



## Explore What's Possible: A Conversation Guide to a Community-Based Ecosystem of Learning Approach

Envision what's possible if we were to truly embrace a community-based ecosystem of learning approach. Use The Big Idea videos and this Conversation Guide to personally reflect on your own, kickoff a conversation with your neighbors, or launch a professional learning session with some colleagues to imagine and try on new thinking about a transformed future for learning.



CONVERSATION ONE:

# Try It On

**Start by watching the [overview video](#)** to ground yourself in the idea of equitable, learner-centered, community-based ecosystems of learning. Then, pick from the following prompts to “try on” the idea:

- What excites you about a community-based ecosystem approach?
- What do you notice is valued in a community-based ecosystem approach? How is that different from a conventional approach to organizing, supporting, and credentialing education?
- How might a community-based ecosystem help create more equitable learning environments and opportunities for all learners?
- Imagine if you had learning experiences that looked like those described in the videos. What might be different for you today? What might be the same?
- Imagine if a young person in your life had learning experiences that looked like those described in the videos. What might be different for them? What might be the same?
- Imagine if your community was home to a thriving ecosystem of learning that looked like the one in the video. What would that be like for you? For your loved ones? For other community members?

**Choose one (or more) of the [remaining videos](#)** to watch. Then, use the following questions to prompt reflection or further conversation:

- Who might contribute to young people’s growth, safety, and wellbeing in an ecosystem of learning? Consider families and caregivers, community and civic leaders, business owners, social service providers, and others.
- Map out your community and visualize the people and places of learning that could be tapped. List, draw, or just think about where, and with whom, learning might happen.
- What promises, if kept, would support every learner in this community to thrive?
- Imagine a day in the life of a learner you know (or even yourself), in a community-based ecosystem. Who do they meet? How do they make decisions about what to do? What do they learn?
- What might hold a community back from taking an ecosystem approach? How might those barriers be addressed?
- What questions do you still have about an ecosystem approach? Who might you approach to begin to gather possible answers?





## CONVERSATION TWO:

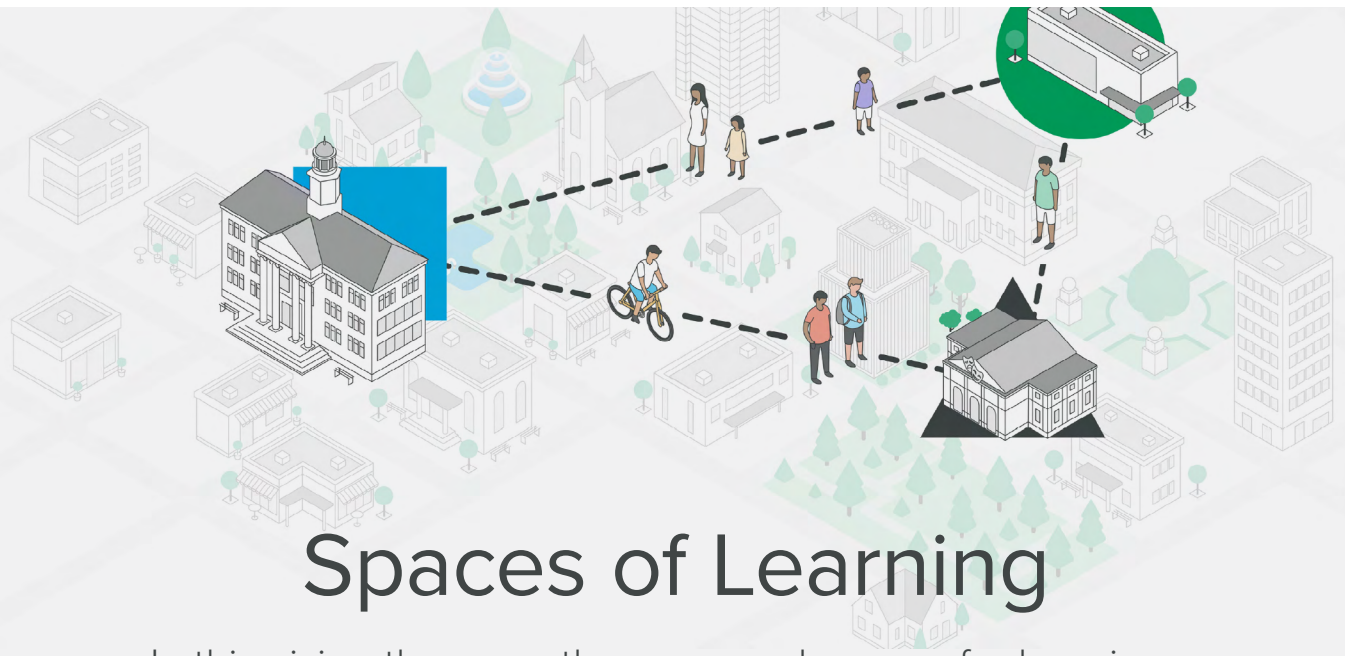
# Imagine and Go Further

**Dive into the world of a learner** depicted in any one of the videos and flesh the story out further with a focus on crafting the stories of the people and people systems in place to support that child.

- Identify and name a set of characters in this story who could be part of the cross-functional team supporting the young learner depicted. (These can be ones you invent, as well as those mentioned in the video.)
- Describe the functions these characters are serving and the roles they are playing.
- Share something about what brought each of them to play a part in the learner's cross-functional team and why it matters to them.

**An example:** Patricia is a retired 70-year-old former lawyer, who is now a grandmother to two young people in an ecosystem of learning. She has always loved to cook and is now volunteering two days a week at a local community center where young people within this community's learning ecosystem get their breakfasts and lunches. She works with other volunteers to make lunch for the 60 young people who have their advisories in this community center. After striking up a conversation with her granddaughter's learning advisor one day, she has started to stay for the afternoons to work with a group of five 13-15 year olds (one of whom is her granddaughter) who are interested in learning to cook. They've set out to make all the recipes from one of Patricia's favorite cookbooks, and the young people are working with their learning advisor to get credit for this work.





# Spaces of Learning

In this vision there are three general spaces for learning—  
home bases, learning hubs, and field sites

Children and young people move through this ecosystem according to their own unique learning journey and in ways appropriate to their development and maturity. This is not an isolated or isolating path; in the context of the ecosystem, young people are finding community and belonging; exploring their interests and ideas; developing basic human literacies in such areas as mathematics, language, history, and science; receiving support and guidance; pushing their thinking; and building their social capital.

## Home Base

**Home Bases** provide safe spaces for young people to build stable, years-long relationships with a cohort of peers and one or two adults called learning advisors. Here, they connect with advisor(s) with whom they partner to set learning goals, create learning pathways, find support, and manage their health and well-being. These home bases could be located just about anywhere in the community, and different ones might cater to specific learner interests, needs, and/or circumstances.

## Learning Hub

**Learning Hubs** serve as spaces that specialize in learning and human development, where learning facilitators and learning specialists support young people to develop and demonstrate competencies, pursue topics and issues of interest, get learning support where they are struggling, and engage in virtual opportunities

all in support of fulfilling the child's learning goals and plans they've set with their advisors. Libraries, office buildings, YMCAs, museums, converted school buildings, colleges, community gardens, theaters, churches, and more could all serve as learning hubs—and a child might spend time in various learning hubs throughout the day or week depending on what interest, competency, or pathways they are pursuing at any given time.

## Field Site

**Field Sites** are the spaces where learners meet and work with community mentors through such opportunities as internships, jobs, field projects, and service learning. The list of possible field sites is nearly endless—banks, pharmacies, retirement homes, nonprofits, graphic design studios, sewage treatment plants, pet stores, food pantries, just to name a few.



## Dig Deeper with Resources from Education Reimagined

Below are documents and articles that will further ground you in the history of our current system, what is meant by learner-centered transformation, why we are thinking about ecosystems in the first place, why innovation isn't enough, and what it means to build with equity at the foundation.

- [A Transformational Vision of Education in the US](#)
- [It's a Paradigm Shift. So, What?](#)
- [The Why Series: Exploring the "Sacred Cows" of Conventional Education](#)
- [Why We Must Invent Community-Based Ecosystems of Learning](#)
- [An Ecosystem Approach to Unleashing Learner-Centered Transformation](#)
- [Next Level Transformation: Inventing Community-Based, Learner-Centered Ecosystems](#)

If you are interested in learning more about learner-centered, equity-focused, community-based ecosystems of learning reach out to us at [thebigidea@educationreimagined.org](mailto:thebigidea@educationreimagined.org).