

pioneering

ISSUE 50 • FEBRUARY 16, 2018 • EDUCATION REIMAGINED

A NOTE FROM EDUCATION REIMAGINED

Kelly Young, Executive Director

SXSW EDU 2018

PITTSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Profile of their Learning
Environment

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Beyond the Blueprint
by Ryan Krohn

TOOLS & RESOURCES

UPCOMING EVENTS

OPPORTUNITY BOARD

ON OUR BOOKSHELF

WORTH YOUR TIME

education 
reimagined

● connect. share. discover. lead. ● pioneering

Dear Pioneers,

I have had a particularly challenging week explaining what Education Reimagined means when we say “learner-centered education.” This challenge is always present for learner-centered pioneers. Someone requests a short explanation of our work, we give our best attempt at an elevator pitch, and the listener immediately seeks to fit our message within examples they are more familiar with. Given the haste of the conversation, we find ourselves simply responding with, “that’s kind of right,” and we walk away feeling defeated. However, we must continue practicing new ways to communicate our message. If we bow out, the following stories will persist.

A colleague of mine at Convergence recently shared a simple story of when her daughter was in Kindergarten. She was strong at math, but her fine motor skills were still developing. So, when she was required to complete a timed sheet of 100 math problems, she fell short of the expected standards. If she had been asked to do flash cards, the teachers would have seen that she had her single digit math down pat.

Closer to home, my son has been visibly frustrated with school. He struggles to find the words, but I gather he is struggling with the system’s inflexibility. His school recently adopted new technology meant to support self-paced learning. When I asked if it’s allowed him to move at his own pace, he cried. He’s assigned units and rushed through them. One day, he was told to complete two units in one hour. He asked to flip the order in which he was expected to do the units because it made more sense to him that way. He was told “no.” These little things are sapping his motivation and self-efficacy.

When we say “learner-centered education,” we mean it is all about listening to learners, valuing their perspectives, and co-designing learning that is engaging and allows them the dignity of choosing the path of learning that works for them. Tucker may not be so sad if he didn’t know there is another way of learning. But, he does know, and as more young people have friends (or parents) involved in learner-centered education, they will also develop an understanding of what it means to be treated as an individual. And, they won’t tolerate the slow erosion of their self-worth.

No matter our current frustrations, we must allow them to fuel our passion for this work. In our latest issue of *Pioneering*, we feature pioneers who are channeling their passions in their communities. Check out their stories.

Enjoy!
Kelly Young



CREDITS

Executive Editor:
Kelly Young

Creative Director:
Monica Snellings

Senior Editor:
Demi Edwards

Senior Writer:
Paul Haluszczak

Published by Education Reimagined,
an initiative of **Convergence**,
1133 19th Street NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 830-2310

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.



SXSW EDU 2018

United in a Statewide Vision for Transformation

Join **Education Reimagined** at SXSW EDU 2018 for a panel presented by the **Texas Association of School Administrators**. Learner-centered education is ready to go from localized experimentation to statewide implementation. In this effort, administrators need support to build on their own understandings and to launch innovative systemic changes. Texas has become an exemplar in how scaling learner-centered models can include unique visions from each community while staying true to guiding principles for effective implementation. Local and national leaders share the strategies that have made transformation take off.

PANEL DETAILS

WHEN

March 7, 2018
3:30 - 4:30 PM

WHERE

Hilton Austin Downtown
500 E 4th Street, Austin, TX
Room 400-402



KELLY YOUNG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
EDUCATION REIMAGINED



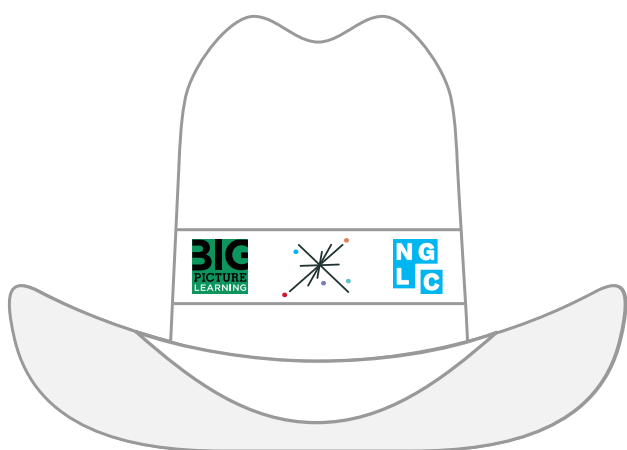
DR. KEVIN BROWN
SUPERINTENDENT, ALAMO
HEIGHTS INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT



BRANDON CORE
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, TEXAS
ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS



DR. GREG SMITH
SUPERINTENDENT, CLEAR
CREEK INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT



TEXASSIZE
10 GALLON PARTY!

HOSTED BY

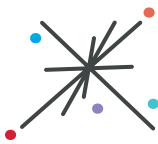
Big Picture Learning
Education Reimagined
**Next Generation
Learning Challenges**

MARCH 6TH
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

CEDAR DOOR
201 Brazos Street

See y'all there!

RSVP



Pittsfield School District

PITTSFIELD, NH

“We no longer say, ‘We can’t go there.’ We forge a path.”

— PITTSFIELD TEACHER LEADER

“**DROP-OUT FACTORY.**” A phrase commonly associated with anomalies in one-off towns far removed from the communities we live in. And, a phrase that might not even be in existence had it not become a national headline in October 2007. For Pittsfield School District, however, this phrase hit home hard.

Pittsfield was the only district in New Hampshire that bore this label. But, rather than intensifying their focus on test scores and the standards of the day, they decided to completely reimagine the “how” of education. Leading the way, Superintendent John Freeman was ready to flip the switch and turn everyone’s attention away from the grade and toward the individual learner.

The **knowledge, skills, and dispositions** pursued at Pittsfield haven’t been handed down by the state. Rather, they were developed in a community-wide effort to answer the question, “What outcomes do we as a community want from our children’s educational journey?” After all, they believed, the needs of their children are unique and should be treated as such.

As is common with district-wide efforts, Pittsfield wanted to start small, take measured yet transformative steps, and adhere to a long-term approach. During their implementation and various iterations, learners have been relinquished from seat time and inflexible curricula. Grades have been pushed to the side in favor of a **competency-based** approach where learners are no longer beholden to a “one-shot” exam. And, most importantly, they can’t slide by with a bare minimum “passing grade.”

This naturally provides space for **learner agency** to develop in each child. With competencies that allow for multiple paths of learning, learners are able to dive deep into 20-week long Learning Studios and shape their investigations in ways that are **personalized, relevant, and contextualized**.

If the competency relates to mathematics, a learner interested in art can explore the work of M.C. Escher or Albrecht Dürer. Another learner interested in video game design can investigate how mathematics (and physics) is used in making the trajectories of the birds in Angry Birds realistic and discernible. With competencies that emphasize “doing” in a variety of circumstances, rather than “memorizing” for a single point in time, learners carry their experiences at Pittsfield well beyond graduation.

Pittsfield is a public district that turned a desperate circumstance into a transformative opportunity. And, as they continue to spread and improve their learner-centered practice, they will lead their community and the children they serve into an exciting future.

LEARN MORE

[How a “drop-out factory” turned into a model for success](#)

[Shifting to Student Centered Learning in Pittsfield](#)

[Students at the Center: Extended Learning Opportunities at PMHS](#)

FACTS & FIGURES

Public

592 learners

4-18 ages of learners served

~52.7% Free and Reduced Lunch

73% of graduating students were accepted to a 2 and/or 4 year college/university in 2017

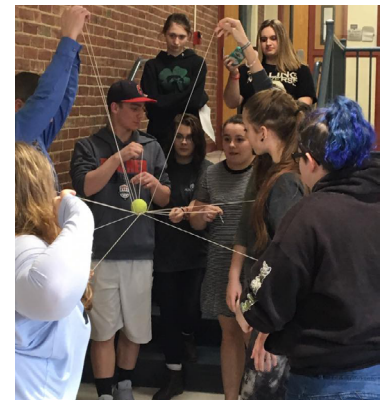
In 2011, Pittsfield Middle High School received a six-year grant with the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to transform their learning environment from school-centered to learner-centered.

CONNECT

[Website](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)





VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Beyond the Blueprint: Building a Community of Transformation

by Dr. Ryan Krohn

Education Reimagined had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Ryan Krohn for the first time at our Pioneer Lab Training in 2016. Since then, we have gained great insight from the work he and the Institute for Personalized Learning have contributed to the learner-centered movement. Ryan is one of the Community Builders in our Pioneer Lab Community and took time to share his experiences with our readers. Enjoy.



DR. RYAN KROHN

When setting out to build something new—be it a house, a relationship, human understanding, or a community—we are called to invoke the powers of creation, action, and deep levels of engagement. Building something new captures the imagination—drawing connections between the present state and a preferred state. In fact, the very idea of building something draws upon a belief-based design.

A house, for instance, starts with an objective blueprint, but beyond the straight lines and ninety-degree angles, the architect draws from a core belief that people will live in this house and fill it with meaningful family moments. The same can be said for building a community. The basic design of a community will bring people together, but the driving belief for the design is that, by being together, we will grow strong relationships, form new perspectives, and gain strength by becoming part of a team.

In my role as Director of [The Institute for Personalized Learning](#) (IPL), I place high value on the power of community—the main source of energy for the transformational learner-centered movement. A community provides the strength of multiple perspectives, which allows for a flow of information that constantly informs, not affirms, the collective thinking and action. In turn, what is built becomes owned by all.

This line of thinking always brings me back to a book by Linda Hill, *Collective Genius*. In it, she speaks to the phenomena of creation inside a culture of innovation. Hill suggests the best and biggest ideas come from the aggregation of individual contributions from every member of the community.

To put Hill's thinking into practice, I developed a 4C-networking model for participants to utilize at the National Convening of Personalized Learning, a recent convening IPL hosted. The idea is simple. During the entirety of the event, attendees are encouraged to exercise the 4Cs—connect, consume, create, and contribute—to ensure the full power of our network is realized. When put into practice, the community discovers new possibilities to create, regionally and nationally, by forming powerful and lasting partnerships—this work, in turn, serves to continually enhance IPL's vision of what's possible. Of course, this model can be applied at any gathering, and it was the lens from which I approached my first Pioneer Lab Training with Education Reimagined in Washington, DC.

For some context, Pioneer Lab Training is an invitation for learner-centered pioneers to engage in a national conversation on education transformation and to see their work as something bigger than they ever imagined.

When I came to my first training in 2016, I was unclear what gifts and talents I might bring (contribute) to the group. I was equally unclear who I would meet (connect) or what I might learn (consume). The training pushed me, my narrow assumptions, and my localized practice (creations) to a place where my perspective was first widened, and then transformed. In two days, I came to realize I was no longer only leading the work directly in front of me, but I was also contributing to a powerful, nationwide educational paradigm shift.

I arrived at the training feeling a need to share our model, and I left with a focus on exploring others. I arrived with a goal to enhance my practice, and I left with a goal to enhance the community. And lastly, I arrived with a collection of evidence of my past work, and I left with a focus on collective future impact.

The Pioneer Lab Training left an imprint on all that I've consumed since those two summer days in the nation's capital. The power of shared language, and even more importantly, seeing the precision with which we distinguish "learner-centered," has reframed how I approach my work. Understanding what learner-centered is "not" is just as important as discussing what it is.

I don't hold this experience alone. I've heard similar stories from the pioneers who were also in attendance at various Pioneer Lab Trainings over the last two years. We all took home with us the idea that the learner-centered movement was our collective movement and that it would take our collective action to build the new system.

The imprint left on us was a collective vision for the future of education and an understanding that the set of "tools" we individually possessed would benefit everyone involved in this work. With newfound footing in the learner-centered paradigm, I continued my work with IPL but wanted to stay connected to the Pioneer Lab Community on a bigger level. Fast forward 18 months, and I found myself flying to San Francisco ready to attend my second Pioneer Lab Training—this time as a Community Builder.

During my second time around, I was there to ensure the newcomers felt part of the broader Pioneer Lab Community and found clarity in how their local work connected with the national learner-centered movement. The learner-centered movement gains steam when more people not only understand the mindset but also see an opportunity to bring it into practice for their communities.

When I was invited to be a Community Builder, I reflected on the power of community, and I saw how necessary it is to create one that is committed to the paradigm-shifting,

"I arrived with a collection of evidence of my past work, and I left with a focus on collective future impact."

RYAN KROHN

transformational change the education system is in great need of. As a Community Builder, I felt an obligation to ensure each attending pioneer saw how their efforts, gifts, and talents mattered. Likewise, I had to ensure each member felt connected to the the community so they could see how their commitment would positively impact their colleagues' work.

This new role was a dynamic shift when compared to my first time participating in the training. As a newcomer, I was most concerned about “what” I could contribute. As a Community Builder, I came in with the goal of showing others “how” the community can be most effective. When combined, the “what” and “how” builds a deeper level of commitment from all of the participants and allows them to clearly see why this movement must be community-driven.

Participating in this new role also had me see how the training ensures each pioneer actually sees how they are part of something bigger than themselves. It creates a setting where each participant is in a position such that they feel safe enough to share their work and confident enough to question it. The Pioneer Lab Training had exercises to facilitate learning and awareness, which paved the way for participants to share ideas, frame new perspectives, discuss challenges, challenge discussions, provide hope and optimism, and gather feedback.

The training also had a major theme of taking action. Pioneers brought with them a history, a context, and a vision-guided future. They left with an understanding of “how” they can contribute their talents within the national learner-centered community.

This community of pioneers is creating the conditions for a new status quo. And, it is one I will wholeheartedly subscribe to.

Dr. Ryan Krohn serves as the Director of the Institute for Personalized Learning and is a Community Builder for Education Reimagined's Pioneer Lab Community. Ryan formerly served as the Associate Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for the School District of Waukesha, WI. Ryan is a national speaker, university instructor, and consultant who centers his work on engaging leaders on the ideas of transformation, personalized learning, and learner-centered designs.



Latino/a and Black Students and Mathematics

The learner-centered paradigm is naturally constructed to serve the unique needs of every learner, regardless of background or circumstance. In fact, it even uncovers the often impossible to find positive components of a difficult upbringing or external living environment. However, this reality does not permit the learner-centered movement to ignore the equitable imbalance that exists in today's traditional education system. The success and viability of learner-centered education is dependent upon showcasing its efficacy for every single learner. [The Students at the Center Hub](#) agrees with this viewpoint, which is why they conducted focused research on how Latino/a and Black learners can be given a better support system and entirely new lens from which to approach mathematics. Although the research is subject-specific, the conclusions and calls to action are transformation-oriented and can be applied to the entire educational journey of the learner. Check out [their findings](#) and see how you can apply them in your community.

Shaping the Future of Readiness: A Discussion and Facilitation Guide

Taking the steps necessary to reimagine and redesign learning in your community can often lead to a stark realization—silos are everywhere. From bottom to top, education sits in one silo of conversation, business in another, community service initiatives in yet another, and so on. You don't like what you see and know a community-owned approach to education transformation is necessary to shift to a learner-centered system. How do you move forward? Our friends at [KnowledgeWorks](#) have seen this question come up time and time again, and they have answered the call for help with their latest publication, [“Shaping the Future of Readiness.”](#) Opening up a community-wide discussion brings about a diverse range of opinions and insights that can become overwhelming. With KnowledgeWorks' discussion and facilitation guide, you can remain focused and organized while you explore the future of work, create a new profile of a graduate, and leverage cross-sector opportunities. By the end of these conversation, everyone in the community will know they own a piece of the redesign process, so in the future, when they are once again called upon to act, they'll already be in tune with “why.”

LEARN MORE

[Community Collaboration for School Innovation Toolkit](#)

[How Educators Might Partner \(and Pitch\) Community Businesses](#)

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

[Conference Website](#)

2018 TRANSFORMSC SPRING CONFERENCE

Columbia, SC

Mar 1-2

[Conference Website](#)

SXSW EDU

Austin, TX

Mar 5-8

[Conference Website](#)

OPPORTUNITY BOARD

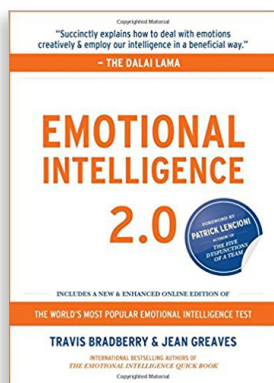
Making Community Connections Charter School

(MC²) is hiring a School Leader to positively impact school culture through relationship building and effective, trauma-sensitive, restorative practices. Learn more [here](#).

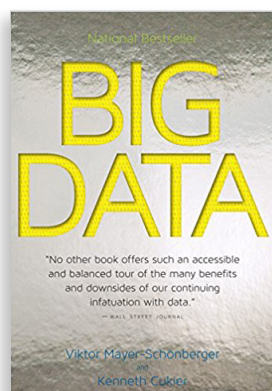
Teton Science Schools is seeking a VP of Educator Development to lead a vision and team to develop place-based educators and increase student engagement, learner outcomes, and community impact. Learn more [here](#).

Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center

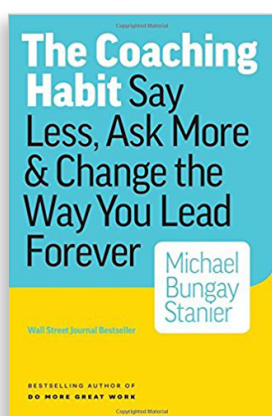
is looking for two learner-centered pioneers to join their ranks as a Residential Life Program Coordinator and a Student Services Program Manager. Read more about the positions [here](#).

**Emotional Intelligence 2.0** by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves

If you had to give a child advice on how to better manage their anger, do you think you'd have more impact on them by sharing a personal story or a story you heard about a friend's friend? When it comes to forming strong interpersonal connections, there are rarely more powerful ways of doing so than sharing (or teaching with) experiences you have personally lived through. As you integrate-emotional learning into the framework of your local learner-centered model, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* could be a perfect thought partner in boosting your own emotional intelligence as you guide young learners along a similar journey.

**Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think** by Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier

Calls for more data in education often fail to reach a meaningful position, as they so frequently lack a clear reference to the relevant statistics and statistical reasoning. And, when they do, there are few people who can articulate these arguments correctly or in a way that is digestible to a wider audience. Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, co-authors of *Big Data*, invite readers to explore the ins-and-outs of data collection, what power it holds (and doesn't), and how we can more appropriately determine its significance.

**The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever** by Michael Bungay Stanier

As a pioneering leader in learner-centered education, you automatically inherit the task of leading your colleagues along a transformational journey that never ends. This means your leadership will always be in demand, which is good and bad. It's good in that you'll have a job for the long-term. It's bad in that you'll need to be operating from a lens of leadership that allows for constant adaptation. According to Michael Bungay Stanier, author of *The Coaching Habit*, the latter shouldn't make you worry as long as you're willing to do less and less—or in his words, “be lazy.” Confused? Discover why this insight and many more will transform the way you lead and infuse your team with an exciting drive for more.

WORTH YOUR TIME

Three Big Questions for Evolving State Education Policy to Support Student-Centered Learning in 2018

What does a “prepared” learner look like? What information do communities need to have access to? What does learner-centered accountability look like? Explore these questions and more in iNACOL's recent analysis. [Read here](#)

FETC 2018: 2 Key Points in Support of Creative Schools

Sir Ken Robinson recently gave a speech exploring two simple notions: we shouldn't be surprised by the results of what we create nor by the positive effects of play. Although the two points don't necessarily coincide, they offer many moments to reflect.

[Read here](#)

How to Find Balance When Too Much Self-Doubt Gets in the Way

Challenging our learners allows them to grow and explore new possibilities. However, for many learners, a challenge induces self-doubt. This is a road block we all have faced at some point in our lives. So, how can we instead find our way around it and let it fuel us to continue moving forward? [Read here](#)

“Most people are fast to stop
you before you get started,
but hesitate to get in the way if
you’re moving.”

— **TIMOTHY FERRISS**

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



AN INITIATIVE OF CONVERGENCE

1133 19th Street NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 830-2310