

pioneering

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A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Executive Director

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by Megan Matson

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Dear friends,

Any parent can tell you how different their children are. And, it's not lost on them that the best way to educate one is unlikely the best way to educate all of them. Take my two children, Tucker and Olivia, as a prime example.

Tucker continues to be bored in school. He is either overly challenged or not challenged enough. "Mom," he says, "sometimes I don't understand something in Math, and I ask for help. But then, I sometimes still don't get it, and the teacher just moves on. And, other times I walk into class and know everything they're about to teach us." So, my son continues to put in a solid but minimal effort.

Meanwhile, Olivia loves school. Recently, she told me, "I used to not like school, but one day toward the end of last year, I decided to be like 'Nora' (a classmate of hers who does well in school) for a day, and I liked it. So now, I listen to the teacher, and I like school." I love that she loves school. (And, there is a small part of me that wonders if part of her switch was to one of compliance—being a "good girl.")

My children, and every other child in this world, have different gifts, curiosities, passions, aspirations, and needs. My theory is that Olivia loves school because she is (now) good at it and loves helping others (maybe teaching is in her future). My son dislikes school because he has no outlet for his passions. This begs a central question: "What kind of system will allow both Olivia and Tucker to excel?"

Last year, our team visited [Avalon School](#), [Iowa BIG](#), and [The MET](#). Although each model was unique, I could see both my children thriving at each one of these learner-centered environments. The reason? At each environment, learning was learner-centered.

The same can be said about our latest learner-centered profile, Innovations High School. Their story is a MUST read. Taylor Harper's advocacy for her young learners shows a powerful example of how to enroll diverse community stakeholders in transforming a learning environment against all odds.

Tucker and Olivia, and all the young people across the country, are counting on us to spread the word about a different future for education. Thank you for your courage and leadership in making system-wide transformation inevitable and irreversible.

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.





INNOVATIONS HIGH SCHOOL

SPARKS, NV

“Innovations is a place where scholars are made to feel welcomed, loved, and encouraged.” —TAYLOR HARPER, LEAD LEARNER

WHEN STATE STANDARDS AND THE STATUS QUO ARE THE RULE OF THE LAND,

how do you convince decision-makers to give learner-centered education a go? For Taylor Harper, the answer was two-fold—persistence and 8%.

As a persistent advocate for the learners she served, Harper was driven to eliminate the not-so-anomalous reality of “kids falling through the cracks.” It took years of advocacy to finally get her shot, but the 8% (yes, eight percent) graduation rate at her newest assignment, Washoe High School, provided the final push. Having seen the Big Picture Learning framework in person, Harper was convinced this was the idea that would provide new opportunities for her forgotten learners.

Washoe High School became Innovations High School, and although the building was the same, the learning was dramatically transformed. Four years into their work, Innovations High School leaders have reversed the trends. That 8% turned into 61% (with a goal of reaching 70% in 2018) and attendance, for a learning environment that doesn’t provide transportation for its learners, hovers right around 90% year-round.

This kind of turnaround is only possible when one thing changes—how young people feel when they enter their learning environment. At Innovations, the learners feel an abundance of love, encouragement, and challenge. A stark contrast to their past feelings of boredom, frustration, and disinterest. Utilizing [The Hope Survey](#), educators are always checking in on the health of their culture and where they can better their practice. With a strong focus on community and fostering a **socially-embedded** environment, their cultural foundation has been completely rebuilt.

Even for a learner like Jackson, who came to Innovations with the weight of the world on his shoulders—social anxiety, clinical depression, victim of bullying—the positive energy has allowed him to expand his **knowledge, skills, and dispositions** and transform into a quiet leader. Through the **personalized, relevant, and contextualized** nature of Innovations’ learning model, Jackson has been able to unleash his potential as a human being—learning how to play the piano and drums and leading fundraisers for Innovations—and is now someone his peers naturally gravitate towards.

The sustainability of Innovations High School relies on traditional metrics to make their case. But, behind those numbers is a deep exploration of providing a learner-centered experience that can be translated to a more traditional language. If you think of one thing when you hear about Innovations High School, let it be of a shining example of what can be created within even the toughest of policy environments.

LEARN MORE

[Video: Innovations High School & Big Picture Learning](#)

[Leading with Courage, Conviction, & Community](#)

FACTS & FIGURES

Public

Ages 14-18

140 learners served per year

First and only Big Picture Learning school in Nevada

Graduation rates doubled from 30% in 2016 to 61% in 2017

Innovations High School has the only Recording Arts Program in Washoe County School District

Utilizes a learner-centered Advisory Structure

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A Conversation with Taylor Harper



TAYLOR HARPER

Q: What path led you to your leadership role at Innovations High School?

A: My story is one about following the path and following the signs. When I graduated from college with my degree in Elementary Education, I desperately wanted to be a 1st grade teacher. I received my first teaching job at an “at-risk” school in Washoe County School District in Nevada. It was a brand-new school, so I got to help open it up.

It was an eye-opening experience. My soul would not allow me to ignore the inequity all around me. As a brand-new, baby teacher, I was hyperaware of it. I was at that school for 10 years and was always the squeaky wheel—advocating for kids and pushing back against the administrators and practices I knew were not helpful.

In October of my 10th year teaching there, while I was also in my master's program for administration, the Deputy Superintendent came into my sixth-grade classroom. He said, “Taylor, I need you to leave your teaching role and come take over this other school.”

I took over the elementary portion of the district's disciplinary school—a program for third through sixth grade kids who had been emergency suspended from their other schools. At the time I took this program over, the staff were doing things like withholding food from kids as punishment.

It ripped my heart out to walk in and see this.

I was able to flip that program around and effect systemic change at the district level. People were no longer simply allowed to give up on kids. There had to be a really good reason for sending them to the program I was running.

Then, I took over the whole disciplinary school, which was called Inspire. This was where a lot of my work with restorative practice—seeking ways to change the inequitable systems that funneled kids into crappy learning environments—took off.

At that time, I started seeking out something different from what I was seeing in Washoe County School District. Whether it was with my own money or money from the district, I was traveling everywhere. I didn't know what I was looking for. I simply knew I was looking for something better. I was looking for a place where I could actually walk in and see kids in situations where they weren't stressed, unhappy, and angry—where they were loved.

As I was traveling around, all the schools with that feel and vibe were Big Picture Learning (BPL) schools. I went to Saint Louis, California, Philadelphia, and Rhode Island. It was always the same feeling.

When I came back and shared my experience with the BPL schools, everyone thought I was crazy. Even though the support was lacking, I continued vocalizing my belief in rebranding and transforming our “disciplinary” program into a one that looked like the BPL framework. I was told “no”—luckily, I'm used to being told “no.” So, I kept pushing and eventually got the district to approve a feasibility study with Big Picture Learning.

As we were getting ready to start implementing the following year, I was asked to take on yet another opportunity within the district: “Taylor, we want you to do the same thing you’ve done at Inspire at Washoe High School—turn it around.” At this point, I honestly wondered if the superintendent was putting me on this sinking ship, so that I could be their fall guy. Washoe High School had an eight-percent graduation rate.

We’re talking about hundreds of kids. The high school had satellite campuses all over the district. There were reengagement centers, schools within schools, night classes, day classes. And, we were graduating many of these kids, but the majority were fifth-years. Since they didn’t complete in their four-year cohort, the state considered them dropouts.

When you looked at the kids who attended Washoe High School, you would see what you would probably see in a lot of alternative settings. You would see kids who were predominantly brown, “different,” or pregnant. All of them had the same story about how they ended up at Washoe High. They were basically told they had to come here—they weren’t going to graduate on time, they were pregnant, their school didn’t like brown kids, etc.

I took the position five years ago. At the time, we were the only Title I priority school in the district, so with that came some money and a lot of accountability. However, upon taking the job, I told them, “This will become a Big Picture school. That’s how we’re going to turn it around.” It was that commitment that eventually had Washoe High School become Innovations High School.

Q: With an 8% graduation rate, why was it so difficult to convince the powers that be to try something new?

A: With this declaration to become a BPL school, I had to once again convince a new platform of state-level people who thought I was crazy.

The practices and systems that I was facing were archaic. The people who were (and some who are still) at district- and state-level positions always came back with the same response, “We’ve never done that before. We’ve always done it this way.”

I’ve had my boxing gloves on since the day I started in administration. It’s always a fight. It’s always a power struggle to remind the people who have been in this work for decades that it’s about the kids. It’s not about the system—this hamster wheel that you’re on.

That’s what I was facing: a lot of close-minded people. That was the hill I was climbing. But, it was a hill I was willing to die on.

When I was in that seeking phase and wondered aloud how I could make this happen when I was always having to fight a new boss, Dennis Littky—co-founder and co-director of The Met School, co-founder of Big Picture Learning, and founder and President of College Unbound—asked me a blunt but powerful question: “Are you willing to get fired for what you believe in?” The question scared me because I was young, but the answer was “Yes.”

When I came into this position, I thought as long as I’m in a leadership position, I’m going to advocate for these kids and for BPL. And, if they don’t like it, they’re going to have to find someone else. I wasn’t going to bend.

“That’s what I was facing: a lot of close-minded people. That was the hill I was climbing. But, it was a hill I was willing to die on.”

TAYLOR HARPER

Q: Take us through the timeline of events from when you came into Washoe High School to when you officially became Innovations High School, a Big Picture Learning school. Where did you have to place your priorities?

A: In the first year, I was doing many different things. I was assessing the adults who were responsible for facilitating education for these kids—90% of them are now gone. They weren't learner-centered. They weren't connectors. I had to flush that system. And, when I came in, most of the staff were gearing up for a fight. A lot of these people had been at Washoe for 25 years.

At the same time, I was using every opportunity available to get to know the kids. Every one of these kids had a unique story to tell. At some point, our system gave up on them. Our kids had become marginalized.

Much to the irritation of many teachers, I spent a lot of time with the kids. I would survey them and ask questions like, "Has an adult ever asked you what you want to learn or how you want to learn? Do you feel like people care about you? Do you want to come to school?"

I started gathering their responses and their stories. Before I could go higher up and convince people to give the BPL framework a shot, I had to know if the kids even wanted it. Long story short, of course they did.

Beyond what was happening inside the building, I had a new boss. We had an interim superintendent and a new school board. As a Title I priority school, I was already under the microscope.

Nonetheless, I was a noisy rebel saying, "Oh no, we're not going to do it that way." Yes, I know we have to increase graduation rates. Yes, I know we have to increase attendance. Yes, I know we have to do everything written in that Title I priority plan. Additionally, I truly believed the state really just wanted to shut us down. There was a lot to manage.

While I was politically trying to identify my allies, those wanting to bury me, and those who didn't really care about the kids, I was also trying to convince everyone of this model.

I started by speaking with my area superintendent and my local superintendent. I requested they visit a BPL school and talk to some of the leaders in the Big Picture network. I said, "Please trust me," and they did. They believed in me enough to follow me to a leadership conference and visited a few schools. They were hesitantly excited and convinced.

Then, we had to convince the state. The purse strings are always so tight. There's tons of money, but you can only use it for certain things, and Big Picture was certainly not on the menu.

Despite all this, in my second year, the state performed a feasibility study, and we became the first Big Picture Learning school in the state of Nevada. At that time, we were rebranding the school to Innovations—getting Washoe out of the name. It's still a process because Washoe High School was a part of this community for 30 years. In our community, not many people leave. Since Innovations is in the same building, a lot of people still associate it with Washoe—"that school."

"While I was politically trying to identify my allies, those wanting to bury me, and those who didn't really care about the kids, I was also trying to convince everyone of this model."

TAYLOR HARPER

Q: How did the stories you gathered from your kids help with convincing the school board and state to try this new idea?

A: When I would go and present to the school board and state, I brought kids with me. And, when they told me I couldn't bring kids with me, I brought videos of kids and found a way to sneak it into the conversation. My hope was that I would find those individuals in leadership positions who really do care and have just forgotten how much impact they can have on children. When they're up in those positions, they don't hear these kids' voices—they don't hear their stories.

That's a big part of how we got where we are now—because the kids got to talk. Every time, you could feel people's souls and heart strings being pulled. It seemed that at the close of every meeting, people were hugging the kids and crying, mad that we had created a system that made them feel this way.

Q: How did you create these moments beyond the district- and state-level meetings? Do you still experience resistance with your colleagues?

A: One of my main messages throughout this whole process was letting the various leaders know that they couldn't help me and they couldn't help improve this school until they connected with the kids, too. I told them they needed to come in and hear the kids' stories. The kids needed to know the faces and names of these leaders. That alone helped move mountains. As the leaders formed connections with our scholars, it empowered them to go back up and start shaking up the system like you would not believe.

My comprehensive school colleagues are rarely happy with me because I took something away from them. Through the approval of my bosses, they no longer get to send kids to us without good reason. This used to be a place where schools could send their kids and pad their graduation rates. Now, none of our kids come here because someone else told them they had to. That's a huge systemic change.

Q: Even with all of these breakthroughs, the expectation of achieving against traditional benchmarks remains. How have you worked your way through these limitations?

A: We start with our focus on the learners. In those first few formative years here, when kids were brought into interview committees, they were the ones who were helping us hire staff. They were the ones sitting at the table with the accountability and state departments when we wanted to change our schedule from quarters to trimesters. They were the ones helping us develop what workshops were going to look like and what content they wanted to see in them.

Even though we're still stuck to seat time and making sure every kid has 22.5 credits to graduate, we have found ways to bring our kids' voices into positively manipulating the system so we're getting what we want.

A big question is how do you manipulate the system so you can do more qualitative assessment. We have to get creative and do it on our own. For example, I better be checking with kids at the beginning of a trimester and asking them what they want to learn, what they're excited about, how they learn best, what they need from me, etc. And, we do the same thing at the end of the semester.

Another helpful tool has been [The Hope Survey](#), which asks kids how they feel when they come to school. Love is the number one ingredient in our secret sauce (which is obviously impossible to measure), but every single human in our building will use the word "love" when they describe how they feel about this place.

“As the leaders formed connections with our scholars, it empowered them to go back up and start shaking up the system like you would not believe.”

TAYLOR HARPER

Taylor Harper has worked with At-Promise Youth in Reno, Nevada for two decades. She has worked in Early Childhood Education, Special Education, and has taught several grades at the Elementary Level. Her passionate dive into the world of small schools and Big Picture Learning began in 2008 when she became the principal of Washoe Inspire Academy. Having extensive experience with school transformation and Title 1 Schools, Taylor is currently the principal of the first Big Picture Learning School in Nevada, Innovations High School.



Not Another Brick in the Wall

by Megan Matson

There is so much silence I can practically hear crickets chirping (if only they weren't nocturnal). Out of the corner of my eye, I see a girl braiding her brown hair and a boy sleeping on his desk with drool pooling beneath his mouth. Ew. I'm sitting at a brown desk in the back of a bland, white-walled classroom, getting an 'A' in yet another class, even though the teacher's words are going in one ear and out the other. You might think I'm having a bad dream, but I'm just a typical American teenager, living a typical day at a typical high school.

For ten years, I've ridden the same old, squeaky bus to go through the motions of an eight-period school day. Eventually, I hop back on that yellow, narrow box of a bus filled with crazed children to go back home. With each passing year, the days get more and more uneventful and colorless.

I have always excelled in the traditional classroom—4.0 GPA, in the Gifted and Talented student program, and liked by just about every teacher. It's like my brain was wired for memorization—exactly what I needed to pass my tests with flying colors. If I were to call myself anything based on my performance at the traditional school, it would have been “successful.” But time went on, and when I became a freshman my only motivations for going to school were getting to chat with friends during class and going to volleyball practice after eighth period. Academically speaking, I was tired of writing the same papers, creating the same boring presentations, and staring at the same white walls all day, every day.

After countless dreary classes and uninspiring learning styles, I heard about a unique opportunity for students in the Cedar Rapids area—Iowa BIG. This learner-centered high school claimed to transform learners into makers, designers, storytellers, and social entrepreneurs who interact with organizations, business partners, and the



MEGAN MATSON

overall community. It couldn't be worse than my traditional classes, so I applied and was accepted to start the program at the beginning of my sophomore year.

The following August, the time came for my first day at BIG, which was in a building shared with a multi-million dollar company in the center of downtown Cedar Rapids—the Geonetric building. Already, I felt important.

Sharing a workspace with people that creative and successful made me feel like I was more than just one in a class of 382 at my high school. I was trusted to work efficiently and professionally side-by-side with real adults in the real world, and that was something to be excited about!

I walked into the sunny, open foyer of the tall, brick building and made my way back to the BIG space, which was overflowing with kids from all over Cedar Rapids. The mentors welcomed us and explained the program in depth, taking the time to outline what our first few weeks would look like—researching and choosing projects in the community we would be interested in working on.

I was immediately taken aback. There were no rules? No time limits? No assigned groups or projects? I sat at a table with bright blue chairs next to people I didn't even know, and I was expected to choose what I was interested in without someone telling me. Am I understanding this correctly?

I skimmed through the projects, attempting to imagine myself doing one project after another, but I couldn't. I had absolutely no idea what my passions were. In traditional school, I was practically told how to feel and what to think about every subject. I had never been asked to have passions of my own.

That night, I went home in tears, explaining to my parents that Iowa BIG wasn't for me. I didn't want to try it anymore. It was unclear and dumb. They encouraged me to give it time. It had only been one day. I needed to stick with it for a bit longer. But, I could tell it was even more unclear to them what BIG was about and why I was getting high school credit to be there.

Despite it all, the next day and the day after, I went back to BIG. Days turned into weeks, and I continued searching for projects until it seemed like everyone knew what they were doing except me. I finally threw myself into two projects I thought I could deal with for a while. At the back of my mind, I knew it would never work.

I couldn't have been more wrong! Before I knew it, I was attending weekly team meetings and connecting with community partners in coffee shops and fancy places of business. I was communicating with new people every week, coming up with bold changes to make in my community. Most importantly, I was absolutely loving my learning.

I spent my entire sophomore year passionately working on a project called Humans of Cedar Rapids. Similar to the popular [Humans of New York](#), my team's goal was to share stories from people around the city with the entire Cedar Rapids community, as well as to encourage the gift of listening and empathy. We would walk through the streets of Cedar Rapids, stopping people and asking if they would be willing to tell us their story—whatever that meant for them.

Being involved in this project, I started working on an Elderly Series. This series was partnered up with another about “young minds.” The purpose was to contrast the difference between the new minds of kids with the wise minds of elders. Right away, I jumped at the idea of talking to people with heaps of stories to tell and experiences to share.

“ I was communicating with new people every week, coming up with bold changes to make in my community. Most importantly, I was absolutely loving my learning.”

MEGAN MATSON



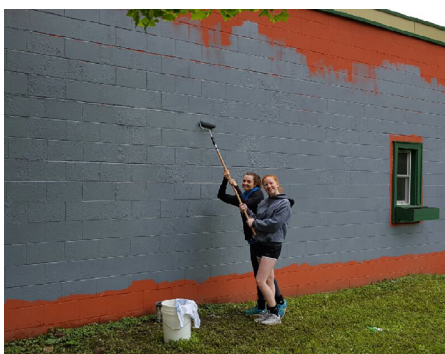
On one of my very first interviews of the series, at a local nursing home, I met a chatty, joyful woman named Helen (pictured left). Helen was small with curly gray hair, glasses, and a beaming smile. She used to travel the world with her husband, so her living space in the retirement community was covered in photos of animals in the Grand Canyon, beautiful waterfalls, and photos of the two of them (looking a little younger) posing in front of many tourist attractions.

Helen's laugh was contagious. She welcomed me with a loving heart and a willing mind to share some of her most prized memories. While Helen was so lovely, she

was just one of many wonderful people I had the pleasure of meeting throughout this process. Being involved with this series opened my eyes to how incredibly beautiful humans are and how we all have a story or two to share with the world.

As the school year was wrapping up, my Humans of CR team and I spent a week creating a mural in downtown Cedar Rapids as a final celebration of our year of stories. The mural was beautifully designed and included the faces of people we had interviewed. We spent long days and even longer nights living in coats of paint with a ragged paintbrush in one hand and a twenty-one-ounce Red Bull in the other.

On a beautiful, sunny Saturday afternoon, the outdoor space across from NewBo Market was filled with my closest friends, family, teachers, local news crews—people from all over the community—and of course my new friend, Helen, for the unveiling of our mural. It was a wonderful tribute to not only the high school seniors on our team but to all the different human beings that live in this place we call home. To top it all off, this entire process was filmed by XQ and was nationally televised during XQ Super School Live last September. I would have never thought I would be shown on national television on all the major network stations in the country; yet, there I was.



Clockwise, from top left: Sketches on transparency film serve as templates for the future mural; Matson and a fellow learner prepare the mural wall; friends, family, educators, and news crews gather for the reveal of the mural; Matson presents her project to the community.

Now, I am a junior at Prairie High School part-time and a second-year Iowa BIG learner. My Iowa BIG experience has inspired me to consider majoring in Education once I am in college. I would love to be an elementary teacher in a learner-centered environment or use my degree in another way that will be helpful to any student or teacher I can reach. I want to prove to people that education is not just sitting in a classroom. I want to show learning can be open-walled, flexible, and specific to any learner's needs.

Iowa BIG has blessed me with fulfilling opportunities, morphed me into who I am today and want to become tomorrow, allowed me to discover my passions, and introduced me to countless people along the way. Now, I see success in a whole new light.

Success shouldn't be defined by consistently earning Highest Honor Roll or being the number one student in my class. Success, at least to me, is the feeling I get when I realize the work I'm doing is benefiting my community. It's the way I feel when I'm in a meeting and for once, don't have to alter my thoughts and ideas to fit someone else's. Success is making a difference in a world for someone beyond myself.

I admire and thank each and every one of the staff at BIG for pushing me far outside my comfort zone and helping me expand my horizons, all while helping me build my own definition of success. Because of them, the walls around me are no longer white. In fact, the walls are gone. The sky is my limit, and because of Iowa BIG, I've learned to reach a little bit higher each day to get there.



Humans of Cedar Rapids featured on XQ Super School Live's national broadcast.

Megan Matson is a learner at Iowa BIG in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She has a strong passion for show choir, being involved in her community, and gaining a better understanding of the people around her. When she's not learning or teaching others about learner-centered education, she is volunteering in a 1st grade classroom or hanging out with her friends and family. Megan wants to be an elementary teacher so she can transform education for America's learners, and of course, travel the world!



Project Wayfinder

Project Wayfinder was founded within Stanford University's d.School and quickly launched into an independent venture. Promoting the idea that today's education system is failing young learners, the project utilizes [purpose research](#) "to inspire our next generation to become intentional meaning-makers empowered to contribute to the world around them." Their research led to the creation of a 15-piece toolkit that can be utilized within any learning setting, including a learner's home. Each piece of the toolkit is designed to help learners navigate themselves and the world—supporting them to take purpose-driven action that will have long-lasting impact within their community. Every Wayfinder's journey starts with self-discovery, finding one's center "to understand who they are and what they value." With this intimate understanding of "who I am," Wayfinders can begin exploring how they fit within the larger landscape of the world around them. Finally, knowledge without action is meaningless, so Wayfinders are empowered to lean into fear and try new things.

Why purpose? [\(link\)](#)

Student Navigation Toolkit [\(link\)](#)

Teacher Toolkit [\(link\)](#)

Community Collaboration for School Innovation Toolkit

The hustle and bustle of the daily drama known as "school" oftentimes leads our attention away from communicating with our communities. One-way memos are commonly sent, but intentional engagement is left for another time. The Colorado DOE, The Colorado Education Initiative, and The Learning Accelerator partnered in an effort to change this story by creating a [Community Collaboration for School Innovation Toolkit](#). The toolkit was designed to reverse the one-way "push out" messaging, creating a "pull in" system that utilizes the knowledge and resources available throughout individual communities. This community collaboration will allow districts to "clearly understand what the local community expects of its schools, so it can then align activities and initiatives." The Community Collaboration model focuses on four activities—creating a forum for community collaboration, acting on community directive, reporting progress, and committing to continuous collaboration. As you explore ways to engage your entire community in the transformation of your education system, consider how this toolkit might provide valuable insights.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars! We will be speaking at some and hosting workshops at others. In all cases, pioneers will be front and center! Join us.

MID-ATLANTIC CONFERENCE ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Pittsburgh, PA

Feb 26-28

[Website](#)

2018 TRANSFORMSC SPRING CONFERENCE

Columbia, SC

Mar 1-2

[Conference Website](#)

SXSW EDU

Austin, TX

Mar 5-8

[Conference Website](#)

OPPORTUNITY BOARD

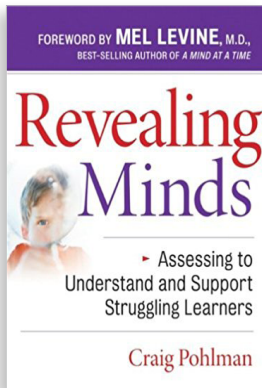
The Donnell-Kay Foundation

is seeking a fellow to join their team in 2018. Fellows spend their time immersed in Colorado's education system and pursuing a project of interest. Learn more about this opportunity [here](#).

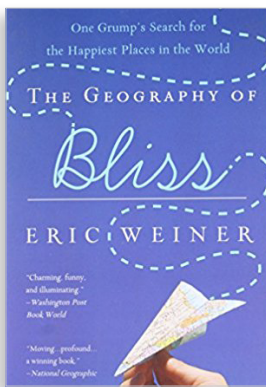
Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center

is looking for two learner-centered pioneers to join their ranks as a Residential Life Program Coordinator and Student Services Program Manager. Read more about the positions [here](#).

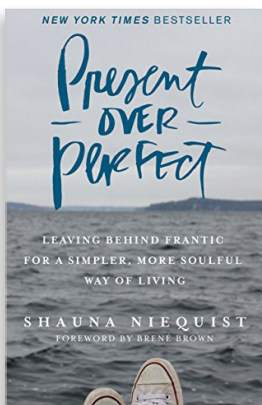
Crosstown High, a brand new learner-centered environment set to open July 1st, 2018, is hiring for a variety of educator positions. Find out more and apply [here](#).

**Revealing Minds: Assessing to Understand and Support Struggling Learners** by Craig Pohlman

Putting a label on a problem allows us to efficiently navigate the myriad issues we have to deal with on a daily basis. However, labels also lead to generalizations and misunderstandings. And, when it comes to human beings, particularly our children, labels can be downright destructive. Dr. Craig Pohlman, author of *Revealing Minds*, believes there's a better way. Pohlman, through his own experience as a licensed psychologist and primary school educator, believes in the power of demystifying the struggles every child goes through. By utilizing detailed descriptions, rather than one- or two-word labels, we can better assess and support the needs of every young person who walks through our doors.

**The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World** by Eric Weiner

[The World Database of Happiness \(WDH\)](#) is a massive collection of international research that attempts to determine where in the world the happiest people live. Eric Weiner, author of *The Geography of Bliss*, took these rankings and made it his mission to uncover the secret ingredients found in this "happiness" sauce. From Switzerland to Bhutan, the reader is taken on an adventure that reveals entirely expected conclusions but in fascinatingly unexpected ways. Take a trip around the world, and ask yourself, "Where does my happiness come from?"

**Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living** by Shauna Niequist

Social-emotional learning isn't a topic reserved for our blossoming youth. Given that most of us had a traditional learning experience growing up, we have blind spots in how we manage our personal well-being. With the fast-paced work of transforming our learning systems, we are naturally inclined to put our personal development on hold. Shauna Niequist, author of *Present Over Perfect*, had a similar experience until it made her crack. Discover how she freed herself from the pursuit of perfection and a utopian future and "settled" for being present in the moment.

WORTH YOUR TIME

No, Students Don't Need Grades

Going gradeless provides a transformative opportunity for educators and learners alike. It provides new chances to reimagine how learning is assessed. Check out why one educator made the leap and never looked back. [Read here](#)

Panel Discussion on Leadership and Management in a Learner-centered Environment

Our very own Kelly Young and Trace Pickering, along with other learner-centered leaders, joined the *Shift Your Paradigm* podcast to discuss the styles of learner-centered leadership and management they've seen across the country. [Listen here](#)

Three Awesome Educational Games Hiding in Plain Sight

Games like *The Oregon Trail* and *Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?* have been staples in the education gaming space for decades. However, they are lagging behind today's technology. What exists in the non-education market that has high-academic value?

[Find out here](#)

“The person who says it cannot
be done should not interrupt
the person who is doing it.”

—CHINESE PROVERB

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