

A TRANSFORMATIONAL VISION FOR EDUCATION BY SCHOLARS IN THE UNITED STATES

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The current system of education was designed in a different era and structured for a different society. Because the current system was designed nearly 100 years ago for a different society and economy. According to the American scholars such as Stuart Butler, Judy Pepler, Jennifer Humke, Robert Sherman, Lily Eskelsen, Rendi Weingarten the system can no longer deliver on the purpose to which we are committed, nor can it provide the individual and public benefits that are sought. As Robert Sherman states “it’s an inherited system, which is based on a standardized, “factory” model where teachers are given an age-group cohort of children at the beginning of each school year, a standardized curriculum, and a matching set of assessments. Despite teachers’ best efforts to individualize along lines of difference, opportunities to tailor the content, pace, and method of instruction are limited. Students are expected to work with their assigned material and move along with their age cohort as the years pass. Grading and other assessment tools are designed primarily to assess the results of learning, rather than to improve learning as it happens”.

The president of National Education Association Lily Eskelsen emphasizes: “for the next generation of learners to succeed and thrive, their learning experiences must facilitate their development in three primary domains: knowledge, skills, and dispositions. There is evidence that this triad of domains can be mutually reinforcing. Deep engagement with disciplinary knowledge builds and develops learners’ skills—such as communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, metacognition, and critical thinking—and dispositions—such as resilience, curiosity, resourcefulness, persistence, and adaptability. Strong skills and dispositions can then allow learners to broaden and deepen their knowledge, driven by their own interests and motivations, as well as by agreed standards for competency in these domains.”

To ensure development in these three domains for all learners, the American scholars developed the system of learning experiences characterized by the following five interrelated elements:

Competency-based learning is an alternative to age- or grade-based learning. In competency-based learning, each learner works toward competency and strives for mastery in defined domains of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Learners’ trajectories toward mastery are guided and managed, rather than placing the emphasis on their achievement of specific benchmarks in a fixed amount of time. Competency-based learning recognizes that all learners are unique and that different learners progress at different paces. It allows the system structure to support variation of learning speeds in accordance with each learner’s specific

challenges and needs. Assessments, both formative and summative, are utilized on a continuous basis to inform the learning and instructional strategy for each learner. Additional resources are provided to learners who need help to accelerate the pace of competency development.

Personalized, relevant, and contextualized learning is an approach that uses such factors as the learner's own passions, strengths, needs, family, culture, and community as fuel for the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Learning experiences are leveraged to bridge gaps and meet learning challenges; designed to expand interests, opportunities, and perspectives; and responsive to learners' passions. At the same time, they are rooted in real-world contexts and empower the learner to demonstrate his or her learning in a variety of authentic ways and settings.

Learning that is characterized by *learner agency* recognizes learners as active participants in their own learning and engages them in the design of their experiences and the realization of their learning outcomes in ways appropriate for their developmental level. As such, learners have choice and voice in their educational experiences as they progress through competencies. Harnessing his or her own intrinsic motivation to learn, each learner strives to ultimately take full ownership of his or her own learning.

Socially embedded learning is rooted in meaningful relationships with family, peers, qualified adults, and community members and is grounded in community and social interaction. It values face-to-face contact, as well as opportunities to connect virtually, and recognizes the significance of establishing continuity in children's lives through the development of stable relationships. Independent exploration and practice; collaborative group work; structured, intentional instruction; and structured and cooperative play, among other experiences, are integrated to develop learners' competencies. Both peers and adults are recognized as integral partners in learning, and learners are encouraged to interact with those developing at different competency rates, from different backgrounds, and with different interests. Furthermore, socially embedded learning catalyzes and structures partnerships with families, community-based employers, civic organizations, and other entities that can foster learning.

Open-walled learning acknowledges that learning happens at many times and in many places and intentionally leverages its expansive nature in the learner's development of competencies. It creates and takes full advantage of opportunities in a variety of communities, settings, times, and formats. All learning experiences, whether highly structured or exploratory and experiential, are valued, encouraged, and integrated into the learner's journey. These experiences may be in-person, virtual, or blended. Play, recreation, technology-enabled experiences, community-based work, and service opportunities, for instance, are all recognized as legitimate vehicles for learning. Open-walled learning also provides learners with a physical space in which to socialize, collaborate, and learn with peers and adults.

References:

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