

Testimony from

# Expert Witnesses

**Making the case that our current  
standardized public education model is  
obsolete, harmful and needs to be replaced.**



**Center for  
Inspired  
Learning**

***This page intentionally left blank***

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Opening Arguments                           | 1  |
| <u>The Experts: Organizations</u>           |    |
| Convergence & Education Reimagined          | 2  |
| Education Evolving                          | 3  |
| New Classrooms & Transcend                  | 4  |
| <u>The Experts: Individuals</u>             |    |
| Sir Ken Robinson, Ph.D.                     | 5  |
| John Merrow, Ed.D.                          | 6  |
| Todd Rose, Ph.D.                            | 7  |
| Ted Dintersmith, Ph.D. & Tony Wanger, Ed.D. | 8  |
| Zoe Weil, Ed.D.                             | 9  |
| Nancie Atwell                               | 10 |
| Geoffrey Canada, M.Ed.                      | 11 |
| Sugata Mitra, Ph.D.                         | 12 |
| Kopono Ciotti, Ph.D. & Jennifer Klein, M.A. | 13 |
| Seth Godin, MBA                             | 14 |
| Peter Gray, Ph.D.                           | 15 |
| Sal Khan, MS, MBA                           | 16 |
| David Cook, M.Ed.                           | 17 |
| Devin Vodicka, Ed.D.                        | 18 |
| Closing Arguments                           | 19 |



**Center for  
Inspired  
Learning**

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

---

# Opening Arguments

## for abolishing and replacing the current standardized education model used in US public elementary schools.

What we have before us is a case of gross negligence on the part of the public education system in the United States. We believe that after hearing the facts of this case, and especially the testimony of our expert witnesses, you will find public schools in the US guilty of perpetuating an education model that is obsolete, harmful to children and society, and in great need of replacement.

We have known that our education system has been failing since the 1983 publication of the US government report, [A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform](#). The document famously stated, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

Now, after four decades of implementing education "reforms," throwing more and more money at this failed education model, and endless research and analysis, it should be obvious by now that the problem is not the teachers, administrators, students, parents, or amount of funding — it's the education model itself.

Simply put, the current education model can be defined by randomly placing children in groups of 20 to 30, then teaching them the SAME material, at the SAME time, at the SAME pace, in the SAME way, by the SAME teacher. In this model, children are seen as passive recipients of information and knowledge and rarely, if ever, take ownership of their learning. Students move between classrooms during the day, move "up" through grade levels over the years, and eventually leave school for the workforce, likely never to step foot again in the place where they spent so much of their childhood. Assessments in this rigid system are done primarily via test-taking, and the teacher is at the center of the learning process.

For each expert witness, we will provide a very short bio establishing their credentials and expertise, followed by direct quotes from them that support our argument. We also will provide links to articles, books, videos, and websites so you can learn more about these experts and dive deeper into their research, findings, and analysis. We think you will find this information helpful, inspiring, and sometimes infuriating. The experts will also show why a "learner-centered" education model is an elegant solution to the crisis.

For the past 40 years, we have been addicted to fixing the standardized public school system. The side effects of this drug have been student anxiety, depression, suicide, school violence and bullying, low- test scores, inequity, gangs, poor work ethics, teacher stress and burnout, and a world left in peril. But don't take our word for it,

**LET THE EXPERTS SPEAK.**

---



THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

# Convergence & Education Reimagined

CONVERGENCE



education  
reimagined

**Convergence** is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit that convenes individuals and groups with conflicting views to find common ground and solutions on important national issues. Their goal is to change the focus from winning the debate to collectively seeking solutions. In 2013, Convergence brought together a **group of 28** educational scholars, practitioners, parents, advocates, and business and union leaders. The resulting vision honors the divergent points of view and values of the diverse participants in the process. A new nonprofit, **Education Reimagined**, was formed by Convergence to support the vision.

## Quotes from A Transitional Vision for Education in the US

“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.”

“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.”

## Quote from the Education Reimagined Website

“We (at Education Reimagined) stand for learner-centered education because it offers the possibility of true liberation and equity in education. **At its core, learner-centered education honors and values the humanity and dignity of each child—seeing them as unique, curious, wondrous, and capable.** It enables each young person to discover and bring forth their unique talents and passions in ways that contribute to their community and society. And it empowers every educator, family, and community to make the difference they are committed to making for young people.”

## Learn More

Read: [A Transitional Vision for Education in the U.S](#)

Read: [Education Reimagined Origin Story](#)

Visit: [Education Reimagined Website](#)

## 28 Vision Signatories:

**David Andrews**, Dean, Johns Hopkins University School of Education

**Sig Behrens**, General Manager of Global Education, Stratasys

**Stuart Butler**, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

**Sam Chaltain**, Writer & Communications Strategist

**Dwight Davis**, Assistant Principal, DC Public Schools

**Rehan Dawer**, Founder, Ethica Global Alliance

**Nick Donohue**, President & CEO, Nellie Mae Education Foundation

**Lily Eskelsen**, President, National Education Association

**Maddie Fennell**, Literacy Coach, 2007 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

**Lizabeth Fogel**, Ph.D., Director of Education, The Walt Disney Company

**Michael Hinojosa**, former District Superintendent, Cobb County School District, GA

**Gisèle Huff**, Executive Director, Jaquelin Hume Foundation

**Jennifer Humke**, Program Officer of Digital Media and Learning, MacArthur Foundation

**John Jackson**, President & CEO, The Schott Foundation for Public Education

**Andrew Ko**, Vice President and Head of Europe for Enterprise Business, Samsung Electronics, former General Manager for Partners in Learning, Microsoft Corporation

**Bobbi Macdonald**, Executive Director, City Neighbors Foundation, Inc.

**Marc Porter Magee**, CEO & Founder, 50CAN

**Peter McWalters**, former Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Robert O'Brien**, Principal, New York City Public School

**Judy Peppler**, President & CEO, KnowledgeWorks

**Stephen Robinson**, Superintendent of Schools, Episcopal Diocese of Honduras, former President Southern Association of Independent Schools

**Shruti Sehra**, Partner, New Profit Inc.

**Robert Sherman**, Consultant, Social and Emotional Learning

**Stephan Turnipseed**, former President, LEGO Education North America

**Randi Weingarte**, President, American Federation of Teachers

**Jeff Weissglass**, President Board of Education, Oak Park and River Forest High School, IL

**Lara Knight**, Wheatley School Leader K, IPP Houston High School

**Mark Wilding**, Executive Director, PassageWorks Institute

# Education Evolving



**Education Evolving** is a Minneapolis-based nonprofit organization that advances student-centered learning for all students by supporting teachers designing and leading schools, and advocating for policy that catalyzes community-led innovation. Their document, **Evidence for Student-Centered Learning** by **Krista Kaput**, examines the academic research that supports the need for America's schools to shift to a personalized, student-centered approach.

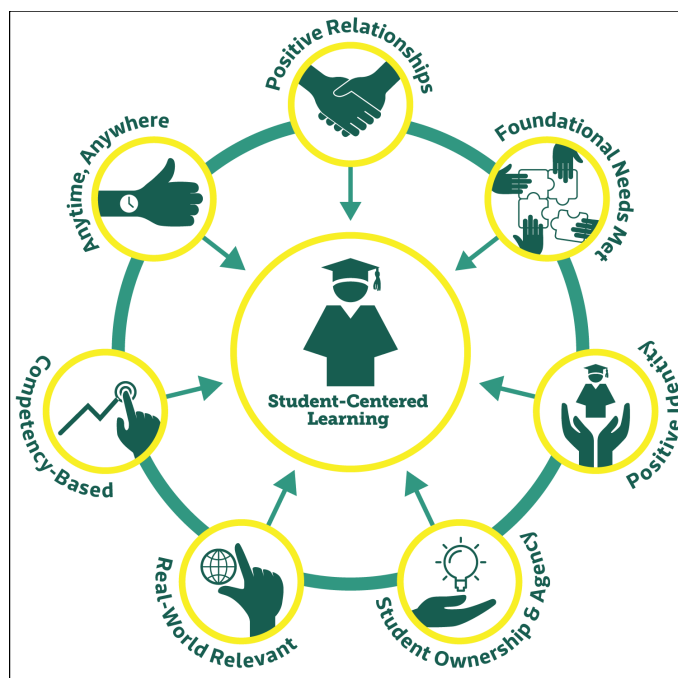
## Quotes from **Evidence for Student-Centered Learning**

“...in student centered learning the model shifts from being adult-centered and standardized to student centric and individualized.”

“Our current public education system is not designed to recognize the uniqueness of each student, nor to help them develop a sense of positive identity. Rather the system relies on the assumption that academic motivation and student effort are a result of the teacher's instruction and a student's pre-existing aptitude, rather than take into account the identity—culture, background, and experiences—of the student. This is contradictory to ample research which finds that positive identity development is critical to a student's academic and social outcomes.”

“Over 100 years ago, our public education system was designed with the goal of educating the masses to work in an era of compliance, standardization, and automation. Even though our economy and industries have changed, the design of our public education system has not. This is problematic because the majority of today's students will be employed in jobs that don't exist yet and the business community is pleading for something different.”

“...we argue it's time to redesign the model and system of schooling with students at the center. It's time to design a system that takes into account students' interests, learning styles, cultural identities, life experiences, and personal challenges. It's time to design a system that not only sets all students up for success but that is also equitable and meets their unique needs. We call this student-centered learning.”



## Learn More

Read: [Evidence for Student-Centered Learning](#)

Visit: [The Education Evolving Website](#)



# New Classrooms & Transcend

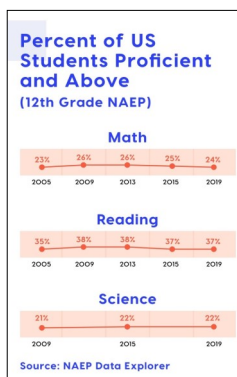


**New Classrooms** and **Transcend** are two nonprofits dedicated to the power and promise of an intentional shift toward a student-centered education model. New Classrooms develops innovative learning models, while Transcend supports school communities and model providers to create and spread innovative learning environments more broadly. **Out of the Box** is a report that represents the conclusions of both organizations.

## Out of the Box Quotes

“For more than 100 years, our nation’s central approach to schooling has oriented around an individual teacher guiding the instruction of a cohort of same-aged students through a uniform curriculum, often with the aid of a textbook. We call this approach to schooling the “industrial paradigm” because it was patterned after the standardized ways in which factories operated during the industrial era. At the time, it was considered the most efficient way of supplying a culturally assimilated, factory-ready workforce that was able to perform repetitive tasks, follow directions, and apply basic numeracy and literacy skills.”

“While it is vital to address immediate challenges, it is also critical to begin focusing on a longer-term vision for schooling. This new vision must move beyond the constraints of the industrial paradigm so the sector can reliably and systematically provide our nation’s youth with an education that enables all of them to realize their full potential.”



Despite numerous education reforms and funding increases, student performance has not improved.

“While there are hundreds of examples of schools, school networks, initiatives, and programs that can validly point to evidence of meaningful success, national-level measures of student performance have largely plateaued. And while graduation rates have somewhat improved, still only about one-third of students graduate high school ready for college or a career.”

“We believe the ultimate impact of many worthy reform efforts has been hindered by key elements of the industrial paradigm itself. Higher grade-level standards, for example, can help to ensure higher levels of academic rigor, but provide little guidance when students begin a school year multiple years behind. Good teacher training can make a big difference for the students they serve, but when skilled teachers burn out trying to fill a fundamentally unsustainable role, it is back to square one with a new teacher. Formative assessments can illuminate specific needs for each student, but operationalizing a unique academic plan for each of them is nearly impossible for an individual teacher.”

## Learn More

Visit: [The Out of the Box website](#)

Read: [The Out of the Box report](#)

Read: [The Out of the Box executive summary](#)

Visit: [The New Classrooms website](#)

Visit: [The Transcend website](#)



# Sir Ken Robinson, Ph.D., Educationalist



**Sir Ken Robison's** resume reads like a Hollywood screenplay. He was Professor Emeritus at the **University of Warwick**. He led a British national commission on creativity, education, and the economy, the results of which were published to high acclaim. Robinson played a pivotal role in developing a strategy for economic and creative development as part of the peace process in Northern Ireland. He was an advisor to the government of Singapore to help it become a regional creative hub, and worked with the state of Oklahoma on strategies to develop innovation and creativity in education, culture, and commerce. Fast Company magazine declared Robinson as one of the “world’s elite thinkers on creativity and innovation, and he was heralded by Time/Fortune/CNN as one of the “Principal Voices” His TED talk, **Do Schools Kill Creativity**, is the most viewed TED history and has been seen by an estimated 280 million people in 160 countries. He has written multiple books, including the New York Times bestseller, **The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything**. His book, **Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That’s Transforming Education**, laid the groundwork for transforming educational systems and was translated into 16 languages. Robinson was even knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to the arts.

---

## Sir Ken Robinson Quotes

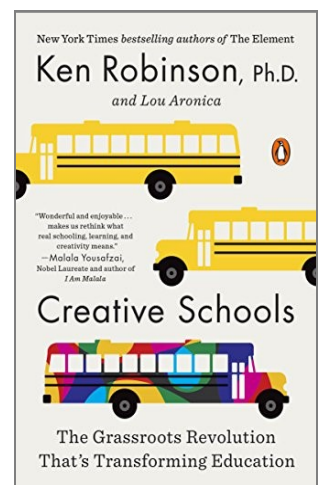
“The evidence is everywhere that the standards movement is largely failing by its own terms and creating more problems than it is solving. In the meantime, some of the countries that are succeeding best in limited terms of PISA league tables are now turning away from the agenda to cultivate skills and attitudes in students that the standards movement has been systematically stifling. The need for this shift is urgent.”

“To meet them, we need a radical change in how we think about and do school---a shift from the old industrial model to one based on entirely different principles and practices. People do not come in standard sizes or shapes, nor do their abilities and personalities.”

“The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn’t need to be reformed — it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.”

“Some of the most brilliant, creative people I know did not do well at school. Many of them didn’t really discover what they could do—and who they really were—until they’d left school and recovered from their education.”

“We have to go from what is essentially an industrial model of education, a manufacturing model, which is based on linearity and conformity and batching people. We have to move to a model that is based more on principles of agriculture. We have to recognize that human flourishing is not a mechanical process—it’s an organic process. And you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do, like a farmer, is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish.”



---

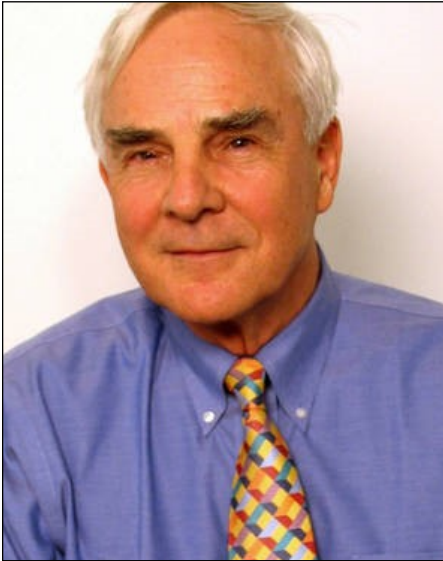
## Learn More

**Read:** [his many books](#) including [Creative Schools](#), [The Element](#), and [Imagine If](#)

**Watch his TED talks:** [Do Schools Kill Creativity](#) and [How to Escape Education's Death Valley](#)



# John Merrow, Ed.D., Journalist



**John Merrow** is a distinguished, award-winning journalist who spent most of his storied career focusing on public education and how to improve it. He received the Polk Award for the NPR weekly series, **Options in Education**, served over 40 years as the Education Correspondent for PBS, and hosted his own PBS docuseries, **The Merrow Report**.

His many awards and honors include two Peabodys, three Emmy nominations, four CINE Golden Eagles, the McGraw Prize in Education, numerous awards from the Education Writers Association, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences. Merrow authored several books, including **Addicted to Reform** (2017), **The Influence of Teachers** (2011), and **Choosing Excellence** (2001). Merrow writes a weekly blog post at [themerrowreport.com](http://themerrowreport.com).

---

## John Merrow quotes from **Addicted to Reform**

“The current education system works on a medical model, diagnosing what’s ‘wrong’ with children and then putting them in one ward or another for ‘treatment.’ The approach I put forth (is) a health model, identifying children’s strengths and interests and then developing a course of action that builds on those assets while also taking care to see that children master basic skills . . . ”

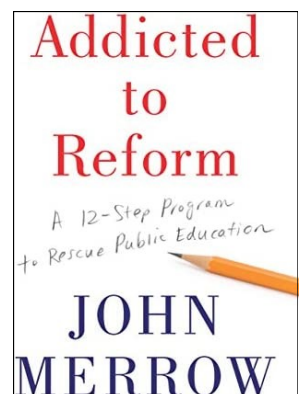
“A particular concern is the way we isolate our children by age and grade, from kindergarten through senior year of high school.”

“. . . we have been spinning our wheels by basically attacking the symptoms of a problem and not addressing the real problem. We became addicted to this process.”

“The process of school reform is unquestionably addictive. It’s goals---such as improving graduation rates, creating pre-school opportunities, or raising academic standards---always feel good and sound right. Moreover, each reform is narrow enough to be seen as achievable within a reasonable period of time. For these hyper focused reformers, most of whom were and are privileged, white, and upper-middle-class, feel good about themselves and the work they are committed to. Like drug addicts, they get high on the work, their apparent success, and adulations from the media and the public. Unfortunately, as with drug addicts, the high is temporary, lasting only until reality intervenes and it becomes clear that the problem persists.”

“(School reform is) a never-ending cycle, one that keeps us from confronting and addressing public education’s real problem: an outmoded system of schooling that is harming many children and our nation.”

“Like most of the changes required to remake public education, this shift . . . will not be easy. Some policies, procedures, and attitudes will have to change, and people who refuse to adapt will have to be moved out.”



---

## Learn More

**Read:** [Addicted to Reform](#)

**Watch:** [John Merrow and NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia discuss Addicted to Reform](#)

# Todd Rose, Ph.D., Developmental Psychologist



**Todd Rose** earned his Ph.D. from **Harvard**, where he later became the faculty director of the Mind, Brain, and Education program. He is the president and co-founder of **Populace**, a think tank “committed to restoring America’s ability to confront its challenges by unleashing its potential—each individual brought alive through their passions, a nation reimagined through our collective pursuit of fulfillment.” Rose is best known for his contributions to Educational Neuroscience and his work applying dynamic systems principles to the study of learning. He is the author of **Collective Illusions**, **Dark Horse**, and **The End of Average**.

---

## Todd Rose Quotes

“We live in challenging times: there is enormous pressure to go along to get along, to stay silent, or to lie about our private beliefs in order to belong. But blind conformity is never good for anyone—it robs us of happiness and keeps us from fulfilling our potential, individually and collectively.”

“I care a lot about people finding their own path, and I think the world’s a better place if we let people figure out their passions and what they’re good at and give them the knowledge and skills to do that, but our education system isn’t designed to do that — it rounds you out and makes you interchangeable with everyone else.”

“Historically, education has been about batch processing: standardize everything against the average, rank kids, sort them to see who gets more and who really doesn’t deserve to be there. The problem, even if you’re just being selfish from an economic standpoint, is we’re not producing the talent we need.”

“So how do we, as a country entrenched in an education system that distributes standardized tests and groups students based on chronological age rather than rate of learning, break through its mental barriers and start to embrace — and demand — the science of the individual?”

“And now, he says, is the perfect time to focus on individual learning. Using the technology we have on hand, educators can easily create learning environments that are flexible.”

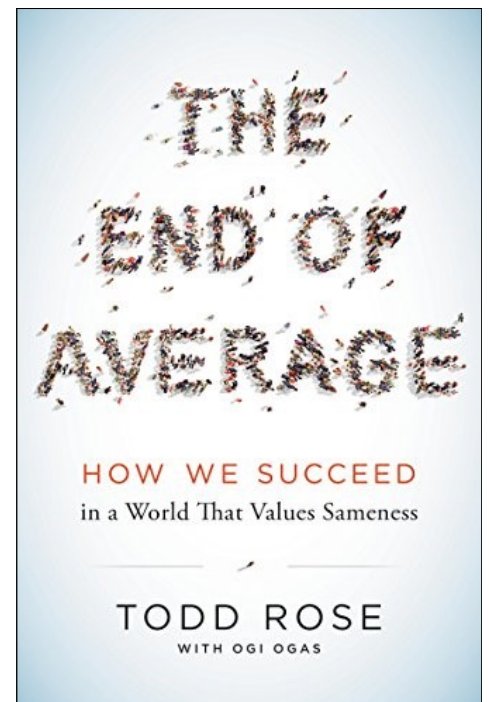
“Equal opportunity, then, requires equal fit between individuals and their educational environments. Anything less is inherently and profoundly unequal I believe that we should set a much higher bar for ourselves in the 21st century. If we are going to be a country that cares about equal opportunity, then we must strive to ensure that equal fit is the birthright of every single child in this country. But right now in education we do not take this idea seriously, in part because until recently we didn’t have the science or technology to do it. But we do now. So if you accept the idea of equal fit, then it means something radical for the future of education — it means we cannot accept a system based on averages; it means we cannot accept standardized curricular materials, or simplistic one-dimensional assessments, or fixed amounts of time for learning or one pathway to academic success.”

---

## Learn More

Read: [The End of Average](#)

Watch: [Todd Rose’s TEDx Talk, The Myth of Average](#)

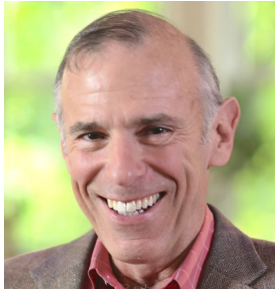


# Ted Dintersmith, Ph.D., Education Innovation Expert

## Tony Wagner, Ed.D., Education Author



**Ted Dintersmith** earned a Ph.D. in Engineering from **Stanford University**. He has extensive professional experience in the private sector, including two decades in venture capital and running a technology company. In the public sector, he worked as a staff analyst for the U.S. House of Representatives and was appointed to represent the U.S. at the UN General Assembly. Dintersmith is a leading advocate for education policies that promote innovation, creativity, motivation, and purpose. He wrote the book **Most Likely To Succeed** with co-author Tony Wagner.



**Tony Wagner** is a globally recognized expert in education. He earned his Ed.D. at **Harvard University**, and held a variety of positions at Harvard for more than two decades. Wagner has worked as a high school teacher, K-8 principal, and university professor. He is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the **Learning Policy Institute**. His book, **The Global Achievement Gap**, is an international bestseller. He wrote the book **Most Likely To Succeed** with co-author Ted Dintersmith.

---

### Quotes from **Most Likely to Succeed**

“The education polices our country is pursuing to “fix” schools only serve to harm students and disillusion teachers.”

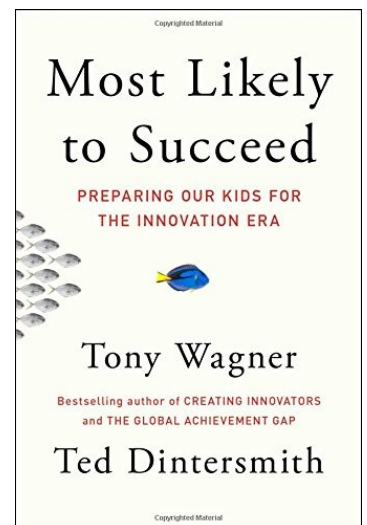
“Unless we completely reimagine school, the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots will threaten to rip civil society apart.”

“Our nation continues to plod away with incremental fixes to an obsolete education system.”

“As we churn out millions of kids each year from an education system that teaches and tests them on narrow aspects of content retention that any smartphone can handle, we set them up for failure, unhappiness, and social discontent. We are, in every important sense, educating our way to a national demise.”

“...education needs to help our youth discover their passions and purpose in life, develop the critical skills needed to be successful in pursuing their goals, be inspired on a daily basis to do their very best, and be active and informed citizens.”

“Students spend their school hours bored, covering irrelevant material, doing mindless tasks, taking far too many standardized tests, and having the creativity and innovation schooled out of them. Our focus shouldn't be to give all kids equal access to the same bad education. We need to reinvent education and give all kids a fighting chance in life.”



---

### Learn More

**Read:** [Most Likely to Succeed](#)

**Watch:** [Most Likely to Succeed feature length film](#)

**Watch:** [Ted Dintersmith's TEDx Talk, Prepare Our Kids for Life, Not Standardized Tests](#)

**Watch:** [Tony Wagner's TEDx Talk, Play, Passion, Purpose](#)

# Zoe Weil, Ed.D., Educator, Author



**Zoe Weil** holds master's degrees from the **University of Pennsylvania** and **Harvard Divinity School**. She is the president and co-founder of the **Institute for Humane Education**, dedicated to a healthy, peaceful world for all living things and the natural environment. She has given six TEDx talks, including **The World Becomes What You Teach**, which became one of the fifty top-rated TEDx talks within a year of its release. Weil has authored seven books, including **The World Becomes What We Teach: Educating a Generation of Solutionaries**, **Most Good, Least Harm**, **Claude and Medea**, and **Above All, Be Kind**.

## Zoe Weil Quotes

“Many educators like to use the phrase, ‘Teach with the end in mind.’ Is global competitiveness what we see as the highest end for our children and our planet? What if the end--the mission of education--were instead to build a future where all life can thrive? With that end in mind, we would focus on giving our students the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary to identify and transform unjust, unsustainable, and inhumane systems. We would prepare them to be solutionaries.”

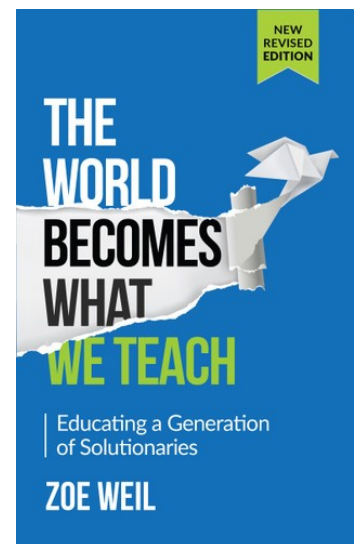
“It's not that many students are graduating from high school without the necessary skills in literacy, numeracy, and science; it's that even if they were to graduate with exceptional skills, they would not by design or purpose be properly educated and prepared for today's world and the important task of solving critical global problems.”

“For the sake of our children, their future, and the entire educational endeavor, it's time to identify and adopt the right purpose for schooling and educate the ‘solutionary’ generation. When we do this, many of the current problems we're focused on will also be solved along the way. Educating young people to be ‘solutionaries’ is a win for them, a win for our nation, and a win for the future of our world.”

“The solutions to the problems we face will come when we effectively and wisely transform the system of education. As Mahatma Gandhi said, ‘If we are to reach real peace in the world... we shall have to begin with the children.’ The education of children is the root system underlying other societal systems, and for the sake of our children and the world, I believe that we must:

1. Adopt a more relevant and meaningful purpose for schooling.
2. Make schools real world- and solutionary-focused.
3. Prepare teachers to educate their students to be solutionaries.”

“Transforming our educational system won't be easy, but I believe that it is the most important and strategic path towards creating more just, peaceful, and sustainable societies. Because the world inevitably becomes what we teach. It's up to each of us-- whether we are teachers, school administrators, parents, grandparents, concerned citizens, legislators, entrepreneurs and business leaders, or any number of other professionals-- to commit to transforming schooling so that it is truly- worthy of children and genuinely worthwhile for the world they will both inherit and shape.”



## Learn More

**Read:** [The World Becomes What We Teach](#)

“This book has never been more important. ... I urge my fellow educators to read this book and join together to make it foundational to our teaching.” - **Steve Cochrane**, former Superintendent of the Year, Princeton Public Schools

**Watch:** [Zoe Weil's TEDx Talk, The World Becomes What We Teach](#)



# Nancie Atwell, Educator, Author



**Nancie Atwell** was a middle school English teacher for almost forty years. She is the founder of the **Center for Teaching and Learning**, a K-8 demonstration school in Maine. Recognizing her distinguished research in teaching English, she was the first classroom teacher to receive the **NCTE David H Russell Award** and the **MLA Mina P Shaughnessy Prize**. Both awards recognize distinguished research in the teaching of English. She was also the winner of the **Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize**, for which she donated the \$1 million award to the Center for Teaching and Learning. Her classic book, **In the Middle**, currently in its 3rd edition, has been an inspiration for generations of teachers. She also authored, **Systems to Transform Your Classroom and School**, **Lessons That Change Writers**, and **Naming the World: A Year of Poems and Lessons**.

## Nancie Atwell Quotes from In The Middle

“Anybody’s achievement is driven by interest. Adult, child, boy, or girl, it doesn’t matter.”

“For forty years, my students have chosen the topic they write about and they’ve selected the books they read.”

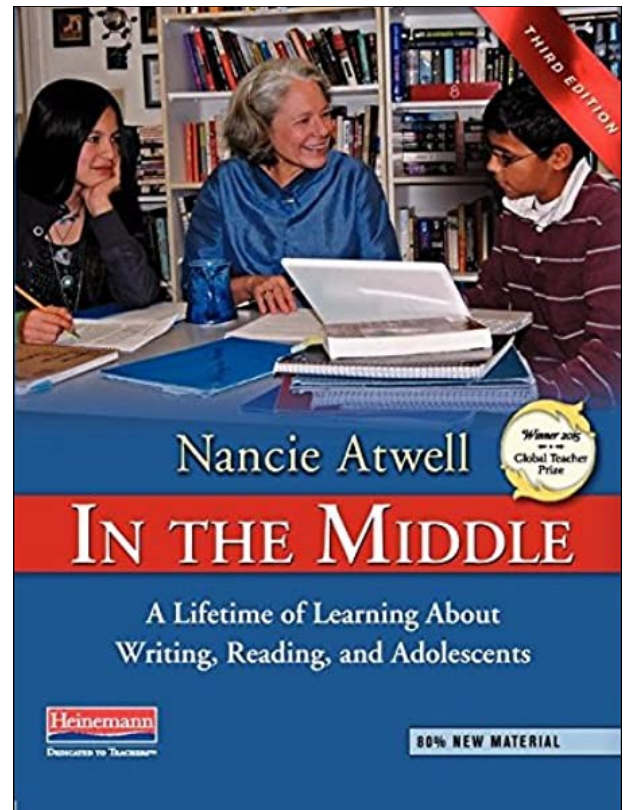
“Each year, my students read, on an average of forty books representing fourteen genres. They finish an average of twenty-one pieces of writings across thirteen genres.”

“I didn’t start out as a workshop teacher. A confluence of experiences drew me out from behind the teacher desk at the front of the classroom and helped me shift my focus from a static curriculum, annual calendar of assignments, and one-size had better fit-all prospective, to the development of methods that uncover and build on each students intentions, strengths, and challenges.”

“My teaching story begins when the gap between reality of my students and the logic of my methods yawned its widest. It starts with an eighth-grade boy who challenged me to stop making assumptions and assignments and start learning in my classroom.”

“Public school teachers are so constrained right now by the common core standards and the tests that are developed to monitor what teachers are doing with them,” she said. “If you’re a creative, smart young person, I don’t think this is the time to go into teaching unless an independent school would suit you.”

“It is not about being accountable to the state, but to our student’s parents.”



## Learn More

**Read:** [In the Middle, 3rd Edition](#)

**Watch:** [Atwell speaking on CNN about winning the Varkey Foundation's first Global Teacher Prize](#)



# Geoffrey Canada, M.Ed., Educator, Activist, Author



Nothing sums up **Geoffrey Canada's** work more than this quote from **President Bill Clinton**, "Canada is a man...who knows what it takes to ensure that every child has a fair shot in life." Canada has dedicated himself to working with kids in poor neighborhoods. He has appeared on shows as diverse as **Oprah** and **This American Life**. He was named one of "America's Best Leaders" by **U.S. News and World Report** and was listed as one of **TIME** magazine's 100 most influential people in the world. Canada has been president of the **Harlem Children's Zone**, an organization with the goal of increasing high school and college graduation rates among students in Harlem. He also serves on the board of directors of the **Children's Defense Fund**. Canada previously served on the board of directors of **The After-School Corporation**, a nonprofit with the goal of expanding educational opportunities for all students.

---

## Geoffrey Canada Quotes

"Why is it that when we had rotary phones, when we were having folks being crippled by polio, that we were teaching the same way then that we're doing right now?"

"Over the past five years, I've met several presidents, several secretaries of education ... and there is no plan. If you want to save your children, you're going to have to do it yourself. It's just us."

"Education is the only billion dollar industry that tolerates abject failure."

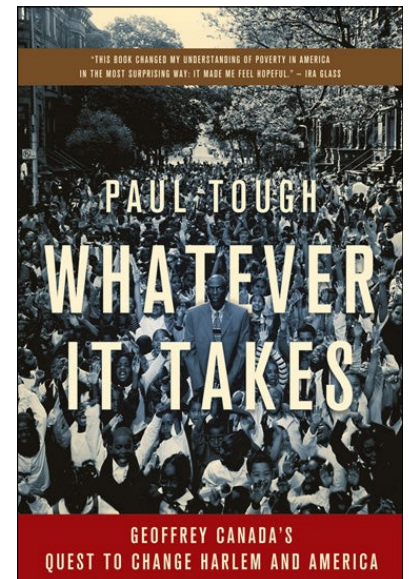
"Let's stop teaching to the middle and start teaching to the student."

"I don't know about a fiscal cliff, but there is an educational cliff we are walking over right this very second"

"How is it we could have a system where schools could remain lousy for 50 years and yet you do exactly the same thing this year that they did 50 years ago when it didn't work then, and no one feels any pressure to change?"

"When kids know that you refuse to let them fail ... they don't give up as easy. So sometimes they don't have it inside, [but] they're like, 'You know, I don't want to do this, but I know my mother's going to be mad.' That matters to kids, and it helps get them through."

"When the safety of America is threatened, we will spend any amount of money. The real safety of our nation is preparing this next generation so that they can take our place (in) thinking and technology and democracy."



---

## Learn More

**Read:** [Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America](#)

**Watch:** [Geoffrey Canada's TED talk, Our Failing Schools. Enough is Enough!](#)

**Visit:** [The Harlem Children's Zone Website](#)

# Sugata Mitra, Ph.D., Computer Scientist, Educational Theorist



**Sugata Mitra** holds a Ph.D. in theoretical physics and is Professor Emeritus at **NIIT University** in Rajasthan, India. He worked as a Professor of Educational Technology at **Newcastle University** in England and a visiting professor at **MIT MediaLab** in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mitra's "Hole in the Wall" experiments demonstrated that, in the absence of supervision and formal teaching, children can teach themselves and each other -- if they're motivated by curiosity. He won the 2013 **TED Prize** for his talk, Build a School in the Cloud.

---

## Sugata Mitra Quotes

"It's quite fashionable to say that the education system's broken. It's not broken. It's wonderfully constructed. It's just that we don't need it anymore. It's outdated."

"My wish is to help design the future of learning by supporting children all over the world to tap into their innate sense of wonder and work together. Help me build the School in the Cloud, a learning lab in India, where children can embark on intellectual adventures by engaging and connecting with information and mentoring online. I also invite you, wherever you are, to create your own miniature child-driven learning environments and share your discoveries."

"You don't actually need to know anything, you can find out at the point when you need to know it. It's the teachers job to point young minds towards the right kind of question, a teacher doesn't need to give any answers because answers are everywhere."

"The Victorians were great engineers. They engineered a [schooling] system that was so robust that it's still with us today, continuously producing identical people for a machine that no longer exists."

"If children have interest, then Education happens."

"Who knows what we'll need to learn thirty years from now? We do know that we will need to be good at searching for information, collating it, and figuring out whether it is right or wrong."

"Experiments show that children in unsupervised groups are capable of answering questions many years ahead of the material they're learning in school. In fact, they seem to enjoy the absence of adult supervision, and they are very confident of finding the right answer."

"Profound changes to how children access vast information is yielding new forms of peer-to-peer and individual-guided learning."

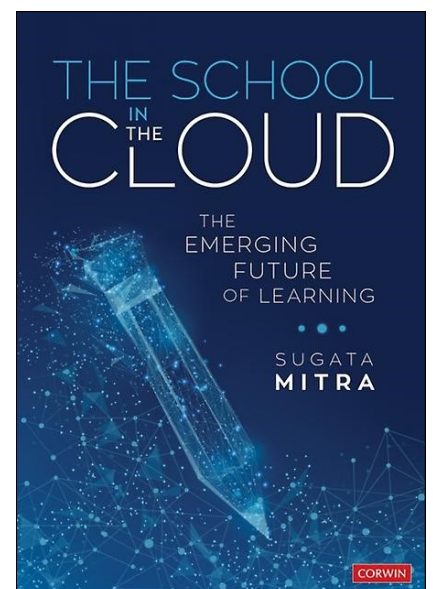
"Teachers are not supposed to be repositories of information which they dish out. That is from an age when there were no other repositories of information, other than books or teachers, neither of which were portable. A lot of my big task is retraining these teachers."

---

## Learn More

**Read:** [School in the Cloud](#) and [Beyond the Hole in the Wall](#)

**Watch:** [Sugata Mitra's TED talk, Build a School in the Cloud](#)



# Kapono Ciotti, Ph.D., Teacher, Author

# Jennifer Klein, M.A., Teacher, Author



**Kapono Ciotti** earned a doctorate in international education leadership from **Northcentral University** in San Diego, California. He is the Executive Director of **What School Could Be**, a professional development platform founded by **Ted Dintersmith** for educators with the goal of unleashing the potential of teachers and students. Ciotti is also the Head of School at the **American International School in Egypt**. Ciotti spent 15 years as a facilitator for the **National Association of Independent Schools**. Along with **Jennifer Klein**, he is the co-author of **The Landscape Model of Learning**.



**Jennifer Klein** holds a masters in English and creative writing from **The University of Colorado, Boulder**. Klein has as a broad background in global education, global partnership development, student-centered curriculum strategies, authentic assessment, and experiential learning. She spent 19 years as a teacher before leaving the classroom to support educators' professional training. Klein has worked with the **Buck Center for Global Education**, **The Institute for International Education**, and **TakingITGlobal**. She is the author of **The Global Education Guidebook**, and along with **Kapono Ciotti**, the co-author of **The Landscape Model of Learning**.

---

## Kapono Ciotti Quotes

“Small steps can bring about big change. And this new reality is within our reach. So what are the small steps we need to take? First, as Sir Ken Robinson asserts, we must combat the misuse and misappropriation of standards. **It is lunacy to claim that every child should learn the same thing, at the same time, in the same way, for 14 or more years of their life. This was not true for me as a learner, nor for my two sons or the thousands of students I have taught in my career as an educator.** Second, with limited hours in a day and limited months in a year, we must reprioritize what learning matters. We must make room and even prioritize our students' engagement with the world around them.”

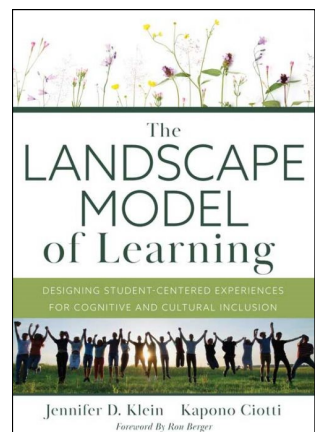
“I want my sons to engage with learning that matters to them and the world. I want them to be part of the solution to problems they are inheriting. I need them to think about our climate, our justice system, and our democracy. And I need them to be the protagonist of their own education.”

## Kapono Ciotti / Jennifer Klein Quotes from **The Landscape Model of Learning**

“We, the authors of this book, share many common traits and perspectives, but perhaps most important is our shared experience of truly nurturing, student centered, happy educational experience in our childhood.”

“What happened for us as children is what we both believe should happen for every child around the world: an education that recognizes the potential of every individual, recognizes the whole student in all his or her messy human complexity, and helps students strengthen areas needing growth while also fostering talents and passions.”

“What might it look like, **we asked ourselves, to have the industrial model behind and strive for the best outcomes possible for every student.**”



---

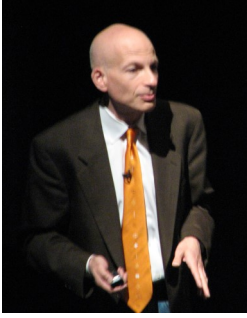
## Learn More

**Read:** [The Landscape Model of Learning](#)

**Visit:** [The About What School Could Be Website](#)



# Seth Godin, MBA, Author, Entrepreneur, Teacher



**Seth Godin** holds an MBA from **Stanford Business School**. He has written twenty best-selling books, including **Linchpin**, **The Dip**, **Purple Cow**, **Tribes**, **What To Do When It's Your Turn (And It's Always Your Turn)**, **This is Marketing**, and **The Practice**. Godin's books have been translated into 35 languages. His blog, **Seth's Blog**, is one of the most popular in the world. His podcast, **Akimbo**, is about culture and how to change it. He has founded two companies, **Squidoo** and **Yoyodyne** (acquired by Yahoo!). Godin has been inducted into the **Marketing Hall of Fame** and the **Direct Marketing Hall of Fame**.

---

## Seth Godin Quotes from **Stop Stealing Dreams**

"We spend a fortune teaching trigonometry to kids who don't understand it, won't use it, and will spend no more of their lives studying math. We invest thousands of hours exposing millions of students to fiction and literature, but end up training most of them to never again read for fun (one study found that 58 percent of all Americans never read for pleasure after they graduate from school). As soon as we associate reading a book with taking a test, we've missed the point."

"Changing school doesn't involve sharpening the pencil we've already got. School reform cannot succeed if it focuses on getting schools to do a better job of what we previously asked them to do. We don't need more of what schools produce when they're working as designed. The challenge, then, is to change the very output of the school before we start spending even more time and money improving the performance of the school."

"The current structure, which seeks low-cost uniformity that meets minimum standards, is killing our economy, our culture, and us."

"The notion that the "essentials" of elementary education are the three R's mechanically treated, is based upon ignorance of the essentials needed for realization of democratic ideals."

"School's industrial, scaled-up, measurable structure means that fear must be used to keep the masses in line. There's no other way to get hundreds or thousands of kids to comply, to process that many bodies, en masse, without simultaneous coordination. And the flip side of this fear and conformity must be that passion will be destroyed. There's no room for someone who wants to go faster, or someone who wants to do something else, or someone who cares about a particular issue. Move on. Write it in your notes; there will be a test later."

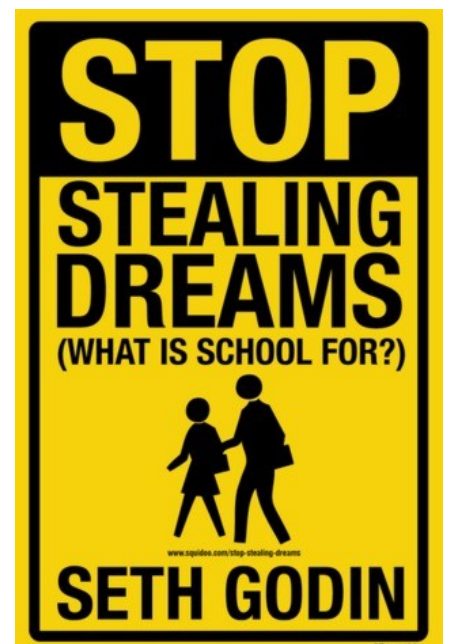
"School has become an industrialized system, working on a huge scale, that has significant byproducts, including the destruction of many of the attitudes and emotions we'd like to build our culture around. In order to efficiently jam as much testable data into a generation of kids, we push to make those children compliant, competitive zombies."

---

## Learn More

Watch: [Seth Godin's TEDx Talk, Stop Stealing Dreams](#)

Read: [The Stop Stealing Dreams Transcript](#)



# Peter Gray, Ph.D., Psychologist, Research Professor, Scholar, Author



**Peter Gray** earned his Ph.D. in biological sciences at **Rockefeller University** and is a research professor at **Boston College**. He has conducted and published research in education, anthropology, neuroendocrinology, and developmental psychology. Gray's primary research focus has been on children's natural ways of learning and the value of play. His many books include **Free to Learn, The Harm of Coercive Schooling, How Children Acquire "Academic" Skills Without Formal Instruction, Mother Nature's Pedagogy**, and **Ancestral Landscapes in Human Evolution**. He is a founding member of the nonprofit organization **Alliance for Self-Directed Education** and co-founder of **Let Grow**.

---

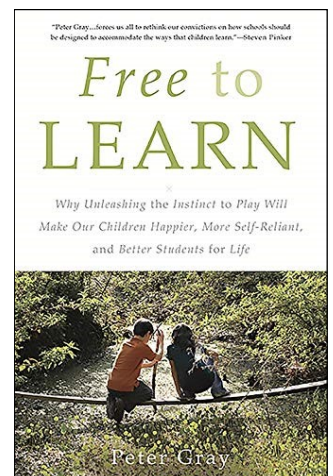
## Peter Gray Quotes

"Everyone who has ever been to school knows that school is prison, but almost nobody beyond school age says it is. It's not polite. We all tiptoe around the truth because admitting it would make us seem cruel and would point a finger at well-intentioned people doing what they believe to be essential. . . . A prison, according to the common, general definition, is any place of involuntary confinement and restriction of liberty. In school, as in adult prisons, the inmates are told exactly what they must do and are punished for failure to comply. Actually, students in school must spend more time doing exactly what they are told than is true of adults in penal institutions. Another difference, of course, is that we put adults in prison because they have committed a crime, while we put children in school because of their age."

"We have forgotten that children are designed by nature to learn through self-directed play and exploration, and so, more and more, we deprive them of freedom to learn, subjecting them instead to the tedious and painfully slow learning methods devised by those who run the schools."

"Once compulsory systems of state-run schools were established, they became increasingly standardized, both in content and in method. For the sake of efficiency, children were divided into separate classrooms by age and passed along, from grade to grade, like products on an assembly line. The task of each teacher was to add bits of officially approved knowledge to the product, in accordance with a preplanned schedule, and then to test that product before passing it on to the next station."

"Older children help younger ones when they play together, and in that way they learn to lead and nurture and develop a concept of themselves as mature and caring. But little of this can occur in school, where children are forced to associate only with others of their own age and where free, unsupervised play is rare or absent."



---

## Learn More

Read: [Free to Learn](#), [The Harm of Coercive Schooling](#), and [Evidence that Self-Directed Education Works](#)

Watch: [Peter Gray's TEDx talk, How Our Schools Thwart Passion](#)

Visit the websites for: [Let Grow](#), and [Alliance for Self-Directed Education](#)



# Sal Khan, MS, MBA, Educator, Entrepreneur



**Sal Khan** is the founder and CEO of **Khan Academy**, a nonprofit with the mission of providing a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere. He is also the founder of **Schoolhouse.world**, **Khan Lab School**, and **Khan World School**, all nonprofits focused on making world-class, personalized mastery education accessible.

Sal's interest in education began while he was an undergraduate at **MIT**. He developed math software for children with ADHD and tutored fourth- and seventh-grade public school students in Boston. He holds three degrees from MIT and an MBA from **Harvard Business School**.

---

## Sal Khan Quotes

"Far too many bright, motivated kids are being badly served by their educational experiences - ones at elite, wealthy schools as well as underfunded ones."

"A one-size-fits-all lecture is not the way to go about education."

"I learned from my peers, and I learned from doing projects, and I learned from mentors, but I learned very little from lectures, and I've talked about how little I attended them."

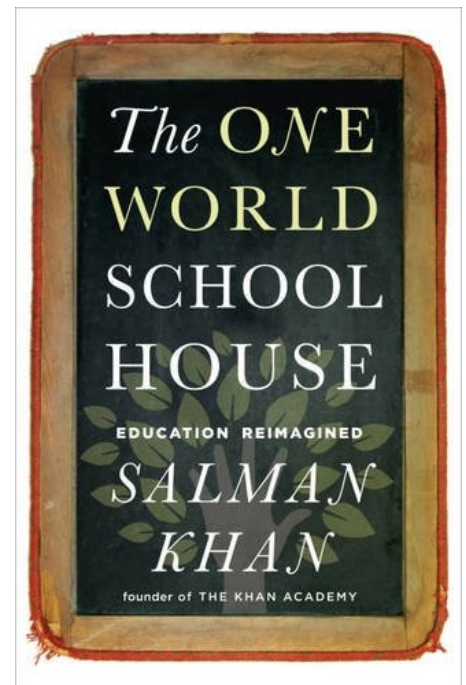
"Formal education must change. It needs to be brought into closer alignment with the world as it actually is, into closer harmony with the way human beings actually learn and thrive."

"Teachers can use technology-based assessments to inform their instruction. These assessments can quickly produce data and surface patterns that help teachers identify where students are faltering and intervene with targeted coaching immediately, before the student falls too far behind."

"In Idaho, we hope to see educators using Khan Academy to individualize their instruction. Instead of a one-size-fits-all lesson, teachers will be able to focus their attention on specific students who are struggling while the rest of the class engages with material appropriate for them."

"It's an old idea. It's arguably the first way that people learn, that, hey, if you need to learn something, if you're having trouble with it, keep working on it until you master it and then you go to a more advanced concept. But in the education systems that all of us grew up in, we all learned at a fixed pace."

"Some kids grasp a subject faster and race ahead to the next level, while others continue to struggle with the first. The great thing we've seen is that if you let a student take his time to master a concept, he will probably race ahead on the next one."



---

## Learn More

**Read:** [The One World Schoolhouse](#)

**Visit :** The websites for [Khan Academy](#), [Schoolhouse.world](#), [Kahn Lab School](#), and [Kahn World School](#)

**Watch:** [Supercharging the Classroom: Using Technology to Support Personal Learning](#)

# David Cook, M. Ed.,

## Director of Innovative Learning, Kentucky Department of Education



**David Cook** began his career in education as a teacher in the Madison County, Kentucky School District. He has been a policy advisor for the **Kentucky Department of Education**. Cook serves as the CEO of **Learning Ecosystem Designs, LLC**, a business that helps transform educational systems to a more equitable, learner-centered model. He is also the Director of Innovative Learning at the Kentucky Department of Education.

---

### David Cook Quotes

“We need a system that lifts up REAL learning focused on real relationships, real equity, and real authentic measures. The world is changing at such a rapid pace. Our education system doesn’t have time to build new pathways, modify curriculums, and close achievement gaps based on standardized tests. We must create truly learning-centered educational opportunities for ALL students without regard to time, space or uniformity of outcomes. We must ready every student for the multitude of different career experiences they will face in an adaptive world that is changing daily.”

“There simply isn’t enough evidence that you can have a learner-centered education system .... while perpetuating the current system that hasn’t substantively changed since its 1894 inception. A current system that, while extremely effective at its purpose, is inherently inequitable because it measures all learners in the same way as if they were widgets...”

“It’s widely agreed among educators, civil rights advocates, and child welfare experts that the U.S. education system is neither equitable nor does it sufficiently address the needs of all learners. What is needed is a system that sets each learner up for success according to their unique needs. Only then will we have real equity. That is when we know we have a genuine “learner-centered” system.”

“You must choose between a genuine and substantive equity facing, learner-centered system that puts its effort and money where its mouth is OR a system that is designed to create widgets, fraught with inequity born of its preference to measure all learners the same while giving lip service to acknowledging every learner is unique.”



---

### Learn More

**Read:** [Having our Cake and Eating It Too](#)

**Visit:** [The Learning Ecosystem Design website](#)

# Devin Vodicka, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Author



**Devin Vodicka** earned a doctorate in Organizational Leadership and a masters in Educational Leadership, both from **Pepperdine University**. Before becoming Superintendent of Schools for the Vista, California Unified school district, he served in many leadership positions in the district, including Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, and Principal at elementary and middle schools. Vodicka has been recognized by four California organizations as “**Superintendent of the Year**” and once as “**Innovative Superintendent of the Year.**” He is the author of the book, **Learner-Centered Leadership**.

---

## Devin Vodicka Quotes

“Over the past several decades we have experienced many reforms, and there have been many well-intended efforts to improve our schools. Unfortunately, the results has often been akin to spinning a hamster wheel faster-- lots of effort with very little real movement.”

“Being learner-centered is a radical and potentially revolutionary approach that holds the potential to eradicate inequality in all forms, including classism, racism, ageism, and sexism.”

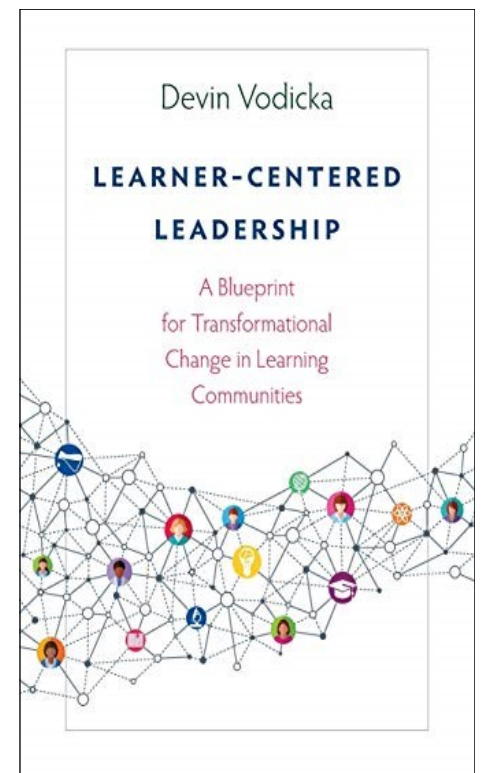
“Learner-centered education means constructing learning experiences in a way that respects and builds on the unique strengths, interest, and value of each learner. By employing this approach, we seek to shift not only the educational system but also society at large.”

“It's time to find an education that can respond to each student. A truly learner-centered education.”

“Given the fact that our students are often disconnected and compelled to comply with an inflexible system that continues to treat all learners as if they are the same, I am amazed with how many of our kids persist.”

“If we can find better ways to connect and inspire every learner, our students, families, communities, and society will stand a much better chance to successfully navigate the monumental challenges and opportunities that are on the horizon. It is extremely urgent that we ensure all learners to reach their potential.”

“By embracing and celebrating the unique strengths of every learner, it is my hope that we can begin to see all forms of difference, including cultural and racial diversity, as the assets they truly are.”



---

## Learn More

**Read:** [Learner-Centered Leadership](#)

**Watch:** [Devin Vodicka's TEDx Talk, Embracing a Different Way](#)

# Closing Arguments

## for abolishing and replacing the current standardized education model used in US public elementary schools.

An overwhelming amount of evidence clearly shows that no amount of money or “reforms” can fix an education model that was never designed to foster curiosity, passion for learning, or prepare children for the life that awaits them after graduation.

In contrast, a [Learner-Centered Model](#) (often called “Student-Centered,” “Personalized,” or “Blended”) that puts the learner at the center of the learning process is a viable alternative in US public schools. In the Learner-Centered Model, the impetus for learning comes from a child's innate curiosity. This structure gives students control over the content of lessons and the learning method and promotes autonomy and active learning. The teacher is seen as a facilitator of the learning process rather than “the sage on the stage.”

From the testimony of [Education Reimagined](#), “. . . learner-centered education....offers the possibility of true liberation and equity in education. At its core, learner-centered education honors and values the humanity and dignity of each child—seeing them as unique, curious, wondrous, and capable. It enables each young person to discover and bring forth their unique talents and passions in ways that contribute to their community and society. And it empowers every educator, family, and community to make the difference they are committed to making for young people.”

As [Sal Kahn](#) so wisely and concisely stated, “Formal education must change. It needs to be brought into closer alignment with the world as it actually is, into closer harmony with the way human beings actually learn and thrive.” We hope you will join us in making that happen.

We at [The Center for Inspired Learning](#) are working with communities, policymakers, and school districts to implement learner-centered education in Washington State elementary schools. Once we have demonstrated that this can be successfully done using existing infrastructure and budgets, we plan on spreading our [Inspired Learner Model](#) to other states and countries, and adapting it so it can work in public middle and high schools.

Thank you for reading the testimony from our expert witnesses, and for caring about the future of education, which is really the future of our children, grandchildren, society, and planet.

[Contact us](#) to see how you can help.



THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION