

A student wearing a red cap and a backpack is walking through a large, circular, abstract sculpture on a campus. The background shows trees and a brick building. The image is overlaid with a teal and purple gradient.

2024



YEAR IN REVIEW

education 
reimagined



Our Vision

To enable all children to fulfill their full potential as empowered individuals, constructive members of their communities, productive participants in the economy, and engaged citizens of the United States and the world.

Our Mission

To make learner-centered education available to each and every child in the United States, inclusive of race, background, and circumstance.

Our Role

To be a catalyst for collective invention—fueling the confidence of those who want to invent a future where learning lives everywhere, and every child thrives.



Letter from Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Demi Edwards

In 2024, the word “unprecedented” came up time and again. We saw exciting “never-before” inventions, seemingly unthinkable developments, and in some cases, events that stunned us to our core.

Across the United States, foundational ideas about the role of public education—how it serves young people and strengthens communities—are being reevaluated, opening the door to possibilities once thought unimaginable. Likewise, its pivotal role as an institution that builds community, access, and hope has never been more clear.

When we began the Education Reimagined journey, we knew we were embarking into unprecedented territory, challenging long-held assumptions and rallying leaders toward a transformed vision for public education.

In this learner-centered vision, every child is known and loved, cultivates their gifts, and—surrounded by networks of supportive adults and friends—contributes those gifts meaningfully to their communities.

What once was a small group of voices is now a powerful and beautiful chorus. Today, we find ourselves locking arms with partners, community leaders, innovators, and champions who hold tight to this vision. For many, it has animated their work for decades, if not centuries. They share our fundamental drive to make it real, and are working actively toward making learner-centered education available to every young person in the United States.

The unprecedented contexts of today’s world—deep challenges, emerging runways, and the opportunities our young people have before them—propel Education Reimagined forward with hope, tenacity, and boldness. We hold tight to our vision and are steadfast in our commitments.

2024 was a year of igniting new dimensionality into our work, taking concrete steps toward realizing our mission. We transitioned to a distributed leadership model, evolving our organization’s structure to enhance collaboration and impact. In this, we empowered leaders across our organization to drive future-forward initiatives. And, they did.

Together, we:

- **Expanded our network:** We connected more deeply across learner-centered environments to uncover and unpack deeper insights about their impact and challenges.
- **Launched the Learner-Centered Ecosystem Lab:** We coalesced visionary champions across a dozen communities to support, study, and accelerate their pilots of learner-centered ecosystems.
- **Formalized and initiated our research agenda:** We set our course to reveal evidence, data and insights to validate and empower the field.
- **Engaged the policy community:** We deepened understanding of the conditions at the state and national level that enable (or inhibit) learner-centered invention.
- **Shared stories of the movement:** We empowered and engaged more voices to share and advocate for learner-centered education, and the systems change possibilities and movements in front of us.



Most importantly, we stood tightly in concert with other organizations, thought leaders, and visionaries who believe, and are working toward, a learner-centered education future. **Partnership, convening, discovering common ground is in our organizational DNA.**

The bold momentum is palpable. As we build on it, we drive closer to realizing the vision of a learner-centered education future for our communities and young people.



Warmly,
Demi
Demi Edwards



OUR FOCUS

The bold actions we take as an organization engage communities in three interlocking dimensions.

01

Building the Field

of learner-centered leaders and communities

02

Catalyzing Invention

to further R&D and make learner-centered ecosystems a reality

03

Spreading the Vision

by helping others see and believe in the power and possibility of learner-centered education



“Education Reimagined illuminates a path for bold education transformation and forges the deep connections needed to turn vision into reality for children, families, and communities.”

CARLOS MORENO, CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BIG PICTURE LEARNING

Building the Field

Our field-building work gathers learner-centered professionals in a national community of inquiry. Rich experiences and dialogue spark powerful insights that propel the leaders within it forward. The shared language of learner-centered education and practice bonds the community together. The resources we develop enable individual leaders to bring other supporters and changemakers into their work. All of this is designed with the intention of enabling the growth and spread of learner-centered education.

This growing national community consists of more than 1,400 professionals and young people, representing 246 organizations and learning environments, eight countries, 42 states, and three reservations, serving more than 272,000 young people.



The Learning Lab

With more than 600 members, the Learning Lab builds the cohesion, credibility, and capacity of the professionals leading the learner-centered field. In April 2024, in San Diego, CA, we held our ninth Learning Lab Training. The three-day experience joined members of the community—including educators, researchers, entrepreneurs, and young people—in exploring the elements of learner-centered education together. We hosted 32 partners, from 17 organizations and sites across 11 states and one reservation.



“It makes a difference to know that innovative, learner-centered education is already happening in both the public and independent sector ... I felt more together than isolated in this mission after the Learning Lab Training.”

SARA CASEY TALEFF, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COLEARNCO AND COTTONWOOD NYC

SparkHouse

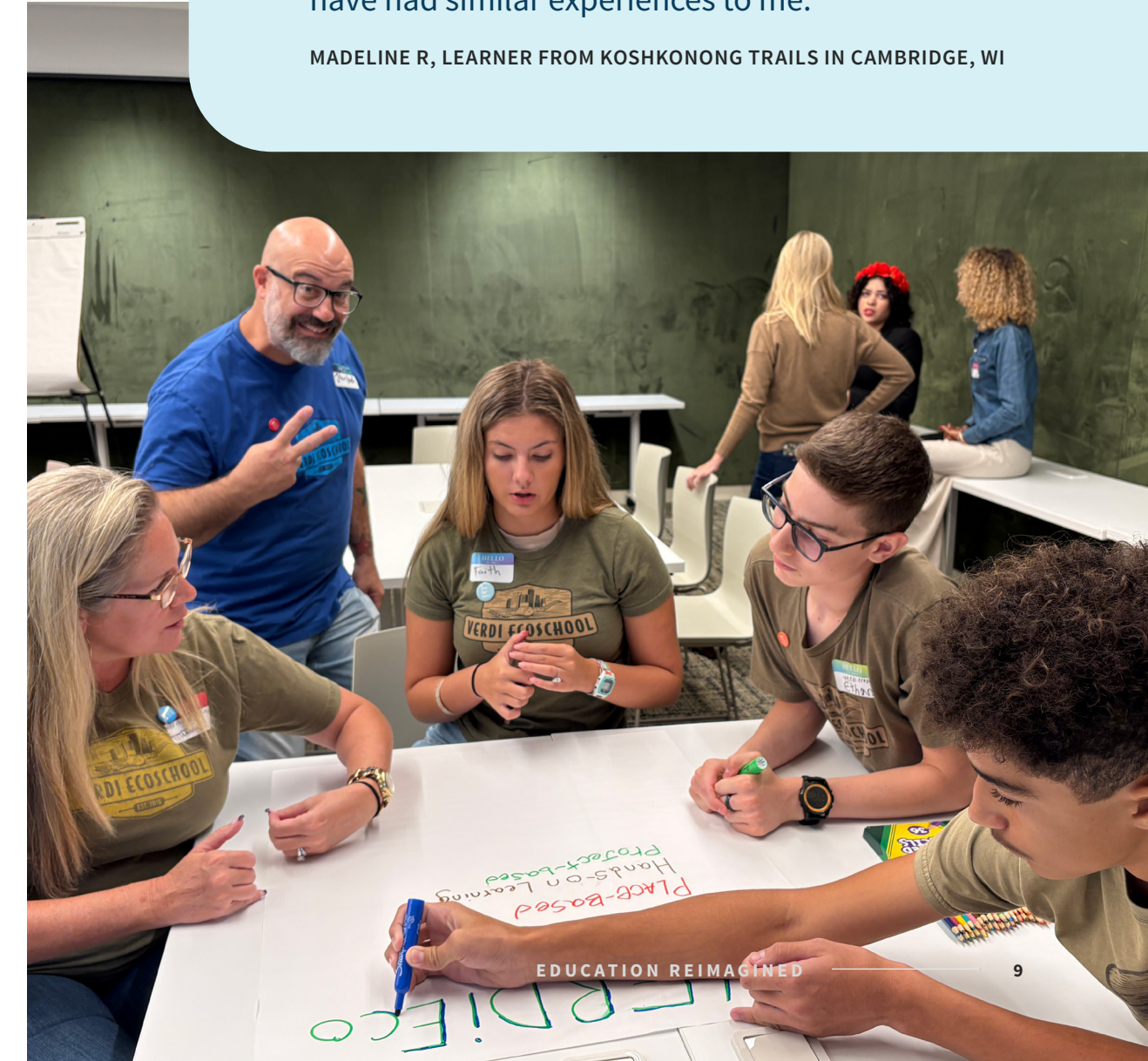
Through our SparkHouse initiative, young people come together both virtually and in-person to share their perspectives of learner-centered education. Together they discover and co-create ideas to advocate for it. Today, our growing SparkHouse community consists of more than 800 young people, practitioners, and professionals from more than 50 organizations and learning environments nationwide.

SparkHouse convened twice in 2024. A virtual April gathering gave voice to learners from seven learner-centered sites across six states. In October, we welcomed learners for two days in Washington, DC. SparkHouse DC hosted 63 participants from 12 different learning communities. Together, participants collaborated, discussed, and explored how the learner-centered field could look when each of us contributes our unique gifts and passions to the national movement.



“SparkHouse helped remind me that there are other learner-centered students everywhere. Sometimes it can feel like we are the only ones. It was really nice to talk to other learner-centered students who have had similar experiences to me.”

MADELINE R, LEARNER FROM KOSHKONONG TRAILS IN CAMBRIDGE, WI



Site Visits

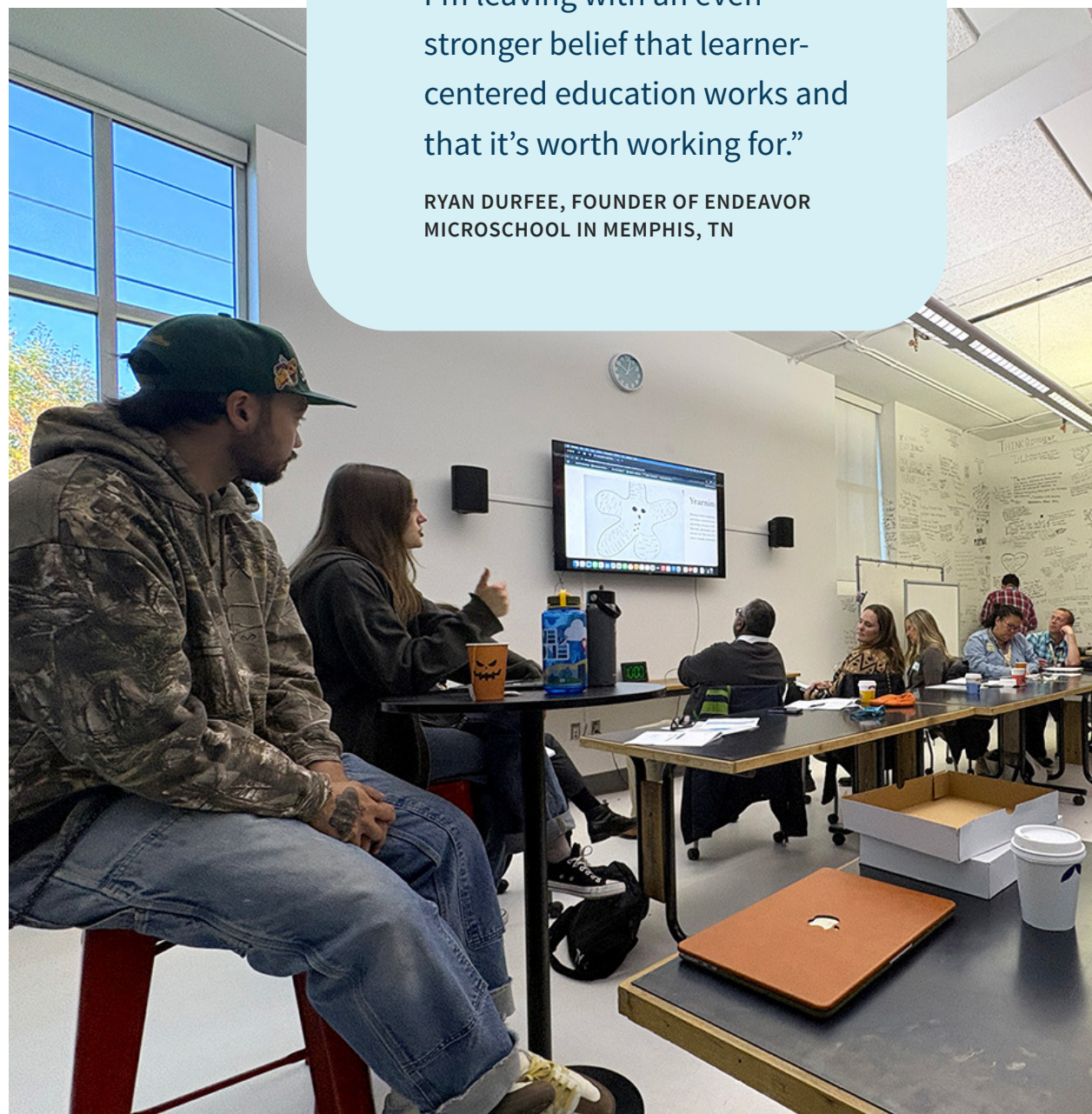
Experiencing learner-centered environments in person, understanding their unique contexts, and visiting with leaders and learners is a cornerstone of our work. To deepen our insights about practice in context, our team visited 18 sites across the country. From rural towns to bustling cities, we explored public schools, charter schools, independent programs, and out-of-school settings. We visited large environments serving hundreds of young people, and microschoools with fewer than 30 learners. We witnessed how learning can be nurtured in an urban garden at Verdi EcoSchool in Melbourne, FL, how the third spaces in the community can animate young people's experiences with My Brother's Keeper in Charlotte, NC, and what it looks like when learners take the lead (including of the school's board of directors) at One Stone in Boise, ID.

Our team, practitioners, and supporters came together to experience, reflect on, and further clarify the learner-centered approach, fueling our individual efforts and building the collective field.



“This was an opportunity to see learner-centered education fully in action. I’m leaving with an even stronger belief that learner-centered education works and that it’s worth working for.”

RYAN DURFEE, FOUNDER OF ENDEAVOR MICROSCHOOL IN MEMPHIS, TN



Advancing Learner-Centered Education Through Research

This year, Education Reimagined ignited research efforts to deepen field insight, practice, and connection. Our new research team articulated and released a comprehensive research agenda designed to build and strengthen the field of learner-centered education, and catalyze research and development efforts toward piloting learner-centered ecosystems in communities across the United States.

Spotlighting Learner-Driven Insights

This year also marked the publication of our inaugural research report, *Learner-Centered in Focus*. This work provides evidence-based insights and practice strategies grounded in the learner-centered experiences of young learners.

The report synthesizes three key dimensions:

- **Youth Voices:** Contributions from over 300 young people across nine learner-centered sites offer an authentic look into the dynamics of their educational experiences.
- **Site Stories and Strategies:** Real-world examples and perspectives from site leaders and learners illustrate how learner-centered education is brought to life.
- **Comparative Insights:** Analysis of how learner-centered experiences differ from conventional educational environments highlights the unique impact of this approach.

By elevating the voices of learners and uncovering actionable insights, *Learner-Centered in Focus* lays the foundation for further research into the outcomes, impacts, and effectiveness of the learner-centered approach.

Learner-Centered in Focus

An Exploration of Young People's Experiences in Learner-Centered Environments

READ THE REPORT

education
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Catalyzing Invention

Creating a future where learner-centered education is accessible to every young person in the United States requires reimagining the systems and infrastructure that enable it. Our systems-level transformation work is rooted in the realization of learner-centered ecosystems.

In 2024, we accelerated our efforts to pilot learner-centered ecosystems—launching multiple initiatives to support their development—and build a robust pipeline of visionary leaders and supporters.

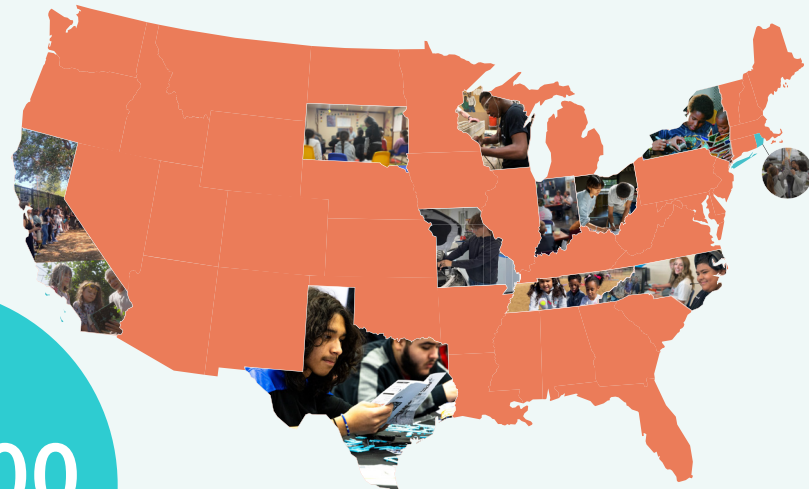
We mobilized resources to ensure learnings were collected, codified, and shared across the field, amplifying the impact of this work. This includes formalizing research to gather, examine and share insights about our R&D efforts.

The Learner-Centered Ecosystem Lab

The Learner-Centered Ecosystem Lab is a cornerstone initiative driving the design and prototyping of transformative ecosystems. With 12 pilot sites serving over 180,000 learners—from a 200-student self-directed learning community to a 12,000-student public school district—the Lab is advancing a bold vision: to develop and refine adaptable ecosystem models that prioritize equity, sustainability, and holistic well-being, while inspiring communities nationwide.

12
PILOT SITES

180,000
LEARNERS SERVED



In September, Lab members from all sites gathered in Brooklyn, NY to kick off the experience together, share their contexts and ambitions for ecosystems, and bear witness to the emerging ecosystem of Runway Green, coming alive at New York's Floyd Bennett Field.

The prototypes emerging from these pilots reflect the unique needs and aspirations of each participating community, offering powerful insights into the potential of learner-centered systems. Through peer-to-peer collaboration and tailored guidance, the Lab has become a vital incubator for innovation, fostering actionable ideas and practices.



“The Lab is a valuable experience for Big Thought. It helps us expand our thinking on how the ecosystem and assets we’ve cultivated over the past 20+ years could be applied in impactful new ways for youth, the community, and the future of public education.”

GREG MACPHERSON, CHIEF BIG THOUGHT INSTITUTE OFFICER,
BIG THOUGHT

A grounding milestone was the publication of our **Learner-Centered Ecosystem Lexicon**, formalizing the distinctions and defining principles of learner-centered ecosystems to crystallize our vision and pilot execution.

To broaden participation and support, and build our pipeline for pilots in even more communities, we hosted the **Exploring Ecosystems Webinar Series**, attracting more than 300 potential partners—including educators, policymakers, and community advocates. These sessions showcased pilots in action, highlighted community-centered approaches, and emphasized the critical role of cross-sector collaboration in designing sustainable ecosystems.

As these efforts continue to spread, they represent an essential step toward realizing a nationwide shift to learner-centered education.

Exploring Learner-Centered Ecosystems
What they are, where communities are leading the charge, and how they can become a public education reality

education reimaged

Join Our Upcoming Webinar! Thursday, November 14 | 1pm ET

Alin Bennett
VP of Field Practice & Advancement, Education Reimagined

Annalies Corbin
President & CEO, PAST Foundation

Aysha Khan
Project Manager, Runway Green



“The Learning Ecosystems webinar was incredible! It provided practical insights and ideas to our team and strengthened our resolve. It nurtures our hope to know that we are a part of something bigger.”

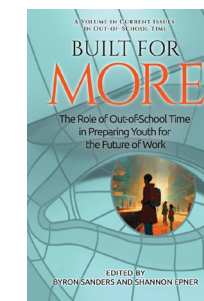
JIM BAILEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER, ROCK TREE SKY

Integrating Youth Development and Out-of-School Time Leadership

Youth Development and Out-of-School Time (OST) organizations are essential to building learner-centered ecosystems, shaping self-discovery, social capital, career exploration, and durable skills. Our Lab partnership with PAST Foundation, FabNewport, and Big Thought has reinforced the field’s critical role in systems transformation. In 2024, we deepened engagement with Positive Youth Development leaders to elevate the promise of ecosystems.

BUILT FOR MORE

Built for More: The Role of Out-of-School Time in Preparing Youth for the Future of Work, edited



by Big Thought’s Byron Sanders and Shannon Epner, features voices across the OST landscape, including Education Reimagined’s Bobbi Macdonald. Released in 2024, the book sparked

conversations on learner-centered education through events like an authors’ gallery walk at the National Summer Learning Association conference, a Big Thought Institute web event, and various articles.

TOO ESSENTIAL TO FAIL

Commissioned by Education Reimagined and authored by youth development leaders Karen



Pittman and Merita Irby, *Too Essential to Fail: Why Our Big Bet on Public Education Needs a Bold National Response* makes the case for transforming learner-centered ecosystems from

vision to reality. The paper presents compelling data on existing demand from youth, parents, community, and business leaders, alongside research on the benefits of community-based education. It catalyzed 17 convenings, discussions, and immersions on Centering Youth Thriving, including a Town Hall hosted by Getting Smart.



“Our partnership with Education Reimagined to produce ‘Too Essential to Fail’ gave us a substantive platform and body of work to share the promise of learner-centered ecosystems with stakeholders of all kinds—including leaders, policymakers, researchers, funders focused on centering youth thriving, and places, times, and spaces where learning happens.”

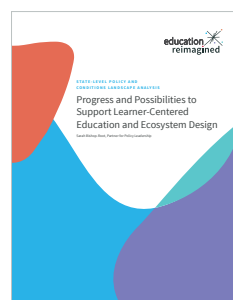
KAREN PITTMAN AND MERITA IRBY,
KNOWLEDGE TO POWER CATALYSTS

Enabling Conditions and Policy for Learner-Centered Education and Ecosystem Design

As we work towards transforming the education paradigm toward a learner-centered future, the enabling policies and conditions must be in place to support learner-centered education and ecosystem design.

Our policy work is rooted in a strong foundation of research, partnerships, and our work in learner-centered environments. This year, we prioritized ways to solidify strategic relationships with a core group of aligned state-level policy and advocacy stakeholders. We also advanced efforts to increase awareness of policies and conditions, both internally and externally, that support learner-centered education and learner-centered ecosystems, including both existing opportunities and needs.

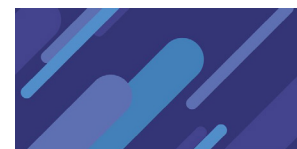
State-Level Policy and Conditions Landscape Analysis



Creating thriving public learner-centered environments and ecosystems requires not only a mindset shift, but an understanding of the existing state policies and conditions that can be leveraged. In May, we

published *State-Level Policy and Conditions Landscape Analysis: Progress and Possibilities to Support Learner-Centered Education and Ecosystem Design* to shine a spotlight on key examples of state-level policies and conditions that support learner-centered design. The key takeaways from the research reinforced mindsets and actions to consider possibilities within policy. In December, we presented these findings to the Washington Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee for their work session focused on integrating and expanding competency-based education in Washington and across the county.

State Education Research and Development Brief



Seizing the Opportunity for State Education R&D: Findings and Recommendations for Action



In partnership with the Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI) and Transcend, we published *Seizing the Opportunity for State Education R&D: Findings and Recommendations for Action*. This brief, based on a qualitative research study grounded in diverse

perspectives across the education sector, explores challenges and opportunities in state-level R&D investment and infrastructure. It highlights successful initiatives nationwide, synthesizes key insights, and presents eight actionable recommendations for state leaders—focusing on fostering innovation and building the infrastructure to scale it. It provides strategic recommendations to leverage R&D for meaningful, system-wide transformation in learner-centered education.

Policy Collaborative

We brought together 25 cross-sector policy experts to explore opportunities and challenges in advancing learner-centered education. Through a series of dialogues and work sessions, they developed fresh perspectives, examined policy conditions, and began shaping guiding principles to support communities in designing and sustaining learner-centered ecosystems.



→ “I am always thankful when I get to participate in national conversations facilitated by Education Reimagined. The Policy Collaborative was no exception. Outstanding thinkers, a great conversation about policy and, as always, moving us forward in transforming learning for everyone.”

DAVID COOK, LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS DESIGN LLC

Spreading the Vision

As we seize the momentum, we are building it, too. A grounding force in our work is to ensure we spread the vision and stories of learner-centered education—its promise, its possibility, and the progress toward our mission. In this, we illuminate bright spots, share insights and learnings, and intentionally connect with leaders within diverse sectors of the field, and invite them to support our work and join our conversations.

In 2024, we advanced our communications efforts in several dimensions.

We contributed our perspectives to more than 50 publications and news outlets. These spanned such local news outlets as Dallas Morning News, Ventura County News, and the Jamestown Press, where our partners’ work shined. In the education innovation space, our work was shared by Getting

Smart, The 74, CompetencyWorks, Growth over Grades, The National Equity Project, Youth Today, eSchool News, and more.

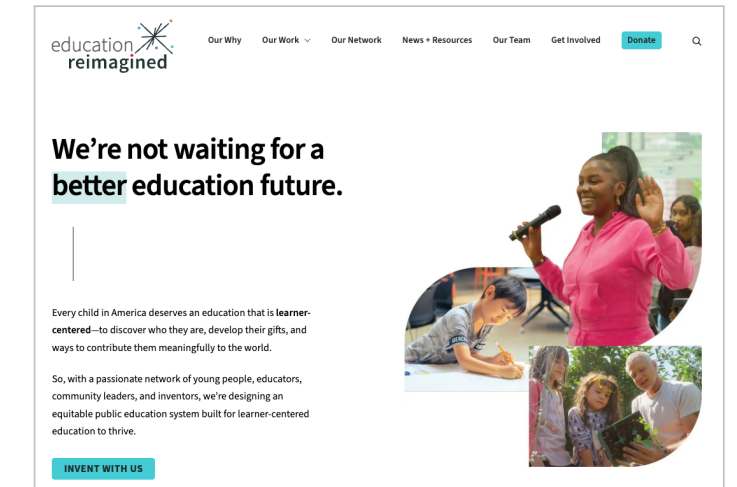
We introduced our *Learner-Centered in Focus* film series. These short films brought viewers into the learning environments of FabNewport, Rock Tree Sky, Big Picture Learning’s Met School in Providence, and Iowa BIG. They shined a light on the unique ways learner-centered education is coming to life there, and how young people and communities benefit. They also bolstered our partners’ ability to engage supporters in their communities.

We led conversations at key conferences and convenings. Our team connected with audiences as sponsors and program contributors with sessions at the Carnegie Summit on Improvement in Education, Big Picture Learning’s Big Bang conference, the Aurora Institute Symposium, and more.



“Wow—these videos are beautifully done! What a moving testament to the power of creating learner-centered ecosystems.”

NATALIE MITCHELL-BAY,
THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION



We launched our new website. A modern new design prioritizes the humanity of our work, and makes it easier for audiences to connect with it. It boldly shares the what, why, and how of our initiatives, as it highlights and honors our network of partners and streamlines access to our news and resources.

With 26 original articles shared in 2024, our Voyager newsletter raised a series of perspectives important to the learner-centered field. Alongside partners from all aspects of our work, members of our team offered their insights and points of view. Topics included the value of learners living in explorer mode, a young learner’s reflection on her summer internship, the rise of parent-driven microschools, and spotlights of emerging learner-centered ecosystems.



LOOKING FORWARD



As we step into 2025, a year sure to bring more of the unprecedented, we are ready to embrace new opportunities that will empower our communities and young people.

The progress we've made together over the past year has positioned us toward meaningful systems change—creating a future where learner-centered education can become equitably accessible to every child across the United States.

With strong leadership, growing momentum, and an expanding network of dedicated partners and allies, we are set to make significant strides in the year ahead.

We will:

- **Advance** learner-centered practice and accelerate the development of learner-centered ecosystems.
- **Leverage** fresh insights from our research to inform and inspire the field.
- **Further** our policy research and stakeholder engagement, amplifying the policies and conditions that support the advancement of innovative approaches and learner-centered education.
- **Amplify** stories and messages that build awareness, deepen understanding, and strengthen support for this movement.

And as always, we will do this as a team of learners—spanning generations, united by a shared commitment to transformation.



OUR SUPPORTERS

We have deep gratitude for all the supporters who dedicate their time, expertise, and thought partnership to our teams and our work. Our heartfelt thanks goes to all the individuals and funders who make our impact possible.



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In remembrance of **Joseph J. Cirsuolo**, August 24, 1941 - October 25, 2024.

We honor his dedication and contributions.

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