

A New Vision for Public Schools Based on the Modern Understanding of Learning & Development



- ◆ **Boost Academic Performance**
- ◆ **Mitigate Student Anxiety and Depression**
- ◆ **Foster a Passion for Learning**
- ◆ **Lower Operational Costs & Prevent School Closures**
- ◆ **Cultivate Public Trust**
- ◆ **Encourage Community Involvement**
- ◆ **Elevate Parental Engagement and Satisfaction**
- ◆ **Close the Achievement Gap**
- ◆ **Significantly Decrease Behavior & Discipline Problems**
- ◆ **Promote Equitable Learning Opportunities**
- ◆ **Decrease Special Education Referrals**
- ◆ **Significantly Address Teacher Burnout and Attrition**

For over a century, children have been sorted by age and randomly placed into groups of 20 to 30, then taught the SAME material, at the SAME time, at the SAME pace, in the SAME way, by the SAME teacher.



These standardized age-based classrooms are a relic of the industrial revolution.

Could turning these classrooms into microschoools significantly improve student outcomes?

Modern research suggests this approach holds great promise.

The Washington State Elementary Student-Centered Initiative

The modern understanding of childhood learning and development has created a seismic shift in our understanding of how we should approach elementary education. Unfortunately, the science has been ignored in favor of sticking with the harmful status quo.

The Washington State Elementary Student-Centered Initiative (WESCI), developed by the [Center for Inspired Learning](#), is designed to revolutionize public elementary education by combining technology with in-person learning. This innovative approach creates an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for every student, grounded in modern research on childhood development and learning. Studies indicate that students will not only benefit from a safe learning environment but also achieve progress 30-50% faster compared to the current age-based, standardized model. Schools that have used this approach have seen significant improvements in student test scores, mental health, and teacher retention. WESCI is cost-effective, and districts that implement it should see savings.

We want to draw your attention to three groundbreaking reports and the testimony of America's top education journalist. These highly reputable sources point to one inescapable conclusion—elementary schools are in a state of emergency, and education policymakers are undermining the children of our state as a result.

Report 1: [How The Science of Learning and Development Can Transform Education](#) (2020) - This report from the Science of Learning and Development Alliance shows how the industrial-era education model is racist, classist, and oppressive, with the greatest harm being to underserved students. Sadly, this is by policymakers' choice, and it doesn't have to be this way. We now have an evidence-based understanding of how to create an environment where every student can thrive.

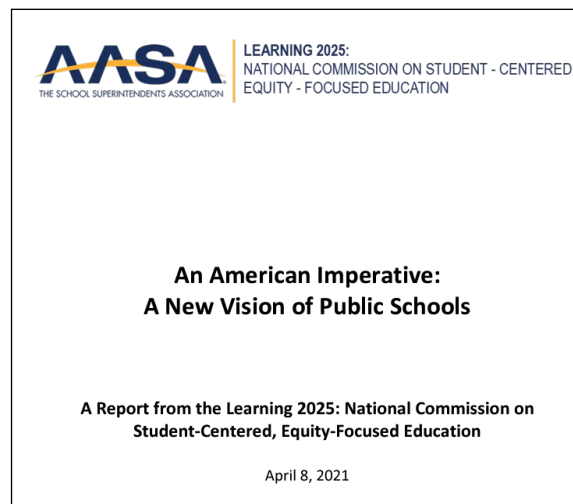
Report 2: [An American Imperative: A New Vision for Public Schools](#) (2021) - The goal of this report from The School Superintendents Association (AASA) was to completely redesign public education to a student-centered model. The report also shows how the current standardized model is inequitable and greatly harms marginalized students. In 2025, the ASSA [committed to providing district leaders with resources and support](#) to “redesign their school systems” to emphasize student-centered learning.

Report 3: [Ours To Solve—Once and for All](#) (2024) - This report from the Education Futures Council puts forth a strong case that school board directors, superintendents, and other policymakers put adult interest over student well-being. In doing so, they fiercely protect the age-based, standardized model of schooling and ignore the overwhelming evidence for a complete overhaul. The report also shows how their resistance to change is greatly harming students and society.

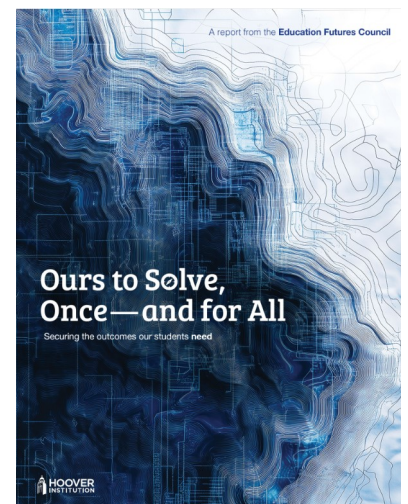
Report 1



Report 2



Report 3



Interview: [National Education Association \(NEA\) interview with award-winning educational journalist John Merrow](#) (2017) - To summarize, school board directors, superintendents, and other policymakers are in denial about the need for fundamental change, believing that reform can fix a structurally flawed educational model. Instead, they should step aside to allow for more innovative approaches. A significant shift is needed, moving from a standardized focus on “How smart is Johnny?” to a personalized approach that asks, “How is Johnny smart?”

Besides the organizations that published the reports, numerous other reputable sources have presented compelling evidence underscoring the critical need for a complete redesign of the educational system. Here are a few other institutions and people of note that support the goal of transforming public education to a student-centered, personalized model:

- The [State of Wyoming RIDE Initiative](#), supported by the University of Wyoming Department of Education, the Wyoming State Department of Education, the Wyoming Board of Education, and the [Wyoming Governor’s Office](#).
- Lily Eskelsen (President of the National Education Association), Randi Weingarten (President of the American Federation of Teachers), David Andrews (Dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Education), and 25 other education advocates in the report [A Transformational Vision for Education in the US](#).
- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) says that schools need to be on the front line and create environments where children feel a sense of belonging and connection.

The Charles Butt Foundation fully funded two cohorts of the [Raising Blended Learners \(RBL\)](#) initiative to bring student-centered, personalized learning to every classroom in Texas. The RBL initiative demonstrated that grant offerings can effectively motivate school districts to embrace science-backed, student-centered learning approaches. This personalized learning program, implemented across two cohorts, yielded impressive results.

WESCI mirrors this strategy by providing grants to schools. We are currently seeking foundations to sponsor six teachers for a three years, thereby incentivizing schools to pilot this innovative and proven educational model.

With these pilot classrooms spread out around the state, we will invite other school district leaders to visit these classrooms. We will also organize gatherings around the state to help educate others about the student-centered model.

We are reaching out to ask your foundation or school district to participate in this critical initiative. We now know how to create a learning environment that sees the wondrous potential in each student and creates the conditions for each of them to reach their fullest potential.



[Click here to watch a video about how a student-centered RBL classroom impacted a veteran teacher.](#)



[Contact us:](#)

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- Visit the home page of [CenterForInspiredLearning.org](#) for a digital copy of this document.

Operating Systems: Personalized vs. Standardized

Personalized: “How is Johnny Smart?”

This model fosters academic success, equality, and better mental health by celebrating the unique interests and strengths of each student, sometimes reducing or eliminating the need for medication and therapy in students struggling with depression, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness.

Standardized: “How Smart is Johnny?”

Studies confirm that this 100-year-old model is a significant root cause of poor test results, mental health challenges, bullying, oppression, and inequality.

10 Differences Between Personalized & Standardized Education

1. **Active vs. Passive:** Students are active participants in designing their learning experiences and develop agency and ownership over their education rather than being passive recipients of standardized content.
2. **Competency-Based vs. Time-Based:** Progress is based on mastery of skills and knowledge, not age or grade level.
3. **Self-Paced vs. Rigid Schedule:** Students move at their own pace rather than being confined to rigid, time-based schedules.
4. **Flexible vs. Fixed Environment:** Learning is dynamic and can occur anytime and anywhere, not just within school buildings in scheduled classes.
5. **Collaborative vs. Isolated:** Emphasizes social embedding, encouraging collaboration with peers, mentors, and communities, as opposed to the isolated nature of traditional classrooms.
6. **Outcomes-Focused vs. Process-Focused:** Emphasis on achieving meaningful learning outcomes and developing essential skills for the modern world rather than focusing on standardized processes and efficiency.
7. **Adaptive vs. Rigid:** Responds to individual student needs and goals, rather than inflexible curriculum.
8. **Whole-Learner Approach vs. Subject Compartmentalization:** Considers the development of the whole child, including collaboration, agency, and problem-solving skills, rather than compartmentalizing learning into subject areas.
9. **Technology Integration:** Harnesses online learning to support personalized and flexible pathways rather than reinforcing a rigid curriculum.
10. **Community Connection:** Promotes porous boundaries between school and community, leveraging broader resources and experiences in contrast to the self-contained nature of traditional schools.