

pioneering

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A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Executive Director

ALTSCHOOL

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education 
reimagined

● connect. share. discover. lead. ● pioneering

Dear Pioneers,

I just returned from Big Picture's **Big Bang Conference** in St. Louis where 500 incredible learners, educators, and school leaders were meeting to rejuvenate and advance their own practice.

The Big Picture principles of learning design are learning through interests, through practice, and through relationships—which, when woven together like a braided rope, demonstrate all five elements of learner-centered education. Their innovative conference was designed to model these principles.

Their “advisories,” for example, modeled personalized, relevant, and contextualized and socially embedded learning. Advisory groups were set up around a common interest, so relationship was naturally seeded. This structure created communities inside the larger conference community that helped us all feel more connected. Another example was the “Leaving to Learn” day, which explored creating open-walled experiences. Depending on interest, people went into St. Louis to discover learning avenues that existed beyond the “conference walls.”

For me, the highlight of the whole conference was being part of an Education Reimagined presentation that was led by young learners, rather than by me (as it usually goes). Called “The Most Underutilized Resource in Education...the Learner,” the session was led by learners Halima and Tenaj from Camden Big Picture Learning Academy, along with their principal, Tim Jenkins, and me. Halima, Tenaj, and Tim acted out two skits to contrast school-centered from learner-centered education. In 6-minutes, they were able to provide the audience with the grist for a great conversation on what learning looks like when you start with the learner's interests, build relationships in and out of school, and do learning through real and authentic projects. It was a blast!

Thank you to Big Picture Learning for hosting such an incredible event. It was such a pleasure to hear Elliot Washor, Dennis Littky, Andrew Frishman, and Carlos Moreno talk in different ways about the “new-form” of education, rather than the re-form of education; the long and compelling history of learner-centered education; and the incredible impact Big Picture Learning is having on learners and their communities across the country. We are grateful for all of the pioneering work Big Picture has been leading for the past 40+ years.

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.





ALTSCHOOL

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA & NEW YORK CITY, NY

“At AltSchool, I’ve flourished intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Being here, I’ve found a passion for learning and the desire to follow my dreams.” – ALTSCHOOL LEARNER

SITTING ON THE DOORSTEP OF THE TECH CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, it’s not surprising that AltSchool utilizes today’s most advanced technologies in its approach to education. But, what separates them from many education innovators in the region is their mission. AltSchool is building a technology platform they hope can someday address inequity in education by putting learners everywhere at the center of their own learning.

What is perhaps most surprising is that technology is nothing more or less than a tool at AltSchool. It enhances learners’ ability to develop and track personalized learning, but it doesn’t replace face-to-face interaction. When a learner steps into the AltSchool learning community, they are stepping into a new world of possibility.

Every AltSchool journey begins with a one-on-one interaction between the learner and their teacher. This conversation is the catalyst in designing a **personalized, relevant, and contextualized** learning plan that empowers **learner agency** and enables the learner to articulate their strengths, learning styles, goals, and interests. This knowledge is then held and utilized by the learner, their parents, and AltSchool educators to build a support system that maximizes the learner’s potential to achieve and go beyond their goals.

Once this plan is set, playlists guide the learner’s weekly assignments, which combine independent exploration, one-on-one interaction with educators, and small group and whole class collaboration with peers. Learning at AltSchool provides an equal balance of flexibility and structure, so learners can explore their interests while developing the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop into their best selves. This exploration is founded in **socially embedded** and **open-walled** principles that take learning from the traditional confines of time (from first bell to last) and space (a single building) to anywhere, anytime learning.

If a 13-year-old wants to discover the trade secrets of salesmanship, he can seek out a mentor in the profession and learn the value of authenticity, trustworthiness, and patience. He can learn the ins and outs of negotiation techniques, reflecting back the ability to communicate effectively, perform financial mathematics, and gain insight into effective research techniques. Within any broad interest, a learner is able to identify and acquire the **knowledge, skills, and dispositions** that will be of use regardless of the learner’s future path.

AltSchool is always looking to advance their practice. With four years under their belt, they are now starting to offer the platform to learning environments around the country. With the learner at the center, AltSchool’s technological and human innovation is poised to create dynamic futures not just for the learners in their community but for all learners as they continue to grow their network.

LEARN MORE

[AltSchool: A Place to Grow](#)

[AltSchool: What Happens When Educators and Engineers Work Together](#)

[‘Mass Personalization Drives Learning Experiment at AltSchool’](#)

FACTS & FIGURES

Founded in 2013

A network of learning environments that includes 7 lab schools serving PreK-8th grade (SF Bay Area and New York) and 4 pilot partner schools

25% of student body receiving tuition assistance

1:1 ratio of educators to engineers

“Superpowering” educators with technology that enables them to cultivate learner agency

Certified B Corporation and public benefit corporation—learn more [here](#)

Fall 2017: Launching services and product that represents a suite of tools to enable learning that is personal for any learning environment

Vision: To ultimately reach 50+M kids in charter and public schools

CONNECT

Website

[AltSchool](#)





Empower Learner Voice and Watch What Happens Next

by Michael Hurlbutt

It's so empowering to be able to use my voice and have it be heard. Within the dominating school-centered education paradigm, the norm is for children's voices to be silent when discussing how the system should work.

After being in traditional school my whole life, I know learners are often left feeling like they don't deserve to have a voice. As young learners, we don't feel like people. We don't have a right to show emotion or receive a personalized education. In the traditional system, learning is being done to us, instead of with us.

Now that my voice has been unleashed, I use it as much as I can.

I have been invited to learner-centered conferences in Washington, DC and Chicago to help shift this school-centered paradigm. The first conference, [SparkHouse](#), was focused on the learners. I heard from many different perspectives, passions, and backgrounds. Some of the stories I heard really showed me that change is possible anywhere and that it's up to learners to step up and make it happen.

The second conference, Pioneer Lab Training, brought everyone together—learners, educators, and other adults in education. It was pretty cool to be in a room full of adults, learning together. I learned so much from listening to more experienced learner perspectives. Most importantly, I learned how to explain and discuss learner-centered education with others in ways that are persuasive and empathetic. It also taught me why change is such a hard thing to pursue.



MICHAEL HURLBUTT

“Now that my voice has been unleashed, I use it as much as I can.”

MICHAEL HURLBUTT

As I listened, I heard the same passion and frustration I've felt through my own experience. With everyone feeling this same need for change, I truly felt part of something I wanted to share with others. Along with the teachers, school board members, and principals, I was able to share my voice and my passion for shifting the paradigm. By being able to share my vision and experience with everyone else, they got to hear my story of moving from a traditional school to a learner-centered one. Having experienced both environments, the biggest difference has been the constant encouragement given to young learners to use their voice in learner-centered environments. In these environments, we are recognized as the future.

After joining in on these conferences, my vision of education has evolved. I'm gaining a better understanding of what learner-centered is and what it isn't. Before enrolling at MC² and participating in their learner-centered system, I looked at school and learning as something I had to do. Now, I think of it as something that is fun and can be done anywhere and with anyone. I'm actually passionate about it.

Before I participated at Education Reimagined's gatherings, I didn't see myself as an advocate for education. Since last November's SparkHouse, however, my advocacy has become one of my biggest passions. Collaborating with so many learners (young and older) from different cultures and backgrounds from around the country, I now realize MC² is not the only one with these ideas and visions about the need to shift paradigms.

I want to thank Education Reimagined for bringing all of us together and helping us further our knowledge in educating others about learner-centered education. After being in traditional schools my whole life and being told "it was me" or "I'm not trying," I realized it wasn't about me or the teacher. It was the system. It was the system not allowing me to have voice in my education or have my passions drive my learning. My time at SparkHouse was when I realized I wasn't the only one struggling.

More and more learners are giving up every day because their learning isn't theirs. When I simply ask people how they would view learning if they could learn about their passions, I see their belief in what's possible in education and themselves change almost immediately. So I invite you—imagine if we could all learn about our passions and apply them to real-world contexts every day. What could learners create?

Most people know the traditional system isn't working, but they're afraid to make changes. They don't know what the results look like on the other side. The thing we need to realize is we, as human beings, change all the time. Everything is always changing, so shouldn't we adapt how we think about education? After being part of a traditional and a learner-centered system, I can confidently say the traditional system wasn't preparing me for life and was possibly setting me up for failure. I didn't have and wouldn't have gained any of the knowledge and life skills I now know I need to survive and thrive.

Learning in a learner-centered environment has taught me so much about my strengths and weaknesses as a learner. I can continue sitting here and explaining how both paradigms made me feel and how I've been a failure in one and an exemplary learner in another, but to put it simply, having the knowledge and skills to explore my passions is what I gain from learner-centered education and what I would never have received in a traditional system. If we give ANY learner voice in their learning, they WILL own it and strive for success just as I have done and will continue to do.

“Everything is always changing, so shouldn't we adapt how we think about education?”

MICHAEL HURLBUTT

My name is **Michael Hurlbutt**. I am 16 and a Phase 2 (Sophomore) at Making Community Connections (MC²) Charter School. I have been here for a year now and have completely fallen in love with the model and dedicated myself to bettering my community and education. I was in traditional school until 9th grade, when I realized traditional education wasn't preparing me for life. I am extremely passionate about education and helping others. I have been a part of two conferences with Education Reimagined, one in Washington, DC and one in Chicago. I want to be an educator when I graduate and move on in my learning career. I have worked with middle school and elementary school students through internships to get experience for my passion in the field of education.



CAST

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) [\(link\)](#) was founded in 1984 just as the personal computing wave was taking off. This team of researchers wanted to get ahead of the curve and test ways technology would eventually impact learning in the everyday learning environment. Over the course of a decade, they developed the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and have since used it as the foundation of their research and development. Their mission is to work with top “researchers, institutions of higher education, corporations, and foundations to pursue this work...until learning has no limits.” Through their research, they have created a host of free UDL tools for educators, hosted professional development opportunities for educators to gain a deeper understanding of UDL principles, and continuously looked to build capacity in their work by engaging education stakeholders across the country to improve learning opportunities for all children. Explore their resources today.

About UDL [\(link\)](#)

Free Learning Tools [\(link\)](#)

Professional Learning [\(link\)](#)

Quill

When the focus of education turns toward the knowledge, skills, and dispositions developed by each individual learner, there is an increased challenge in focusing assessment on the small details. The creators of Quill [\(link\)](#) have taken on this challenge in one particular area of learning. If a learner expresses expert knowledge when verbally presenting her findings on a particular learning activity but struggles to express it clearly in her writing, it can't be said she hasn't become proficient in the subject matter. However, written communication is undoubtedly a premier skill to master for today's working world. How can learners remain focused on the big picture of their learning journey, while picking up the necessary technical skills in the process? Enter Quill. This tool for writing provides real-time feedback as the learner writes. And, rather than giving away the answer, the tool encourages the learner with pop-up messages like “Good work! Now revise your sentence. How could you avoid repeating the word ‘tea’?” These messages encourage the learner to search for clearer ways to express their meaning and allows the learner to visit quick lessons to explore particular grammar rules and strong sentence structures.

Quill Connect [\(link\)](#)

Quill Diagnostic [\(link\)](#)

Quill Proofreader [\(link\)](#)

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.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING SUMMIT

Chanhassen, MN

Jul 31-Aug 1

[Summit Website](#)

ELEVATE! BY MESA COUNTY VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT 51

Grand Junction, CO

July 31-Aug 1

[Event Info](#)

LEAP INNOVATED CONFERENCE

Chicago, IL

August 28

[Conference Website](#)

25TH ANNUAL MEETING: THE STATE POLICY NETWORK

San Antonio, TX

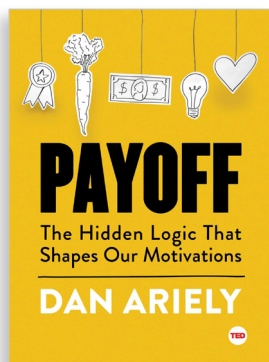
Aug 29-Sep 1

[Meeting Website](#)

OPPORTUNITY BOARD

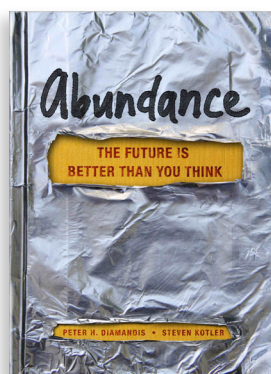
iNACOL is accepting applications for two awards—**Teacher of the Year Award** and **Outstanding Individual Contribution to Personalized Learning Award**. Learn more [here!](#)

TechBoston Academy is seeking a **Grade 8 General Science/ Mathematics Teacher**. Learn more and apply [here](#).



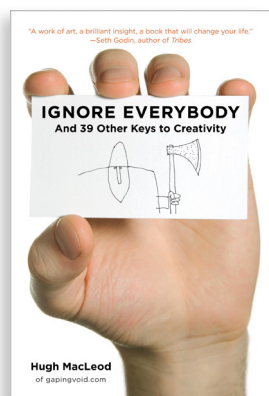
Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motivations by Dan Ariely

Whether you're a young learner, parent, practitioner, educator, team leader, or well...anyone, motivation is a foundational component to achieving the ambitious goals we set. Oftentimes, we believe we understand what motivates us and those around us but still find ourselves falling short of expectations. Dan Ariely, Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics at Duke University, dove deep into what we think motivates us and what actually motivates us. And, he shares the results of his research in *Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motivations*. Want to discover more about how you can maximize your potential and the potential of people you lead? Check out Ariely's work.



Abundance: The Future is Better than You Think by Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler

Reading the daily news cycle can conjure up images of a bleak future in which the world has nowhere to go but down. As pioneers in education, it's our hope and optimism that keeps us pushing forward, despite the barriers standing in front of us. Thankfully, we aren't the only ones looking optimistically into the future. Authors Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler dive into a variety of topics to explore how the exponential growth of technology will affect positive change a lot sooner than we think. Explore *Abundance: The Future is Better Than You Think*, and fuel your optimistic fire for building a transformational future.



Ignore Everybody: And 39 Other Keys to Creativity by Hugh MacLeod

At Education Reimagined, we are creating the space for learner-centered pioneers to join together as a community and recognize they aren't alone in this transformational work. But, it can't be ignored that when we work inside our communities where the school-centered system dominates the education conversation, we can feel discouraged. Hugh MacLeod, with his well-known terse writing style, wants you to stop. In his book, *Ignore Everybody: And 39 Other Keys to Creativity*, he wants to liberate people to explore their creativity and create the space for good ideas to become great.

WORTH YOUR TIME

How to Get to Big, Hairy Audacious Goals

As we approach the apex of the summer, the urgency of producing a high-impact learning experience for your learners is building. Explore how you can get there from the lessons learned by a long-tenured leader. [Read here](#)

Dropping Out of College Into Life

We've presented stories of learners feeling lost in the traditional K-12 system, and how learner-centered education can reinvigorate their spirit. But, what happens to those who lose themselves in the higher education space?

[Read here](#)

Six Powerful Motivations Driving Social Learning By Teens

How is what we traditionally viewed as an "engaged learner" shifting in today's highly social, yet virtual, culture? What can we learn from the way our learners communicate with one another and integrate learning inside it? [Read here](#)

Shift Your Paradigm—Episode 008

Listen in on the 8th episode of the **Shift Your Paradigm** podcast in which leaders from in which leaders from Alabama's Pike Road Schools share what they had to let go of as leaders for their learning environment and learners to flourish. [Listen here](#)

“Summertime is always the best
of what might be.” — **CHARLES BOWDEN**

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



AN INITIATIVE OF CONVERGENCE

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