

# **A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS IN EDUCATION**

## **REASSESSING THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY**

# FINDING CALM IN THE CHAOS

In 1961, Jane Jacobs published her landmark book '*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*'. In it she detailed the federally-driven attempt to save post-war American cities through a process called urban renewal.

Faced with increasing poverty, crime and congestion, urban renewal would counter the chaotic nature of the city environment through standardized planning and organization.

Historic neighborhoods would be bulldozed to make way for efficient highways; city layouts would be segregated into functional districts (i.e. business, shopping, living, and entertainment); and high-rise public housing would be erected to remove the poor from the dangers of street-level living.



# **THE BEST LAID PLANS ...**

**Despite the best of intentions, urban renewal was a spectacular failure.**

**Congestion in city centers increased as cars replaced mass-transit; the segregation of city functions paved the way for escalating crime rates; and low-income, high-rise buildings further marginalized impoverished citizens by dividing African-American and white populations, effectively concentrating the ghetto rather than eliminating it.**

**It turns out, cities are not so simplistic. They are messy affairs. As Jacobs observed, cities function not by an orderly segregation but by a more spontaneous integration of unique parts. It is not that there is *no* order in cities – but the order emerges from diversity, and not the other way around.**

# **THE RHYMING OF HISTORY**

**So how does this relate to education? Well, one could argue that right now our public schools find themselves in a situation quite like that of the post-war American city.**

**There are systemic challenges that afflict schools nationwide, including unprecedentedly high rates of teacher attrition and the resulting erosion of academic stability; enduring opportunity and achievement gaps between low SES students and their more affluent counterparts; and a general decaying of public faith in the system.**

**And how have we tried to address these issues? Through broadscale, federally-driven programs like No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and Common Core.**

# **DANCERS DON'T NEED WINGS TO FLY**

By almost any measure – much like urban renewal failed to positively impact cities – these master-planned solutions have largely failed to produce any positive impact with regard to student outcomes, and in some cases (like with achievement gaps) they've only made matters worse.

The failure again stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of how social institutions like schools work. Just as Jacobs wrote of cities, the order of a school “is all composed of movement and change, much like an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers reinforce each other to compose an orderly whole”. In other words, the order emerges from diversity.

No two schools are exactly alike. And yet, given their excessive reliance on standardized testing and measurements, that's exactly how federally-powered programs have traditionally conceived of them. By strictly dictating the terms by which learning communities must operate, policymakers are reinforcing the false premise that successful schools are places of uniformity.

# A HOPELESS OBSESSION

The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that our standardization-based model of education is incapable of equitably delivering the kind of preparation our young people need to thrive. Heightened levels of youth stress, persistent economic inequality, disengagement of young people from the democratic process, and a general decaying of hope are indicators that we, the adults creating this system, have not yet gotten it right.

As such, we would do well to move beyond the obsession of how *should* a school function, and instead consider how *might* a school function? How *might* a student progress? What possibilities *might* exist? What connections *might* be made?

A school that works becomes an enormous laboratory of open exploration, trial and error, failure and success. Accordingly, good educational policy will focus that exploration; it will not inhibit it.



# **THE NEW EXPERTS**

**In a system committed to dynamic possibilities over permanent design, the mantle of leadership must necessarily shift from a narrow, centralized team of detached academics to a wide, decentralized network of connected experts.**

**But who exactly are these new experts?**

**They are those individuals who possess a deep well of practical experience in the field of education; committed practitioners who have developed domain-specific expertise through ongoing hours of explicit, deliberate and sustained practice; local specialists who are uniquely poised to spot emerging patterns and adapt to shifting contexts within a school environment.**

**In other words, they are teachers.**

# **RUNNING TO STAND STILL**

**There is a growing awareness that investing in professional development for teachers is one of the most effective ways to support collective teacher efficacy and drive higher student achievement. And, to a much greater degree than many people realize, this investment is being made.**

**Even by the most conservative of estimates, American public schools are believed to spend in excess of \$18 billion per year on PD, which equates to an average of \$5,600+ in annual spending per teacher. In reality, this figure is likely much higher.**

**There is no question that schools are deeply invested – both philosophically and economically – in helping their teachers succeed at one of the most difficult jobs on the planet. Unfortunately, this investment does not appear to be paying off. Even though over 90% of teachers commit to participating in PD each year, the majority reportedly do not believe this effort is useful to their practice.**



# **BIRTH OF THE AGENTIC TEACHER**

**At present, most professional development misses the mark. One-time workshops are the most prevalent model for delivering professional skills training, and yet they have an abysmal track record for changing teacher practice. Just as we can't simply 'pour' knowledge into the heads of our students, neither can we with teachers.**

**It's an undeniable truth that teaching is a complex and nuanced endeavor, and professional development must recognize this. If we accept that schools are places of diversity – subject to an 'intricate ballet' of frequent and unpredictable reshaping – teachers will have to become comfortable with changing the tire while the car is running so to speak; creating their own innovations in instruction while at the same time teaching to higher standards.**

**In other words, teachers must become agentic. They must accept increased autonomy over the instruction process, and equip themselves with the foundational type of knowledge, skills and dispositions that have been consistently demonstrated to help teachers support students across varying contexts.**

# A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

In order to meet the increasingly rigorous demands of education -- and to earn a better yield on the massive investment we are making in teacher PD -- schools cannot simply do more of the same. We must seek out a better approach to professional learning that drives targeted, sustainable change.

With that in mind, we created a new program called *The Learning Blueprint*.



Developed and led by leading science of learning expert Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath, *The Learning Blueprint* is designed to bridge the gap between the status quo and the new mandate for teacher development, and equip learning communities with the shared capacity to embrace a more diverse, broadscale vision for education.



# THE BIG PICTURE

***The Learning Blueprint* is uniquely tailored to support academic communities that value deep learning, innovation, high-achievement, and whole-child development.**

**At its core, the program is designed to bring the Learning Sciences to all relevant stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents and leadership. Through ongoing cycles of knowledge-building and evidence-gathering, *The Learning Blueprint* is an iterative process of targeted improvement meant to help diverse learning communities identify and personalize those practices which maximize their impact.**

**Over the course of 1-3 years, participating cohorts build a foundation of research-based knowledge, create shared plans for success, embed high-impact learning strategies, and develop an internal system for collecting and evaluating evidence to inform future decisions.**



# EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Over the past four years, *The Learning Blueprint* has been delivered to dozens of schools, hundreds of teachers and thousands of students across Australia, America and Hong Kong ... and the results have been remarkable.

For instance, from 2017-19, the teachers at Genazzano College in Melbourne, Australia (an all-girls Catholic school serving 1,000 P-12 students) participated in the program. During this period, the median student ATAR score increased from 85.5 to 90.0, while the percentage of students who's score exceeded 90.0 rose from 36% to 50% (the highest in school history). Meanwhile, the teachers demonstrated a significant increase in their ability to effectively adapt and apply key Science of Learning concepts to their practice.

Similarly, *The Learning Blueprint* was delivered from 2016-19 at St. James Parish in Ballarat, Australia (a low SES school serving 200 P-5 students). During this period, student NAPLAN reading scores rose from 358 to 466 (the highest in school history), while reading, writing and numeracy growth significantly outpaced national avg's.

# WHY IT WORKS

We've identified a handful of key reasons why The Learning Blueprint has been so successful in driving measurable change among committed learning communities.

- **RIGOROUS BASIS IN THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING** | *The Learning Blueprint* maintains a commitment to teaching foundations of learning. This means well-characterized, well-replicated concepts supported by a wealth of brain and behavioral research.
- **PRACTICAL MECHANISM FOR PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION** | To help schools move past the ineffective 'workshop' model of PD, *The Learning Blueprint* delivers a practical framework for innovation that teams can leverage to drive higher student achievement and support professional growth. Known as 'Micro Projects', teachers will engage in an iterative cycle of testing, assessing, documenting, and sharing pedagogical strategies and evidence.



# WHY IT WORKS (CONT.)

- **STRATEGIC INCLUSION OF AGE-APPROPRIATE STUDENTS** | *The Learning Blueprint* includes an elective metacognition module specifically designed to help adolescent students (i.e. year 9 and above) take agency over their own thinking, learning, and self-management practices. Not only does this align their interests with broader school ambitions of high-achievement and whole-child development, but it addresses an enormous gap left unfilled by the federally mandated academic standards.
- **SUPERIOR LEARNER EXPERIENCE** | For too many teachers, PD consists only of occasional ‘in-service programs’ of limited duration (i.e. workshops) during which they are passively exposed to faddish strategies or irrelevant theories. *The Learning Blueprint* is carefully designed to help participants experience key concepts. Rather than simply gaining exposure to a disconnected set of ‘best practices’, teachers are forced to wrestle with new ideas and undergo deep learning through an extended process of classroom translation.



# **THE LINCHPIN FOR CHANGE**

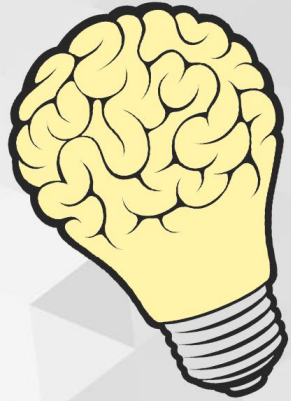
If education is to move beyond the status quo of strict standardization and mass uniformity, it will have to be teachers who serve as the linchpin for change. Teachers maintain a natural position of connection and authority within learning communities, and they must accept a greater degree of leadership over the future direction of our schools.

As such, it is imperative that we upgrade our approach to teacher development, and equip our greatest academic assets with the means to engage in their practice with more agency and autonomy.

For schools that are ready to embrace this a new vision of education rooted in diversity, innovation, high-achievement and whole-child development, *The Learning Blueprint* can deliver a proven, sustainable solution.

# LET'S GET STARTED!

Are you ready to explore how *The Learning Blueprint* can work for your school? Send us an email at [info@lmeglobal.net](mailto:info@lmeglobal.net) and we can schedule a time to meet and/or supply you with additional information. We look forward to hearing from you!



the **LEARNING BLUEPRINT**

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE LAB AND THE CLASSROOM

Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath

