EMPOWERED **TEACHER FALL 2023 / ISSUE 03** THE VISION ISSUE SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM, SUCCESS IN LIFE LIZ JARERO Western Hills Elementary Kearns, Utah **MEET LIZ** BUILDING AN ENGAGING THE FUTURE OF TEACHING THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLS **CLASSROOM** THOMAS HATCH **SAL KAHN** CULTURE INSPIRATION / ACTIVITIES / TOOLS YOU CAN USE / ADVICE / MORE

TEACHERS TRANSFORMING EDUCATION



TEACHERS TRANSFORMING EDUCATION



WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF EDUCATORS

Change-making teachers, like you, have the power to transform learning. You have the opportunity to better prepare young people for life by guiding them through an experiential, principle-based, real-world relevant education.

WE BELIEVE IN TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

Empowered, as an organization *and* community, believes learners should have agency over where, when, what, how, and from whom they learn. This requires:

BELIEF IN PEOPLE PERMISSIONLESS INNOVATION A FREE AND OPEN EDUCATION MARKET

These elements drive education toward a diversity of outcomes where learning leads to more people living a life of meaning and purpose.

Empowered encourages freedom of thought through executing a growth mindset in our learning community.

Kimberly Jordan

Spartanburg High School Spartanburg, South Carolina

Let us be your partner — championing your ideas, elevating your voice, and providing you with tools that lead to outsized outcomes.



CONTACT US. WE CAN HELP.

Call/Text: 866.999.3921

Email: hello@empoweredhq.org

Web: TeachEmpowered.org/GetEmpowered





Dear Teacher,

First, thank you for picking up this magazine and giving it a go. I hope it makes you laugh, cry, reflect, appreciate and most importantly RALLY.

Rally around what? Change! Monumental, systemic, paradigm-shifting change.

Empowered's core belief for improving society lies within supporting and elevating teachers. We are a community of teachers dissatisfied with the status quo and rallied around growth mindset. Our community represents an educator movement seeking to identify in students their innate gifts and talents through the power of individualization.

Every person has a genius, a unique gift, an advantage. Today's education paradigm disagrees. You entered the teaching profession to identify those geniuses and to uncover those gifts. You are best positioned to identify them and even better equipped to advise on them. Resultingly, you are prime positioned to provide the necessary voice and testimony to shift the education industry's standards; allowing all geniuses to thrive!

Our magazine is designed to inspire the movement by celebrating the profession. If you, like us, feel moved to innovate beyond the centuries old model of one-sized, robotic, and standardized; please join us. But don't just join! Critique, advise, inform — help us be better. If we are of no value to you or if our work doesn't move or help you, please let us know. Don't hesitate for a moment to provide us with your version of how together we EMPOWER change.

Sincerely,

LIZ KOCH

Chair/Founder, Empowered

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Does EMPOWERED TEACHER MAGAZINE inspire you?

After finishing this issue, please complete a brief survey to tell us what you think of Empowered Teacher Magazine. Scan this QR code or go to **TeachEmpowered.org/TellUs**





EMPOWERED TEACHER MAGAZINE

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SPECIAL THANKS

A special thanks to all teachers who work endlessly to support a stronger future in education.

A NOTE TO READERS

The views expressed in articles are the author's own and not necessarily those of Empowered Teacher Magazine or Empowered.

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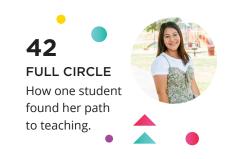
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BY LINDSAY SCHROEDER



What if the vision you had for your career as an educator fully came to life? Close your eyes and imagine a day in that life. Wow! Talk about excitement, joy, passion, and fulfillment all in one day. But where do you begin?

This issue is focused on bringing your vision to life. The start of a new school year brings so much energy and potential. A new group of students. A new learning environment or classroom. A new focus on each student's potential. A new teacher tote. Classrooms are brimming with excitement. Wouldn't it be great if that feeling of fresh opportunity could last all year? Well, it can, and we are here to support you along the way.

We know changing where, how, or what you teach can be challenging and time consuming. But accomplishing your vision of helping each student succeed is worth it 100 percent of the time. Throughout this issue you'll find resources to help you bring your vision to life through the structure and vision of your classroom, engaging activities, and thought-provoking articles.

At Empowered we believe the following:

- Learning should be personalized.
- Students should experiment and engage.
- Focus should be on personalized outcomes, not standards and grades.
- Parents and students should own their educational decisions and have a marketplace full of options they should get to pick you as their teacher!

Are you with us? We hope so, as we are excited to partner with you to make the above statements true. Throughout this issue, we hope you are inspired and invigorated by the opportunity ahead for your students, for yourself, and for education.

Lindsay Schroeder

Chief Operating Officer

Empowered



EXPLORE THE VISION ISSUE Look for this icon to find perspectives, inspiration, and activities to set your vision.

Explore this issue of The Empowered Teacher Magazine online. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:

TeachEmpowered.org/ExploreIssue



ISSUE 3 • FALL 2023 PHOTOGRAPHY VIA EMPOWERED



Let's customize an engaging, hands-on training session (from 1 hour to full-day) that meets the needs of your colleagues and students.

ALL RISEUP WORKSHOP SESSIONS INCLUDE:



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Explore how our tools can help your students realize their individual strengths and confidently own their path to success.

 ${\it Rise Up Workshops executed in 2023 are \ \it available \ \it at \ \it no \ \it cost \ \it to \ \it participants.} \\$

To learn more and request your own RiseUp Workshop - including pricing information for 2024 - scan the QR code, visit the URL below, or email hello@empoweredhq.org.

*Based on RiseUp Participant Exit Surveys (Summer 2023)

RISEUP WORKSHOPS

Where personalized learning meets boundless potential

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TeachEmpowered.org/PlanAWorkshop





WHEN STAYING AFTER SCHOOL IS A GOOD TO THE STAYING AT A GOOD TO THE STAYI

HOW ONE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S "*MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE*" APPROACH LED TO A TRANSFORMATIVE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

BY ERIKA ROSE

For many kids, and teachers too, stayingafter school sounds like a bad thing. But not if you know Kimberly Jordan's after-school program.

In her program at Spartanburg High School in South Carolina, staying after school looks like a little extra math help or getting ice cream and talking with a trusted adult before going home.

Jordan is the kind of teacher who doesn't watch the clock to signal the end of the workday. She is the kind of teacher who works late simply because the school day wasn't long enough for her kids to get what they needed.

It's an approach that some parents say has changed their kids' lives.

One parent called Jordan a "lifetime family friend" who helped her daughter open up about something troubling her. Another said, "I don't know where I'd be right now without Ms. Jordan."

It's no wonder this industrial engineer turned high school teacher is now a decorated educator, with teacher-of-the-year titles on her second-career resume.

The VELA Education Fund, which awards micro-grants to "early-stage entrepreneurs

- students, families, educators, community members - who are innovating outside of the traditional education system," noted Jordan's creativity and resilience in her grant application.

"Kim felt compelled to step up and take action to address an immediate need in her community, while also working toward a more sustainable solution that would empower the families and learners she works with and the Spartanburg community," said Meredith Olson, president of the VELA Education Fund.

Olson said 70 percent of VELA grant recipients use the funds to implement programs

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serving rural, economically distressed, or disadvantaged communities, like Spartanburg.

A BLESSED JOURNEY

To hear her tell it, Jordan was destined to teach, but it took some divine intervention to get her there. It came as a spiritual awakening after her husband lost his job and she began a journey of prayer and self-reflection. At the time, she was a stay-at-home mom who had put an engineering career on hold.

"I prayed: 'Lord, what do you want me to do? Am I supposed to do something different?" Jordan says. "I knew He wanted me to teach. It was very clear."

Jordan became certified through South Carolina's Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE), which enables degreed individuals to work as teachers. Then, she went directly into the most challenging of challenging environments.

Her first teaching job, 15 years ago, was at a residential juvenile justice facility that serves kids who have committed nonviolent offenses. These students experience relational or behavioral problems and need individual attention to return to their families and communities.

"It helped me to develop who I am as a teacher, and as a professional in the teaching arena," Jordan says. "They challenged me constantly. I count that as a great blessing to have started there because it really allowed me to become the teacher I am today."

IT'S AN APPROACH THAT SOME PARENTS SAY HAVE CHANGED THEIR KIDS' LIVES.

She started an after-school program there, and ultimately helped several young men earn their General Education Development (GED) diplomas and enroll in online college programs.

The job led her to seek out a better way of reaching this particular kind of student. Taking her background in industrial engineering, which is all about finding the most efficient process, she knew there had to be a better way.

Jordan thought, "I'm sure somebody else has already delved in how these kids think and what teaching techniques would work more efficiently. I found a master's degree program at Columbia College in divergent learning, which is basically one way of saying non-traditional thinkers. For most students in poverty, that is exactly what they are."

What a game-changer.

NEVER ENOUGH TIME

After four years, Jordan left for a job at Spartanburg High School, where she now teaches AP engineering courses for part of the day, while also teaching those who struggle the most.

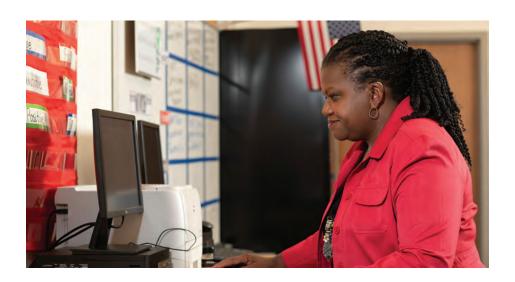
She still feels like class time is never enough and to truly reach non-traditional kids, it is necessary to extend herself to them after school.

"Students needs were not being met" Jordan says. "To close that gap, we started the after-school program, or, at the time it started, it wasn't a program, it was just me being available."

Jordan also partners with her local church, helping at a program for elementary students and even bringing her high school students with her twice a week. She initiated a program there called "STEAM It Up." It allows Jordan to extend herself further, and be that trusted adult that kids need to flourish.

Often, being available is all that is needed.

Janaisia Roberts, 16, had been struggling with emotional problems. The family had been living in a homeless shelter after



PHOTOGRAPHY VIA CARROLL FOSTER



losing their apartment in a fire in December of 2020, and had been struggling with the violent loss of her brother just months before.

"My daughter is very smart," Roberts' mother, Cynthia Mock said. "She just doesn't communicate well with most people. We were trying to get her to open up and become more sociable."

Mock said that all teachers need Jordan's communication style, which she described as honest, open-minded, and empathetic, yet stern.

Mock says Jordan "communicated with my daughter on her level" and never allowed her to see herself as a victim despite her tragedies.

MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE

Sandra Woods is a former middle school teacher who recognizes the deep impact of being available for the benefit of the "whole child."

Her daughter benefitted from this approach by Jordan, who they now consider a lifelong friend of the family.

"You gotta have the heart," Woods says.
"You've got to have the compassion. Not just for the children in poverty. Even the children

whose families are wealthy, those children want somebody they can connect with. Someone who won't use it against them."

All of these stories and interactions can be summed up as Jordan's personal philosophy about education: "Meet them where they are and help them grow to where they can be." This philosophy can also be applied by establishing a vision with students, by being clear about where they are and where they aspire to be.

"We like to look at the individual child," Jordan says. "That is what I endeavor to do: To not allow them to say that their circumstances will dictate their success."

Erika Rose is a well-established writer based in Chicago. She's worked with a number of high-profile publications.

Connect with Kimberly on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/Kimberly



THE VISION ISSUE

For more inspiration, check out the Empowered Hub.



FUNDING BIG IDEAS

Meredith Olson said the educators who apply for funding from VELA typically have a deep understanding of what their learners and families need and have an openness and curiosity about how they might work in new ways to meet those needs.

"The same entrepreneurial spirit that leads an educator to try a new lesson or test out a new resource or tool can lead them to dream up a solution or approach that does not yet exist," Olson says. "If you have a big idea about how to do education differently, test it, explore it, and talk to people about it. "One of the most powerful parts of our community at VELA is how our entrepreneurs continue to share ideas and experiences to push their thinking forward."

Visit **VELAEdFund.org** to apply for a micro grant.



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Are you an educator with a big idea about how to transform education?

VELA Education Fund catalyzes innovation in K-12 by providing trust-based funding to the education entrepreneurs who are stretching the canvas on where, when, and how learning takes place.

VELA has awarded more than \$26 million to more than 2,000 entrepreneurs across the country.

Our Micro grant application is currently open.

Scan this code to learn more and apply!



www.VELAEdFund.org

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING

A VISION IN THE CLASSROOM

BY KASEY MILLAR



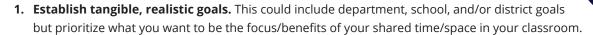
Having a "vision" for something means having a mental picture of an ideal or desired state.

All of us, as individuals, should have a vision for our days, careers and lives. In establishing a vision, we find a sense of purpose that directs our efforts and energies to help us prioritize reaching our goals.

The Empowered Community has a shared belief in the power of individualized learning that connects to the real world and helps every student develop their unique skills to create and seize opportunities in their own lives. That collective vision informs how we, as an organization, support teachers in their efforts – starting with helping them articulate their own vision for their classroom.

SETTING YOUR VISION

If you don't already have an articulated vision for your classroom – you likely have at least a loose idea of one in your mind. How do you formalize your vision?



- **2. Keep it short.** Start with "In this classroom we . . ." and then build three to five sentences or bullets that build out the vision.
- **3. Tie it to a larger mission.** This should build upon your school or district mission.
- **4. Make it informative and inspirational.** Find the middle ground between minutia and overly theoretical.
- 5. Give it room to grow and evolve. Avoid overly specific words, terms, and references that limit collaboration.

SHARING YOUR VISION

Having a vision for the classroom is great but you will need the support of your students and others to bring it to life. To best ensure all understand what you plan to accomplish:

- **Post it.** Print it, legible from the back of the room, and use it as a reference when needed.
- Discuss it. Read and discuss your classroom vision with students at the beginning of each term.
- Socialize it. Make your vision part of conversations with colleagues, administrators, and parents.



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FURTHERING YOUR VISION

You, and your students, must actively work toward your vision to accomplish your goals. This starts with buy-in from those students. Let them ask questions, challenge, and provide their perspectives. It will lead to great discussions and could even inspire them to think about a vision for their own future.



ACTIVITY: COWBOY INKBLOT TEST

Inkblot Vision Test: What Do You See?



ILLUSTRATIONS VIA EMPOWERED

This lesson is intended to explore "vision" and the benefits of sharing knowledge.

As all educators know, it is important that any group, organization or business have shared goals – which are part of a shared vision. Our Inkblot Test activity serves as an example of how aligning on a vision can be a collaborative, challenging and rewarding process.

ACTIVITY: COWBOY INKBLOT TEST

SUBJECT/	TIME	FOUNDATIONAL	KEY MARKET
GRADE LEVEL		PRINCIPLES	REAL-WORLD CONCEPTS
K-12	+/- 30 Min	Knowledge Win-Win Focus Responsibility	Shared Vision Trial and Error Contribution and Motivation

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Printed versions of our Inkblot Graphic for each student, a digital copy/larger-sized graphic for group discussion, a digital copy/larger printed graphic of "image two," discussion plan and debrief questions (yours or ours)

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 1 Explain that the class will be doing a "vision test" today clarify it will be simple and won't take long.
- 2 Hand out individual graphic copies (instructing students to keep them "face down") of image one or prepare to project/share a large copy of the graphic for the group.
- Instruct learners to flip their papers or display the larger version for all to see.
- 4 Have students shout out what they see.
- **5** After some time, if no one has seen the intended object, give them hints or try to guide guesses.
- 6 When a student correctly identifies the cowboy on the horse or if no student can show them "image two" (with the cowboy on horse highlighted).
- Flip between the two images and ask them if they now see what is intended. Ask why they can see it now and/or why they could not see it initially.



Find this activity on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR code or visit:

 ${\bf Teach Empowered.org/Get Cowboy Inkblot}$



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cont. ACTIVITY: COWBOY INKBLOT TEST

SUGGESTED DEBRIEF / DISCUSSION

- Why is it important that groups have a shared vision/see the same things?
- Should someone with knowledge share it or should those without knowledge seek it? Why?
- · How can seeking/sharing knowledge lead to contribution motivation and win-win outcomes?
- How did those who couldn't see the cowboy see it? Being told? Help from others? How did that feel?
- How can this activity apply to your day-to-day life? Seeking and sharing knowledge? Working together?
- How did it feel when we all saw the same thing? How might that apply to other interactions?



READY TO TRY IT?

All of our activities, including the Inkblot Test Activity Guide and Graphics, can be found, downloaded, and modified on the Empowered Hub:

TeachEmpowered.org/GetCowboyInkblot

From there, you can share activity feedback and connect with other teachers who have also successfully modified Empowered activities to fit their classroom needs.



WANT TO DIG-IN?

Try our Inkblot Test activity and find more classroom activities that spotlight and start discussions around vision, and other life-relevant concepts, inside the Empowered Hub.



GO DEEPER: DOWNLOAD CLASSROOM VISION SUPPORT TOOLS

To get started, scan this QR code or visit: TeachEmpowered.org/ClassroomVision



[13]

A teacher turned teacher advocate, Kasey Millar is the Educational Materials Manager at Empowered. She channels her passion for education into developing educational materials to ignite learning in classrooms throughout the country. A self-proclaimed "economics nerd," Millar was named the Kansas Economics Teacher of the Year in 2019.



RENATE MATTHEWS

Teaching chose me.

I always had a knack for being able to explain things in a way that people could understand, especially young people. I am a consummate student. My learning and my teaching go hand in hand. I was actually in the business world — working as a bookkeeper — and I started teaching business classes and I loved it.



"Teaching chose me."

ADVICE FOR NEW TEACHERS

Let your daily, first interactions with every student be positive.

Even if a student irritated you the day before, is out of uniform, or needs to be disciplined, etc., you should still greet them first with all of the love and respect that you feel on your very best days.



inspiration

I'm inspired by all of the master teachers who have been willing to share their tips and strategies with me, and for all my students who help me become a better teacher year after year.

BEST THING ABOUT TEACHING

I always teach my students that "Knowledge is not power," by itself. "Knowledge is ONLY power when it is properly applied." I love when students come with that light in their eyes because they were actually able to apply what they learned in my class.



Connect with Renate on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR code or visit:

TeachEmpowered.org/Renate



MY IMPACT

I think very deeply about how I can impact my students and the communities in which they live, work, and serve. It's very important to me that they understand that they have the responsibility to give back and pay it forward. They also need to understand that for every decision that they make, there's either a reward or a consequence. They are leaders.

I want to teach them the best way to impact their cities and come out shining.

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TENE MANNING

I was at a crossroads

I decided to get into education when I was at a crossroads in my career. I worked as a Marketing Director and was looking for a change. While attending an Economic Development Symposium for work, I heard from a CTE educator who worked in our school system and taught students how to start their own businesses by giving them the tools to do so. My first and immediate thought was, "How do I get into that?"

ULTIMATE JOY!

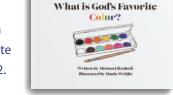
I recently hosted my 5th annual Shark Tank Competition in my Entrepreneurship class. Six business finalists advanced to the final round, presenting in front of business owners from our local community. I was able to reward my students with tangible prizes, professional headshots, certificates, and a trophy. One of the judges even offered to provide our first-place winner with the funding she needs to start her business. To see this come to fruition every year for students is my ultimate joy!







I enjoy freelance writing and have been published in several publications. I wrote and published a children's book in 2022.



"Wow, what I do really does make a difference."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Every year – I think all teachers go through this – I question if I'm really effective, if I'm doing a good job. But then you'll have students that just pop up out of the blue coming to visit you after school and it just really makes you wonder how many students that you are affecting in a positive, transformative way. When you get that confirmation, you think, "Wow, what I do really does make a difference."



I use the Empowered program's Foundational Principles to give voice and choice to our classroom expectations and norms. We break down the eight principles and they unpack how the principles should influence their behavior in the classroom.







FAVORITE EMPOWERED PD

I had a blast at the 2023 Empowered RiseUp events this summer connecting with colleagues and sharing our passions.



Connect with Tene on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR code or visit:

TeachEmpowered.org/Tene

MAY WE SUGGEST?

BOOKS THAT INFORM, CHALLENGE, AND INSPIRE

It is widely accepted that learning should be a life-long process. As an educator, you likely believe that for every student and for yourself.



Empowered Teachers — as a challenge to discover something new, an urge to expand on a a topic of interest, or in pursuit of self-actualization — are always open to learning and the benefits that come along with it. There is, for better or for worse, no shortage of books "about" teaching. You can steep in methodologies, strategies, best practices, case studies, biographies, and more. It can be overwhelming to find the right read.

These books have all been read (by eye or ear), enjoyed, and discussed by members of our staff. They all share an important central theme — transforming K-12 learning experiences to improve student outcomes — but they vary in perspective on "how" and "why." We hope you'll benefit from them.



EMPOWER: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STUDENTS OWN THEIR LEARNING

John Spencer and A.J. Juliani

Two former middle school teachers collaborate on a "book of ideas" (vs. an "instruction manual") to help foster creativity and exploration in learners. It contrasts traditional learning of preparing students for *something* with helping students pursue passions while preparing themselves for *anything*.



CREATING INNOVATORS: THE MAKING OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

Tony Wagner

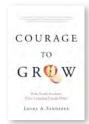
Wagner, a former high school teacher and K-8 principal, elaborates on his "play, passion, purpose" theory of how young people can drive an innovation-driven economy if they are guided along their path including nurturing creativity and imagination, experiencing failure, and using the experiences to move forward.



LONG LIFE LEARNING: PREPARING FOR JOBS THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST

Michelle R. Weise

A former Chief Innovation Officer and Fulbright Scholar, Weise outlines her theory that in the near-future, our lives (and work) will be longer but the changing world will force us to seek learning throughout our lives to thrive. Her position on "targeted education" of interest-based exploration are both K-12 and life relevant.



COURAGE TO GROW: HOW ACTION ACADEMY TURNS LEARNING UPSIDE DOWN

Laura A. Sandefer

Sandefer's book is neither "how-to" nor "theory". It is, instead, the tale of her "21st century one-room school" (which has grown to 350+ locations worldwide). The book shares how committed parents and educators can collaborate to unlock the genius in every child — which can be done in any learning environment.



A FIRE TO BE KINDLED

Kelly Smith

Smith, an innovator by background, writes a deeply hopeful book about how "meaningul, messy, audacious" learning can move people — and humanity — forward. We are challenged to see education as an active (not passive) process that parents, educators, and students can target to unlock the potential in every learner.



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UNMOTIVATED STUDENTS

BY JENNIFER L. M. GUNN

Social emotional learning for students who struggle with apathy

Some students have a complex relationship with education.

Maybe they don't like school. They may want to be left alone, or they do just enough to get by. Students can be unmotivated for a myriad of reasons and tend to turn in incomplete or mediocre assignments, claiming it's "good enough." But it is possible to shake up this stagnation. Social emotional learning tools allow teachers to recognize and handle student apathy and inspire even uninspired students. They also play into the larger vision you have for your classroom, tailoring your approach to the individual needs of your students and the needs of the collective group.

THEY DON'T TEACH THE SAME WAY YOU DO

Students may struggle to reveal their full potential in a traditional classroom. That's what John F. Kennedy High School teacher Beau Gasinski learned this year with one of his entrepreneurial pathway students. Gasinski reviewed transcripts to scope out his new students and assess their abilities to manage in his class. Transcripts showed an incoming student appeared to be struggling academically was engaged and successful with Hipster Society, a t-shirt company she started in an Empowered classroom. She quickly became the go-to person in the class when it came to using the Cricut or heat press to create logos. When her grades put her at risk of not graduating, Gasinski asked why she struggled so much in other classes while she shined in his classroom. Her response was one he'll never forget:

"Because they don't teach the same way that you do. I look forward to coming to your class each and every day because I am excited about what we do in here. It's just the way that I learn best."

The confidence she developed in Gasinski's class is making a difference: She graduated in Spring 2023 with plans to attend junior college.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The now-famous Rita Pierson TEDTalk said it best: "Kids don't learn from people they don't like." While some teachers who rely solely on the power-dynamic disagree, relationships are a crucial foundation for learning — especially with students who have strained connections to school.

Gina Angelillo-Farieri, a Restorative Justice Coordinator in the New York City Department of Education, specializes in the use of social emotional learning (SEL) strategies to benefit learners. She routinely trains other educators in how to implement SEL and restorative justice practices to improve student wellbeing and learning outcomes. Let's say a student always comments on the Starbucks drink on your desk and how they've always wanted to try the famous Pink Drink. An incentive with meaning could be that if they complete a certain big milestone, you share a Starbucks treat together to celebrate. Incentives with meaning are something that has significance to the student. Offering such an incentive shows good faith and your dedication to the relationship. It's about finding what matters to the student and tapping into that to make a connection: "Show me you can complete this project and I'll finally make that funny dance TikTok with you." Extrinsic motivators may not be an everyday, all-the-time occurrence, but when used appropriately they

Praising progress – even in small amounts – is just as important as praising that correct answer.

"A good life is filled with good relationships," she says. "When the people we work for see us and treat us with respect, kindness, and humanity, we want to show them our best and make them proud. The same goes for our students. The more we show them that we care about them as individuals and can connect with them, the happier they will be to be in your class and show you they can try."

Relationships are the starting point in developing a connection with a student. You may come to find out valuable information about the root causes of their academic apathy or struggle.

INCENTIVES WITH MEANING

Incentives aren't a new concept, but we're not just talking gold stars or candy here. Incentives that have real meaning to the student are discovered by building relationships, and they encourage unmotivated students to push past their usual boundaries.

can build a bridge to more ongoing intrinsic motivation.

Ready for a more complex but highly motivating system? Try a true classroom economy by printing out currency, distributing it to reinforce efforts by students who are typically least motivated, and building an auction with items that you've learned your kids love the most. It steps up the reward system, adds real-world skill-building, and makes things a heck of a lot more fun.

Let's talk about the intangible motivators as well. Feedback and compassion are also forms of incentive. Simply being seen is a big motivator, so feedback that begins with "I noticed that you..." shows students that you have observed their efforts personally. And if you can't seem to get through to a student yourself, there may be someone else in the building who can.

"Let's face it, you're not going to connect with every single student at the same level, but there is likely someone in the building



who might have a great rapport with a student who you can't seem to connect with as well as you would like to," says Angelillo-Farieri. "Leverage those relationships! I once had a student who loved baseball, and I used to see him chatting and having a great time with one of our teacher's aids in the hallway. I was really struggling with him one day and I sought out the aide and the student after class. We had a heartfelt, 'we see you; we care about you, and we know you can do better' discussion. It completely turned things around, and I was able to tell the aide to give the student kudos on his hard work in the future." That kind of student support teamwork is an incentive with meaning.

Workload overwhelm is real... Breaking down tasks into smaller sections makes things feel more manageable.

AFFIRMATION, NOT JUST PRAISE

Frequently, students who lack motivation in school hear a lot of negative messages. "Try harder." "If you just applied yourself..."

"Why can't you just do it?" This type of communication closes off students to learning and their teachers because they don't trust adults to see them as anything but a disappointment.

Engaging in a practice of affirmation — not just praise, but affirmation - can break through those barriers. By building a relationship, a teacher discovers what a student needs to hear and what kind of feedback hits their heart. Actions are also essential. For example, hanging up artwork in the classroom by a student who is good at drawing, but who maybe draws too much in class, builds the relationship by affirming his strengths rather than harping on his academic distractions. This builds trust and makes a student want to work harder for you. It opens doors to learning, as the student is more willing to take risks because they trust you to see and affirm who they are.

Students who seem to lack motivation may not believe in their capacity to grow — or they think growth is too much work. "Praising progress — even in small amounts — is just as important, if not more so, as praising that correct answer because it instills the idea of a growth mindset in your students, which studies show improves their ability

to cope with anxiety and stress, improving their mental health," says Angelillo-Farieri. When students begin to see that they are in fact learning new skills and are more capable than before, they are more likely to want to do more.

CHUNKING

For some students, the sheer volume of schoolwork is overwhelming or just plain discouraging. They learn early on that doing the bare minimum works and saves them from dealing with the onslaught of purposeless work. "Workload overwhelm is real. Especially for students who may have a focusing issue or neurodevelopmental condition, such as ADHD. Breaking down instructions and work tasks into smaller sections makes things feel more manageable for students and can provide a better quality of work" says Angelillo-Farieri. When dealing with students who won't push past their limits, chunking material and assignments is an effective tool for not only helping students get through their work but for building capacity over time.

Employing these social emotional learning strategies can lead to better outcomes for students and help teachers achieve their vision of a successful learning environment in their classrooms.

Jennifer L.M. Gunn spent 10 years in newspaper and magazine publishing before moving to public education. She is a curriculum designer, teacher, teaching coach, and educator in New York City. She created Right to Read, a literacy acceleration program for teens, steeped in social justice. She also created the progressive learning models, The Big Idea Project and We the Change. Jennifer is also co-founder of the annual EDxEDNYC Education Conference for teacher-led innovation. She is a regular presenter at conferences and frequently writes about education, adolescent literacy and innovation. Connect with Jennifer on Twitter: @jenniferlmgunn.



THE VISION ISSUE

For more inspiration, check out the Empowered Hub.



From coaching basketball players to deliver their best on the court to coaching teachers to deliver their best in the classroom, Empowered's Director of Training and Events

Mik Love knows how to motivate and inspire people to reach their full potential.



GAME CHANGER

FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY CALI TORELL

As a former Division II college basketball coach, Mik Love brings that same approach to his work to engage and transform educators, and in turn, their students.

Love is the mastermind behind Empowered's RiseUp conferences and the new RiseUp Workshops, a personalized and experiential training opportunity that brings Empowered's proven learning model to your school. Love knows how teachers react when they hear about mandated district-wide professional development days or in-service experiences. He refers to these traditional training opportunities as "sit and get," but with RiseUp Workshops, Love offers immersive, collaborative training experiences.

We sat down with Love to learn more about his journey into coaching educators, his vision for the RiseUp training platform, and how it makes a difference.

How did you get started in education?

"I come from a long line of educators. My grandmother was a schoolteacher. My father recently retired after 38 years in education. My sister works for another nonprofit doing grant work within the education space. My brother is a dean at a school. So, you could say that education is in our blood. More importantly, I think being a servant to others is in our blood. When you think about how you can get the most out of people, that is something that we really connect to."

How did coaching prepare you for leading Empowered's training team?

"Starting my career as a basketball coach in Division II women's basketball taught me many life lessons. First and foremost, the importance of being able to communicate. In coaching, you want to break things down in a way where players get the reps and they understand why we're doing the drill. It's very much like educators and why they're teaching in a certain way in a classroom. And the same questions that

students ask, players ask: Why are we doing this? How does it translate? I never lost that feeling of coaching. I just transferred it to a different game."

Why is training and development for teachers so important?

"Training in any job is extremely important because the minute you stop learning is the minute you stop growing. You have to continue to develop and hone who you are.

This world is changing so fast around us. Compared to other industries, whether it's the tech world or sports, education moves slower. But that doesn't mean the students do. They keep up with just about every trend that is happening in the world. We've got to be able to speak to their lives continuously and be relevant. It's about learning. It's not about doing school anymore. It's about how can we get these students to learn as much as possible and apply that learning over and over again so they can make better decisions when they go off into the world."

How does your vision of professional development differ from the norm?

"We want to collaborate. We want to partner with educators to really figure out how we bring back learning. How do we pique that curiosity? How do we unlock the hidden talents in every student? First, we start with the teacher, unlocking their hidden talents and understanding why they got into the profession and really connecting to that.

We also want to be extremely immersive in our trainings. Let them know what their classroom could be like. Let them know what it's like to run activities. Let them know what it's like to hold a debrief meeting and how much can come out of that."

How did you develop this perspective?

"The way that we truly learn is through our experience and applied knowledge. But it's Read more of Mik's columns online. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/CoachsCorner

the individual teachers who make this so unique and impactful. It becomes transformational when you can take what you've learned and apply your gift to it. Then it morphs into something that we can share with the rest of our network of educators. That's how many of our activities happen, that's how many of our trainings are developed. That's why each one of them is a little bit different, and you have to be there because the brilliance that comes from the body of educators that we support is unlike any other."

What inspires you about working with educators?

"I was one of those students that could have been a bad statistic. Third grade literacy rates are how they predict the number of future prison beds. In the third grade, I couldn't read. For me, it's personal. I feel a special connection with our educators and understand the power they have to instill confidence and self-esteem in their students.

My job is to find as many ways as possible for educators to be welcomed by their students because they're all unique, they're all different. I want to give teachers the ability to reach as many kids as possible and change the trajectory of their lives, not by creating more smart people, but by creating more wise people. People who can use their intelligence, use their experience, combine it, and make better decisions that are good for themselves and good for society."

Cali Torell is a communications professional and lead writer at Goff Public, a full-service communications agency based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. A former print journalist and freelance writer, her work has appeared in Midwest-based newspapers and lifestyle magazines, including Minnesota Parent, Minnesota Good Age, and the Growler.

Empowered Students make

Great Employees







You hear about it constantly: Employers are unhappy with the up-and-coming workforce.

They are plagued with questions: Where is the talent that is creative, thinks critically, communicates well, and engages in collaboration? How can employers support the development of a labor force that sees problems not as barriers, but as opportunities for creative solutions? Where is the resiliency and grit?

Like many other businesses, Bank of America found themselves asking similar questions. How could they help support the development of future employees that embrace an entrepreneurial mindset?

Through ideation and introspection, it led them to create priority initiatives that focus funding and support on improved workforce readiness for the local community.

As they began searching for aligned partners to make this mission a reality, they discovered Empowered.

When Bank of America saw firsthand the teacher resources Empowered had to offer, they noticed not just that students were engaged, but how they were engaged. Through hands-on learning, students were

actively problem-solving and working alongside peers to address the issue at hand. It required deep and out-of-the box thinking. They were working on real, meaningful, and authentic problems.

But, most importantly, they realized students were – through an instructional strategy that was individualized and drew from the real world – discovering, developing, and applying their unique skills and talents. Students were given the opportunity to dig into what they were passionate about, explore opportunities, and then seek win-win ways to share their talents with others.

This simply wasn't your typical learning experience. And the outcomes were what Bank of America was seeking to support.

They witnessed students developing an entrepreneurial mindset – the kind of mindset they wanted to see in all their employees. All those questions they were seeking a solution to, Empowered was an answer to them.

And it wasn't just that students were thinking entrepreneurially – it was that they were becoming principled entrepreneurs. They were internalizing Empowered's Foundational Principles – core values that mirrored what Bank of America also valued. These principles guided students to recognize how their ideas and contributions could positively influence the community around them in a way that creates long-term value.

With Empowered, a preferred partnership was formed – one of shared vision, shared values, and complementary capabilities. Since connecting in 1991, the synergy of the two organizations has led to invaluable opportunities and support in the Wichita metropolitan area including with teachers like Mr. Darren Couch.

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FINDING A MATCH

Darren Couch, a Technology Teacher who started using our resources in 2018, also came to us looking for something different.



Darren Couch Technology Educator The Independent School Wichita, Kansas

He needed to make learning more "fun" as a way to engage and excite his students. That required materials and resources that would transform his classroom into a place where learners could explore what they might want to do, professionally, with their lives and use the time and space to develop the skills and experiences they would need to reach those goals.

Like every other invested teacher, he believes he can truly prepare students to leave school as happy individuals who are ready to be successful and want to contribute to making their communities better.

Like Bank of America and other employers, he wanted his students to be valuable employees, whether in their first jobs or their long-term careers.

"When I started teaching Empowered I was looking for more engaging, real-world experiences for my students," Couch shared. "I wanted to give my students the opportunity to explore their passions and find a way to incorporate that passion into a business."

He's taken steps to ensure his students are exposed to the opportunities to develop their employability skills – skills that employers are seeking in their hired talent. He told us, "I give my students the opportunity to explore many types of businesses including their operating models and what they need from their staff. Through this, they gain an understanding of what skills they might showcase in an interview. We practice how to present their soft skills and relevant experiences, so it feels natural

when talking with professionals and in real-life situations."

The partnership between Bank of America and Empowered has given him the tools and resources to bring his vision to life. His classroom has engaged with the local community bank on numerous occasions, including visits to the bank, and the staff from Bank of America coming to visit his students as mentors.

A LONG-LASTING PARTNERSHIP

Pairing these real-world experiences with the experiential educational materials of Empowered has allowed his students to develop those coveted employability skills.

"Having the ability to partner with professionals in the community gives us the chance to learn what skills employers are looking for from students entering the workforce," said Couch. "And students gain the confidence of working with others outside of the classroom in a professional setting."

Empowered is beyond thankful for the long-time support of Bank of America. The partnership continues to enhance the ability for transformative change in education to take place. This change ripples beyond the walls of a school building, as students matriculate into society. These students become neighbors, employees, and leaders.

"Bank of America believes in assisting entrepreneurs by providing the necessary tools and resources to guide their journey and help move our economy forward. By supporting Empowered teachers, we're building upon our long-standing focus on workforce development and education funding. We are honored to partner with them and fulfill their mission of helping individuals self-actualize through the power of principled entrepreneurship."



Shawn Lancelot Bank of America Wichita, Kansas

Empowered's partnership with Bank of America doesn't just create employees; it yields principled employees. Just the kind of employees businesses are looking for.

Connect with Darren on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/Darren



Empowered receives charitable donations from Bank of America for general operating support.

WHAT IT TAKES TO IMPROVE SCHOOLS NOW - AND IN THE

FUTURE

BY THOMAS HATCH

When schools closed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many hoped that we could face the challenges and reimagine education **all together.**



I share those hopes but my experiences working in and studying school improvement and school reform efforts in the US and in "higher" and "lower-performing" countries also makes me deeply skeptical. Time and again, I have seen how ambitious plans and visions fall short of their aspirations. As a consequence, although I believe this may be a crucial time to ask: "What if this is a moment when we can re-imagine education?", I also know that we need to ask a second question: "What if it isn't?" What if, despite the changes wrought by the pandemic, the existing institutional structures, practices, incentives, and beliefs that sustain conventional schooling remain in place?

I don't see this as a pessimistic take. It's imagining the future and understanding the past that enables us to take off on journeys where the exact destination is unknown. When getting ready to climb a mountain, adventurers don't just hope that the path they envision does not lead to an impassible ledge; they don't rely on the hope that the weather will hold. They try to imagine what might happen when they turn a corner or reach a new level, and they get prepared. When the unexpected happens, when the conditions predictably change in unpredictable ways, we need to be ready to respond and rise above.

As my colleagues Jordan Corson and Sarah Van den Berg and I argue in our book, *The Education We Need for a Future We Can't Predict*, it's clear that we do not know exactly what lies around the corner, and we cannot determine, with certainty, what today's students will need as adults or what roadblocks or supports societies will put in place for helping them to get there. But we can build on what we know about why it's so hard to improve schools, and we can imagine what it will really take to create more powerful and equitable educational opportunities in the future.

To that end, our review of the challenges and successes of efforts to change schools over the past century yields several key principles of school improvement that can help educators to create more equitable and more powerful learning experiences now and into the future: First, new possibilities for learning and schooling are most likely to take off when their goals, capacity demands, and values fit the common needs, existing capabilities, and prevailing conditions in the schools and communities where they're supposed to work.

Second, this first principle leads to a corollary or second principle that seems particularly problematic for those who want to reimagine schooling altogether: the more radical our visions are for education and the more they diverge from conventional practice, the less likely they are to take hold on a large scale. However, that does not mean that it is impossible to pursue the new visions for education. It means that the demands and pressures of conventional schooling make it easier to bring those visions to life in particular circumstances and contexts - ecological "niches" in a sense - rather than across entire school systems.

This tension between the nature and extent of reform efforts yields the third principle and opens up another avenue for change: There are places - "niches of possibility" where the conditions are more amenable for transforming education. That does not mean that we have to accept every aspect of the conditions or ignore those that are deeply problematic. But we have to figure out how to challenge and work with and around the conditions in order to change them. Instead of creating personalized or student-centered approaches that are supposed to work in general for all subjects and topics, across developmental levels, all the time, this "niche" approach depends on the expertise and ingenuity of educators to



develop specific "micro-innovations"resources, structures, practices services and activities that are new to the contexts in which they are introduced. What counts as a micro-innovation? Micro-innovations are concrete and visible changes in the structures and practices of schools and other educational organizations in specific contexts that have the potential to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of educational opportunities. Sharing micro-innovations can help others to envision what might work in their own settings to address critical, specific, and local problems they may be facing to support all aspects of their students' development. In a sense, it means shifting from trying to scale-up initiatives across often inhospitable conditions to "plugging-in" to places where the goals, needs, capabilities and values already provide some support for more powerful learning.

A visit to eduLab in 2016 – a workshop space within the Academy of Singapore Teachers – helped to open my eyes to the many critical developments in classrooms that

could be considered micro-innovations. eduLab was established to support the use information and communication technologies to develop new instructional practices, materials, and approaches that respond to the issues Singaporean educators were experiencing in their classrooms. In one case, a chemistry teacher noted many of his upper secondary school students struggled to remember the terms that they had to develop an understanding of key terms at the beginning of their introductory chemistry course. response, the teacher developed a card game that gave the students an opportunity to explore the rules that governed the use of the terms. Working with staff from eduLab and researchers as part of the team, a comparative study was carried out that demonstrated the benefits of the game. Designs for an app were then developed that enhanced the game with visualizations and that provided feedback on students' performances that teachers could use to inform their instruction. Finally, eduLab worked with local start-up developers to build the app, WriteFormula, which was made freely available (both on iTunes and through Google Play).

Since that time, I've seen micro-innovations all over the US and around the world both inside and outside schools. These micro-innovations include those aimed to help specific groups of students in conventional schools learn key concepts for particular disciplines - like the card game and app from Singapore and number cards (a variation on flash cards) that Jo Boaler and colleagues created to help students develop their number sense, a key concept in elementary mathematics. But micro-innovations also include developments like an "activity-based pedagogy" from Second Chance designed specifically to enable out of school students in Ethiopia and Liberia catch up to their peers in fourth grade. Second Chance's approach has create whole set of materials, activities, and supports designed initially for contexts in Ethiopia, where many young children have been out of school for years. Despite difficult conditions, they have developed a 10-month curriculum in which students work with objects and materials from their local environment - including sticks, stones, and clay - sorting, grouping, and experimenting, making observations, recording findings and discussing them with peers and facilitators. Nikita Khosla, Senior Director of the Luminos Fund that supports the program, observed, "If you walk into a Second Chance classroom in Ethiopia or Liberia, you will see about 25 children sitting in groups of 5. There will be work on the walls. It might be mud walls,

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The more **radical** our visions are for education and the more they **diverge** from conventional practice, the less likely they are to take hold on a large scale.

but you will see chart paper stuck to them. You'll see alphabets made out of clay. You'll see children using lot of local materials for math or going outside for nature-based learning. With this approach, Second Chance has served more than 170,000 children in Ethiopia, Liberia, and Lebanon, with their graduates completing primary school at nearly twice the rate of children in local government schools.

Micro-innovations can be developed in all kinds of niches of possibility both within and outside conventional schools. For example, the Beam Center in Brooklyn, New York, began by creating a camp in New Hampshire that engaged youth in working with artists and craftspeople to create large-scale art installations. They developed a distinct variation of project-based learning - what I call "learning productions" that enable youth to develop their interpersonal, cognitive and creative capacities in collaborative efforts to build things like a "Pipe Tree" — a fully functioning pipe organ nestled among (and shaped like) the trees in the surrounding forest. But Beam has gone on to adapt this approach by creating "fab labs" in a network of public schools in New York City support teachers as they create these same kinds of "learning productions" during the regular school day as well. As Brian Cohen, Beam Co-Founder, described it "by being part of the [regular] school day, the work we do in the classroom becomes the core of a new kind of school community. Instead of the regular stratifications - teachers, students, administrators, high-achieving students, low-achieving students - now you have a blending of roles, an accessible forum for achievement, an incentive for all to be learning and a common aspiration."

These games, activities, learning productions, fab labs, and other micro-innovations can be shared across contexts, but within predictable constraints. The number cards can be used by many different teachers

working on number sense and related concepts with students early in their mathematical development, but the cards aren't likely to be as useful in other subjects or to work as well with more advanced mathematical concepts. Second Chance is not likely to "scale" easily to settings where students are already in school, and Second Chance has even found that expanding to sites with large numbers of out-of-school youth like Liberia and Lebanon requires them to make numerous adaptations to match the specific local circumstances. Yet, both the number cards and activity-based pedagogy and related materials and services contribute to the development of the materials, expertise, and networks of relationships that create more powerful learning experiences all around the world.

Rather than hoping for some "disruptive innovation" or general approach to educational reform will magically sweep across schools and education systems, a focus on micro-innovations highlights the central role of educators in making specific, concrete improvements in their students learning experiences right now. These developments help to establish the infrastructure for equitable and more powerful learning that, over time, can provide the foundation for educational transformation. In the process, the focus shifts to the student level and to responding to the local circumstances that will enable each child, including those left out and systematically disadvantage by conventional schooling, to encounter more and more opportunities inside and outside schools to engage in more powerful learning experiences. Those experiences create new emergent possibilities for education that build directly on the specific conditions in which students live and learn every day.

Thomas Hatch is a Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University and Director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST). His research includes studies of school improvement efforts at the school, district, and national levels. His latest book, The Education We Need for a Future We Can't Predict (Corwin, 2021), focuses on efforts to create more powerful learning experiences both inside and outside schools in developed and developing contexts.



This article has been adapted from THE EDUCATION WE NEED FOR A FUTURE WE CAN'T PREDICT by Thomas Hatch, Jordan Corson, and Sarah van den Berg (Corwin, 2021). Connect with Hatch on Twitter, @tch960, or by email, hatch@tc.edu.

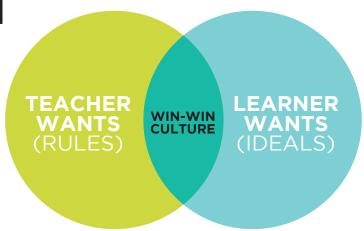
PHOTOGRAPHY VIA CORDELL HURST

TIPS TO SHIFT YOUR

CLASSROOM CULTURE

BY LINDSAY SCHROEDER

One of the greatest challenges in education is figuring out how to shake up the traditional learning model that has dominated classrooms for centuries.



A fundamental way to change this dynamic in your learning environment – and make room for other innovative approaches – is to transition from an educator-led approach to a learner-centered approach, eventually leading to learner-led.

You may be asking yourself, but how? An easy way to begin that transition is starting off each semester with a shared vision by collaborating with your students to design your classroom culture. Instead of taking the lead by sharing your expectations and classroom rules, engage learners in a conversation about the behaviors they'd like to see or a culture in which they can succeed. Think of it as a Venn diagram.

One way to start a discussion is by using your chalk/dry erase boards (or oversized easel paper) to:

TEACHER WANTS LEARNER WANTS SHARED (IDEALS) **EXPECTATIONS** STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3 List school and personal Have students collectively Work TOGETHER to set a rules/policies for your discuss their expectations shared expectation for a classroom and/or behavior based on each rule/policy classroom culture based expectations on the left. or in general - on the right. on principles.

One example may be that you expect students to come to class prepared. Students may suggest that expectation demonstrates them being responsible and seeking opportunities. Together, you decide to adopt the principles of responsibility and opportunity as part of your classroom norms.

This collaboration between you and your learners creates a true win-win classroom culture that benefits everyone. Starting this on day one empowers each student to begin taking ownership of their learning. This allows students to be curious, contribute to their learning set-up, and gives you the opportunity to start building relationships with each student by observing their talents in action. The goal in a learner-centered space is for you to serve as a guide to facilitate learning, through productive struggle and provide support after failures.

To shift your classroom culture from educator-led to student-centered, try these activities and discussion questions to chart a new course for you and your students.

WAYS TO SET CLASSROOM CULTURE

EDUCATOR-LED

LEARNER-CENTERED

SHARED VISION FOR SUCCESS

Educator develops/shares syllabus, resources, lesson content, etc.

Educator sets/shares classroom rules, dynamics, and norms.

MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT OWNERSHIP

Educator lectures on set topic, gives assignments, tests knowledge, etc.

Learners share ideas. Sample prompts:

- What do you hope to get out of this class?
- What is important to you in this space?

SUGGESTED EMPOWERED ACTIVITIES:

- Cowboy Inkblot/Find the Numbers (pg. 10)
- S.M.A.R.T. Goals
- Creating a Shared Classroom Vision

Learners brainstorm principles of engagement for learning. Learners *and* educators adopt a shared expectation. **Tools to use** include Empowered Foundational Principles and Market Concepts.

SUGGESTED EMPOWERED ACTIVITIES:

- Classroom Vision: A Win-Win
- Classroom Culture Venn-Diagram (at left)

Educator guides learners through a "do first, talk later" experiential lesson that create individualized take-aways. **Strategies to leverage** include, but not limited to, collaborative debrief, written self-reflection, personal stories, contextual lecture, and examples.

SUGGESTED EMPOWERED ACTIVITIES:

- Socra minars
- es Cards

Names

with PMM Overlay Tool



DOWNLO^

To get star





It's a new day in education.



yes. every kid. foundation. yes. every kid. foundation. promotes a bold vision of transforming education in America with a family-first approach, advocates for families in policy implementation and design, and defends families and innovative education entrepreneurs.





FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

IDEALS FOR THE CLASSROOM.
IDEALS FOR LIFE.

BY EMPOWERED HQ



Principles are a consistent set of ideas that anyone can anchor to — helping drive constructive behaviors in all aspects of life. They allow us to overcome the potential bias of our own experiences and beliefs to find consistent, common ground with others. When leveraged properly, principles can help us with sound decision making and to create long-term value for ourselves and others.

CLASSROOM PRINCIPLES

Classrooms are typically governed by "rules" — but what if, instead, they operated under a set of mutually agreed concepts and ideals?

Empowered has anchored to eight principles that we believe are applicable in the classroom and beyond.

In our 30+ years of collaboration with teachers, these norms have evolved in number (as few as five, as many as eight), terminology (once "values", now "principles"), and definition (mutual benefit is win-win focus, etc.) but, most noteworthy, the intention has stayed true.

We reference our Foundational Principles (FPs) in all of our tools and resources and encourage educators to incorporate them as they see fit.





RESPONSIBILITY

Take ownership of your own life. No one will ever be as concerned about your success as you.

INTEGRITY

Always act with courage, respect, and toleration.

KNOWLEDGE

Seek and use the best knowledge, drive change that benefits others, and exemplify humility and intellectual honesty.

FREEDOM

Respect the rights of others and study the links between freedom, entrepreneurship, and societal well-being.

PASSION

Find fulfillment in your life by improving the lives of others.

OPPORTUNITY

Approach everything in life as a reason to improve; recognize and seize what life has to offer.

SOUND JUDGMENT

Use economic thinking to create the greatest benefit while using the least resources.

WIN-WIN FOCUS

Cooperation creates real value in society — for yourself and others.

CLASSROOM TOOLS

Empowered Teachers receive a set of Foundational Principles bookmarks in their StartUp Kits, which can be requested inside the Empowered Hub. They, and their students, can use the bookmarks as reference points during activities and debrief discussions.

There are also Foundational Principles posters in a variety of sizes — available for self-print, too.



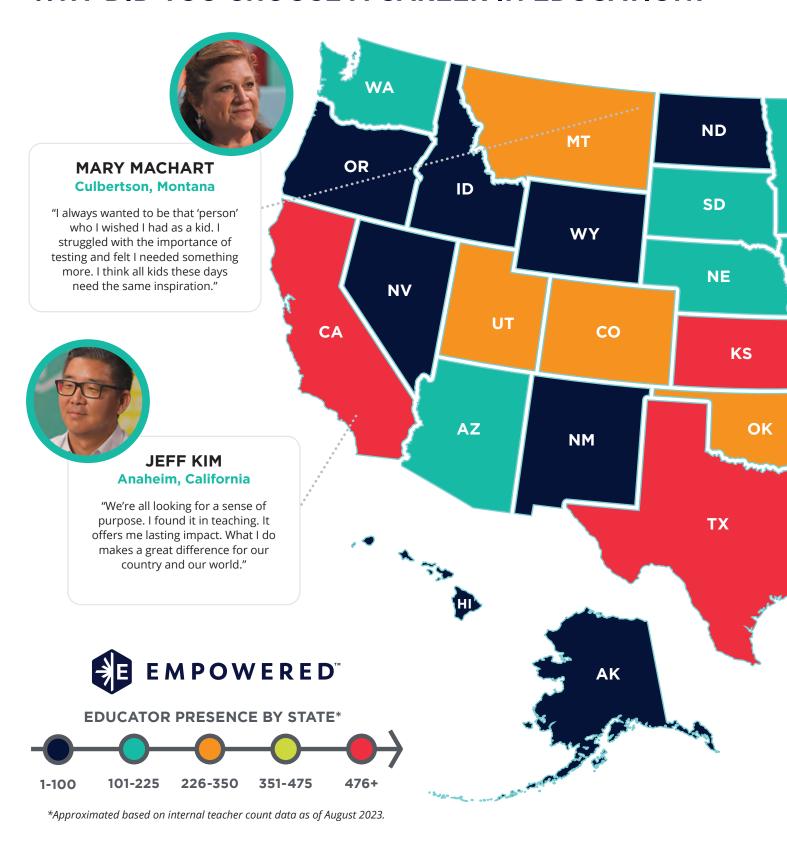


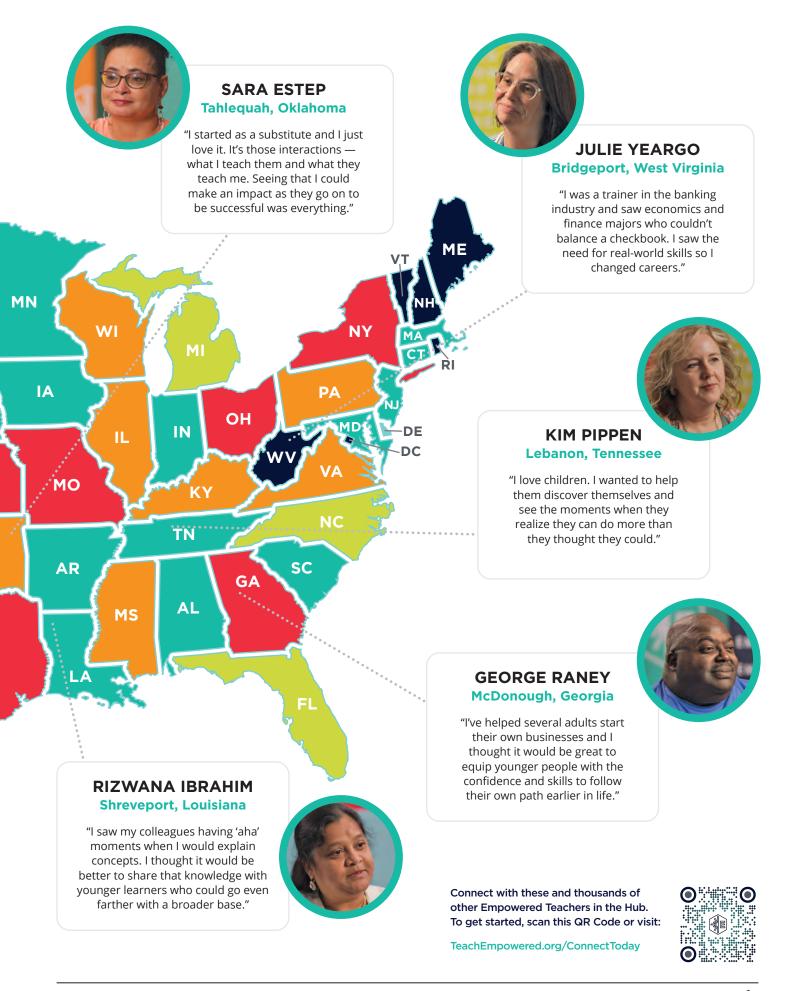
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TEACHERS TELL US

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE A CAREER IN EDUCATION?





Reimagining Professional Development by

LISTENING TO TEACHERS

BY JENNIFER L.M. GUNN



The job of an educator has never been more challenging, with ever-mounting responsibilities and a turbulent societal landscape. It seems everyone, from politicians to parents to community members, believe that they know what's best for education. But who should be consulted in policy decisions made about schools? Educators.

It's time to lift the voices of the people who can build something better, more innovative, and more student-centered.

Parents and politicians commonly argue that teachers must "follow their direction" because they "pay their salaries," but it's this kind of thinking that erodes the public perception of the professionalism and competence of our teachers, and somehow never seems to extend to firefighters, park rangers, or librarians. It's time to build education from the bottom up, and it all starts with empowering teachers.

UN-PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Growing and improving throughout one's career is important. Things change, practices evolve, and it's imperative that any professional remains open to lifelong learning. A significant amount of time is given to teacher's professional development. In some states, teachers have to pay out of pocket for ongoing education courses, exams, and seminar hours to continuously maintain their licenses. Most schools have mandatory professional development hours every week that typically offer procedural content where everyone, regardless of experience, collectively learns from an administrator or outside consultant. These sessions are often uninspiring and directive, rather than collaborative and interactive.

If teachers were regarded as experts, they could teach in collaborative professional learning spaces, choosing their own development pathways, working in partnership, utilizing each other's experiences, learning from their peers, and profoundly growing their skills. Highly

respected educators would be seen as sources of knowledge and ideas, rather than receptors of direction and cogs in the wheel.

Our current system of accountability and professional development is designed to conform every teacher to a lifeless, boring mold, rather than help them flourish as experts in their unique ways. But if teachers were seen as experts, they could help develop their practice in partnership with their peers. Every teacher would bring their expertise, knowledge, ideas and value to the table to help the community grow. Peer-to-peer intervisitations and reviews would be far more effective and align with how some other professions grow their practice. Teaching teams would help educators develop their lessons and units together and connect their disciplines authentically. Effective pedagogy would become less about ticking boxes and compliance, and more about truly engaging students in deeper learning through community-driven practice.

LET'S SAY IT: TEACHERS ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD

It's time that people listened to educators. Teachers are experts in their field, but are rarely seen as such — even by themselves. In countries like Finland, teachers are highly regarded professionals who are trusted to make decisions, design content, and shape policy. It's time that teachers in the U.S. were given a seat at the table — and while we're at it, students too. As we face a national teacher shortage, it's time to shift the paradigm.

The impact of 3.2 million empowered, expert educators? Extraordinary.

Teacher and education expert Jose Vilson says teachers need to see themselves as experts first. They need to recognize their knowledge as worthwhile and significant. Like any professionals, teachers need to believe they have value. Most importantly, teachers need to bring that expertise into their classrooms, so students can aspire to do the same one day.

Teachers are scholastic experts who work in the field every day. "We need to see teachers as experts of their craft, and afforded the same cred as professionals in other fields," Vilson says. "A teacher who is confident in their expertise and comfortable in their role should be embraced."

The impact of 3.2 million empowered, expert educators? Extraordinary.

Think about it like this: If a change was needed in medical practice, they wouldn't bring in real estate agents to consult just because they've been to the doctor. That's because it's critically important to have actual medical expertise to shape clinical decisions. The same is true for education. Those with experience and training in this field should be the ones shaping it.

It's time for us to innovate, to think outside of the antiquated vision of school, and to bring our unique value to the market. We studied for years to do this work. We've spent countless years, weeks, days, and hours with our students. This country has had 104 years of compulsory public education, and we're still underperforming on most education metrics worldwide. Maybe, just maybe, it's time we started listening to teachers. Perhaps their vision for education can create better results.

Jennifer L.M. Gunn spent 10 years in newspaper and magazine publishing before moving to public education. She is a curriculum designer, teacher, teaching coach, and educator in New York City. She created Right to Read, a literacy acceleration program for teens, steeped in social justice. She also created the progressive learning models, The Big Idea Project and We the Change. Gunn is also co-founder of the annual EDxEDNYC Education Conference for teacher-led innovation. She is a regular presenter at conferences and frequently writes about education, adolescent literacy and innovation. Connect with Jennifer on Twitter: @jenniferlmgunn.



THE VISION ISSUE

For more inspiration, check out the Empowered Hub.





BY ERIKA ROSE

She wore bold, square-framed, animal print glasses. Her voluminous, curly hair was bouncy and stylish. Her shoulder-to-elbow tattoo held plants and African symbolism.

In as much as a first meeting can portray, it honestly seems like a smile never leaves her face. Seeing her bounce with enthusiasm, the eccentric Ms. Frizzle of "The Magic School Bus" series comes to mind, a comparison she loves. But instead of a bus, Ms. Alexandria Rackston's adventures happen in an occasional inflatable igloo or at a desk with bicycle pedals.

Such amenities are part of the carefully planned classrooms of Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy, located in Atlanta's inner city, where the school's K-5 population is comprised entirely of minority and economically disadvantaged students.

As the newly promoted STEM program support specialist at Tuskegee, a progressive school where the classrooms look more like lounges, Rackston embraces the notion of trusting teachers to teach. When a teacher requests an inflatable igloo as a learning aid, no one raises an eyebrow.

"We don't say no," Rackston says. "It might sound crazy, but we allow teachers to be open and creative. We want to show children that learning doesn't have to happen at a desk."

These small characteristics of Tuskegee's learning environment are merely windows into something bigger happening. Rackston's job is to integrate the Empowered strategy throughout the entire STEM-focused elementary school. Yep, that's right. Entrepreneurship for elementary kids. The flexible Empowered

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program offers tons of entrepreneurial, problem-based instructional strategies and activities as part of a community of teachers who support each other with resources, activities, and educator events.

Building entrepreneurial skills is something Rackston feels can't be started too early. After spending the past three years adapting the program for fourth graders, Rackson is now adapting the lessons for each grade level at Tuskegee, setting forth a vision to engage 550+ of the youngest future entrepreneurs.

TYPICALLY ATYPICAL

A typical day at Tuskegee starts at 7:15 a.m. Morning duty consists of the school's team of academic strategists and assistant principals, aka "The Academic House of Innovation," cheerfully greeting parents and getting kids out of cars and buses as they walk to school.

Students head to their homeroom, also their first block of instruction. Three other blocks of instruction follow, consisting of literacy, STEM, and "Beyond the Core," which focuses on areas such as Spanish, art, and dance. Of course, there is also lunch and recess too, "because when the body moves, the brain grows," says Rackston.

The departmental approach is great for teachers too. It reduces burnout and infuses variety.

While the classes are underway, the "think tank" as Rackston calls it, meets to discuss the week's goals. She serves as coach and advisor to the school's non-STEM teachers, teaching them how to effectively sneak STEM concepts into their classes. Establishing this shared vision helps all teachers engage their students in a meaningful way. When STEMtopia 100 happens each Friday, Rackston is the architect behind the lessons, adapted for each grade level.

UNCONVENTIONALLY PRACTICAL

Unconventional approaches need teachers who think differently. Students are having so much fun playing her games, you wonder if they even realize they're actually learning math, reading, and science.

"We always have a speaker out there," Rackston says of her favorite part of the day. "My colleague is the DJ."

We don't say no. It might sound crazy, but we allow teachers to be open and creative. We want to show children that learning doesn't have to happen at a desk.

It's easy to envision her dancing her way to the line of cars at drop-off. "I'm a little extra," she admits, "I'm a hugger."

In years past, Rackston has been known as the Minecraft teacher, with students scarcely able to wait a week to show her what they're building, not even realizing they had to use some math calculations to keep their businesses within the area and perimeter requirements she'd mandated. Sneaky, huh?

Much of the Empowered way of teaching is focused on entrepreneurship, a practical life skill, and who better to execute this kind of learning than an entrepreneur?

As early as 16, Rackston was doing extravagant nail art for her friends, complete with



stones and glitter, for a fraction of what the salons charged. Throughout her life, she's launched a number of ventures, from nails to body scrubs to brunch boxes. She's since passed on the entrepreneurial bug to her 12-year-old daughter Tose, the namesake behind her former home-based bakery, Tose's Cakes.

Rackston knows that, "Empowered changes lives," and she's seen it in the community she teaches in.

We are already equipping [students] with the skills so they can survive in today's ever-changing world.

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged in 2020, some students whose families had lost jobs took their entrepreneurship lessons to the streets. Temporarily out of school and unable to participate in their school's "Market Days," they adapted an Empowered lesson they'd practiced in school, they calculated the cost of goods, and sold bottled water on the streets. Not only did this keep some families afloat, but it also demonstrated why entrepreneurship is such a foundational part of learning in this economically disadvantaged area.

Another example is one that directly supported a city goal of repurposing vacant

spaces. Rackston helped one teacher earn a grant from the Vela Education Fund, a national nonprofit which supports non-traditional education models and "everyday entrepreneurs." The grant enabled children to visit areas around Atlanta where they could envision their ideas come to life.

"Our children and families are below the poverty line," she says, "But they have ideas. They are talented. They are creative," Rackson says.

"At the elementary level, we are already equipping them with skills so they can survive in today's ever-changing world."

Erika Rose is a well-established writer based in Chicago. She's worked with several high-profile publications.

Connect with Alexandria on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



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TEACHERS of TIKTOK

BY MORGAN MORROW

My TikTok origin story will probably sound familiar.

I joined the app in spring 2020 when it was all anyone could talk about and I formed a habit of scrolling the "for you" page of videos that were supposedly curated for TikTok and geared toward my interests. (It's amazing how much time can vanish while you watch strangers dance, lip sync and apply flawless makeup rituals). At first, I was a "ghost viewer." This is the most typical type of TikTok user – people who watch videos but do not make their own. In 2020,

TikTok was a fun way to pass the time, especially when the world was so chaotic. It was a way to escape and laugh. I had no idea that so many different groups would eventually be on the app, or how supportive and helpful the people on the app could be.

During the spring semester of 2021, my students told me that I should be a "Teacher TikToker," which I thought was a terrible idea. As a high school teacher, I did not want any student of mine to see me on social media. Not that I had anything "bad" on any of

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my socials, but it was a personal boundary that I never wanted to cross. My social media pages had been private since my teacher internship days.

However, by this time I was starting to see more and more teachers come across my "For You" page. These videos were funny and relatable, but most of all helpful.

The first teacher that I decided to follow was *@historyrulez*.

She was also a 20-something high school teacher, except she taught History instead of English like me. Her TikToks were so relatable. She would joke about how her students acted in class or how a lesson that she tried to teach did not go the way she had planned. It made me feel connected to her and I thought that her videos were hilarious.

As I started to interact with her videos (liking, commenting, sharing, etc.), more and more videos like hers started to show up on my feed. I then realized just how large the "#teachersoftiktok" community is. Within this community there are several types of Teacher TikTokers that all have different ways of expressing themselves on the app, and I have found it to be a positive and helpful space. It is a place to draw inspiration from, both personally and professionally, which can help you get ideas to bring your vision for your classroom to life.

#TeachingStrategies

One aspect of TeacherTok that is incredibly helpful is getting teaching ideas. So many teachers share strategies and lessons that have worked well in their classrooms. They also share other tips and tricks such as what to do on the first day of school or how they set up their classrooms. Teachers also show their classroom routines and procedures.

One teacher who gave me great ideas is @kindasortateacher.

She's an English teacher so I related very quickly to her content. She creates the

most amazing digital resources and is the queen of interactive Google Slides if you're looking for a fun icebreaker or activity to incorporate in your classroom. She gives amazing advice on teacher side hustles and also provides some comedic relief in her content.

For other great #TeachingStrategies accounts, follow:



#TeacherLife

Teaching is hard, and sometimes you need light-hearted stories to get you through a week with a hard unit or a rowdy seventh period. TeacherTok includes plenty of funny stories, positive aspects of teaching, and encouragement. Some teachers also share aspects of their lives outside of school with tips on how to wind down after work or get the motivation to work out after school.

For this kind of inspiration, follow:



#TeacherOOTD

Any other teachers out there need outfit inspiration? One of my favorite topics on TeacherTok is teacher outfits. In these videos, teachers show where they got each piece of their clothing and how to style them. Most outfit pieces are super affordable and are from places like Amazon, Target, and Old Navy. It's fun to get ideas on how to mix up your wardrobe!

For outfit inspiration, follow:

@magicallearningadventure

@missjackson_in3rd

If your "For You" page isn't showing this type of TeacherTok content, give these teachers a follow and start engaging with their content.

Then start making your own TikToks. It can seem daunting, but a great way to do that is by bringing an Empowered activity to your learning space. Start with an easy one, like Roll The Dice or Speak Out Cards. You can find them for free on the Empowered Hub. Take and post a video of you having fun during a lesson. Viewers can get inspired and share feedback.

If you have funny or inspiring stories, great instructional strategies, or cute teacher outfits, show them off!

#TeachersofTikTok is a positive, supportive group in what can be a frustrating job. I can't wait to see you in my "For You" feed.

Morgan Morrow is a high school teacher currently residing in Destin, Florida. She attended the University of Central Florida for her undergraduate and graduate degrees, and she has taught a variety of English courses for the past eight years. In addition to helping students and other teachers, Morgan enjoys running, going to the beach, and hanging out with her longhaired dachshund, Finn. Follow Morgan on TikTok, @morgmorrow.

Join Empowered's social media community. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/SocialMedia



BY EMPOWERED HQ

As a student in Andrew Busath's Latinos in Action classroom at Kearns High School near Salt Lake City, Utah, Liz Jarero experienced firsthand how the Empowered approach helped her and her classmates take ownership of their learning journey.

"We're taught math and English, but not the social skills on how to present ourselves to other people, so we can make a good first impression," Liz said. "Empowered gives kids an introduction on how to behave in the real world and that's one of the main reasons why I wanted to bring it to my classroom."

With Busath's encouragement, Liz was so inspired by her experience that she decided to pursue a career in education and help others realize their potential. At just 19 years old, she used her language skills to kickstart her career in the classroom as the English language learning (ELL) coordinator at Western Hills Elementary in Kearns, Utah.

Over the past two years, Liz's journey has come full circle as she brings the Empowered learning model to her ELL elementary students. Empowered's student-centered approach helps educators like Liz to tailor their teaching to an individual student's needs — like those who are learning English. In her school, she brings together small classes of ELL students at each grade level, third through fifth graders, for regular sessions focused on building language and social-emotional skills.

"My classes are students who all speak a different language at home or come from a different country and need support speaking the language," she said. "They are struggling to fit in socially, culturally, and their whole world is flipped upside down."

The experiential learning model gives ELL students space to explore these concepts while learning how to communicate better and connect with other students like them who are experiencing the same challenges. Her class gives students a place to begin building connections and solving conflicts with their peers while exploring their unique skills.

"I knew I wanted to use Empowered to keep my kids engaged, provide incentives for them to learn, and teach these skills without me telling them," she said. "They will grasp the concept without me telling them because they are practicing how to do it through the activities."

Empowered's activities allow Liz to have real conversations with her students and create teachable moments – building their confidence and deepening their understanding.

Empowered gives kids an introduction on how to behave in the real world?

Recently, while using an Empowered Activity – Paper Airplane Factory – with her third graders, Liz shared how one of her students learned a valuable lesson about seizing opportunities. In this activity, students are tasked with building prototype airplanes that can fly a required distance. If students demonstrate positive behaviors, they can earn hints to make their factory more successful.

"I had a student who got really discouraged when he couldn't build an airplane that made it over the red line. Everyone on his team was successful, but he started to have a meltdown. He was upset that he couldn't figure it out and my job was trying to get him to see that everyone else also made mistakes, but they didn't give up. After we finished, I had him look at all of the airplanes that didn't make it and the prototypes he was working on and re-test. He finally made it over the line! I reminded him of the growth mindset we talked about. If he had kept his focus on the opportunity to improve instead of breaking down, he would've made it over the line. You miss out on opportunities when you give in that quickly."



Andrew Busath and Liz Jarero

The exercise was an eye-opening moment for the student. But as Empowered educators know, the "secret sauce" to this approach comes after the hands-on activity.

"When we sit down and reflect and talk about it, they'll pick up on different things that I didn't even know I would teach them," she said.

Liz is preparing for her third year as ELL coordinator and plans to pursue additional educational opportunities to continue teaching as a licensed educator.

Connect with Liz on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/Liz

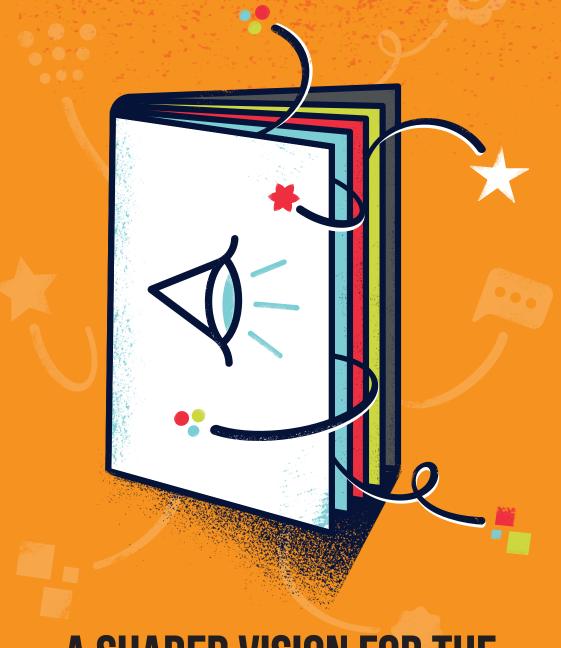


THE VISION ISSUE

For more inspiration, check out the Empowered Hub.



PHOTOGRAPHY VIA MICHELE LEE



A SHARED VISION FOR THE

FUTURE

Founder of the eponymously titled virtual learning tool – Khan Academy – and trailblazer of EdTech, Sal Khan's vision of the future of education is built far more on ancient Greece than it is on bleeding-edge tech (well, maybe a little bit of both).

BY MARC OESTREICH

As technology frees up educators from the impossible task of individualizing instruction for each student, it sets them free to be guides — to be sherpas — on the journey toward self-actualization. We sat down with Sal Khan to ask him about that vision, what he's doing to transport us there, and the pivotal (but evolving) role of the teacher in bringing it to life.

It's a beautiful 76-degree day in Mountain View, California, with the eternally cool breeze blowing off San Francisco Bay through the conifers and into the sun-toasted Santa Clara Valley. For years, this unique climate was home to orchards, artists, and bohemian life. Today, the orchards have given way to red-roofed neighborhoods; the artists to technologists, engineers, andcoders; and the bohemian lifestyle to the entrepreneurial spirit that powers our modern American economy.

It's the epicenter of innovation. But the old 1970s BoHo vibes weren't supplanted by the futurist scene, but rather appropriated and cherished as part of the new American spirit. You have to think a little differently to exist here. You have to have a big utopian vision to carry on a coffee-shop conversation. You have to think about making the world a better place. It's the price of admission... and first in line with his ticket is Sal Khan.

"Do you mind if I walk and talk," he asks, in what I find out quickly is his normal cadence. Keeping pace with Khan feels like hitting the "1.5X" button on an audiobook. I should have known. Khan operates at a different speed than the rest of humanity, so why wouldn't his speech follow suit? No sooner had we introduced ourselves than he had bound out the door, into the sunlight, and set off striding down the streets of Mountain View. "I find I tend to think more clearly when I'm up and moving."

He wasn't kidding. Within five minutes of beginning to talk he had laid out his global vision for education. It wasn't rote or memorized (Khan couldn't do rote if he tried; it's not a part of his philosophy on education and it won't be a part of his philosophy on interviews); instead it was heartfelt, humble, and honest. It set the stage for one

of the most profound conversations I've ever had around education. "My hope is that we can create a world where we can supercharge schools," Khan began. "We want to make sure that everyone has access to rigorous tools in a competency-based environment." Instead of a system that promotes us past huge gaps in knowledge, it's time to reimagine education as highly personal and focused on mastery.

THE BACKSTORY

Sal Khan is many things. A first-generation immigrant, an accomplished cartoonist, a graduate of both MIT and Harvard, a YouTube influencer, a board member of the esteemed Aspen Institute, one of Time Magazine's most influential people in the world, and, according to Forbes, the man with a "\$1 Trillion Opportunity." He's many things, but is he relatable? To many, Khan's story doesn't feel that of the everyman at first blush. But, a closer look at the history of Khan Academy reveals a tale of humble beginnings. Those humble beginnings were the birth of the biggest idea education has ever seen: to provide free, first-class education to anyone, anywhere.

It was the summer of 2004, and Khan had just finished his MBA and moved from his hometown in Metairie, Louisiana to Boston, Massachusetts. He had just begun crunching numbers at a hedge fund there when his family came calling. Nadia, a cousin back in Louisiana, was struggling in her math class

and needed some tutoring. He had a duty to his family and he wasn't about to let a thousand miles stand in his way.

Khan began tutoring Nadia using a virtual whiteboard tool to illustrate concepts and bring ideas to life. The live sessions evolved into a few short videos on more challenging topics to keep things convenient for them both. Little did he know that the simple tutorials would forever change the course of education. Nadia shared them with friends and family. They all shared them with classmates and online forums. As demand grew, Khan devoted more time to video production. And, in just a few years, his content had been viewed half a billion times on YouTube. Billion. With a "B."

People lose the forest for the trees so much in education.

Khan Academy came to life quickly, with thousands of videos amassing online in just a few years. Soon, a platform followed, then an app and a teacher-focused app, and then a district-wide program. Khan Academy became synonymous with the promise of technology in education. But the challenges in our education system were larger than technology alone could solve — it'd take a new perspective.





THE TREES

"People lose the forest for the trees so much in education," says Khan. "How do we improve test scores, or college enrollment, or college graduation?" he mockingly asks. "Well, those are all a little bit beside the point, aren't they?" And they are. They are means to an end that captures our attention perhaps far more than the end itself. Khan would have us adjust our focus and frame, away from test scores, away from the traditional metrics of success in education, and zoom out a few clicks.

"The true end in education is whether or not I lived a good life," Khan explained, "whether I could support myself and my family, whether I could give my family members and children knowledge, whether or not I could participate civically." That zooming out is crucial to understanding Khan's perspective, but also crucial to understanding education itself a bit more fully.

Khan touched on the idea of self-actualization as central to the purpose of education. That idea isn't new — it's just increasingly rare to see it. In fact, going back millennia, philosophers and writers were expounding on the important and immutable link between education and self-actualization. In 1500 BCE, the education system of the Vedics, in ancient India, was among the first to organize education more broadly, for the people. Why? To free them from the tyranny



The true end to education is whether or not I lived a good life.

of ignorance. The ancient Greeks believed that education was crucial in the quest for "areté," or being the best you can be. Education has historically been central in our quest to reach the most significant and critical goals of human existence: to become our best selves, to realize our greatest potential, to shine the bright light of truth into the darkest corners of our ignorance. These can only be realized through a system of education, of schools, that elevates these goals and holds them central to its purpose. We don't yet have that system. Or, should I say, we don't have that system anymore.

A century of focusing on the trees in education may have seen the forest burned, logged, and developed. Now, we're staring at a tree in the grassy patch between parking spots, a Dollar General to our right and a same-day check cashing outfit to our left. We've put our effort into building to the average, into getting folks over a minimum bar of proficiency, of ensuring that everyone just makes it to graduation. Excellence, mastery, exceptionality, self-actualization. They aren't in the conversation. But Khan is bringing them back. He's planting trees.

BACK TO THE FUTURE The Greeks

"In a lot of ways I think the role of the teacher in the future will be what it was prior to the Industrial Revolution." Khan was reflecting on how the job of educators could evolve back to where it once was. "If you go back a few hundred years and look," he continued, "very few people got an education, but the ones who did, got a very good education." He painted a picture of education thousands of years ago and it sounded eerily similar to his own vision.

"If you were Alexander the Great 2300 years ago, and you had Aristotle as your tutor, Aristotle was doing that personalized, mastery-based instruction with you. If you didn't understand things well, you had the opportunity to go back and get the specialized attention you needed. There was a lot of Socratic dialogue. I mean, Socrates taught Plato who taught Aristotle, so Socratic dialogue was happening quite literally. You were able to learn actively, to get involved and move. There wasn't a lot, I'm guessing, of Alexander the Great just sitting and staring at the clock while someone droned on and on about whatever the topic was."

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And it wasn't just the Greeks — the Socratic method and its brethren in other cultures built an educational system that focused on the learner first, that ensured concept mastery, and that framed education as part of the quest to be the best you. When you think about it, it makes our current system look a bit silly. But, remember, only a fraction of people would get even a basic education in this era, and it would stay that way for thousands of years.



Industrial-Era Education

As we entered the twentieth century, America was thriving and the American experiment was built on equality under God. Separating society into a huge, illiterate working class and a much smaller educated elite made less and less sense. With the advent of assembly lines and mass production, the needs of modern society were changing. We needed an educated public, trained to read and write, and ready to follow directions. We needed public schooling.

And despite his position on them, Khan isn't keen to dump on our industrial-era schools.

"You go back about 200 years ago and we introduce this idea of mass public education. It's a hugely utopian idea and it deserves credit. It has transformed the world for the better. Literacy rates, numeracy rates, have all dramatically improved globally over the past 200 years. But tradeoffs had to be made. You couldn't give every student the attention that Alexander the Great had, or Prince Charles, or whomever."

Compromises were indeed made. A system was built to stamp out education like parts on an assembly line. The problem: parts

come into the factory with the same raw materials, but kids just do not. They were wildly different and diverse, developing at different paces, with different talents and the capacity for mastering their own unique specialties. The process was concrete and unapologetically built to a standard. The kids that made it through were partially educated on a handful of topics. Those that didn't fell forever into the cracks. But, generally, it was an improvement.

Khan notes that "we borrowed tools from the Industrial Revolution: pack students together, move them along at the same pace, have set curricula and assessments. Some kids are going to consistently do well on the assessments, and they go to the top of the labor pyramid. Other kids are going to be in the middle or bottom of the labor pyramid. It all seems very clean and scientific."

While cold and dehumanizing, it appeared functional at first blush. A closer look, however, and it quickly began to sound Orwellian. Top-down planners built semi-functional institutions that would determine our fate based on ill-designed tests. To say that it's a system ripe for innovation feels like something of an understatement.

The Modern Era

As our economy shifts from assembly lines and manufacturing jobs to engineering, innovation, and technology, we're presented with an opportunity to reform and reimagine the education system that feeds it.

"I think the opportunity now is that the labor pyramid is inverting," Khan suggested. He's referring to the 180-degree change in the American labor economy over the past few decades. Technology, somewhat ironically, is automating most of the jobs at the bottom of the labor pyramid and forever changing the demands we make on public education. Rote memorization, adherence to rules, and tightly drawn curricula all seem a bit anachronistic in the modern economy; somehow out of context. Like an infected appendix, ideas like top-down education, lecture-based learning, and social promotion are vestigial organs we've evolved beyond that are sticking around to haunt us.

We have to bring back the personalization, the mastery learning, and the active learning as much as possible.

"The Industrial Revolution model is not acceptable anymore. We want as many people as possible to operate at the top of the labor pyramid in our new knowledge economy. We have to bring back the personalization, the mastery learning, and the active learning as much as possible."

How do we do this? We evolve the role of teachers and amplify education with high-powered tools. Tools like, well, you know...

THE FUTURE OF TEACHING

After what amounts to a short blip in the timeline of human history, the industrial-era education model is kaput. It propelled humanity forward, but its time has passed and, as soon as we get into surgery to remove this old vestigial organ, we'll be on to the next era.

We had zoomed through 3,000 years of human history before he could even get to the cafe. As he walked, I asked Khan to explore the future of education a bit with me. If the future needs to look like the past, what do teachers need to look like? And how can they help get us past the awkward teenage years of our development of public education?

"The role of the teacher [in the future] is what Aristotle was doing with Alexander the Great, but now amplified by tools like Khan Academy and Schoolhouse.World. In this way, a single teacher can actually provide personalization and attention for 25, 30, 35 students. And how do they do that? Let the students work on things like Khan Academy, where teachers get insights into what can support students better."

If his vision of the classroom was beginning to sound like a computer lab, he puts that idea to rest quickly.

Students should also be able to support each other. That's a really powerful part of the learning process.

"Students should also be able to support each other. That's a really powerful part of the learning process and allows for individualization, support, and community-building. Then, depending on the course, teachers should be creating experiences to complement the material. That shouldn't be a teacher lecturing for an hour; rather, it should be a Socratic dialogue to let knowledge seep in deeper — to really figure out how it applies in the world — but it has to be active learning. And, I think if teachers do that, we'll be in great shape."

Khan's vision was big, but it wasn't tangible yet.

The teachers I've talked to know the power of Socratic dialogue and experience, but they just struggle to visualize how it'll come to life in this future utopia. He hadn't given me enough. I pushed him to paint me a picture. What will the future of teaching look like? What will be a day in the life? How will it differ from today?

"Well, I'll start with today. A teacher is teaching four or five classes of 55 minutes; they're lecturing with the desks all lined up; they're one person with 30 students and they're isolated. Teachers are spending significant chunks of their time lesson planning and grading papers, and then, when they go to the classroom, it's about delivering a predictable lesson plan and managing a quiet, compliant classroom. It's fatiguing. You have to be on, you have to hand-grade tests. You have to handle all the administrative and parent interactions. It's a really depleting experience."

AND FOR THE FUTURE?

"The teacher doesn't do lesson planning. They come to the classroom and they aren't isolated. I see the future as two or three teachers with 50-60 students. The students are all allowed to work on their own with tools like Khan Academy and Schoolhouse.World. They get personalized mastery-based instruction and even more meaningful peer-to-peer tutoring online. The teachers get to be much more of the system designers and the conductors of the orchestra. The teachers will be monitoring data to see how things are working, and the tools will tell them that 'these five kids need extra help here' or 'these two kids need a pep talk' or 'these six kids might need to be pulled aside to talk about life challenges."

"My day as a teacher is working alongside other colleagues in a larger group. Every action I do is driven by data and insights. I'm able to have, frankly, more meaningful interactions and relationships with students. And students will be more engaged in the class in relationships. You do that for 4-5 hours a day and you go home and get much-needed rest."



THE FUTURE OF STUDENTING

The future of teaching is clear and Khan brought it to life beautifully as only the world's most influential educational innovator could. But, I couldn't help but wonder about the kids I remember from class. The guys who had given up on learning, or had decoupled from the process, or who had grown to revile it all together. I couldn't help but think of myself — a fairly decent student by most metrics — sitting in calculus class dreading every next second. What does Khan's vision of education do to help the folks who have given up?

"I think there's a lot of talk on the margins right now about making it appealing to them, applying it to the real world, making it more fun... but the reality is actually much, much simpler than that. It goes like this: if you show me someone in an algebra class who actually has a strong foundation entering into that algebra class, they're usually pretty engaged. But, if you show me someone entering that algebra class who doesn't have a strong foundation, even if they used to think they might one day become an engineer or a scientist, they'll become more and more demoralized."

It's like he's known me my whole life. Smart kid falls behind, gets demoralized, hates the subject, and gives up. It's a deadly little cycle that I've seen hundreds of kids fall victim to. We have to break that cycle if we're going to truly revamp education.

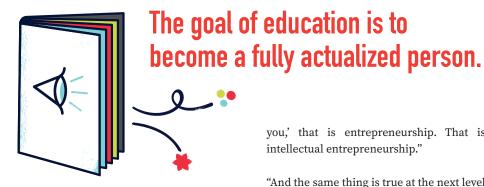
"I think the number one thing is to make sure students always have the opportunity and incentive to finish their unfinished learning," prescribes Khan. He makes it sound so simple. How on earth have we made it so stinking complicated? And why?

"I think a lot of people unnecessarily try to dress up learning," he continues, working his way up to a crescendo, "like it's not interesting enough by itself." He had lit up and was speaking more extemporaneously as he got more excited. It was a wonderful moment to witness. The world's most innovative educational expert was on a roll.

"They're almost ceding the fact that learning isn't interesting, but are you serious? Isn't interesting? Take biology—the study of how the human body works? That's not interesting? History. All the stories throughout mankind that got us to where we are. That's not interesting?! English, algebra... every subject can be fascinating."

As the brisk pace of his walk slowed and he prepared for his next meeting, a pitch to an unnamed major university to use his new Schoolhouse. World certification process, I wanted to bring the conversation back to its roots. If education's future is a return to its past, how do those pivotal modern ideas like growth mindset, grit, and resilience fit

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into the equation? I can't imagine Socrates delivering a Brene Brown pep talk or Alexander the Great receiving lessons on mindset shift. But surely these have to be important concepts to any future vision of education. Right?

"When people tell me that we need to be more like Finland or Singapore with their higher test scores, I remind them that, despite the test scores, America and Silicon Valley are still the hubs of innovation and entrepreneurship in the world. So, when I talk to them, I say 'Hey Finnish Department of Education, you need to start following the American model more closely.' In fact, everyone in the world needs to make their system more American."

He described a system that, once you pull away the standardization and bureaucracy, began to sound quite amazing. His visionary status was clear to me - he could cut through what was wrong and imagine all the best of American education, unmolested by top-down thinking.

"In America, people are proud to have moved up the ladder via effort. The stigma connected to failure is lowest in the US. In fact, in Silicon Valley, it's a badge of honor that you tried and failed. That's what entrepreneurship is about. That's the growth mindset. That's what education needs to offer."

"So I think, taking it back to education, when we say all this stuff about growth mindset and entrepreneurship, but then the student gets a 'C' and we say 'too bad, you're a "C" student'... we're undermining everything we thought we were trying to promote. But, when we change that to, 'hey student, you got a "C" for now. It's not a big deal... just keep working on it. I believe in

you,' that is entrepreneurship. That is intellectual entrepreneurship."

"And the same thing is true at the next level for the teacher. Like, hey teacher, it's OK to take risks. It's OK if it isn't working out of the gate. It's OK if you tried something new and it took you two steps backward. You're going to learn from that — just brush yourself off and figure out the next iteration. I think it's not just OK but it's incredibly important if we're going to get to that reality that you and I have articulated in the next 10, 20, 30 years."

We have a vision for the future and a believable path to get there. Khan's tools have paved the way, but it's teachers who will truly transform education with those tools in hand, working with technology, not against it.

"I don't think any serious person thinks computers are going to replace any teacher. The tools are going to allow you to get your classroom where you want it to be. Every teacher's standard is differentiation. You're going to be able to differentiate more. Every teacher went into the profession because they imagined themselves being able to form connections with students that last a lifetime. They're going to be doing even more of that if they can take some of this other stuff off their plate."

There you have it. With tools in hand, education breaks out of the clutches of an anachronistic, industrial-era system that's lasted over a century. The future of education looks bright. It looks like teachers empowered to do what they do best. It looks like students working at their own pace to master each and every skill. It looks like... well, it looks a lot like the past. But this time it's not just for Alexander the Great, it's also for Alexander from Gary, Indiana. It's not just for Prince Charles, it's for little Charlie Smith from Farmington, Delaware. And, how about the forest we lost earlier? The one that disappeared as we stared blankly at a single tree? Well, in Khan's vision of the future, it's back. We're again zoomed out to the real purpose of education.

"The goal of education is to become a fully actualized person." It's simple. It's profound. It's been done before. And, with Khan's help, it feels achievable.

So, for us in education, it's back to the future. It's a focus on self-actualization for both students and teachers alike. Fire up the flux capacitor and get this thing up to 88. Where we're going... we may not need roads, but, if we're going to get there, we do need great teachers.



Find tools to reimagine the future of education at khanacademy.org and schoolhouse.world.



THE VISION ISSUE

For more inspiration, check out the Empowered Hub.



EmpoweredHub.org

DID YOU KNOW?

Sal Khan refused to let students fall behind from COVID-19.

The education innovator came up with a plan the moment the pandemic struck. As the founder of Khan Academy, an online platform providing world-class education to more than 120 million registered users worldwide, he decided to launch a free tutoring platform.

Sal had a name from the start: Schoolhouse.world. Beyond offering free high-quality tutoring, he also wanted to inspire students to become tutors themselves. He knew this peer-to-peer tutoring approach could make a difference during the pandemic. He also knew it could benefit students for years to come.



Educational Subscription Boxes

MAKE LEARNING COME ALIVE

BY EMPOWERED HQ

Check out these subscription boxes for engaging, hands-on ideas delivered straight to your door.

The time for tastemaking is nigh and entrepreneurs are making the most out of it. If there's a niche, there's a subscription box out there to fill it (see Henri+Roo's Chicken Keeper Box or the Pickle-of-the-Month Club). As the popularity of subscription boxes grow, so do the possibilities of using them with our students. The options range from everything from lab experiments to historical activities.

For science, especially physics and chemistry:

MEL Science Price: From \$30

MEL Science offers various hands-on courses for all ages. Each box contains all the necessary project tools along with exciting and enriching digital lessons. Whether you're looking for engaging lessons for high school students, middle schoolers, or elementary students, MEL Science offers Physics and Chemistry courses for all ages. Young scientists can even explore their lessons using VR.

When you purchase a MEL Science box, you also gain lifetime access to VR lessons, DIY experiments, and science news. MEL Science is perfect for curious young scientists. Learn more at: MELScience.com





For social studies: History Unboxed

COOL

History Unboxed brings subscribers a variety of hands-on history lessons from around the world. Each box is available in three versions, making each topic accessible to each age range (5-9, 10-15, 16+). In each box, subscribers receive everything they need to engage in interactive activities. Boxes can be selected and purchased individually or as part of a curriculum set. History Unboxed is perfect for students interested in stories from around the world and the historical significance of them. Learn more: HistoryUnboxed.com

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#3 For STEM, especially chemistry and engineering: Creation Crate Price: Varies

Creation Crate offers kits featuring a variety of STEM subjects for all ages (even adults!). Each box contains the necessary components to complete each hands-on project. Subscribers are also granted access to an online classroom to dive deeper into each project. Teachers could use Creation Crate as a way to demonstrate and develop students' STEM skills. This box would be a strong fit for secondary students who enjoy technology. *Learn more at:* CreationCrate.com

For STEM and art:
KiwiCo Price: \$3

KiwiCo offers Eureka (STEM) and Maker (Art) subscription boxes for creative minds of all ages. Practice problem-solving while testing out new art and design tools. KiwiCo can be used for classroom demonstrations, small group projects, or as a whole-class learning experience. *Learn more at:* KiwiCo.com



#5 For English, or anyone else who likes to maintain a library: And the Story Begins Price: \$19

And the Story Begins is perfect for teachers looking to spice up their classroom libraries with exciting new books. Choose your favorite genre, the length of your subscription, and you'll receive your books in no time. For those using this box for the classroom, consider changing the genre from month to month to add variety and depth to your classroom book selections. Teachers and students who love reading or who need to grow in their love for reading would benefit from this box.

Learn more at: AndtheStoryBegins.com

For any teacher wanting to increase experiential learning: Empowered Price: FREE

Empowered's Start-Up Kit is intended for any educator just getting started using Empowered's resources in the classroom. The box, which can be requested after setting up an Empowered Hub account and registering your classes, contains a "Field Guide" for transforming your classroom experience, some Foundational Principle bookmarks (see Page 31), Empowered Currency, some swag, an activity you can use immediately in the classroom, and more.



Get Your Empowered StartUp Kit. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:

TeachEmpowered.org/GetAKit





In his new book, **Ratchetdemic: Reimagining Academic Success**,

Dr. Christopher Emdin believes it's time for students and teachers to embrace their ratchetness – and let **authenticity and joy** rule the classroom.

BY JENNIFER L.M. GUNN



Even a casual conversation with Dr. Christopher Emdin is like an impassioned masterclass on educating from the **heart and soul**.

If you've ever heard him speak at a conference or listened to one of his TEDTalks, you know the **real-deal energy** he brings.

With his trademark churchlike cadence, Emdin preaches pedagogical principles to educators who leave moved, inspired, and more than a little riled up.

At a conference a few years ago in New York City, Emdin gave a rousing keynote, circulating the rapt audience as if in concert. When he was finished, the audience gave it back; at once erupting into an ovation unlike any I'd seen. Perhaps the most telling reaction, however, was from a New York City high school senior named Xavier, who was volunteering at the event. In stunned disbelief, he turned and said, "Wow, I've literally never heard anyone speak about education like that." It shouldn't be rare... but it is.

Read one of Emdin's books and you'll feel much the same, each page brimming with candor, revelations, and truth-bombs about the humanity of teaching and learning. One can't help but be galvanized by Dr. Emdin, who was previously an Associate Director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education and Director of the Science Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, and is now the Robert A. Naslund Endowed Chair in Curriculum

Theory and Professor of Education at the University of Southern California — where he also serves as Director of Youth Engagement and Community Partnerships at the USC Race and Equity Center. He doesn't want his energy to be the exception, he wants to make it the rule.

Emdin's passion is the very spark of authenticity that he knows is missing from mainstream academia. Instead, too many classrooms are stuck perpetuating colonial and industrial frameworks of compliance and silence, driving a wedge between learners and learning. For Emdin, learning is loud, passionate, and joyful. And that's more than okay, it's cultural truth. In his latest book "Ratchetdemic: Reimagining Academic Success," he calls for embracing "ratchetness" in the classroom as the real pathway to academic success, especially for often-marginalized students.

GETTING REAL ABOUT "RATCHETNESS"

Most high school teachers could tell you a basic definition of the word ratchet. It's not generally considered a positive word, used mostly to insult someone's behavior, manner, or fashion as low-brow, vulgar, or as stereotypically representative of more urban culture. Emdin, however, argues that youth of color should embrace the term. "It's a word that's always been used to say you're less than, you're useless, you're not worth anything. And in response to that, certain populations have appropriated the word and used it like a weapon to fight back; to say, no, I am a king, I am valuable, I have worth," argues Emdin. "This is a term of endearment. My use of ratchet is in much the same way as in the African American tradition of taking words that are intended to demean and leveraging them to empower."

Instead of giving ratchetness power as an insult to denigrate people of color, Emdin instead says that embodying ratchetness merits honor. It's hardly the new philosophy of urban America; it's hardly the worrisome trend that suburban pearl-clutchers fear; it has a rich history. Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard was among the first to suggest authenticity was the highest



virtue in his contributions to a theory that later became known as self-actualization. Authenticity is key to being your best self and embracing ratchetness, argues Emdin, is a crucial step on that journey.

Dr. Emdin told us that "ratchetness is a way of knowing and being that is more concerned with authenticity and less concerned with respectability. It's a mindset that says, I'll be unconcerned about how society views how I should be, and I'm going to dedicate myself to what makes me most free and most comfortable. That's it. And this is an ideology and a philosophy of life that has been taken up by a lot of populations that don't find acceptance within institutions like schools." For it's schools that so often attempt to curtail, correct, and overpower "ratchetness" in the name of academic advancement.

THE TRAGIC CHOICE: BE ACADEMIC OR BE YOU

When public education became widespread in the early 20th century, its main goal was to take our previously agrarian, then-expanding society and provide a foundation of education and training in order to build a new industrial workforce. We've all heard the adage that school is for our betterment. The industrial model of education still reigns, and the philosophy

still is that education will prepare students to be qualified, civilized, and worthy workers. "It is not until they are thrust into institutions that convince them that the endless pursuit of better is the chief currency for being successful that they begin to question themselves," says Emdin in his book. "When students encounter educators who are convinced that the purpose of school and life is not learning for the sake of gathering information to use in the real world, but learning to be seen as better by someone they don't know or see, students begin to internalize that philosophy and start to see themselves as less than."

This model, Emdin argues, subjugates non-white culture and cultural expressions seen as non-compliant, non-academic, uncivilized, or unprofessional... but it subjugates much of white culture, too. It's top-down. Children begin receiving these messages early on. "Schools are like 'if those kids are sitting down and paying attention and raising their hands, they must be ready to learn. They must be academic.' Can you imagine then when a child is like, 'Well, I'm expressive. I like asking questions. I like to be out of my seat. I'm excited.' They start thinking that who they are is not academic," says Emdin. "And so this false binary is constructed where children will say, 'Well, I'm either going to be academic as they define it or I'm going to be myself.' And then what's happening is they start constructing a perception of misperception. That being themselves is not academic. 'If I'm not academic, then maybe I'm a gangster. If I'm not an academic, maybe I'm a thug.'" Students, and particularly students of color, are forced to make a choice between their authentic selves and the so-called refinery of academia — and that choice involves 13 years of hearing that who they are needs fixing.

LEARNING IS LOUD AND JOYFUL

When students are deeply engaged in learning, it may not look like a silent classroom of mere note-taking or essay writing. Most teachers have experienced a truly magical lesson — with high engagement, where students are passionate, full of questions, lit up, and excited to learn. We know that children are naturally curious and over time school has a way of dimming

or taming this natural curiosity. The academic model most of us grew up with involved sitting in rows, taking tests to show our memorized knowledge and sitting quietly unless called upon. We learned to be docile, receptive and compliant — likely missing out on so much more because we were taught to be passive.

The academic model most of us grow up with involved sitting in rows, taking tests to show our memorized knowledge, and sitting quietly.

As educators, many of us perpetuate this practice, even if we entered the teaching field with dreams of doing so much more. Active hands-on learning, experimentainquiry, collaboration, project-based learning help build 21-century skills that today and tomorrow's leaders require. Not only that, these modalities build confidence, leadership abilities, and social skills not found when students merely learn to be obedient and passive learners. "A child can come in and be loud and what you consider to be abrasive. In reality, they just simply want to ask more questions," says Emdin. "The closer we get to recognizing that we cannot pass judgment on young people based on how they express themselves or how they show up in the classroom, the closer we get to allowing them to be able to find that their own selves and their potential selves actually are intrinsically academic."

Further, there's a deep racial component. According to Emdin, students of color are more often suppressed and taught that their cultural norms, attitudes, and even mannerisms are crude and in need of correction for the learned, professional world. "It's about plantation pedagogies that were enacted by white people during slavery that are still being carried out today by the majority-white teaching force," says Emdin. According to a Pew Research Center analysis released late last year, based on data from the 2017-18 school year, the latest compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, 79% of U.S. public school teachers identified as white. And Emdin contends that the continued old custom of disregarding the norms and mores of people of color and replacing them with white standards of acceptability is not only overtly racist, but obstructing

learning and progress for students of color.

RIGOR & RATCHETNESS

So often when a classroom is full of joy, noise, and spirit, questions inevitably surface about rigor. "But where is the rigor?" administrators may ask when they see a noisy classroom, or a vigorous outside-the-lines lesson. This is a troubling leadership response that searches for recognizable anchor points of academic conformity and compliance to signal so-called real learning. "Rigor is weaponized," says Emdin. "There are a few words that are floating around in educational spaces that are utilized to demean teachers or to make them justify the enabling of problematic practice. It's used as if it equates to care. Like, 'If you care about young people, you'll be rigorous.' But they don't define what rigor means. And oftentimes what they mean by rigor is to create spaces that are lifeless to make young people be ready to be complicit in the real world. They don't really mean rigor. They mean complicity. They mean lifelessness. They mean the absence of agency."

Instead, Emdin argues, rigor should be found in the passion, engagement, and challenge of the learners and the learning tasks. "Ratchetdemic, I think, is the actual definition of rigor," says Emdin. "For me, a rigorous classroom or rigorous curriculum

is that the content level is always right outside of the reach of the students, but the conditions are created where joy moves them to be able to leap from where they are toward that thing that's outside of where they are right now. The joy and passion are what provides the trampoline so that students can reach new heights."

When students are free to be their authentic selves, when there is joy in learning, when they feel safe to express curiosity without being shut down, and when their self-expression is validated rather than reformed, they no longer have to choose between self and academia. They can instead use the classroom's joy and freedom to safely excel. "If a kid is reading on a fifth grade level and the texts are at an eighth grade level, but the ratchedemic classroom is so joyous, the rest of the classroom is the trampoline that makes them jump to levels that they were not at before. You hop into a ratchedemic classroom and you leap into the skies ... in a way that you never have before in a classroom," says Emdin.

THE MODERN WORKPLACE IS RATCHETDEMIC

Most teachers have heard — or maybe even said - something like "You won't get away with that in college." Or, "You can't act like that in the workplace," creating an enigma of a real world devoid of humanity that only celebrates the pliant rule followers. The thing is, times have changed. Today's college classrooms are different. Today's workplaces are different. The skills these institutions value have evolved and K-12 schools need to adapt. Modern companies value diversity and celebrate distinct dispositions. College classrooms are full of passionate discussions, where asking deep questions and challenging beliefs are encouraged.

According to Indeed, employers aren't merely seeking deferential direction followers. They now seek analytical thinkers, active learners, problem-solvers, strong communicators, creative thinkers, innovators, collaborators, and leaders who



can express opinions and engage in ideation. "I think education's always behind because in any endeavor or setting, folks will find your authentic self and those who have the credentials and the knowledge of what they're engaging in are the ones who are most successful," says Emdin. "If you go to the Google offices, they create space for folks to be able to have fun, and they understand that the workers are more productive when they're enjoying the work that they're doing."

We live in a different time and yet schools are still largely preparing students to be workers in the industrial revolution. "It's the factory model in the contemporary economy," says Emdin. "Do you prepare young people to be able to follow instructions? Well, we live in a society where we need people to be able to have creative ideas and to be imaginative and to be thoughtful and to be knowledgeable. So the question always is, do you want to just create workers? No. We want to create thinkers and inventors and revolutionaries and folks who are going to go out there to change the world. The people who are engaging in the most cutting edge and transformative research are the ones who are enjoying what they're doing and asking the most provocative questions." That's ratchetdemic.

WE CAN ALL BE RATCHETDEMIC

Being ratchetdemic is different for everyone, but Emdin argues we can all be ratchetdemic. "The colloquialism ratchet is associated with urbanness and associated with Black youth and associated with hip-hop culture, but ratchetness is your core and authentic self that society has forced you to tuck away. Everybody has that," says Emdin. "Everybody when they walk into classrooms is forced to perform some version of who they think they should be for young people. And young people just want adults in their lives who are real people. What is a piece of your identity? Bring that self to the classroom. It connects with the ratchetness of young people. We all have ratchetness and our forms of ratchet may be different, but once we express our ratchetness to other folks, we see each other, we model for each other, we get real authentic. And I've always said, you can't be culturally relevant to young people if you're not culturally relevant to yourself."

STAYING TRUE TO YOUR RATCHETNESS

As teachers face a lot of pressure to comply with curricula, standards, and administrator expectations, Emdin suggests that there is one way of never losing your true ratchetdemic spirit in the classroom: Knowing your why. "The passion that made you decide to take the job is actually what you need to be able to be effective at the job," says Emdin. "So many amazing teachers who had a calling to teach because they love just being in front of young people and being a part of transforming and changing

lives get into the school and get into the classroom and they end up being guided by the administration. And they end up being guided by the curriculum, and so they tuck away what brought them to teach to begin with."

With a seemingly ever-mounting list of expectations set upon teachers, it can be easy to fall away from what originally brought us to this work. Emdin believes that's the ultimate danger. "If you remember your why, every single day, it's very hard for you to be, to be a victim, a ward of a state," he argues. "It's hard for you to listen to an administrator or district or politician that says all teachers are worthless when you know that you chose to do this because you were called to do this —you have to go back to our why as often as possible."

Our why and our true selves are the energy sources that drive us through the challenges of this work. They're also the beacons that keep us authentic - and ratchetdemic. That isn't to say that knowing our why is a magic cure-all for all the injustices of education or the pressures we face as teachers. It's not. But it is a step toward shifting teaching from a place of inauthenticity and oppression to one of humanity and liberation. "We have to go back to our ratchet selves as often as possible because that's what makes us effective," says Emdin. "That's a battery that drives good teaching - your why, your truth, your raw self, your authentic self, the thing that makes your soul happy, the thing that makes you just step out of your comfort zone. That's the battery that drives good pedagogy."

Jennifer L.M. Gunn spent 10 years in newspaper and magazine publishing before moving to public education. She is a curriculum designer, teacher, teaching coach, and educator in New York City. She created Right to Read, a literacy acceleration program for teens, steeped in social justice. She also created the progressive learning models, The Big Idea Project and We the Change. Gunn is also co-founder of the annual EDxEDNYC Education Conference for teacher-led innovation. She is a regular presenter at conferences and frequently writes about education, adolescent literacy and innovation. Connect with Jennifer on Twitter: @jenniferlmgunn.

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Have fun and love what you do

The success of the academic year is dependent upon the fun that you have as you teach. And people don't usually say this to educators, but you've got to enjoy what you do. You've got to love what you do. You've got to embrace the aspects of this work that make your soul be on fire. It's less about what an institution wants. It's more about how much you enjoy what you're doing and how much you do not lower expectations for young people. And there's a misperception that these things are opposites, but you can do both.

Rigor and realness are equally important

I think the biggest thing I want to share with teachers as they start the school year is that you can be equal parts as ratchet as you are academic. You can love young people and hold high academic expectations.

You can have joy and laughter in the classroom and still pass a citywide exam. You can be jovial and have a sense of humor and still hold high academic expectations for young people. But the binaries that have been constructed by our society about what is required to be effective in schooling do not really exist. So don't fall for the lie that you have to choose one part of yourself to be effective in the classoom. You can and should do it all.



Dear Lydia,

Longtime reader, first-time writer...I'm an anxious wreck. I am a great economics teacher. You want to talk about supply curves? To make Milton Friedman sexy? To get kids up and engaged in macroeconomic theory? I'm your gal.

This year, though, my administration has been trying to replace my old familiar acronyms (GDP, NNP, MRS) with a new one... a scary one: SEL.

I thought it was just a passing focus around the beginning of school, but it's becoming the cornerstone of every meeting, every memo, and every new investment. I'm getting pressured at every turn to annotate my lessons with social and emotional learning. I'm worried that bringing an SEL unit or text into my room will steal from the experience of my class. You know what they say... TINSTAAFL. You can't add SEL without subtracting some GDP.

And, if I'm being brutally honest, I'm worried about what sort of Pandora's box I'm opening here. I've heard horror stories about colleagues flooded with tales of trauma, anxiety, and depression. Don't get me wrong, I love helping kids to thrive, but I'm way out of my depth pretending to be a pscyhologist.

Is there a way to push back? Or to check the box without sacrificing my fun class?

Yours,
SEL-usive

Read more of Lydia's columns online. To get started, scan this QR code or visit:

TeachEmpowered.org/DearLydia

DEAR SEL-USIVE,

First, I hear you and you are not alone. In the past five years teachers have gone from being both subject-matter experts and pedagogical experts to taking on the role of technlogist, test-preppers, and recently (as you indicated) psychologists.

Luckily, the horror stories you mention can be avoided and your classroom can actually become even more vibrant and fun...with a simple addition to the structure of your learning design.

One of the major challenges facing every classroom - every lesson plan is the scaffolding of "prior knowledge." As educators, we learn all about the importance of stitching every next lesson to something you've learned before. But, as we all quickly find out, what happens when our learners don't share the same fidelity of prior knowledge? Things fall apart quickly. Well, what if I told you that you can fix your SEL problem and the prior knowledge problem with one fell swoop? Sounds rad, right? It's a little classroom trick we call "Foundational Principles" and here's how it comes to life:

We all inherently know what principles are, but we don't spend enough time bringing them to the forefront.

Principles that focus the classroom around a simple and powerful goal: creating value for yourself and others.



The eight principles are ideas like operating with Sound Judgment, creating Win-Win relationships of mutual benefit, and taking ownership over your work and life through Responsibility. But they aren't just some credo on the wall, they work into every single lesson and discussion to drive deeper thinking.

Just imagine it. Every lesson plan you have, every project you've planned, you can keep it all. But, as you work through a tough activity about marginal utility (sub in any random topic, other teachers), you relate the subject back to our framework of Principles.

When we think about creating Win-Win relationships in our life, how might we think about marginal utility? Well, it's all about finding that balance before things go south.

And how might we relate that to Win-Win relationships in our personal lives? Well, three unanswered texts to your boyfriend might be cute, but ten might be creepy. It's all just marginal utility.

These Foundational Principles become the shared language of your class,

allowing learners of all paces and backgrounds to easily jump into the conversation and relate the topic to real life. And no, I haven't forgotten the crux of your question. SEL.

Look at CASEL's Five Core Competencies. By bringing in ideas like relationship, judgment, and integrity as a lens by which your students see the material, they automatically relate dense ideas to social life. Texting and marginal utility? It covers self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness. You've covered the full spectrum of SEL competencies in a matter of minutes. No trauma. No oversharing. No overstuffed leather couch and "how did that make you feel?" Just economics and principles FTW.

Try it out for a week and watch your class conversation evolve quickly. And get back to us with what you learn along the way. I can't wait to hear about it!

Stay Empowered,



HUMAN DESIGN TILLINGSIGN TILLINGSIGN TOLINGSIGN TOL



Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes; to truly see the world through their eyes in each context or situation.



As empathy is the first step in **Human Design Thinking**, Kasey Millar, Empowered Manager of Educations Materials, recently sat down and explained its value to students, teachers, and anyone searching for creative and ground-breaking solutions.

What is Human Design Thinking, and why is it so powerful?

Human Design Thinking is a process that anyone can use to find solutions to problems they encounter in the world or in their daily life.

Is there a step-by-step process?

There are 5 steps to the process. The very first step is the EMPATHIZE stage. With empathy, you really get to know the person you that you're solving the problem for. You try to understand what they're about, why they have this pain point, so that you can figure out steps to help solve the problem for them or with them. The next stage is the DEFINE stage – finding what the problem actually is that you're attempting to solve. Here, you're really getting into the nuts and bolts of what you're trying to figure out. The third stage is the IDEATE stage, and this is where you brainstorm. Come up with as many ideas as you can. There is no such thing as a bad idea when you're trying to ideate. The fourth stage is PROTOTYPE trying to fail fast, fail cheap - figure out different ways you can solve the problem. You're not looking for a perfect solution at this point. You're just trying to find a way

that might work. In the final step, you TEST the prototype. In this stage, you'll realize the process is not linear; it's flowing. You may continue to refine your first prototype or you may try a second, different prototype. You can go back and change things as much as you need.

If I'm going to jump into Human Design Thinking, do I need any foundations of anything else, or can I use it on its own?

I believe you can use it on its own. At the bare bones of it, you are really just trying to understand what people need and figure out ways to solve that problem. You don't need to read a bunch of books or listen to a bunch of podcasts. You just need to be able to empathize with others to feel what they feel, so you can get to the root of the pain that they have and the problem you're trying to solve. So, I think if you can empathize with others, that's what you really need to do first.

Can you tell us why it's so important for students to work on the skill of empathy?

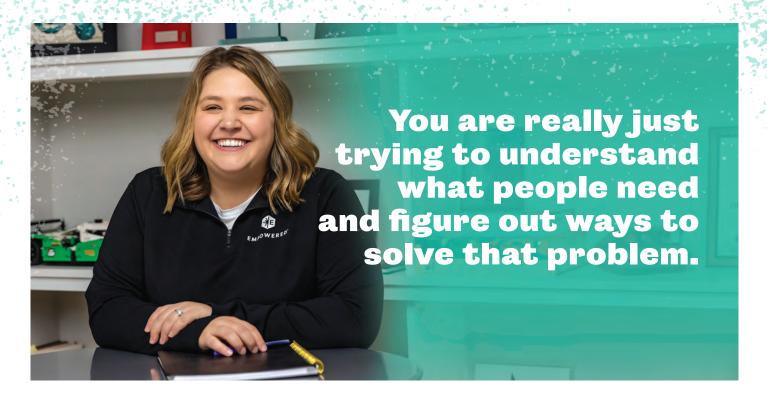
You know, it's just not an inherent skill for everybody. You need to practice and

develop it. That practice in the classroom will benefit you outside of it, too. You can use Human Design Thinking in your daily life when you're trying to solve problems as well. It's just important to empathize others so you can understand what they're going through. This just helps you become a better person when you can empathize with others.

I think about empathy as being able to read between the lines. What are some strategies to help students, teachers, and humans in general be able to do this?

Absolutely. When you're empathizing with others and talking with others, it really needs to be a transformational conversation instead of a transactional conversation. You don't want to go into an empathy interview with people thinking you are getting something out of it. You need to be able to look at that conversation and see what they have to offer, and you have to offer to create a win-win in these conversations. Interviews are a great way to do this. What are the needs? What problems are they encountering? Get to the root of who the person is. Another way is to immerse

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yourself in their situation. If you're trying to solve a problem in the lunchroom, go to the lunchroom and see what that looks like. See what the setup is and immerse yourself in that environment.

What are some of the pitfalls of not going through this process to solve a problem?

If you don't include empathy — "seeing" things through the perspective of our customer — in your approach, you could find yourself offereing ideas that don't fully align with the challenge and, in turn, aren't true solutions.

Some students, some teachers, and some humans are great with empathy, and for others, it's not a skill that comes very easily. I think about kids with neurodivergency, you talked about interviewing being a great tool, is there another way that they can go through the practice of this until it becomes a little more natural?

I would say just break things up into bite -sized pieces. You wouldn't want to set a student up with 45 questions to ask an individual. Give them two questions and see how that goes. I encourage all students to not think of it as an interview, but instead,

think of it as a conversation. You're really just getting to know someone. You're really just trying to understand what they need. If you're doing that by reading questions off of paper, you might not truly get what they're trying to tell you. So, breaking it down and taking it in small chunks can really help if a student is struggling.

I know you were in the classroom for years. As teachers, we often see a problem, and we are so passionate about solving it, we just jump in to solve it. Can you think of a situation like that where Human Design Thinking would have been beneficial?

I think back to my first couple of years of teaching. In college, we were taught lesson plans had to be a certain length. We were told that was *the* way. It didn't take into account our thoughts or, more importantly, the student experience. When I was doing this, I wasn't really empathizing with my students. It took me some time to sit back and realize – whoa. This isn't really working for them. It isn't working for me. If I would have taken time to go through the Human Design Thinking process as a teacher to figure out what tools would be most efficient and practical, I would have been a lot more successful in my early classroom years.

I see Empowered in the classroom, and it's so powerful with business, economics, and entrepreneurship teachers — what about English, math, science, and history? How can I take Human Design Thinking and bring that to one of these classrooms?

It doesn't matter what classroom you are in. You can use the five steps of Human Design Thinking to solve any problems you may have. Take a science class as an example. They are doing experiments all the time. If you do that through the lens of Human Design Thinking, you are empathizing with the situation and the people involved. You are defining the problem. Then you make prototypes and test. Often, you find out that your original hypothesis isn't exactly what you were thinking, so you go back, you redo, and eventually, you end up at a better solution. You can do that in every class. Think about the writing process in English classrooms. Your first draft isn't usually your final draft. As you're empathizing with your audience, you're ideating with what your essay could be about, sometimes you're going to have to prototype. Sometimes you edit a paragraph's placement. The end product that you turn into your teacher is going to be different than your first draft. By looking at the process through a Design Thinking lens, you can have a stronger end product.

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ISSUE 3 • FALL 2023 EMPOWERED TEACHER

I was listening to a piece by Dave Kelly about creative confidence. The average American classroom does a great job of squelching creative confidence. How does creative confidence result from Human Design Thinking?

I think this process is a great way to unleash some creativity in students. Most Kindergartners will tell you (in their own words) they are creative. The older the student gets, the less they say they are creative. We know this isn't true. Students just don't know how to unleash it in the right way. I see creativity really coming alive in the ideate stage. It's not about the quality of your ideas. It's about the quantity of your ideas. This is the time to let your brain kind of open up, and think about things in a different way. Use the wild ideas. Even if it's something you know that's not possible, you get to be creative in the ideate stage. There are no rules or boxes. Color outside the lines. When we allow students to do this, it gives them a confidence that they didn't have before.



You're saying that by following these steps, they are more confident to brainstorm because they'll have informed, thoughts ideas. Right?

Yes! And this really sets them up for success. If you're just going to think about a problem and brainstorm solutions, once again, you're not going to get to the root of the problem because you really don't know who you're solving the problem for and why they really need something solved. It truly helps people mesh creativity and solutions in a safe and comfortable way.

Wow! I think of parenting. So often we just jump in and try to solve the problem before we really figure out what the actual problem is.

We are so busy in life. Sometimes we feel we have to jump into something, and we'll figure it out along the way. Where if we did stop and think about solving whatever issue comes our way, maybe we would have a little more success, whether that's at home, at school, or at a job. This process is really transferable.

Let's say I'm a teacher new to Empowered, and I'm just diving into this. I go onto the Empowered Hub, and there are so many cool resources. If I really want to focus on Human Design Thinking, what is your recommendation for a first thing to try?

We have a whole bucket of Human Design Thinking activities. A quick one that is really easy for teachers to try in any class period, any grade level, is MOCKUPS. There are three different cards. You have a target market. You have a problem that you are trying to solve, and you have constraints that you need to work within. They are silly ones like you're trying to help a rock climber make friends in a way that's invisible. Students are asked to find a quick and creative way to help the target audience find a solution. There are a bunch of cards that you can use. You could take five minutes for a round where students brainstorm and pitch, then do another one. It's a way to open your mind and get used to empathizing. Students will have fun and laugh while learning in the process.

I love that Empowered's approach to Human Design Thinking is so accessible to new and seasoned teachers alike. Sometimes it has even a great impact on those seasoned educators because it is a transformation of thought. If I have tiptoed into the process and want a deeper dive, what resources do you suggest I explore?

A great resource is the Vacant Lot project. Vacant Lot is about looking around your community, empathizing with your community, and figuring out what to do with an abandoned building or vacant piece of land. We ask students to add value to the community through this process. It's an activity that an educator, new or seasoned, could do in

Download PDFs of Helpful Tools today. Visit this url or scan this QR Code to get started.



TeachEmpowered.org/HDT

their classroom to explore Human Design Thinking in a fun way that is relevant to the real world. This could be done in one class period, a few days, or even longer. Some Empowered educators have asked their students to pitch to school officials, town council members, or community leaders. Students could see what real world change looks like in their own classroom.

I know you hear feedback from educators all the time. What are they sharing about Human Design Thinking?

Teachers tell us that Human Design Thinking is a fun way to approach problem solving. It's a practical way that students can solve problems. It frames things in a way they've never thought about before. It allows students the space to be creative, to think, and to try. Often times, failure is a bad word in schools, but through Human Design Thinking, students learn that failure isn't a bad thing. In fact, you must have failure so that you can grow and learn. If we never experience failure, then we wouldn't ever get anywhere. We need to know what works and doesn't work. This process allows students to know that it's okay to fail, and it's okay to try different things. It just might be the 16th idea that is the real home run.

Debra A. Cole is an award-winning playwright, director, and educator (theatre, writing, arts) from Kansas with degrees in journalism and education.

Connect with Kasey on the Empowered Hub. To get started, scan this QR Code or visit:



TeachEmpowered.org/Kasey

Crossword

By Patrick Blindauer

ACROSS

- 01. Rock's Jethro ____
- **05.** Noted ringmaster?
- 08. Chap, slangily
- 13. Bit of geometry homework
- 15. Catch, as a thief
- 16. Has a bawl?
- 17. Foundational Principle #3
- 19. Much of "Deck the Halls"
- 20. Part of a ship's hull
- 21. Pricey cracker topper
- 23. Go from 0 to 60, say
- 24. Homer Simpson's cry
- 26. Foundational Principle #8
- 30. Uplifting poems
- **32.** Vaccine variety
- 33. Puts into action
- 34. Ranger's concern
- 37. Not in vogue
- 39. Foundational Principle #4
- 40. Foundational Principle #5
- 44. Part of a confession
- 45. With affection
- **46.** Be sulky
- 49. Frosting tool
- 51. Clothing, informally
- 52. Foundational Principle #5
- 56. No, in Glasgow
- 57. Pic from a parlor
- 58. On top of, poetically
- **59.** Travel far and wide
- 61. Like some rights
- 63. Foundational Principle #6
- 68. Florence Nightingale, for one
- 69. "Life Is Good" rapper
- 70. Playground retort
- 71. Medium-distance races, informally
- 72. Fig. on a transcript
- 73. Watermelon leftover

NEED ANSWERS?

Scan this QR Code or visit:

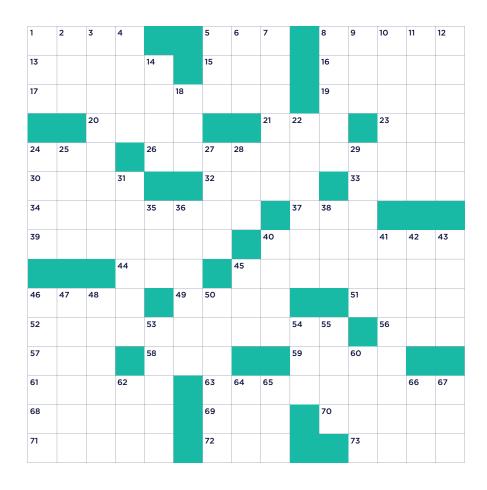
TeachEmpowered.org/Crossword

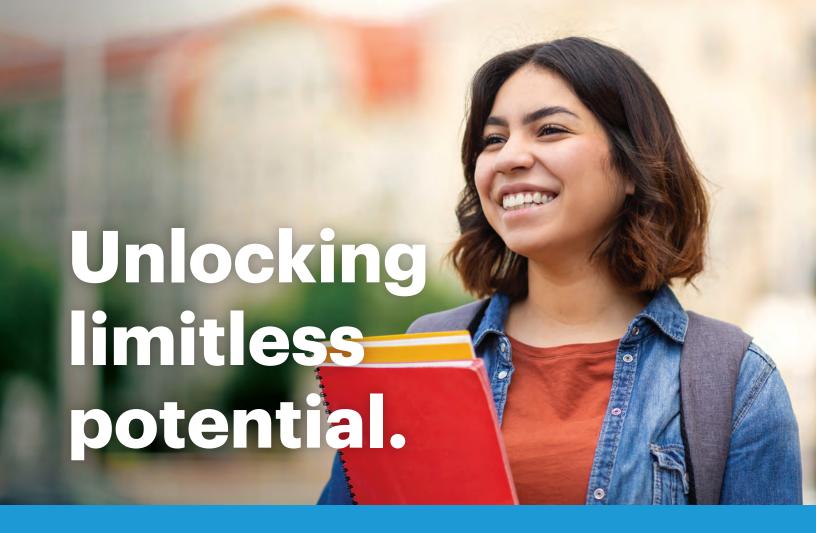


DOWN

- 01. Toll rd.
- 02. Big coffee container
- O3. "Check it out!"
- 04. "St. Elmo's Fire" actor Rob
- **05**. "... your point is?"
- 06. Connectivity issue
- 07. Peninsula of Europe
- **08.** Bass staff symbol
- 09. Significant period of time
- 10. Plants with lavender blooms
- 11. Big ___ Chew
- 12. Determine the value of
- **14.** ___ off the handle
- 18. Manning of football
- 22. From another museum, perhaps
- 24. Tip, as a cap
- 25. Glade target
- 27. Usual thing
- 28. Like Oscar Wilde's humor
- 29. Start of a journey
- 31. Takes care of

- 35. "Star Wars" plan, for short
- **36.** This evening, informally
- 38. Amer. currency unit
- 40. Gilpin of "Frasier"
- **41.** Steel mill resource
- **42.** Korbut of gymnastics **43.** 11 Wall St. occupant
- **45.** Blue-striped billiard ball
- 46. Like a stiff drink
- 47. Not quite transparent
- 48. Favorable trend on Wall Street
- **50.** Smokehouse process
- **53.** Casting assignments
- 54. Number between due and quattro
- 55. Class with mats
- 60. "A Farewell to ____" (Hemingway novel)
- **62.** Inquire about
- 64. Down time
- 65. Org. that inspects bags
- 66. Low digit?
- 67. From Jan. 1 until now





Stand Together's **Koch Internship Program** helps young professionals develop relevant skills and workplace confidence — making them more entrepreneurial in their pursuits while ensuring they make a positive contribution right away.

The **10-week program**, with stipended **full-** and **part-time positions**, is offered **three times a year** with:

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- Devoted professional development time
- Seasoned, professional, 1:1 mentors
- Capstone projects, based on participant interests

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