



Learning Without Limits:

How might education look if the community and world were really the playgrounds for learning?

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with many great challenges and great opportunities when it comes to providing young people with community-based learning experiences. As we consider the possibilities before us, it's important to determine what we can start, stop, and continue doing right now (and long after the pandemic is over) in partnership with young learners, their families, and community members to take advantage of the playgrounds for learning right outside our front doors and throughout the digital world.

START...

- Creating an advisory structure such that young people have a consistent community to be with, set learning goals with, and design learning pathways with.
- Asking young learners, especially those you are most concerned about, whether or not the learning experiences available to them match their interests and passions.
- Finding out what is happening in kids' lives outside of the school day.
- Credentialing (or at minimum, acknowledging) learning that is happening outside of school time and school walls, whether or not it was school-sanctioned or had anything to do with "academics."
- Exploring how other young people, virtual opportunities, and/or community members could support a child's learning, in particular a child who is struggling, unmotivated, or uninspired.
- Engaging with potential partners and mentors beyond your zip code.
- Noticing and sharing your ideas and successes with families, communities, and neighboring schools. Also engage them in conversations about what could be for young people and how else learning could be structured.
- Seeing that learning is more than a "project." Start seeing it as developing learners who are revolutionary and changing the world now and when they leave formal schooling.
- Normalizing young learners teaching adults and begin shifting the mindsets of adults to show them what young people are capable of.
- Creating space for the gifts, talents, and wisdom of your learners to collide with the needs of your community.

STOP...

- Breaking learning up into 7-8 unrelated periods of time each day (especially not through Zoom).
- Using the term "learning loss" to mean what kids didn't learn over the last year, as if this year hasn't been entirely made up of learning experiences for all of us.
- Doing the things that your young people could be doing (e.g. determining what a class is going to cover; setting learning goals; documenting learning; or providing feedback on assignments).
- Thinking that school or education *needs* to be set up in a particular way. There isn't one right way or one book to follow.

- Thinking that the purpose of school is solely to get students “prepared for college.” Education is about community, making meaning of learning, support, and sparking curiosity.
- (For young people) Allowing adults to think that you are anything “less than” or that you are powerless. You are powerful.

CONTINUE...

- Taking care of yourself amidst the challenges of the pandemic.
- Being flexible, innovative, and open to new ideas or inputs from anywhere, including your young people.
- Being cognizant of the real-life challenges you and your young people are facing and co-creating an environment of support for all of you.
- Allowing young people to learn in-person and remotely as needed or desired.
- Exploring how virtual or online tools, programs, or opportunities could support and enhance your young peoples’ learning experiences.
- Inviting your young people to bring up ideas/suggestions, take on more responsibilities for their own learning, and care for each other.
- Providing needed resources for young people to learn at home, regardless if they are learning in-person or remotely (e.g. computers, internet access).

FOR MORE INSPIRATION

Education Reimagined

- [Education Reimagined Website](#)
- [A transformational vision for education in the US](#)
- [Voyager Newsletter: Stories and Ideas Shaping the Future of Education](#)

Iowa BIG

- [Iowa BIG Website](#)
- [What is Real Academic Rigor?](#)
- **Articles from Iowa BIG’s young learners**
 - [This is Not Your Typical First Day of School](#)
 - [How One Amazing Day Re-Defined My Comfort Zone](#)
 - [Unlocking the Door to My Future](#)
 - [Because Mom Said So \(And Why I'm Glad She Did\)](#)
- **Articles from Iowa BIG mentors**
 - [Iowa BIG: A Conversation with Trace Pickering](#)
 - [These Misconceptions are Keeping School in the 1960's](#)
- **Articles from local and national media**
 - [“The Back-to-School Project”](#)
 - [Story from XQ: Iowa BIG](#)
 - [Linn-Mar students sign up chainsaw artists for auction](#)
 - [Derecho Recovery](#)

Empower Community High School

- [Empower Community High School Website](#)
- [Centering Compassion: A Conversation with Empower Community High School Leaders](#)
- [Empower Community FLOW Project](#)