

Culture of CBL

How competency-based education supports the dismantling of inequities baked into the K12 education system

OCTOBER 2021

AURORA INSTITUTE VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM





MISSION

Creating **learner-centered communities** where all young people thrive.

WHAT WE DO

- Design
- Adult development
- Change leadership

CORE VALUES

#equity a vision for racial and economic justice through education inspires and focuses our work.

#excellence we commit to delivering exceptional designs and experiences, always.

#care we strive to always humanize, connect, and support one another in the journey; everything with love.

#humility we are dedicated learners who recognize the limitations of our own perspectives and experiences.

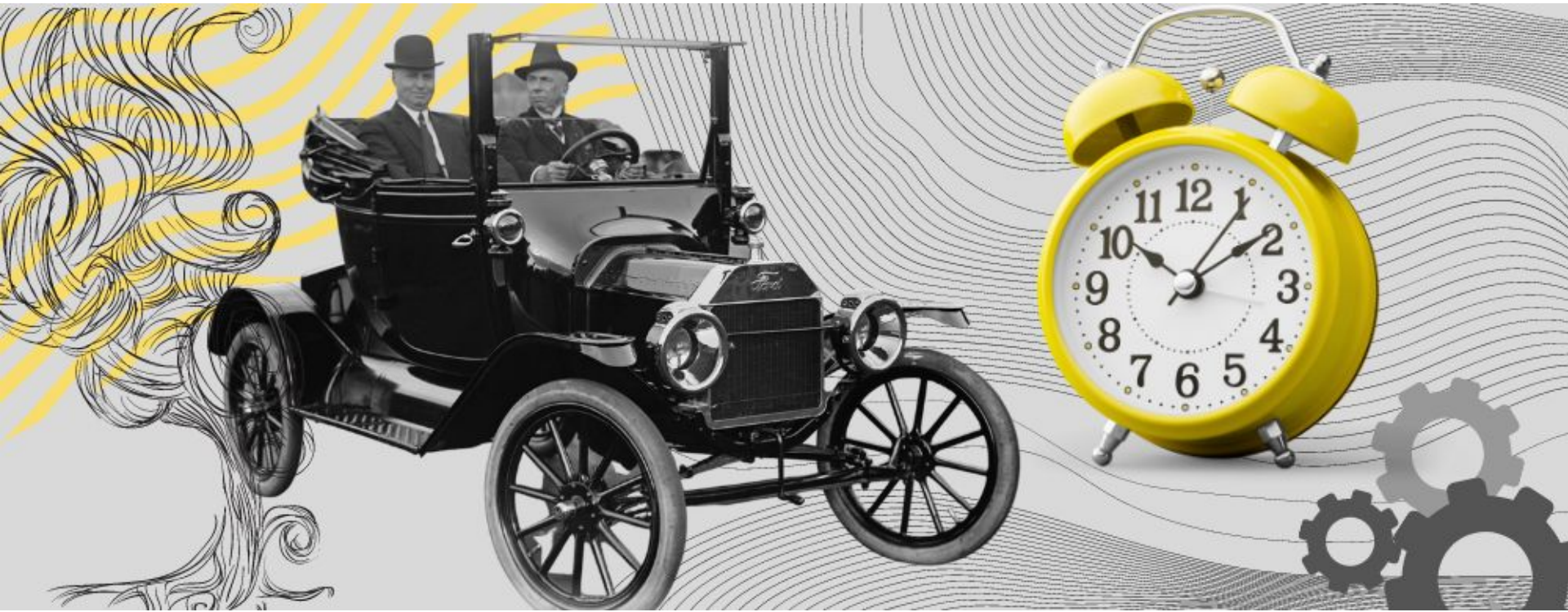
#possibility pushing the creative boundaries of purposeful change is in our organization's DNA.

The Culture of American Schools





Thank you to [Tema Okun](#), Kenneth Jones, and all the brilliant minds who informed and articulated [White Supremacy Culture](#). Their collective work is at the heart of this analysis.



The principles of industrialization deeply permeate the culture of schooling. These principles were designed to uphold white supremacy culture: culture that supports middle- and owner-class whites in maintaining and growing their wealth and power.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

- **Standardization:** Sameness is the goal; variability is a problem
- **Linearity and "one right way:"** There is one single path and "one right way" of production to get to the desired outcome; managers should establish the right way; worker roles should be partitioned and simplified to carry out the work
- **Efficiency:** The ideal production model is the *maximum productivity* in the *least amount of time and cost* without falling below the standard; this ultimately helps to maximum profit
- **Compliance / Distrust of the worker:** The deficit-based assumption that workers will do the least amount of work possible means that shaping the environment to maximize compliance - such as through strict oversight and careful control over the environment - were necessary

How CBL Shifts the Culture

SHIFTING FROM A WHITE SUPREMACIST PARADIGM TO A LEARNER-CENTERED, COMPETENCY-BASED ONE

WSC Feature



URGENCY

“We need to move to the next lesson/skill/unit so that learners don’t fall behind.”

Quick learning is evidence of intelligence, skill, and competency.

Proficiency happens when it happens: people who learn more slowly are no less competent **once** they become competent.

SHIFTING FROM A WHITE SUPREMACIST PARADIGM TO A LEARNER-CENTERED, COMPETENCY-BASED ONE

WSC Feature



QUALIFIED & OBJECTIVE:

“I am qualified to know what “smart” is, how it manifests.”

Some people are smart (or talented, or gifted) and some aren't.

The brain is adaptable and flexible, always growing and learning. We tend to be very competent in some arenas, and less so in others. Over time our competence in any arena can increase with effort, efficacy, coaching, and practice.

SHIFTING A FROM WHITE SUPREMACIST PARADIGM TO A LEARNER-CENTERED, COMPETENCY-BASED ONE

WSC Feature

PERFECTIONISM

"I expect students to turn in high quality work."



Revising, retaking, and redoing is a sign that students haven't learned what they need to learn.



Revising, retaking, and redoing is practice: it is how everyone develops competency. This is also a demonstration of perseverance and determination--habits that are essential in all arenas of life.

A Take Home Version (very much a work in progress)

SHIFTING FROM WHITE SUPREMACY PARADIGM TO A LEARNER-CENTERED, COMPETENCY-BASED ONE | a few examples



wsc characteristics

	<i>from</i>	<i>to</i>
URGENCY	<p>Some people are smart (or talented, or gifted) and some aren't.</p> <p>Quick learning is evidence of intelligence and competency.</p> <p>As long as we learn at least 65% of the material we are ready to progress.</p>	<p>The brain is adaptable and flexible, always growing and learning. We tend to be very competent in some arenas, and less so in others. Over time our competence in any arena can increase with effort, efficacy, coaching, and practice.</p> <p>Proficiency happens when it happens: people who learn more slowly are no less competent once they become competent.</p> <p>Learning two-thirds of anything is a great start. Now let's figure out what's needed in order to become truly competent.</p>
DEFENSIVENESS, FEAR OF OPEN CONFLICT	<p>Respect and self-control in school can be expected of everyone all the time.</p>	<p>Interpersonal communication is a complex, layered set of skills. Experiences of trauma, especially early in life, can make it challenging to engage in communication in stressful moments.</p>
PERFECTIONISM	<p>Revising, retaking, and redoing is a sign that students haven't learned what they need to learn.</p> <p>Composite course grades tell us what students know and can do.</p>	<p>Revising, retaking, and redoing is practice: it is how everyone develops competency It is also evidence of mastery of perseverance and determination: qualities that are essential in life.</p> <p>To really understand what students know and can do, we have to look at their mastery of specific, research-based competencies, and their attendant skills. Course grades need to reflect what students have ultimately mastered, rather than an average of how well they have mastered things at moments in time.</p>
WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD	<p>Showing your work, thinking, and process will help you learn.</p>	<p>There are many ways for learners to show what they know, think, understand, and can do. Creating options and choices nurtures agency, and builds competency across multiple domains.</p>
INDIVIDUALISM	<p>You will learn best if you work on your own and create your own product.</p>	<p>Learning is a social endeavor: we learn best when we have opportunities to</p>

(some of) THE CHARACTERISTICS of WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE | Tema Okun, [updated 2021](#)

- FEAR** White supremacy culture's number one strategy is to make us afraid. When we are afraid, we lose touch with our power and become more easily manipulated by the promise of an illusory safety.
- ONE RIGHT WAY** (along with PERFECTIONISM, PATERNALISM, OBJECTIVITY & QUALIFIED)
The belief there is one right way to do things. Connected to the belief in an objective "perfect" that is both attainable and desirable for everyone. Connected to the belief that I am qualified to know what the perfect right way is for myself and others.
- EITHER/OR & THE BINARY** Reduces the complexity of life and the nuance of our relationships with each other and all living things into either/or, yes or no, right or wrong in ways that reinforce urgency, one right way perfectionist thinking, and abuse of power.
- DENIAL & DEFENSIVENESS** The habit of denying and defending against the ways in which white supremacy and racism are produced and our individual or collective participation in that production.
- RIGHT TO COMFORT & FEAR OF CONFLICT** The internalization that I or we have a right to comfort, which means we cannot tolerate conflict, particularly open conflict.
- INDIVIDUALISM** Our cultural story that we make it on our own, without help, while pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, is a toxic denial of our essential interdependence and the reality that we are all in this, literally, together.
- WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD** Honoring only what is written and even then only what is written to a narrow standard, even when what is written is full of misinformation and lies. An erasure of the wide range of ways we communicate with each other and all living things.
- PROGRESS IS MORE & QUANTITY OVER QUALITY** The assumption that the goal is always more and bigger ,with an emphasis on what we can "objectively" measure as more valuable than the quality of our relationships to all living beings.
- URGENCY** Applying the urgency of racial and social justice to our everyday lives in ways that perpetuate power imbalance and disregard for our need to breathe and pause and reflect.

reDesign's Equity Statement

reDesign Equity Statement



What we believe.

It's a simple idea, really. We believe what you look like, the language you speak, the income you earn, who you love, where you live, or what you believe should not be predictive of your educational or life outcomes. Social and cultural identities should not limit the opportunities of some, and deem limitless the opportunities of others. This is a basic principle of fairness.

And yet, this basic principle is missing from the blueprint of our education systems—not by coincidence, but by design. Underlying all of our institutions is a system of advantage created to secure and protect the wealth and power of white, heteronormative folks. The resulting oppression of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and LGBTQ+ and other communities is both structural (think: policies, laws, financing, institutions) and cultural (think: ideas, beliefs, attitudes, norms), holding inequities firmly in place.

At reDesign, we believe that all of us can play a part in disrupting these inequities. We can reimagine the current blueprint, and co-design new, liberatory learning systems deeply grounded in love, locality, and justice for all. When it comes to K-12 education, here's what we believe:

Every young person deserves to be met right where they are.

It's time to reimagine schools as learning communities: places where every learner is affirmed and supported as they discover and develop their identities, passions, competencies, and sense of purpose. In learner-centered communities, all learners have the opportunity to experience connectedness, develop competency, and cultivate critical consciousness to positively impact the world.

Every educator deserves a world-class profession.

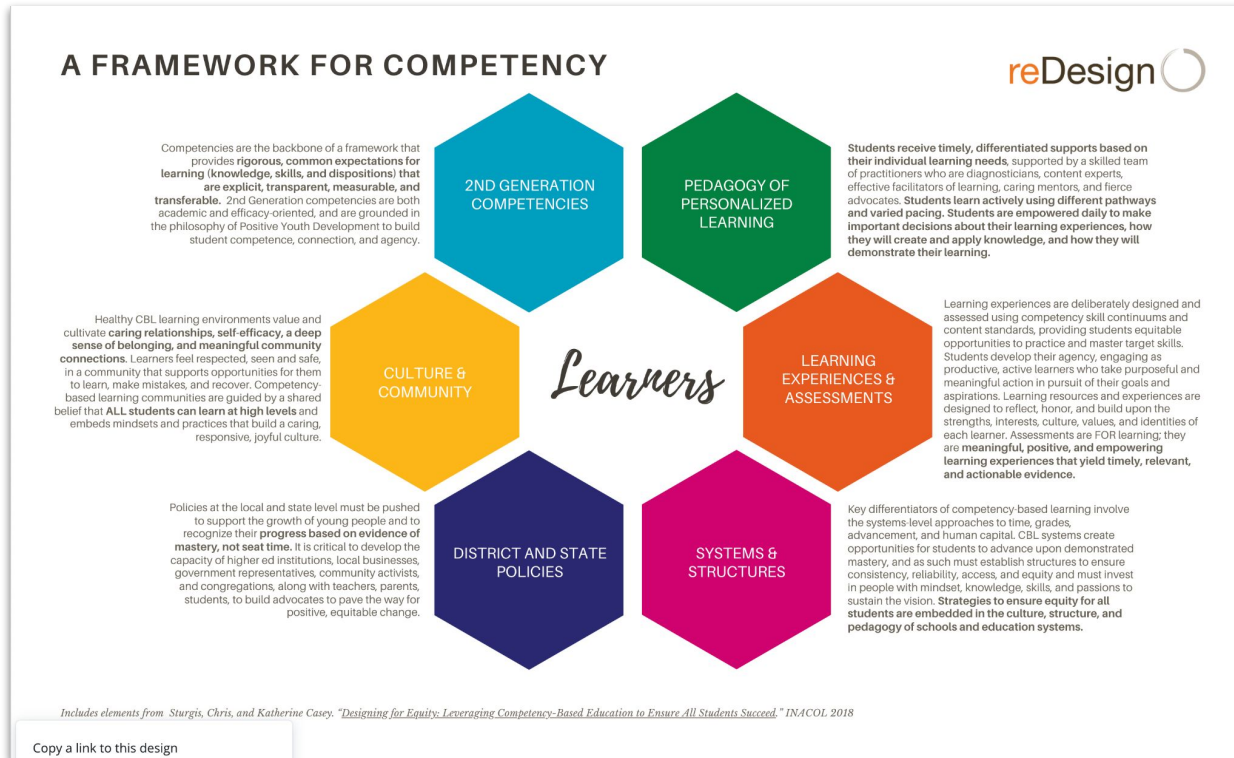
Interest in the work of education is at an all-time low, and each year experienced educators seek to leave the field. It's time to reinvent the profession: the working conditions and expectations, the resources and respect, the compensation, the competencies and qualifications, the pathways for advancement, the learning supports, and the range of roles.

Everyone deserves access to lifelong learning communities.

In a world of continuous change, an equitable learning system ensures everyone has meaningful opportunities to connect, learn, and contribute as lifelong learners and community members. Reimagined learning communities extend beyond classrooms and schools. They are local and virtual, peer-based and intergenerational. They function as spaces that reflect and nurture community assets, and contribute to greater opportunities and equity for all.)

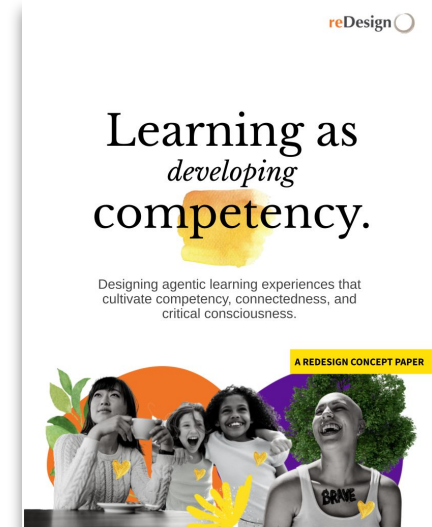
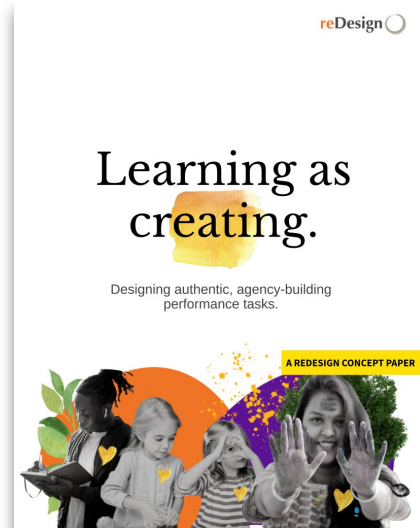
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A Learner-centered Framework for Competency



3 *NEW* Concept Papers - Hot off the press!

The best of reDesign's thinking over the years



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♥ Reach out: antonia@redesignu.org

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