



## Superintendent's HOPE Note - May 2021

*"Student choice is more than simply picking a task. It's about owning the entire learning process."*

*-John Spencer*

### SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING

*"When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."*

*-Alexander Den Heijer*

We are a school district. We are in the business of educating learners. Our mission is The Success of Every Learner, which means that we are genuinely committed to ensuring that every learner is prepared to be successful in a *variety* of post-secondary pursuits. We owe it to ourselves and to our learners to move beyond a system that continues to abandon some while stifling others.

When we customize learning, we shift our conversation from the act of teaching to the demonstration of learning. In the industrial-age model of instruction, teaching is guaranteed, but learning is not. **This is not a teacher issue. It is a systems issue.** Even the most skilled teacher will struggle to ensure that every learner learns when presented with a wide range of needs, time constraints, and a curriculum that is restricted to one grade level.

When we customize learning, teachers are recognized as the professional that they are. Teachers are asked to analyze data, prescribe a course of "treatment" that is unique to each learner and then monitor the learner's progress toward proficiency in real time. The learner is also provided with a new sense of responsibility for their learning. Unlike a traditional system in which learners simply absorb the knowledge imparted to them, learners become actively engaged in the process. They are provided with purpose, autonomy and opportunities for mastery, all factors in human motivation.

Imagine a system in which teachers are treated as professionals and students are genuine partners! It is possible when we customize learning. We will continue to work through the logistics together, but do not lose sight of the long-term vision. We owe it to our learners.

### THE CHALLENGE: AN INDUSTRIAL-ERA SYSTEM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

*an excerpt from A Transformational Vision for Education in the US*

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

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

Access the full document at [Education Reimagined Full Report](#)

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

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



### Piece of the Puzzle



Teacher Appreciation is May 3-8, but I'd like to dedicate this month's Piece of the Puzzle to our Teachers. What a year this has been! Thank you for hanging in there through a year like no other. On behalf of our learners, K-12, thanks for everything that you do.