

New Research and Development Acceleration Effort to Redesign Public Education System Launches Across the United States

Education Reimagined Effort Flips Paradigm from Classroom-Based to Community-Based Education

WASHINGTON D.C., October 17, 2023 — Education Reimagined is launching a research and development acceleration initiative to create and enact a new design of a modern public education system that aligns more directly with the needs of learners, their communities and our economy. This effort will result in five full demonstrations of newly designed community-based ecosystems in five communities over the next five years.

To seed this research and development effort, Education Reimagined aims to raise more than \$20 million dollars by the end of 2024. The organization is coalescing the partners, marshaling infrastructure resources, and identifying the policies and conditions to enable the development of [community-based ecosystems of learning](#) throughout the country. This vision is grounded in the equitable development of each child's agency, identity and purpose. It shifts from the traditional notion of education being confined to a single building, and instead, leverages the community, its assets, and its people as the classroom. This R&D acceleration initiative will demonstrate this new way of organizing, supporting and credentialing public K–12 education, to equip young people and communities more powerfully for a future we cannot predict.

“Today’s education system was designed more than a century ago to meet a specific, now outdated, need to train workers for predetermined roles in an industrial society. As paradigms shift all around us, including the artificial intelligence revolution across our society, we need to shift education and invent a system that aligns with the needs and opportunities of the future,” said Kelly Young, president and founder of Education Reimagined. “We are excited to ignite a process to uncover specific ways to build and spread this community-based ecosystem vision in partnership with these communities and dozens more to come.”

In these systems, young people proactively lead their learning journeys, are supported by caring adults and mentors, and learn everywhere, way beyond the walls of a school. Learning occurs and is credentialed across a community, within curated and supported networks of parks, museums, libraries, natural settings, sports fields, businesses, homes, virtual settings, school and college buildings, civic centers, and community squares.

In partnership with Education Reimagined, leaders in diverse communities across the country have already started this work to build locally-driven visions for learning ecosystems, set strategies, and lay the groundwork to bring this to life in partnership with their communities. Sites that have started this work are building out home bases for long-term relationship, learning-journey and identity-development; learning hubs for contextually relevant academic learning and skill-building; and field sites with deeply integrated real-world learning, hands-on experimentation and exploration.

Education Reimagined teams will be working with waves of additional communities in the coming years to explore possibilities and unearth insights to empower the ultimate development of these demonstration sites. This phase aims to prove the viability of the concept of community-based systems of learning and understand how to enable its spread.

In order to reach the goal of five full demonstrations of community-based public education systems, Education Reimagined seeks to engage at least 50 communities over the next five years. To learn more about learner-centered education and community-based ecosystems of learning, and to inquire about joining the effort to pilot ecosystems in your community, visit thebigidea.education-reimagined.org.



Community-Based, Learner-Centered Ecosystems

Education Reimagined is launching a comprehensive R&D acceleration initiative to create an alternative public education system designed to align with what's now needed for our youth and society, and for igniting healthy, productive and family-sustaining futures.

This R&D effort to shape and enact an alternative design of public education is grounded in the vision of community-based, learner-centered ecosystems. **We are flipping the paradigm of education, to a public system in which individual communities — and all their unique assets—become the classroom, the lab, the library and the playground of learning.**

This is not about building new school models or attempting to enact innovation within the existing school systems. **By contrast, this effort is about inventing systems anew and creating a public education option designed intentionally to leverage full communities to serve learners and their needs.**

SOCIETAL NEEDS ANSWERED BY ECOSYSTEMS

Paradigms are shifting all around us. The paradigm of education needs to shift, too.

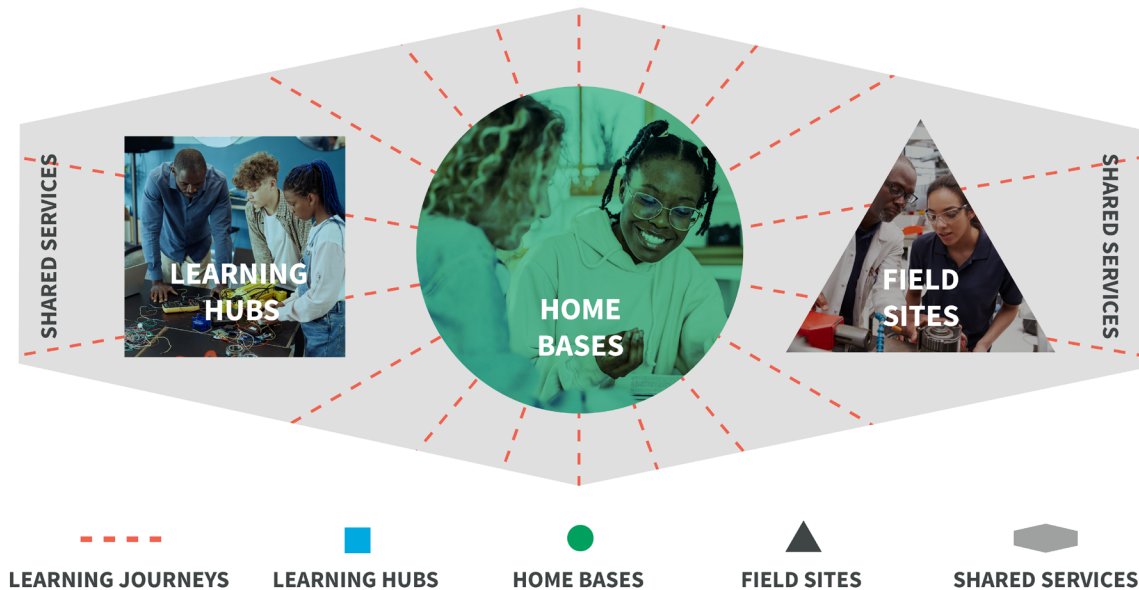
- New opportunities are emerging with the world of work, and the emergence of AI, that require new sets of higher-order competencies and ways for young people to shape ideas, find belonging, build careers and plan their futures.
- Our society is facing existential challenges — climate change, disruption of democracy, eroding public trust — that our younger generations are inheriting as problems to solve. We must support these young people to think big, unleash their creativity and work collaboratively to address these monumental issues.
- Countless factors and influences will emerge that we can't predict. The pace of society's evolution has exponentially increased, which will require our youth to adapt and embrace change nimbly.

Our current 100+ year-old system was not designed to develop learners for these opportunities and demands of the future. It was designed very intentionally to meet **a specific, now outdated, need — preparing a workforce for the industrial era.**

On top of this, educators are opting out of their careers in droves. For far too long, we have placed the sole burden of academic learning and child development on one population of professionals, while failing to provide them with the support, recognition or compensation commensurate with the ask. The demands and constraints for schooling — including creating order, managing to block schedules, instituting testing and assessment — far too often override the opportunities for learning, and the fulfillment of these individuals' calling to teach.

Moreover, the current system's design has all but blocked the contribution of youth development professionals, early childhood practitioners, community mentors, or families from the education of our children.

All of this requires the mobilization of full communities to reset how young people learn.



WHAT ARE COMMUNITY-BASED, LEARNER-CENTERED ECOSYSTEMS?

Community-based, learner-centered ecosystems are reconceived public education system designs that are emerging across the nation. In this design, K–12 learning is shaped, distributed and networked throughout communities, versus set in singular school buildings. Young people craft and navigate their learning journeys through meaningful collaboration with adults who support them, as well as their peers. The experience of that learning leverages the assets, insights and expertise of a wide variety of organizations and people. It prioritizes learning that is tangible, rooted in context and intrinsically tied to each young person's interests, aspirations and personal relevance.

ELEMENTS OF ECOSYSTEMS

These learning ecosystems consist of interconnected experiences tailored to the interests, needs, gifts and aspirations of each learner. This publicly funded and publicly accountable design aims to heighten equity in learning for each and every young person — no matter their race or circumstance — and mitigate the impact of historic inequities.

Their educational experience is intentionally designed as an ongoing **learning journey** to enable the full spectrum of 1) identity, belonging, relationship and social capital development, 2) vigorous academic learning and skill-building in meaningful and interesting contexts, and 3) real-world learning to explore, discover and apply concepts against projects and experiences of meaning, and interest to each learner.

The ecosystem integrates three types of learning environments that are purposefully interconnected into each child's learning journey:

- **Home Bases**, safe spaces which serve as anchors for learners, peers and advisors to build deep, stable relationships over time, set goals and navigate learning journeys;
- **Learning Hubs**, dedicated spaces that live across the community — such as libraries, schools, colleges, museums, arts centers and labs — for young people to unpack academic foundations and concepts, research ideas, and learn specific skills; and
- **Field Sites**, commercial, public or non-profit organizations — such as businesses, farms, maker spaces, cultural centers — for learners to pursue dedicated projects, apply their learning in the real contexts and the world of work, engage with mentors, and hone their skills and aspirations, all as they contribute to specific needs of that organization.

Local teams of learner-centered advisors and coordinators guide the daily experiences of young people throughout their learning journeys, ensuring they are connected, safe and seen. **Learning Hubs** offer the support of overarching learning facilitators, as well as specialists to drill down into specific subject areas. All of these professionals have the autonomy to build their cultures with learners. And they receive support, resources and a rich community to empower their practice and advance the ecosystem.

At **Field Sites**, designated mentors help learners set and pursue learning goals relevant to specific projects aligned with their overall learning journeys.

Each community taps a suite of shared services 1) to enlist, organize and support community partners, 2) to enable the safe and smooth navigation of this learning through physical services or technology, 3) to facilitate validation and credentialing of experiences, 4) to oversee funding and financial management of the ecosystem, and 5) to codify and share feedback. These shared services provide the connective tissue for enabling learner-centered experiences, and the boundaries of the ecosystem within communities.



Education Reimagined is a national nonprofit organization, based in Washington, D.C., harnessing the power of visionaries and communities across the country to create and enact a new design for the public education system that is centered around learners, versus schools.

GROUNDING COMMITMENTS

Education Reimagined recognizes the obligation of public education to develop and prepare future generations. Education must lead to family-sustaining careers and fulfilling lives — so that all young people are equipped to contribute productively to communities, economies and democracy.

The current public education system was designed more than 100 years ago to meet a specific, now outdated, need: to instill order and compliance, for predetermined roles in an industrial society. This structure has perpetuated long-standing inequalities, resulting in the marginalization of entire communities.

Along with growing numbers of families, educators, youth and communities, Education Reimagined believes that public education must be a community-based endeavor to broaden the horizons of our youth, empowering them to discover their purpose, what excites them, understand how the world works, and develop their skills to contribute meaningfully. Learners must be acknowledged and embraced for who they are, and encouraged to thrive in the present and future.

Paradigms are shifting all around us. The paradigm of public education must shift too.

HISTORY

Education Reimagined came to life in 2013 as a project of Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, a D.C.-based nonprofit that advances collaborative problem-solving across divides to help solve seemingly intractable challenges. This project gathered 28 ideologically diverse stakeholders to consider what was needed to ignite meaningful and productive change within public education. Their work together enlivened a powerful community of people driven to shift the paradigm of K–12 learning more directly toward what matters for the development of young people. This group created a transformational vision for education in the United States, illuminated as learner-centered education. And they distinguished the elements of learner-centered education as 1) learner-agency, 2) socially embedded, 3) personalized, relevant and contextualized, 4) open-walled, and 5) competency-based.

Established as its own 501c3 in 2019, Education Reimagined has successfully furthered the effort to build and advance the field of learner-centered education. In seeking to enable learner-centered education as an option for all young people in the United States, the organization has:

- Established a community of practice of more than 500 learner-centered leaders and young people via its Learning Lab;
- Supported these practitioners with research, tools and learning experiences to advance their learner-centered practice and model advancement;
- Elevated voices and stories of these leaders to bring light to the power and possibility of learner-centered education; and
- Regularly convened leaders and their stakeholders to explore and share new ideas, insights and strategies.

CURRENT FOCUS

As Education Reimagined continues to build the field of learner-centered leaders, the organization today is laser-focused on advancing the creation of a transformed public education system. It is catalyzing players around the country to develop this system, grounded in the concept of community-based, learner-centered ecosystems.

Given the deeply embedded headwinds and constraints within the conventional K-12 system, Education Reimagined operates with the belief that it's necessary to build anew, and completely reframe the ways of working and operating to better serve young people and communities, and deliver the full promise of public education. The organization is working to support an invention process that is not hindered by the current system's 100+-year-old ways of operating.

Education Reimagined is now igniting a comprehensive R&D acceleration initiative to flip the paradigm of education, to a publicly funded and accountable system in which the community becomes the classroom, the lab, the library and the playground of learning. To do so, the organization is sharpening the vision, coalescing the partners, marshaling the funding and resources, and igniting the R&D process to establish learner-centered, community-based ecosystems as a viable, accountable and sustainable alternative design for public education.

LEADERSHIP

Founder and President Kelly Young sets and drives the vision of Education Reimagined, fueled by her entrepreneurialism, her deep background in mobilizing people to shape and enact new ideas, her experience as Chief of Family and Child Engagement at D.C. Public Schools, and as a mom of two. Her team includes experts in strategy, policy, learning science, design and practice, and communications.

Education Reimagined is supported by a Board of Directors and an Advisory Council representing a diverse spectrum of leading voices fueling education invention and advancement.