education
reimagined

A transformational
vision for education
in the US.

WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE CAME TOGETHER

We are a group of educational practitioners, scholars, business people, parents, and advocates with an extraordinarily diverse set of backgrounds, positions, and perspectives. Collectively, we are engaged in blended learning, disruptive technology, deeper learning, connected learning, personalized learning, social and emotional learning, community schooling, out-of-school learning, teaching improvement, the teaching profession and its collective leadership, school choice, and more. We recognize, honor, and value the points of view of all of those engaged in the work of education: learners, teachers, parents, unions, businesses, charter schools, administrators, civic leaders, and education advocates and organizations.

We came together recognizing that we have strongly held and often divergent views on a number of current issues and controversies in public education. We were determined to create a vision of the future of education that could unite us and many others. We believe that it is time for a new conversation about education. Not only are we tired of the same recurring debates about what is wrong with today's education system and who is to blame for its inadequacies, but we also realize that no amount of tweaking or modifying the current, industrial-era system will fulfill our vision of all children learning and thriving to their full potential.

SIMPLY PUT, the current system was designed in a different era and structured for a different society. Our economy, society, and polity are increasingly at risk from an educational system that does not consistently prepare all children to succeed as adults and is least effective for the children facing the greatest social and economic challenges. Conversely, the Internet revolution has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity for new approaches to learning. Our growing recognition of the importance of skills and dispositions is also sparking a shift toward experiential learning. In short, we see both an imperative for transformation and many promising avenues for re-envisioning the learning experience.

In order to envision something new, we engaged in a challenging, dialogic process to reimagine learning. Working with highly skilled facilitators, we met for six two-day meetings over an 18-month period, from April 2013 until October 2014. At the start of this process, we were a collection of individuals on a battlefield, fighting, often against each other, for our own answers to the problems of the current education system. Through this process, we discovered that each of us, to a person, shares a fundamental commitment for all children to learn and thrive regardless of their circumstances.

United in this commitment, we worked together to reimagine education for all children. We grappled with hard questions about the outcomes we want for all learners, the learning environments that could foster those outcomes, and the systems and structures necessary to create those environments. While we knew a reimagined education system would not be a panacea for poverty and the other forms of systemic disadvantage facing our learners, we challenged ourselves to envision a system designed to meet all learners where they are and allow each to reach his or her full potential. We contended with the diversity of challenges that learners entering the education system have. We understand that education alone cannot correct social and economic inequities; we believe it will contribute greatly to mitigating their impact.

Emerging from this process, we stand united behind a vision for a new future of learning. In this future, the education system is structured with the learner at its center. Learners seek mastery not only of core knowledge but also of skills and dispositions that promote lifelong success. Learning experiences are intentionally designed to support, challenge, engage, and excite all learners. To realize this vision for all children, incremental change is not sufficient. It is time to transform education.

This document is designed to catalyze a new national conversation about education transformation and to become a rallying point for a network of pioneers who are already or would like to be working along similar lines. It puts forward a vision for the future of learning but does not provide a one-size-fits-all answer for how to get there. Instead, it stands as an invitation and challenge to engage in the next set of conversations about how this vision could manifest itself in the diversity of communities across the country.

OUR COMMITMENT: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

We are committed to transforming education so that all children experience great learning.

We envision a learner-centered system in which all children thrive, are able to deeply engage in their own communities, their nation, and the global community, and are prepared and excited for their future. We are committed to what we believe is a widely held view of the purpose of education:

> **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 US and the world.**

We also share the widely held belief that education is vitally important to the health and well-being of individuals and society and, therefore, exists as a public responsibility. The investments we make in children are investments in our communities, our country, and the world.

Because the current system was designed nearly 100 years ago for a different society and economy, it can no longer deliver on the purpose to which we are committed, nor can it provide the individual and public benefits that we seek. Our vision offers a new set of lenses that brings into focus both the limits of the current system and the possibilities offered by a fundamentally different, learner-centered system.

With these lenses, we recognize and are ready to answer the growing call from learners, parents, educators, communities, and national leaders for a reimagined way to educate children. Our

vision will engage and support those pioneers already experimenting with ways to develop learner-centered education, elevating their work from the sea of reform efforts. It will also provide a rallying point for new innovators and supporters who see the potential for a shift in paradigms and want to join this emerging network.

THE CHALLENGE: AN INDUSTRIAL-ERA SYSTEM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The American public education system arguably served the majority of learners well for much of the 20th century, providing core knowledge and basic skills to millions and facilitating transitions from rural to urban life; from other countries to the US; and from a lower- to a higher-skilled workforce. We have inherited this system, which is based on a standardized, "factory" model. Teachers are given an age-group cohort of children at the beginning of each school year, a standardized curriculum, and a matching set of assessments. Despite teachers' best efforts to individualize along lines of difference, opportunities to tailor the content, pace, and method of instruction are limited. Students are expected to work with their assigned material and move along with their age cohort as the years pass. Grading and other assessment tools are designed primarily to assess the results of learning, rather than to improve learning as it happens.

Though there are some benefits to this model, there are also significant and increasing costs. Many students are ushered on despite an insufficient and limited understanding of the content and inadequate maturation, leaving them with serious gaps in their ability to learn at the next level. Others, whose pace in certain areas exceeds that of their peers, are often denied the opportunity to explore beyond the grade's standardized curriculum.

Moreover, most students' formal learning experiences are confined within school walls and devoid of enriched and diverse opportunities that would be available in their communities and through online resources. Those with resources can supplement their education with "extra-curricular" activities and are, thus, better positioned for success. Those who cannot are often left underprepared. Coupled with persistent poverty and other forms of disadvantage, the current system produces increasingly unequal outcomes.

While this factory-school model remains in place, the world is changing. The demographics of the nation's population have been shifting dramatically in the past fifty years, placing growing demands on the education system. Young adults emerging from the system are being asked to contribute to and function within an increasingly globalized society and workforce. Collaborative norms are emerging as businesses, governments, and individuals are networking across borders. Employers are calling for employees who are not only able to demonstrate high-level writing and communication skills, but also the capacity and creativity to adapt and contribute as the demands of their jobs fluctuate. Similarly, with the unprecedented and exponentially expanding access to content and information, success no longer demands traditional memorization and rote learning of content but, instead, requires the ability to absorb, analyze, and apply content. The future begs for individuals ready and eager to grapple with and solve the problems of today and tomorrow.

We believe that the current system's one-to-many approach to teaching, standardized curriculum, age-based cohorts, and classroom-contained instruction are all limitations on our children's opportunities to learn and thrive in this changing world. Too often these system components leave teachers exhausted, parents frustrated, and children uninspired. We see that it is not enough to continually measure, tweak, and improve the system bit by bit. Such adjustments will not ultimately produce the results we want because they iterate a system fundamentally structured for standardization. In order to fulfill the purpose of education for all children and create extraordinary learning for each and every child, our system must be entirely transformed.

THE FUTURE: A LEARNER-CENTERED PARADIGM

To contextualize the transformation of education, we see a paradigm shift—from the Industrial Age's school-centric paradigm to a new learner-centered, network-era paradigm. The learner-centered paradigm for learning functions like a pair of lenses that offers a new way to look at, think about, talk about, and act on education. It constitutes a shift of perspective that places every learner at its center, structures the system to build appropriate supports around him or her, and acknowledges the need to adapt and alter to meet the needs of all children.

The learner-centered paradigm changes our very view of learners themselves. Learners are seen and known as wondrous, curious individuals with vast capabilities and limitless potential. This paradigm recognizes that learning is a lifelong pursuit and that our natural excitement and eagerness to discover and learn should be fostered throughout our lives, particularly in our earliest years. Thus, in this paradigm, learners are active participants in their learning as they gradually become owners of it, and learning itself is seen as an engaging and exciting process. Each child's interests, passions, dreams, skills, and needs shape his or her learning experience and drive the commitments and actions of the adults and communities supporting him or her.

The chart below highlights some of the key contrasts between the current paradigm and the new one that we envision.

ASPECT	CURRENT PARADIGM	LEARNER-CENTERED PARADIGM
World View	**INDUSTRIAL AGE**	**NETWORKED AGE**
Frame of Reference	Factories and Assembly Lines	Networks and Lateral Connections
Model	**SCHOOL-CENTRIC:** All components of the system are designed for efficiency of education delivery in the context of standardized schools	**LEARNER-CENTRIC:** All components are designed for the education experience to be adaptable to the needs and potential of each learner and supports the highest possible outcomes for each and every learner
Model Components	Standardized age cohorts Linear curricula divided into subjects Education factories called "schools" Learning experiences designed to impart knowledge in long-established categories	Personalized learning that is competency-based and has a wide range of learning environments and adult roles Learning experiences enable learners to develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a relevant and contextualized manner Learners are embedded in a network of stable and supportive relationships with adults and are encouraged to learn through self-directed discovery, with their peers, and with the guidance of adults

The time is ripe for this transformation. We are ready for a system that both harnesses today's potential and has the capacity to adapt rapidly to the inevitable changes and advances of tomorrow. We live in a time of rapid innovation and ever-expanding possibilities. We know more about how children learn and what effective instruction looks like, and we have new understandings of how the brain works. Similarly, the emerging science of effective instruction offers

new opportunities to facilitate engaging, dynamic learning that recognizes the rich diversity of learning styles and backgrounds present in our country. Advances in technology facilitate learning in ways never before imagined. Global networks and relationships abound. Furthermore, experimentation with how to transform the current system to a learner-centered one has already begun.

THE DESIGN: LEARNING DOMAINS AND ELEMENTS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

For the next generation of learners to succeed and thrive, their learning experiences must facilitate their development in three primary domains: knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The below chart includes our description of each of these domains and a set of examples adapted from the work of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	DISPOSITIONS
The theoretical or practical understanding of someone or something.	The capacities and strategies that enable learners to apply knowledge to novel situations, engage in higher order thinking, problem solve, collaborate, communicate effectively, and plan for the future.	The behaviors and ways of being that contribute to learners fulfilling their full potential.
• World class standards • Career and technical education • Other content areas and essential literacies • Global competence • Applied knowledge	• Learning how to learn • Time/goal management • Critical thinking • Problem solving • Working collaboratively • Communicating effectively • Metacognition • Self/social awareness and empathy • Creativity & innovation	• Agency (self-efficacy) • Curiosity • Initiative • Resilience • Adaptability • Persistence • Leadership • Ethical behavior and civic responsibility • Self-control

There is evidence that this triad of domains can be mutually reinforcing. Deep engagement with disciplinary knowledge builds and develops learners' skills—such as communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, metacognition, and critical thinking—and dispositions—such as resilience, curiosity, resourcefulness, persistence, and adaptability. Strong skills and dispositions can then allow learners to broaden and deepen their knowledge, driven by their own interests and motivations, as well as by agreed standards for competency in these domains.

To ensure development in these three domains for all learners, we envision learning experiences characterized by the following five interrelated elements. Taken together, they form our new design for learning:
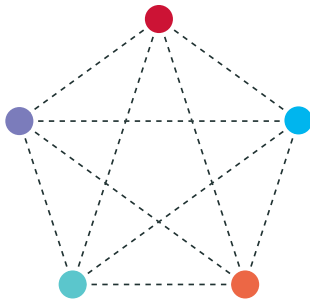
COMPETENCY-BASED

PERSONALIZED, RELEVANT & CONTEXTUALIZED

LEARNER AGENCY

SOCIALLY EMBEDDED

OPEN-WALLED

These five elements are not meant to serve as a blueprint for a rigid model to be implemented everywhere. Instead, they serve as a "North Star" to guide innovation. They do not create a single roadmap that can be followed the same way in every learning community. Realizing new designs will be an iterative process; much experimentation will be necessary to discover ways that these five elements can work together and reinforce one another to create excellent learning experiences for all children, regardless of their circumstances.

COMPETENCY-BASED learning is an alternative to age- or grade-based learning. In competency-based learning, each learner works toward competency and strives for mastery in defined domains of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Learners' trajectories toward mastery are guided and managed, rather than placing the emphasis on their achievement of specific benchmarks in a fixed amount of time. Competency-based learning recognizes that all learners are unique and that different learners progress at different paces. It allows the system structure to support variation of learning speeds in accordance with each learner's specific challenges and needs. Assessments, both formative and summative, are utilized on a continuous basis to inform the learning and instructional strategy for each learner. Additional resources are provided to learners who need help to accelerate the pace of competency development.

PERSONALIZED, RELEVANT, AND CONTEXTUALIZED learning is an approach that uses such factors as the learner's own passions, strengths, needs, family, culture, and community as fuel for the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Learning experiences are leveraged to bridge gaps and meet learning challenges; designed to expand interests, opportunities, and perspectives; and responsive to learners' passions. At the same time, they are rooted in real-world contexts and empower the learner to demonstrate his or her learning in a variety of authentic ways and settings. Personalized, relevant, and contextualized learning also acknowledges that different learners face different challenges to learning, whether in health, safety, economic situation, emotional wellbeing, social interactions, or competency development. Those challenges are both identified and addressed so that the learner is adequately supported, thus ensuring that his or her current life situation does not constrain the breadth or depth of learning.

Learning that is characterized by **LEARNER AGENCY** recognizes learners as active participants in their own learning and engages them in the design of their experiences and the realization of their learning outcomes in ways appropriate for their developmental level. As such, learners have choice and voice in their educational experiences as they progress through competencies. Harnessing his or her own intrinsic motivation to learn, each learner strives to ultimately take full ownership of his or her own learning.

SOCIALLY EMBEDDED learning is rooted in meaningful relationships with family, peers, qualified adults, and community members and is grounded in community and social interaction. It values face-to-face contact, as well as opportunities to connect virtually, and recognizes the significance of establishing continuity in children's lives through the development of stable relationships. Independent exploration and practice; collaborative group work; structured, intentional instruction; and structured and cooperative play, among other experiences, are integrated to develop learners' competencies. Both peers and adults are recognized as integral partners in learning, and learners are encouraged to interact with those developing at differ-

ent competency rates, from different backgrounds, and with different interests. Furthermore, socially embedded learning catalyzes and structures partnerships with families, community-based employers, civic organizations, and other entities that can foster learning.

OPEN-WALLED learning acknowledges that learning happens at many times and in many places and intentionally leverages its expansive nature in the learner's development of competencies. It creates and takes full advantage of opportunities in a variety of communities, settings, times, and formats. All learning experiences, whether highly structured or exploratory and experiential, are valued, encouraged, and integrated into the learner's journey. These experiences may be in-person, virtual, or blended. Play, recreation, technology-enabled experiences, community-based work, and service opportunities, for instance, are all recognized as legitimate vehicles for learning. While opening learning to a myriad of settings, open-walled learning also provides learners with a physical space in which to socialize, collaborate, and learn with peers and adults. Where a particular community possesses relatively few educational resources, they are supplemented to provide learners with authentic, rich, and diverse learning opportunities.

COMPONENTS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: LEARNER-CENTERED IMPLEMENTATION

In order to fully realize a reimagined learning environment, the future education system will need several core components. Local communities and other constituencies will need to experiment with those components to discover how they can be implemented together to best support each and every learner. Thus, the expression of the five elements of great learning will vary across the nation according to the needs and resources of the learners and their communities. Components include the following:

In the new vision, **AGREED DOMAINS AND STANDARDS FOR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND DISPOSITIONS** are established to guide learning. Learning outcomes are defined in terms of mastery across all three of these domains. Education stakeholders jointly own the standards and have a clear vision of what mastery looks like. Educators create learning experiences and assessments that develop and track mastery in all three of these domains.

ADULTS IN THE SYSTEM hold diversified and specialized roles to facilitate and guide learning in formal and informal learning environments, virtually, at home, and in the community. These reimagined roles for professional educators, in particular, take advantage of the emerging science around effective instructional practice, ensuring that educators are themselves equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to guide, instruct, encourage, and support learners. Deep expertise in pedagogy and child development is valued, as well as expertise in a particular discipline, body of knowledge, or skill set. Educators, both individually and collectively, are empowered to take leadership responsibilities along with other key stakeholders (e.g. families, communities, employers, social service agencies), while opportunities for professional development continue to support them in their own growth. The institutions that prepare, support, and elevate professional educators are transformed to serve them in their reimagined roles.

Furthermore, the reimagined roles for adults in the system offer families, businesses, social service agencies, community groups and members, and other interested parties the opportunity to play meaningful roles in the system. Creating coordinated and networked teams, which include all of these varied roles, provides learners with the supports necessary to ensure that they achieve competency and mastery in agreed domains.

TECHNOLOGY enables reimagined learning to happen for all learners, as it increases accessibility and reduces costs. Technology integrates diverse sources of learning experiences, embeds assessment seamlessly into learning, helps provide adaptable and personalized learning

pathways, and enables coordination among networks of learners and adults. Technology supports learning in diverse settings and times, helping to make it adaptable to the learner. With the assistance of technology, adults in the system have expanded opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with learners and to guide, facilitate, and encourage their learning.

ASSESSMENTS are aligned with critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions to guide each learner towards mastery of agreed upon competencies. There are three primary types of assessment:

Assessment **OF LEARNING** is summative and performance based.	Used this way, **assessment judges results** against established standards and benchmarks. This most traditional use of assessment can reveal how the learner and the system are performing over time.
Assessment **FOR LEARNING** is formative, real-time, and diagnostic.	Used this way, **assessment provides immediate feedback** both to the learner and to adults on developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions while learning is actually happening.
Assessment **AS LEARNING** is self-examination by the learner.	Used this way, **assessment supports the development of metacognition,** the understanding of how learners learn and who the learners know themselves to be. This use of assessment provides the kind of self-awareness needed to become a better learner and to develop higher-order skills and dispositions.

In the new paradigm, assessment "for" and "as" learning are the predominant types employed. Assessments help learners and adults identify progress and challenges and tailor strategies and pathways towards mastery. Assessments are embedded in the learning experience and provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery through performance-based tasks and in real-world settings.

Like assessments, **DATA** is employed to further children on their learning journeys, to support their understanding of their own learning, and to provide information on their progress to adults in the system. The amount and type of data shared is tailored to protect the child's privacy and wellbeing. The data systems and data privacy protections used in other sectors, such as healthcare, serve as particularly useful models in the arena of education data.

REIMAGINED SPACES FOR LEARNING, whether they are in education centers, libraries, museums, community centers, or other locations, provide learners and the supporting adults with a physical space to gather, play, socialize, and learn. They give learners the opportunity to engage with each other, their educators, their families, and community members seeking to support their growth. Reimaging the way these spaces are organized and where they are located provides opportunities to integrate learning experiences for children into the community. They bring health and social services and community-based activities more directly into the daily fabric of learning, when needed. Learning spaces also offer appropriate custodial care to learners, particularly younger ones.

A COORDINATED NETWORK OF INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, AGENCIES, ASSOCIATIONS AND FEDERATIONS, AND BUSINESSES offers open-walled, relevant, and contextualized learning resources and opportunities to learners and creates avenues for learners to be involved in and engage with the community. Additionally, this network promotes collaboration and communication amongst entities working to support learners' health, nutrition, safety, and wellbeing.

RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS focus on ensuring that every learner has adequate support, spaces, resources, and tools to meet their needs and best support their learning experiences. The focus on each learner's progress along competency domains drives more resources to those learners who have stalled in their progress in particular competency areas or those who have started behind their peers. Financial resources will be applied and integrated in ways that support the whole child, ensuring that each child has access to and receives the necessary educational, social, emotional, and health supports and services, regardless of economic circumstances.

We affirm that education is a public good and, therefore, exists as a public responsibility that society has to each of its members. Given its vital importance, both public and private investment in education are essential and will be used to move the system into the learner-centered paradigm.

In addition to experimentation with these core system components, we recognize the need to innovate and create systems of funding, governance, and quality assurance consistent with the vision, as well as the need to develop supportive public policies.

The chart below juxtaposes some of the model components of the current paradigm with those of the learner-centered one.

MODEL COMPONENT	CURRENT PARADIGM	LEARNER-CENTERED PARADIGM
Organization of learners	Organized in age cohorts	Learners learn individually and in diverse and shifting groups consistent with their developmental, social, and competency needs
Curricula	Standardized linear curricula divided into subjects	Relevant, contextualized curricula organized by competency
Learner goals / Progress indicators	Required credit hours and seat time	Development of competency in agreed domains of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in timeframes appropriate to each learner
Role of learners	Passive vessel to be filled	Active co-creators of their learning and development
Role of adults	Individual teachers expected to serve as content deliverers, curriculum developers, data assessors	Network of qualified adults facilitating learning and development
Technology	One-to-many communication tools (e.g. books, white boards, projectors)	One-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many communication, networking, diagnostic, and content delivery tools
Assessment	Primarily "of" learning	Intentional assessment "for, as, and of" learning
Resource Allocation	Place- and formula-based funding uncorrelated with individual children's needs	Financial resources applied and integrated to support the whole child
Location	Localized in a school building	Learning occurs at many times, in many places, and through many formats; a physical space is established for learners and adults to gather, socialize, and learn
Meeting learner's needs	Differentiation of the standard model to meet learners' needs	Personalization for each and every learner

CREATING A NETWORK OF PIONEERS IN EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION: AN INVITATION AND A CHALLENGE

Learner-centered education is an idea whose time has come. There is a growing hunger from education leaders, families, students, and communities for an entirely new way to educate children, for a reimagined way to foster thriving, highly engaged learners. They are seeking something transformational. Across the country, many communities and states are ready for a new vision and a fresh conversation.

We recognize the many efforts and leaders already actively seeking to transform the system into a truly learner-centered one. There is no shortage of pioneers experimenting with transformational ideas and practices. This is a realm populated by districts, states, unions, civic leaders, businesses, foundations, non-profits, universities, and individuals all starting from different access points and digging deep in different aspects of the vision. In partnership with these innovators, we seek to build a national, cross-sector network of people and organizations that are consciously and collaboratively experimenting within the new paradigm. This network will:

- Support, recognize, deepen, and learn from current experiments already innovating with one or more of the elements to create learner-centered environments for children

- Catalyze new experiments to explore how the design elements and system components of this vision can work across the full diversity of our country's communities

- Clear structural obstacles, such as seat-time requirements, to allow for local experimentation with the support of district and state actors

- Change the public narrative from one of fixing the current system to one about how to make extraordinary learner-centered learning available to each and every child

This emerging vision offers a North Star toward which to aspire, a language that creates the space of learner-centered learning, and the means to distinguish transformational efforts from those of reform. We invite those excited and interested to join us to engage deeply on the questions still to be answered and explore how this vision might manifest across the nation.

We are committed to accelerating a cultural tipping point where new norms of learner-centered learning will shift the nation to the realization that the current system cannot fulfill on the purpose of education for all kids and that we must, therefore, work together to create a re-imagined model for learning. With communities across the nation working to transform the old school-centric system to a new learner-centered one, we see the potential for a society of thriving learners, engaged parents, and inspired educators.

Education Reimagined seeks to accelerate the growth of the movement dedicated to transforming education in America by connecting, amplifying, and empowering pioneers and contributing to a new public conversation. 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. Visit our website at **www.education-reimagined.org** Email us at **educationreimagined@convergencepolicy.org**

This is a living document. This vision will evolve to reflect the ongoing learning of pioneers about learner-centered education and the systems to support it.

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