

# pioneering

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# pioneering

Dear Pioneers,

In the next couple of months, we are going to unveil our new strategy to help accelerate the learner-centered movement. This strategy will reflect and amplify the needs and wants of learner-centered pioneers from across the country. And, it is all thanks to pioneers like you who have been willing to share their stories with the world through *Pioneering* and many other facets of our work.

This new strategic vision will be propelled by three key levers that must be simultaneously pushed by the movement for system-wide transformation to be realized:

- **Building Public Support** for learner-centered education.
- **Creating the Conditions** for learner-centered environments and ecosystems to thrive.
- **Advancing Proof of Concept** so that learner-centered environments can demonstrate how learner-centered education works for every single learner, including those who have been ill-served by the current system.

This is a unique time in history when what the world demands and what learner-centered education produces is a perfect match. However, as we are all well aware, the number one barrier preventing us from realizing this union is the dominant mindset (or paradigm) that guides the majority of education conversations.

Paradigms are hard to crack, but they do shift. History has taught us this lesson many times—for example, we no longer believe the world is flat, and leaching is not seen as the cure-all for our medical ailments. Unfortunately, these paradigm shifts took centuries to occur. We don't have that kind of time.

Because of the exponential pace of global change and the interconnectedness and interdependency of all people's futures, we need to cause this education paradigm shift in record time.

The strategy we are developing is aimed at addressing this exact challenge. Once it is ready to unveil, you will be the first to know. In the meantime, there is one thing you can be certain of—we will need you (as we always have) and every other learner-centered pioneer continuing the amplification of their work so the movement becomes too big to ignore.

I hope you enjoy the latest issue of *Pioneering*!

**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.





**SEEQS**  
HONOLULU, HI

“At SEEQS, they have to process essential questions and really work towards solutions that make a difference. They’re learning to be proactive and lifelong learners.”

— SEEQS PARENT

**MANY EDUCATORS COME TO A CROSSROADS IN THEIR CAREERS** when their passion for serving young learners is competing against the limitations, barriers, and frustrations stemming from the system they are working in. This often leads to a career change. But, for people like Buffy Cushman-Patz, they, instead, seek a transformational path within their current work.

Buffy saw how the traditional system was not only hindering her ability as an educator but, more importantly, was negatively impacting the growth and development of her learners. She wanted to break down the silos of “school” and community. She wanted to create a culture of learning that saw everyone—child and adult—as an educator and a learner at the same time. She identified her wants, and then she brought them to life with SEEQS, a learner-centered environment in Honolulu, Hawai‘i that opened in 2013.

If you request a tour of this dynamic learning environment, your tour will be led by young learners rather than adults. You’ll hear them describe SEEQS in a beautifully simple way, “Our former school was all about sitting and silence. SEEQS is loud, fun, and interesting.” As the learners describe more about their experience at SEEQS, it’ll become evident that Buffy drew early inspiration from **open-walled** learning environments like those in the Big Picture Learning network, which helped guide the design of **personalized, relevant, and contextualized** learning opportunities.

As one of many examples, a learner might describe to you how her burgeoning passion for sustainability led to the production of a small solar panel and, unexpectedly, wide-ranging community interest. Taking advantage of her well-developed **learner agency**, this young learner was able to go from idea to product without giving up in the face of uncertainty, setbacks, and failures. With each new challenge, she was able to access the **socially embedded** support system within her learning community—including the community at large—to collect feedback on the problems she was facing while at the same time inspiring others around her to explore other sustainable energy projects. She became a mentor while playing the role of mentee—a learner and an educator at the same time.

SEEQS was created from a passion and drive to transform education for young learners. As it continues to evolve, there will be a plethora of lessons to be learned and shared along the way. We can’t wait to see what’s to come.

## LEARN MORE

[A Model In Self Governance From A Charter Middle School](#)  
[Middle School SEEQS Sustainable Project-based Learning](#)  
[SEEQing Knowledge: Learning Through the Lens of Sustainability](#)

## FACTS & FIGURES

Public Charter

Learners ages 10-12 served

180 learners served

2013 grand opening

Two hours dedicated to Essential Questions of Sustainability (EQS) each day

Multi-age classes to support the continuum of learning

Five core principles guide SEEQS research-backed learning philosophy

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# A Conversation with Buffy Cushman-Patz



BUFFY CUSHMAN-PATZ

## **Q: What path led you to starting your own learning environment, SEEQS?**

**A:** I began my career as a geologist, but it was my experience as a teacher that made me feel limited about what I was able to do in my classroom. I was teaching chemistry, physics, and algebra, and I felt the real connections with kids happened around the things that are outside of a pure disciplinary content area—connections happen around what make us human, not the content we digest.

I was frustrated by what I was limited to doing and not doing in the classroom. And, it wasn't a problem with the particular school I was in; it was a problem with the concept of school and how we practice it. I decided to see if I could make a difference at a different level of education. I came to Washington, DC for a year as an Einstein Fellow to get an idea of what was happening in education policy. I learned pretty quickly that isn't where real change happens. Real change happens at the school level. However, the Einstein Fellowship exposed me to a lot of best practices and really great teachers, which built my confidence and validated my beliefs in how kids learn best.

From that experience, I decided I wanted to design a school. I joined a school leadership program that helped me hone my ideas about what a great school looks like, including best practices and the latest research. While I was in the program, I pulled together a board and individuals who were willing to go in on this new school project with me. That's when the original charter group application came together.

## **Q: What would you like to see at the policy level that would better enable programs like SEEQS to become more common and spreadable?**

**A:** In Hawai'i, at our state level, charter schools are the environments where innovation can most freely take place. Innovation can happen in any school, but in Hawai'i, charters provide the opportunity for the whole school to be based on an innovative idea rather than an idea only being implemented at the classroom level by a single educator.

To better support this effort, Hawai'i's charter schools need to better serve as the research and development arm of public schools. We need to build mechanisms that allow us to better share our work with each other and not feel competitive about who is doing things "better" for their kids. At SEEQS, we have a small school that can change direction on a dime, whereas a major public district doesn't have that flexibility. We can be the ones to figure out what works and what doesn't and communicate that out.

Right now, the way we share is by inviting others to view our program. We currently give between three to five tours per week. Person-to-person—that's how learning works. We're okay with doing it this way, but it's a lot of work and slow moving. However, it's the work we want to do. We want this learning available to all kids, not just the 180 we currently serve.

When it comes to helping folks actually implement a new model of learning down the road, it's pretty difficult to provide that assistance. That's why we put so much information on

our website. We're always happy to share our work, but our time is always the most limited resource. It's also important to note, we use our website internally as a reminder about the work we do and how each element of our work is moving us in the right direction. We use it as our check and balance. Once you find yourself among the trees, you can lose sight of the forest. What's on our website is our forest—we have to make sure we remember what our forest is.

In terms of federal policy, the biggest thing they could do is stop making rules about what we need to do in our schools. It's about less policy, not more. All of the testing and accountability stuff makes you focus on not letting your kids fail, rather than letting them accelerate, innovate, and succeed.

One of the challenges as a teacher is that you can get so focused on the kids who aren't succeeding that you can forget to pay attention to the "good" kids that also deserve attention. Since they're doing "fine," you don't have to give them attention. That can happen at a school level when you have a federal policy that says just make sure your kids don't fall below "this." This happens rather than creating opportunities to enable and support the innovative work that goes above and beyond the low expectation.

For those of us who were successful in school growing up, whatever we found in the way of innovation, we either had the motivation to seek it out ourselves or our parents helped us along the way. The challenge in equaling the playing field for all kids in public schools is providing each child access to those opportunities within the learning environment itself. That means not spending so much time worrying about test scores. When it comes to assessing learning, it's important to remember that just because something is hard to measure doesn't mean it's not worth measuring. That's one of the biggest challenges we need to overcome.

**Q: SEEQS has their tours led by learners. What gives learners the confidence and ability to lead these tours?**

**A:** As soon as we started getting kids to give these tours, we discovered how charming they were, and more importantly, how powerful it is to hear it from their point of view. We've had a couple of years to build this part of our program. The learners volunteer to participate and fill out a short application answering why they want to be a school ambassador. They must get permission from their teachers since they will be pulled out of class quite frequently for 30-60 minutes at a time.

We do training for them so they know the content every tour should cover; we provide them with some prompts to get them started. But, what gives them the confidence is simple—they're living it. It's like someone asking questions about your family. You can answer those questions really easily because you know your family. It's not hard for them. It's fun.

Of course, the more you talk about something, the more fluent you become in what you're talking about. I sit in on the full tour about a third of the time and will pop my head in periodically during others, so the kids can hear how I speak about the program and use similar language moving forward. If they say something that might come out a little convoluted, I'll summarize it if I see the adults aren't quite processing what's being said, and I'll hear the kids use that language during their next tour. It's a learning process for the students, and we all become better stewards of what we're doing. Our eighth-grade ambassadors could run the school at this point.

**Q: What's one of your favorite learner stories since SEEQS opened?**

**A:** There are two particular eighth-graders, since they first came here as sixth-graders, who have continuously used their Essential Questions on Sustainability (EQS) time to explore how plastics affect the environment. In particular, they've taken an interest in plastic

“In terms of federal policy, the biggest thing they could do is stop making rules about what we need to do in our schools. It's about less policy, not more.”

**BUFFY CUSHMAN-PATZ**

straws. They were shown a video one time where they saw a sea turtle with a plastic straw in its nose, and it was really powerful for them. Since then, they have been on a mission to help reduce the use of plastic straws in restaurants.

Last year, these students went to a local California Pizza Kitchen and pitched a well-thought-out, well-documented presentation to the restaurant's manager about how they could reduce their use of straws by simply asking customers if they wanted a straw with their drink, instead of automatically providing one. The manager agreed and changed the restaurant's practice.

This same group of students has gone to the state capital to give testimony on issues of sustainability. One of our students, Lucy, has gone half a dozen times in the last three years. She's an experienced advocate for issues about banning plastics and styrofoam. These issues come up in our legislature year after year because we live on an island and people genuinely care. When you see the trash that gets washed up on our shores every day, you can't ignore it.

**Q: Given that SEEQS has a focus on sustainability, do you see any commonalities in the type of families that are attracted to your model?**

**A:** Less than you would think. Maybe 25% of our families are drawn to our school because of the sustainability focus. There are so many things that people look for when searching for the right school for their child. Sometimes they are attracted to SEEQS because of its small size; others are most attracted to the project-based learning; some like the location; and some are just looking for something different. There are many different reasons.

I would say the most involved parents are in it for the sustainability side of things, and the new parents who come for that reason are surprised there aren't more parents as interested in that aspect. What's important to us is that the students are getting that exposure and not in a brainwashing way.

We don't go around telling every kid they must recycle, recycle, recycle—do this, don't do this. We're not about teaching specific environmental practices. We're about digging deeply into these issues.

We say that school is needed for kids to be prepared for life, so why not get them prepared in school itself and not have them figure it out once school is over. I wanted to drive from the thing that we really care about.

My school leadership program was in Boston and I specifically remember my mentor principal asking, "Why sustainability? Nobody is going to be into that." I told him "Yes, in Hawai'i they will be," and they totally are. I've lived in this community for 20 years. We have to care about things like sea-level rise. It's not hypothetical. It's happening. We have plastic debris on all of our beaches. You can see the environmental impact every day here, and it's a little overwhelming. I knew our community would buy-in to thinking about these issues.

**Q: What is SEEQS in hot pursuit of to expand their work?**

**A:** High school. We were chartered to be a 6-12 charter. Seeing Lucy (for example) finish eighth grade as a strong, powerful advocate—as someone who knows who she is and someone who loves to learn—I would love to be able to foster that for four more years. When I look at Emma Gonzalez and others from the March For Our Lives movement, I see my kids in those kids. I see how they could be strong advocates for their environment and for their learning in years to come if they got to stick with us for four more years. That's what we're in hot pursuit of.

**Buffy Cushman-Patz**, SEEQS' Founder, has explored teaching and learning through the lenses of theory, policy, leadership, and through first-hand experiences as a teacher in both conventional and unconventional settings. Buffy completed her EdM in School Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in May 2012, with School Development as her concentration. In 2010-2011, Buffy was honored with an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship; she served her fellowship year at the National Science Foundation's Office of Legislative and Public Affairs.



# 10 Steps on How To Bring Your Learner-Centered Vision to Life

by Charlie Goetzinger

Learner-centered practices and innovative programming are showing up more frequently in the visions, missions, and directives of districts across the nation. However, what's showing up on paper is strikingly different than what's being put into practice. Beyond the attractiveness of trendy buzzwords, it appears many districts are simply unsure where to start once the words are drafted.

As part of the BlendED Academy at Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids, IA, I have had the opportunity to take part in a collaboration that started with the same approach. A group of teachers came up with an idea to transform learning within our community. Those words made it on paper, and now we're working to implement it to the level of a full-scale program.

Throughout this process, I've recognized ten lessons that can be applied to any school or district exploring a transformational journey of their own. The specifics from my experience are far less important than the higher level lessons. The practices put in place in your community must be tailored to the needs of your learners and community.

## 1. START WITH WHY (A LA SIMON SINEK)

Nearly five years ago, I began to ponder whether or not I wanted to remain a high school science teacher in the school district I was teaching in. I was frustrated by rising class sizes and the unfathomable percentage of students with IEPs or 504 plans in general education and co-taught classrooms. I felt as though I was working so hard to provide individual attention to each student that I was nearing burnout. I explored what other opportunities were out there that would challenge, yet still reward me (yes, there existed selfish thoughts).

What ultimately pushed me to stay and address the current issues facing our school were the students and feeling the need to do better by them. So, my why was pretty simple—my students.



CHARLIE GOETZINGER

## 2. FIND SUPPORT

My next step was to find a group of like-minded teachers and begin to brainstorm solutions. I actually got with these fellow pioneers in a seemingly haphazard way.

Upon having a few discussions with the administration at my current school, I reluctantly agreed to a meeting in which the objective was to start a program that would address some of the issues or barriers to freshmen success. The meeting was open to everyone in our building, yet only seven staff members chose to partake.

During the meeting, we brainstormed some of the things that plagued our freshmen students, including attendance, behavior, engagement, and social belonging. And, from this meeting, every collaborative conversation we have had since takes us back to our original discussions and question: **What is the best thing for our current students?** This question drives our work forward and guides each change we implement.

## 3. CREATE FROM WHAT'S AVAILABLE TO YOU

The seven of us began unlearning everything we currently knew about how school was traditionally run. To discuss learner-centered solutions, we needed to start from scratch with as few barriers as possible. The one barrier set forth by our administration was that we had to teach the same standards that the rest of our building was teaching. A big barrier, but we were willing to work with it.

We began with a single question: Imagine, if you could design an educational experience for 14-16-year-old students, what would that look like?

We decided we needed to find a way for our students to accelerate through the content standards so we could free up time for project-based learning experiences that incorporated community members. We looked at the school schedule and determined if we co-taught the three core classes (language arts, mathematics, and science) for three consecutive periods, we could mess with the schedule during those three periods. We (including our students) determined we didn't each need the traditional 52-minute class periods and five-minute passing period. We have determined that time should be the one consistent variable.

So, although our seminars are set at 30-minutes, the actual time for each learning target varies by student and must be determined by the student and teacher, together. Some of our students need the teacher for an entire three-hour block, while others may not need to see or work with the teacher at all for that day. So long as they are keeping up with a pace to keep them on track with what the administration has laid out for us, they determine the time requirements.

After making this discovery, we began building the foundation of our seminar model—we break the classes down into smaller time periods and students can self-select when and where they need direct instruction. This means that if a student is “on track” in relation to the standards, they will have additional time work on their projects. The projects that students work on are determined by a combination of the students' passions and the needs of the community. We utilize a college and career planning tool to determine student interests and seek community members to collaborate with students on projects. Occasionally, we have community members reach out to us to ask how they can help and determine potential projects that students might enjoy.

“What is the best thing for our current students? This question drives our work forward and guides each change we implement.”

**CHARLIE GOETZINGER**

#### 4. PREPARE FOR PUSH BACK

Typically, when talking to schools and districts that are implementing innovative practices, you tend to only hear how wonderful everything is. While BlendED Academy certainly advertises the benefits of our model, we also make sure that people are aware of the struggles that come along with trying something new—particularly when it falls outside the traditional framework.

By living within a traditional school, it often feels as though there is a competition for who's doing best by the students. Traditional educators can develop a perception that our model is aiming to push them out. Rather than seeing us as another path for our diverse learners to expand their potential, many feel threatened and endangered.

This perception can lead to unexpected impacts like ensuring class sizes match the norms of traditional schooling. We currently have an average class size between 20 and 35 students, which matches up with the rest of the building. While that serves to satisfy the staff in our building, it comes at the expense of some of the learner-centered goals of our program. Class sizes that large make it more difficult to combine two classrooms and allow teachers to take students to alternative locations for work on their community projects. Every member of our team is responsible for a large group of students at every point throughout the day.

In some sense, it has become cyclical. We began reimagining school because of burnout, and as we appeal to varying perceptions, we find ourselves dipping back into the struggle of providing our team with the flexibility to provide each student with the opportunities they deserve without exhausting the educators.

#### 5. CREATE SPACE FOR CONTINUOUS SELF-REFLECTION AND COLLABORATION

One of our stopgaps to prevent burnout and attrition is our team's commitment to collaborating and sharing the experiences, stories, and hardships of the day. We have a dedicated planning and lunch period that allows us to meet to discuss issues that arise, schedules for upcoming days, or plans for future events. During this time, we commit to conversations regarding our students, including things that might be going on with them in their lives outside of school, as well as behaviors we are seeing in school. We also constantly discuss ways to improve our practices—how to find more time to do more things, how to meet with all our students, and how to tweak our current system to meet our desired goals. We also revisit our goals and vision each year to determine what we want to look like and ways to improve.

#### 6. FAIL HARD, FAIL FAST

We are currently on schedule variation number 1,542 (not an accurate number, though it feels this way). We were given the flexibility from both district and building leaders to make mistakes and the time to correct them. I want to make sure that at no point is failure the end result. The important thing is that we take our "failures" seriously and learn from them for continuous program improvement. We have changed many things from year-to-year to meet our goals.

The first goal is that the program must meet the students where they are. The second is that we deem it necessary to implement large-scale changes if we find new ways to tackle issues. We also recognize that when something is not going the way we would like it to, there needs to be an immediate correction on our end. Otherwise, we will fail our students over the long term.

“One of our stopgaps to prevent burnout and attrition is our team's commitment to collaborating and sharing the experiences, stories, and hardships of the day.”

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I like to think along the lines of Elon Musk's work with Tesla. Traditional car companies typically roll out a new car every year with minor corrections from last year's model—forcing car buyers to purchase a new model year to get the improvements. At Tesla, most improvements are made with a "simple" software upgrade that provides the buyers with immediate corrections on their current vehicle (regardless of the year they made the purchase), reducing the need to roll out a "new" car each year. Our program operates in a similar manner: If something isn't working, we collaborate to make changes for the benefit of the students, almost immediately.

## 7. NETWORK AND LEARN FROM OTHER PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS

One of the most beneficial experiences for our team was the opportunity to visit some of the innovative programs in Waukesha, Wisconsin and invite their leaders to visit us. From Waukesha's FLIGHT Academy, we picked up the idea that morphed into our Advisor Groups. At Waukesha North's INSPIRE program, we liked the idea of breakout rooms and a type of seminar modelling. At Butler Middle School's QUEST program, we liked the jobs that students participated in—QUEST functioned as a small community, and student engagement was evident. At Waukesha STEM Academy, we enjoyed seeing how they utilized the building and the scanners outside of each room that tracked attendance and availability. Most of our team went on one of two visits and were able to pick up things that we felt could apply to our program and students.

As the BlendED Academy has developed and grown, we have had the opportunity to reach out and show others what we have to offer and how we conduct learner-centered practices within a larger school. One of the hesitations of districts is how to allocate resources that can help promote and sustain these practices. What we have been able to show through hosting various districts and schools is that, with a few dedicated teachers and support from a district level, learner-centered practices can be a part of any building, with minimal resource reallocation.

BlendED has also provided me the opportunity to present and share our practices at a state and national level. For example, I have had the pleasure of presenting to small groups at the Iowa Competency-based Education (CBE) Collaborative. Additionally, I have been able to take students to present our practices and their experiences to the Iowa Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (IACTE), which is comprised of 32 teacher preparation programs in Iowa. The students discussed what their experience is like in the program and complemented the presentation on how best to prepare post-secondary education students for learner-centered practices.

## 8. DEFINE SUCCESS

Through our seminar scheduling model, we have addressed most of the issues that affect our freshmen. We have shown that we have better attendance, engagement, and feeling of belonging. Each of our teachers now serves as an advisor to 35 students in our program. During advisor meetings, we begin by getting to know our students on a more personal level. We talk about life, interests, goals, and potential college and career aspirations. From these discussions, we ensure that the students understand there is an advocate for them at school and determine potential projects that might be of interest to them.

As a by-product, we have also shown increased proficiency and growth numbers on standardized tests, which has satisfied the needs of the district and state while moving our program forward.

“Our belief is that relationships drive a student's education. If we can build the relationship and trust with our students, we can get them to learn anything.”

**CHARLIE GOETZINGER**

What our team has come to pride ourselves on are the relationships and trust we have built with our students. Our belief is that relationships drive a student's education. If we can build the relationship and trust with our students, we can get them to learn anything. When we couple that with weaving their passions into their education, they now have investment and ownership in their education.

## 9. SUSTAINABILITY

When looking at programs that have implemented learner-centered practices in the past, many of them have struggled to find long-term sustainability. The factors that commonly contribute to this are a lack of support from district and/or building leadership; the attrition of leaders—teachers, administrators, state members—who helped guide the visioning process and implement the vision in the beginning stages; teacher burnout due to implementing too much, too soon; or the lack of a long-term vision.

There are a few things that have helped keep us going thus far. We have been given the ability to adjust to meet the needs of our students and adapt each year. We generally get along well as a staff. We are committed to the success of every student. And, we have committed time for collaborative planning and preparation each day.

Additionally, the leadership is distributed with each one of us taking on roles and responsibilities; yet, we keep the group informed of every decision and action. One of the focuses has been to maximize what we do with very little financial allocation. Everything we have done comes from grants that are completed by the students or teachers, which eases the decision by the school and the district in terms of whether to support our initiative.

Up to this point, we have been fortunate enough to have retained our entire group of educators each year. We understand that changes will come and people will move on, so we need to be diligent in how we become sustainable when those changes occur. Program sustainability is something that I have been thinking about for a few years, since reading the book *Better Together* by Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein. The authors discuss the importance of program sustainability and highlight programs that aren't simply driven by one person and would be able to survive if a visionary leader were to leave the program.

What is important for us moving forward is to focus on distributed leadership and every team member taking responsibility for certain aspects of our program. If a person leaves, we then must only fill in the missing piece and not the whole. Additionally, it is important to continually revisit the mission and vision of our program and ensure that everyone is committed to those core beliefs. If there is a fracture in the group, we can begin to expect the integrity of the program to diminish.

## 10. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The important thing for BlendED moving forward is the vision for the future. Our district's vision is Every Learner: Future Ready. This is something that needs to drive our work as we continue. As a team, we know where we want to be regarding the opportunities and experiences we need to provide for our students. Having attended the most recent Pioneer Lab Training in San Francisco, we now have the framework from which to operate, and the Lexicon, in particular, will help to guide our future discussions and the opportunities provided to our students. While we implement most of the five elements in the BlendED Academy, we need to shift to where they are evident on a daily basis, in every learning experience.

**Charlie Goetzinger** is a co-creator of the BlendED Academy at Jefferson High School—an innovative program in its fourth year of implementation. Charlie has been a science and mathematics teacher at Jefferson for seven years. During the summer months, Charlie also coaches softball at Jefferson. He lives in North Liberty, IA with his wife, Rachel, and son, Gannon, with another child coming in May.



# High Quality Project-Based Learning (HQPBL)

Project-based learning—at least the phrase—has been popping up within learner-centered (and school-centered) implementation strategies throughout the 21st century and its common usage only appears to be accelerating. What’s not so common is having clarity about what makes for a high-quality project-based learning framework. Acknowledging this roadblock, The Buck Institute took on the challenge of gathering 27 stakeholders from around the world who have been working on PBL for decades to come up with a [universal framework](#) that not only provides a robust landscape of HQPBL but does so “in terms of the student experience.” They quickly point to the fact that: “Various models and guidelines for PBL have been created by experts and organizations in recent years, but these are typically written from the perspective of the teacher.” By, instead, putting the learner first, this HQPBL framework focuses on intellectual challenge and accomplishment, authenticity, public product, collaboration, project management, and reflection. Dive into these elements and more to discover if HQPBL is a fitting tool for your environment.

**A Framework for High Quality Project Based Learning** ([link](#))

**Defining High Quality Project Based Learning: A Look at the Research** ([link](#))

**About HQPBL** ([link](#))

## Genesys Works

When corporate executives [express concern](#) about the limited knowledge, skills, and dispositions entry-level employees are showing up with, unproductive finger pointing can ensue. Fortunately, for our communities and our young learners, the wall between “real-world” and “school-world” is being taken down by efforts like [Genesys Works](#)—a group on a mission to “provide pathways to career success for high school students in underserved communities through skills training, meaningful work experiences, and impactful relationships.” By exposing learners to open-walled opportunities that are directly relevant to their potential interests and passions, Genesys Works is exposing learners (and employers) to unexpected possibilities. Learners are gaining valuable exposure to working within intergenerational age environments. And, employers have an opportunity to gain insight about the future leaders of their industries. Discover if Genesys Works is in a city near you and how it might open new doors to your learning community.

**The Problem** ([link](#))

**The Genesys Works Solution** ([link](#))

**Bring Genesys Works to Your City** ([link](#))

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### ASU + GSV SUMMIT

San Diego, CA

Apr 16-18

[Summit Website](#)

#### FUTURENOW! CONFERENCE

San Diego, CA

Apr 27-28

[Conference Website](#)

#### EDUCATION ELEMENTS PERSONALIZED LEARNING SUMMIT 2018

San Francisco, CA

May 2-4

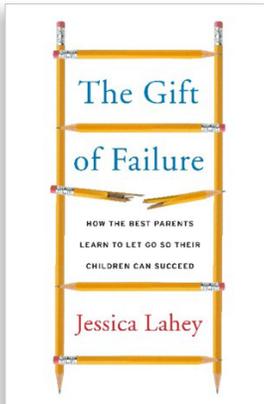
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### OPPORTUNITY BOARD

#### The 2018 Lawrence W. O’Toole Teacher Leadership Awards

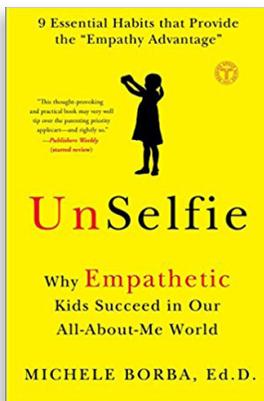
nomination period is now open. Applications are due April 27th. Nominations are open for classroom teachers at public high schools in the New England region. Learn more [here](#).

**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](#).



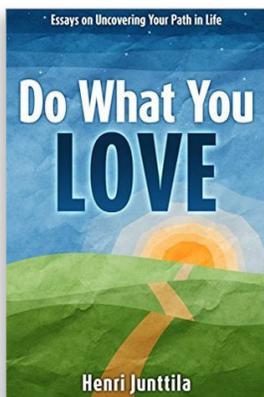
**The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed** by Jessica Lahey

Sara Blakely, billionaire founder of Spanx, is well known for sharing about the uncommon dinner conversation she and her siblings had with her father when growing up. Each day, he would ask his kids what they failed at. And, in his eyes, the only real failure was not failing. Jessica Lahey, author of *The Gift of Failure*, endorses this idea and wrote her book as a call to action for parents everywhere to take a step back and let their kids experience adversity. Explore her real life examples of when these “learning through failure” moments arise and how we can better recognize when to let them happen.



**UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World** by Michele Bora

The cliché is true: The more connected we become, the more isolated we feel. As Dr. Michele Bora lays out in her new book, *Unselfie*, this social isolation is causing us to lose our sense of empathy towards everyone around us. When compared to 30 years ago, studies show teens are 40% less empathetic, and the decline is continuing. Efforts in the social-emotional learning movement are working hard to quell this trend, and Bora is using her expertise to help spread the message to every parent. Discover her nine-step empathy building program and how it might provide insights to you and parents in your community.



**Do What You Love: Essays on Uncovering Your Path in Life** by Henri Junttila

Discovering your passions is as much about exploring the world around you as it is exploring the world within. This is true for anyone at any age. As life moments stack up, we can find ourselves viewing the world through lenses we never anticipated looking through. In Henri Junttila’s book, *Do What You Love*, readers have the opportunity to see how the path toward finding what you love can take many shapes. But, in the end, there are universal elements we can all be aware of as we go through this journey called life.

WORTH YOUR TIME

**Personalized Leadership**

When transforming your learning environment from one that is school-centered to one that is learner-centered, you discover everyone, young learners and educators alike, need to be met where they are on their learning and professional development journeys. Discover how one leader is exploring that space.

[Read here](#)

**Innovation in Real Time**

If it’s hard, it’s probably worth doing. Education transformation is no different. Explore one learning environment’s experience in continuing to move forward in their transformational work, while maintaining a positive and healthy environment for their learners. [Read here](#)

**A Student’s Perspective: Some Truths About Real-World Learning**

Designing a learner-centered environment means providing the space for learner voices to be heard and acted upon. Education Reimagined has always prided itself in providing such a space in *Pioneering*, and we love seeing other national organizations looking to do the same. See what’s happening with our friends at NGLC.

[Read here](#)

“Find your voice and inspire others to find theirs.”

—**Stephen Covey**

Read past issues of  
**PIONEERING : A LEARNER-CENTERED PUBLICATION**  
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