by Monica Snellings

SXSWedu is, in a word, mammoth—it takes a well-organized plan and strong discipline to land in the spaces I think I might want to be in. And, even with all of that planning, I still find myself making a few unexpected discoveries during the four-day journey.

At this year's conference, one thing was as consistent as ever: The lineup of keynote speakers was amazing. From the opening keynote by Dr. Christopher Emdin to the closing presentations by Dr. Brené Brown, Dr. Sara Elizabeth Lewis, and Roberto Rivera, these powerful speakers added critical and urgent points for our consideration as educators and as human beings.

Dr. Emdin opened with a talk entitled “We Got It from Here...Thank You 4 Your Service.” The talk (and title), inspired by the latest album by A Tribe Called Quest, challenged conference attendees to honor and value the culture and creative expressions of brown and black learners. He emphasized, when these elements are denied or invalidated, we as education stakeholders strip away learners' humanity and do violence to their sense of self. As we readied ourselves for the four-day event, he asked all of us to carry this lens with us in each of our experiences. I highly recommend you watch his presentation ([link](#)) in its entirety.

Feeling motivated and inspired after this opener, I found myself walking around SXSWedu with an even more focused eye on finding truly learner-centered presentations. Four presentations really struck a chord with me, plus a bonus discovery that spoke to the kid inside me. Here are my reflections:

THE END OF SCHOOL AS WE KNOW IT

Will Richardson welcomed attendees to what he believes (and we would concur) is possibly the most disruptive moment ever in education. Adding to the challenge handed down during the opening keynote by Dr. Emdin, Will encouraged the audience to examine a new context for education and modern learners. He was emphatic that educators accept that all of their content is readily available via the internet and their role as “teacher” needs to transform. He asked educators to start seeing themselves as co-learners in the journey of education, rather than just as teachers imparting knowledge. He suggested that we need to allow young people to teach us as much as we feel the need to teach them.



MONICA SNELLINGS

To explore more wisdom from Will, visit Modern Learners [\(link\)](#) and download their white paper, *10 Principles for Schools of Modern Learning*. Then, check out their brand new initiative, Change.School [\(link\)](#)—“an 8-week experience for educational leaders who are serious about designing and creating relevant, sustainable change in their” learning environments. Finally, check out his TEDx talk, *The Surprising Truth About Learning in Schools* [\(link\)](#).

INTERNSHIPS AT SCALE FROM BIG PICTURE LEARNING

The Big Picture internship program has learners out in their communities one or two days a week starting in 9th grade. To put it simply, **they leave school to learn**. Learners’ interests drive the process and result in the formation of powerful, long-term relationships with community mentors. In fact, the learners at BPL truly own the entire process of identifying their interest area, recruiting a mentor, and co-designing their internship experience.

Big Picture’s secret sauce in creating these opportunities is the result of lessons learned over their years of testing and iteration. But, their experience and commitment to this style of learning doesn’t make the exercise of actually seeking out opportunities, recruiting mentors, and scaffolding internship experiences any easier than when they started. Rather, they have simply opened up more and more opportunities to make the program even better for their learners. That’s what makes it all worth it.

Now, in an effort to share what they’ve learned, go big, and make this type of learning available to learning environments everywhere, they’ve launched **ImBlaze**, an internship management platform. BPL Co-Executive Director, Andrew Frishman, shared that ImBlaze is currently live in 12 environments. Over the next few years, they plan to iterate and improve the platform with the goal of adding more schools along the way, so many more kids can embrace the world as their classroom. For educators interested in taking action today, Andrew suggested three things:

1. **Support learners in inviting guest speakers aligned with their interests;**
2. **Launch an “Interview A [scientist, veteran, writer, artist, or business person] Project;” and**
3. **Conduct interest-based job-shadow days.**

As you consider how a learner-centered internship program would bring positive learning experiences to your environment, Andrew also recommended reading *Developing Talent in Young People* by Dr. Benjamin Bloom—a deep dive into a groundbreaking study conducted in the 1980s. For more information on how to connect with Big Picture Learning and their ImBlaze initiative go here [\(link\)](#).

A VOICE FROM THE FUTURE

John Maeda is the foremost expert on the intersection of design, technology, and education. He is formerly head of the MIT Media Lab, the 16th president of the Rhode Island School of Design, an advisor to KPCB—the venture capital group—and now Global Head of Computational Design and Inclusion at Automattic.

In a wide-ranging conversation, Maeda took questions from the audience via Snapchat. As he scrolled through the questions, he spoke to his study of how, from a user perspective, China uses smartphone technology in a more sophisticated manner than American citizens. He wanted to learn from them, so this Snapchat experiment was one of his playful studies.

“Will Richardson welcomed attendees to what he believes (and we would concur) is possibly the most disruptive moment ever in education.”

MONICA SNELLINGS

As he answered various questions, he made the case for mentors or “Yodas.” He remarked, “We all need them—you might have the keys, but a Yoda opens the doors.” And, how do you find a yoda? Identify and ask. Don’t expect them to show up on your doorstep and invite you under their wing. Thinking back to the BPL conversation, I reflected on how learners themselves could take this advice into action if they are empowered to go out in the world and simply ask for mentorship.

Digging into his personal experience, Maeda spoke of practicing constant renewal throughout life—believing that there is always something new out there. Through trying, failing, and working at the edges, he said he could have stopped and regretted things but chose not to. For more reading on this idea of growing through failure, he referenced an essay by John Gardner that has sustained him. You can read it here [\(link\)](#).

Speaking specifically to education, he is hopeful about progress being made in the K-12 sector. However, he believes higher-ed needs to be turned upside down. Going forward, people need to build the mindset of a lifelong learner and always be “running with the river.” He closed by saying, “I encourage you to do uncomfortable things—to remain relevant to the things people are thinking about.”

If you want a peek into the future of work, visit Automattic [\(link\)](#). This is the world we need to be preparing our learners to enter. Check out Maeda's 2017 Design in Tech Report [\(link\)](#) for a deep dive into “design trends revolutionizing the entrepreneurial and corporate ecosystems in tech.”

SOCIAL SENSORY ARCHITECTURES

In the image below, you'll see a picture of an installation of social sensory architecture that engages children with Autism on their terms. This tactile surface addresses the proprioceptive dysfunction (difficulty understanding the position of the body in space) some children experience when diagnosed with a sensory processing disorder. This pressure sensitive surface transforms with touch to assist with things like grading movement. These spatial environments are physically, visually, and sonically responsive. By using meditative sounds and visual cues when your hand or your body applies pressure to any spot on the surface, you begin to improve your understanding of your body in space. It is an incredibly beautiful and delightful experience. Check out the research and researchers behind this effort here [\(link\)](#).



“I encourage you to do uncomfortable things—to remain relevant to the things people are thinking about.”

JOHN MAEDA

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING TOTALLY FUN—BREAKOUTEDU

BreakoutEDU is an immersive games platform for learners of all ages. In BreakoutEDU games, players work collaboratively to solve a series of critical-thinking puzzles in order to open a locked box—an actual real box with physical locks just like you find in Escape Rooms. Each Breakout EDU starter kit costs about \$125 and can be used to play hundreds of games. Right now, there are over 345 game choices. There are games for players age six up to adults. They also publish templates and resources so you can design your own games. Explore more here [\(link\)](#).

Carrying a pleasantly exhausted mind into the final speeches of the four-day conference, I was reenergized by the unique, thought-provoking presentations by Brown, Lewis, and Rivera.

Brené Brown spoke about vulnerability—the willingness to be brave and take risks. For many of us, shame is the biggest thing that gets in our way. Up to age five, shame is the threat of being unlovable. She cited that 85% of people can remember being shamed in school and the transformative effect it had on the way they thought about themselves. And, 90% could name a teacher that influenced and changed the trajectory of their lives for the better. Brown asked the audience not to ever question the power you have to make a difference for the people you teach.

Next up was Dr. Sara Elizabeth Lewis, an Assistant Professor of Art and Architecture and African American Studies at Harvard. She is also the author of *The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mastery*. Dr. Lewis shared her thoughts on the power of art and the artist to uniquely address social justice issues. She demonstrated her thesis with powerful, evocative images. The phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words” came to mind, but I think it goes much deeper than that. Art can move people in ways that reasoned arguments cannot. Art makes present and concrete our common humanity. Dr. Lewis stated “the arts are how we overcome our collective failures.” What occurred to me is the enormous potential we could unleash if we truly committed to having a place for the arts in education in the same way we do for reading or math. In my mind, a truly learner-centered education system would open up a new renaissance of creativity and lead to a more humane and just world.

Roberto Rivera closed things out by sharing the story of a young person named Carlos whose misdirected entrepreneurial skills were being employed on the street corner. He was told early that he was learning deficient. Over time, he discovered he simply learned differently, and he was able to go from helpless and hopeless to helpful and hopeful. From “a dope dealer to a hope dealer.”

Turns out, Carlos is Roberto Carlos Rivera, and this was his story. He explained that the Latin root word of education “educare” means to bring out that which is already there. He stated that the job of educators is to 1) see the beauty and brilliance in our youth and 2) help them see that and experience it in themselves. He spoke movingly about the power of community and social emotional learning research on Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG). As we teach, engage, and create with our communities, he sees enormous potential and opportunity if our mindset is one of abundance (not deficit) thinking. Check out Fulfill The Dream, a social and emotional learning curriculum he created to engage youth in culturally relevant ways using media, movement, and music here [\(link\)](#).

Watch the keynotes here [\(link\)](#).

“In my mind, a truly learner-centered education system would open up a new renaissance of creativity and lead to a more humane and just world.”

MONICA SNELLINGS

Monica Snellings is Communications and Design Lead for Education Reimagined. Monica was previously studio director at a communications design firm in Washington, D.C. In this capacity, she worked with government agencies and nonprofit organizations in the development of behavior, policy, and strategic communication materials. She recently completed a Masters in Design for Social Innovation at the School of Visual Arts, New York in 2015.



LEARNER VOICES

Re-Defining My Comfort Zone

by Hannah Bertram

Hi, I'm Hannah! I'm a senior in high school from Cedar Rapids, Iowa and an enthusiastic member of Iowa BIG. Throughout the last four years, I have grown to love the community I was raised in. My story is winding and continuously developing, and I'm excited to share it with you.

A little background: Iowa BIG is an innovative, alternative, academic program offered to high school students in Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Mt. Vernon, Iowa. The Iowa BIG model is quite different from that of traditional school. We don't have classes; we don't have bells; and we don't have tests. At BIG, we see the community as our classroom. Students are encouraged to be makers, designers, storytellers, and social entrepreneurs by working with businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies. In a nutshell, we receive the same credit that we would at our traditional high schools, but instead of doing worksheets and unenthusiastic presentations about things that don't interest us, we work on initiatives/projects we are passionate about and that make a difference in our communities. This model of education has changed my perceptions of myself and the world around me.

HOW DID I GET TO IOWA BIG?

Let's backtrack a little. I discovered Iowa BIG during a time when everything I did and thought in high school seemed to be Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, and double-spaced. As a student who had always found a way to be engaged with and passionate about what I was being taught, I had lost my drive.

Fortunately, in the spring of my sophomore year, I attended the Iowa BIG "Hackathon" ([link](#))—a day enveloped in controlled chaos where students from BIG and traditional schools come together to "hack" on new and old ideas that interest us or could benefit the community (these usually come hand-in-hand).

Personally, I spent my day working with the Urban Orchards team ([link](#)), a group of BIG learners designing and installing an urban fruit orchard at Noelridge Park.

In one day, I had designed a washing station for a fruit orchard, gone to a local park and staked areas for fruit trees, and met with the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. It was a crazy day, but I felt so fulfilled and active that I immediately knew Iowa BIG was a place for me.



HANNAH BERTRAM

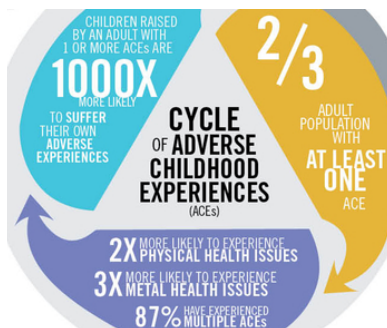
STARTING ON A NEW JOURNEY

Joining Iowa BIG was scary at first. I had always worked hard in school to get “good grades,” but BIG wasn’t about the grades. It was about experiences much richer than I would get at traditional school. My family and I weren’t sure how to approach this different style of learning, but by the following fall, I was officially a BIG student. My first projects at Iowa BIG transformed my previous connotations of “education.” My classroom became the streets of Cedar Rapids, and my educators became everyone I met. Naturally, I joined the Urban Orchard team and dabbled in agriculture. I gained first-hand experience working with tree nurseries and the Parks and Recreation Department.

Then, I joined the CRTrees project, a group of students working to design an app for the City of Cedar Rapids’s Arborist. This was when I tried coding for the first time. Most students my age, especially girls, are never taught how to program websites and apps. I started learning the language of HTML while building an app for the city’s Arborist. We used the CRTrees App ([link](#)) to help him log the health and location of trees in the area. My exposure to coding opened a new door for me, and I discovered my interest in web development. I started designing the Food Environment Alliance website ([link](#)) for a team of food security organizations in CR, and I have designed more sites ([link](#)) since.

Through the Food Environment Alliance, I also gained public speaking experience. We brought seventeen organizations together, which took a great deal of communication. My team and I were constantly presenting and editing the website to make it as effective as possible for all the partners involved. Through the experience, I also saw my self-confidence grow. All of these projects were fun and experimental and allowed me to learn a lot about myself and how I function in a team-based setting. They took me from basic Times New Roman, to the iconic Helvetica, expressive Bodoni, and professional Neuton.

BREAKING NEW GROUND



Out of all my projects, there was one that outdid them all—the ACEs project. I joined a team of students, teachers, and community members who were passionate about the way mental health was viewed by the community. We researched and analyzed the Center for Disease Control’s Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study. Through the ACEs study, it was found that the negative mental health impact on adults who suffered through childhood trauma is greater than society realizes—

because it is an ongoing cycle. We started working with educators in the area and implementing trauma-informed practices in three local high schools, a youth shelter, and two elementary schools. We also had the chance to work with Iowa State Senator Liz Mathis on her mental health bill, Senate File 2259. This bill gained more funding for injectable medications for schizophrenia patients and increased accessibility to psychiatrists for Iowans.

The ACEs project opened my eyes in a way that education never had before. Learning about the impact trauma had on my peers caused me to reconstruct how I empathize with others. I also discovered I have an immense passion for psychology and public health. To me, it seemed like a no-brainer to implement mental health supports in the state and community. However, I quickly discovered not everyone agreed. Some people think that mental illness doesn’t exist, and some think it’s not their cause to worry about—however, I set out to change that. By working with audiences that encompassed

“My classroom became the streets of Cedar Rapids, and my educators became everyone I met.”

HANNAH BERTRAM

many diverse beliefs about mental health, I was welcomed into a network of people throughout Iowa and beyond that made me enjoy the experience even more.

The ACEs project presented many obstacles, and I experienced a lot of failures. There were many times I wondered if people would ever be willing to change their approach. Many educators and even students questioned if implementing a new attitude would actually help, and sometimes it didn't. However, these failures taught me about the value of persistence. Working alongside people who also felt the conversation about mental health needed to be louder empowered me to become someone I never had been before. I was confident and brave. I was bold.



My time with Iowa BIG has allowed me to view myself in a new light. I recognize the value of experimentation, have redefined my comfort zone, and am more confident overall in myself and my abilities.

As I transition into the end of my high school career, I have footing in the field of public health. I credit Iowa BIG for helping me develop a lasting network that will support me throughout my life. I want to thank Education Reimagined for supporting

this program, and I want to thank the program for supporting me. Iowa BIG never fails in challenging me to push myself. The way I have been integrated into the community has allowed me to see everything, including myself, through a new lens. Because of Iowa BIG, I am ready to create my own fonts.

“The way I have been integrated into the community has allowed me to see everything, including myself, through a new lens.”

HANNAH BERTRAM

Hannah Bertram is a senior at Jefferson High School and Iowa BIG. She is a member of the board of directors for the Cedar Rapids Downtown Rotary Interact Club, runs cross country, and participates in show choir. She has loved music and volunteering since she was young. Next year, she plans to attend the University of Iowa to double major in Political Science and Public Health with a minor in Social Psychology. She recently launched the EdRevision project with fellow BIG learner, Jemar Lee, because she believes education should encompass choice and variety.



EdRevision

We are excited to share a brand new initiative launched by two SparkHouse [\(link\)](#) learners earlier this year. After attending SparkHouse in November 2016, Hannah Bertram and Jemar Lee returned to their home state of Iowa with a deep desire to bring the learner-centered conversation to their Cedar Rapids community and beyond. With this newfound passion in their hearts, they promptly began formulating an initiative called **EdRevision** [\(link\)](#). It is their mission to “educate communities about the importance of learner-centered education; [they] will empower traditional and nontraditional students and teachers by bringing them together to revise education.” Hannah and Jemar aren’t alone in this effort as 12 other Iowa BIG learners signed on after hearing about their idea. With support from Iowa BIG mentors, these learners are already organizing events, an EdCongress, and EdRevision Talks. Their work is creating brand new spaces where learner-centered learners and traditional learners can share their experiences from two different paradigms and discuss strategies for advocating for transformation in their spaces.

Meet the team! [\(link\)](#)

Follow EdRevision on Twitter [\(link\)](#) and **Facebook** [\(link\)](#)

Learn more about Iowa BIG [\(link\)](#)

College Transformed: Five institutions leading the charge in innovation

For a holistic shift from school-centered to learner-centered education to occur, the entire academic path needs to be transformed—from early childhood learning all the way through the world of post-secondary opportunities. Although our work at Education Reimagined is focused on K-12 transformation, we are always on the lookout for where the paradigm shift is taking place in other segments and sectors. In a recent paper, **College Transformed: Five institutions leading the charge in innovation** [\(link\)](#), Alana Dunagan from the Christensen Institute examines five institutions looking to keep up with the changing landscape of the 21st-century learning environment. As a result, these institutions are taking ownership in creating new possibilities and pushing boundaries. From measuring success based on graduate performance in their future workplaces to competency-based degree programs for traditional and non-traditional undergraduates, these institutions are adapting to the needs of their learners. Dive further into how these institutions are moving forward in their transformational pursuits and see the bridges between K-12 and higher education transformation already being built.

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.

PIONEER LAB

Houston, TX
March 23-24

[Event Website](#)

EDUCATION ELEMENTS PERSONALIZED LEARNING SUMMIT 2017

San Francisco, CA
May 10-12

[Conference Website](#)

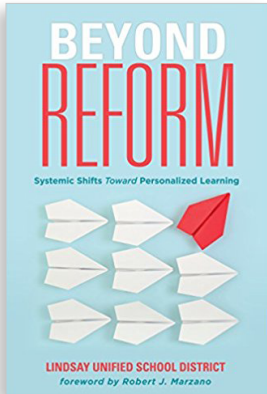
OPPORTUNITY BOARD

Education Reimagined

is hiring for three dynamic, diverse team members! We’re seeking an **Associate Director of National Outreach & Community Building**; a **Web & Social Media Manager**; and a **Personal Assistant**. [Learn more here!](#)

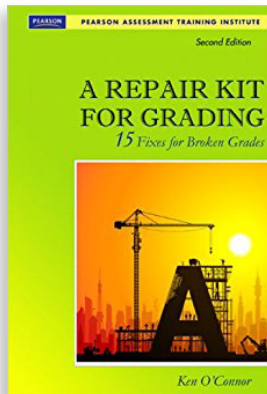
B4KIDS is seeking a founding **Head of School** for their 2017/18 academic year! [Apply here](#)

KnowledgeWorks and **Teach the Future** invite learners to **Imagine FutureEd!** The design challenge is open from February 20-March 27. Check it out [here](#)



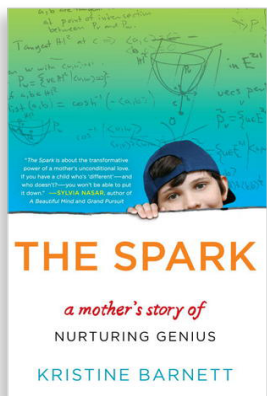
Beyond Reform: Systemic Shifts Toward Personalized Learning by Lindsay Unified School District

It's been a decade since Lindsay Unified School District began their transformational journey from a time-based, school-centric system to a performance-based, passion-driven, learner-centered one. Since this systemic shift, they've seen learner engagement, attendance, and graduation rates skyrocket. With such a dramatic transformation happening in just 10 years, the leaders at LUSD knew they had something worth sharing. To get their story in as many hands as possible, they wrote and published *Beyond Reform: Systemic Shifts Toward Personalized Learning*. Get your copy today!



A Repair Kit for Grading: Fifteen Fixes for Broken Grades by Ken O'Connor

When viewing school-centric assessment from a learner-centered lens, it can be like trying to understand how a giraffe got inside a doghouse. It's utterly nonsensical. So, re-imagining how learning is assessed is the only way forward. In Ken O'Connor's *A Repair Kit for Grading: Fifteen Fixes for Broken Grades*, he challenges educators to reevaluate their current grading practices and provides powerful suggestions for where to go next. For O'Connor, it is all about tying assessment to learning quality and ensuring that message is known and understood by all parties involved. Explore his ideas and see how you might adapt them to your practice!



The Spark: A Mother's Story of Nurturing, Genius, and Autism by Kristine Barnett

A child enrolls in school, has a particularly significant “weakness” that doesn't fit the “average,” and his days are spent addressing (or “fixing”) this inefficiency. Does this sound familiar? How often is that child successful? Kristine Barnett asked herself the same thing about her autistic son, Jacob. And, rather than following protocol handed out by the experts, she went with her gut and chose a path focused on Jacob's strengths and passions. Check out her book, *The Spark: A Mother's Story of Nurturing, Genius, and Autism*, and discover how her child went from a future of social isolation to one where he is a boy genius staring at a possible Nobel Prize.

WORTH YOUR TIME

What happened when one school banned homework—and asked kids to read and play instead

When you stand in the learner-centered paradigm, an obvious conclusion arises: Homework (as it is traditionally used) is not conducive for developmental growth in our learners. And, now, more and more research is supporting that conclusion. See how one environment decided to get rid of it altogether!

[Read here](#)

Never Too Late: Creating a Climate for Adults to Learn New Skills

As educators lead young learners into lifelong pursuits of knowledge, they too must adopt this growth mindset. See how this mindset shift can come to life for professionals in your environment. [Read here](#)

Iowa Ideas—A Push Toward Learner-Centered Education

Listen in on Education Reimagined's Associate Director, Trace Pickering, as he discusses the importance of learner-centered education in his home state of Iowa in a new local series called *Iowa Ideas*. [Listen here](#)

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

— R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

Read past issues of
PIONEERING : A LEARNER-CENTERED PUBLICATION
www.education-reimagined.org



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