



SYMPOSIUM BREAKOUT SESSION
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022 | 12:00-1:00 PM ET

Creating New Possibilities for School Design: Collaboratively Exploring Educational Paradigms Alongside Students

PRESENTERS:

- Rohan Menon, reDesign
- Donelle Nalder, reDesign Youth Advisory Council (YAC)
- Aanika Dalal, reDesign Youth Advisory Council (YAC)
- Sabbia Gale-Donnelly, reDesign Youth Advisory Council (YAC)



Creating New Possibilities for School Design

COLLABORATIVELY EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL
PARADIGMS ALONGSIDE STUDENTS



OCTOBER 2022

AURORA INSTITUTE VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

reDesign 



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reDesign 



Aanika Dalal

Austin, TX



Donelle Nalder

Boise, ID



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly

Crompond, NY



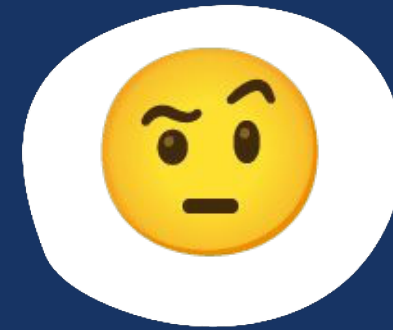
let's get warmed up.

turn your camera OFF.



go to “gallery view” on Zoom.

listen to the questions...



... and respond with your camera!

Have you ever thought about...

*...how to create more flexibility
in your school day?*

Have you ever thought about...

*...how to give your students a more
active role in their learning?*

Have you ever thought about...

...how to assess student learning differently (instead of big, final exams)?

Should your students
be part of changing
these paradigms?

Should your students
be paid for doing
these things?

Uh, yeah!



MISSION

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

WHAT WE DO

- Learner-Centered Design
- Adult development
- Change leadership



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WHAT WE DO

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Youth Advisory Council

Meet the 2021-22 Youth Advisors.

Sonya Pholsiri (Round Rock, TX)

★ Sabbia Gale-Donnelly (Crompond, NY)

Matthew G. Smith (Baltimore, MD)

Marbellyn Lopez (Round Rock, TX)

Hayden Hill (Durham, NC)

★ Donelle Nalder (Boise, ID)

Devonne Riddick (Lawrenceville, GA)

David Vicuna (Temple, TX)

Darisel Velez (Central Falls, RI)

Chase Nelson (Ellicott City, MD)

Ava Richardson (Memphis, TN)

Alex Williams (Baker, MT)

Akayla Baynes (Wentzville, MO)

★ Aanika Dalal (Austin, TX)

At a glance...

14 students.

10 states.

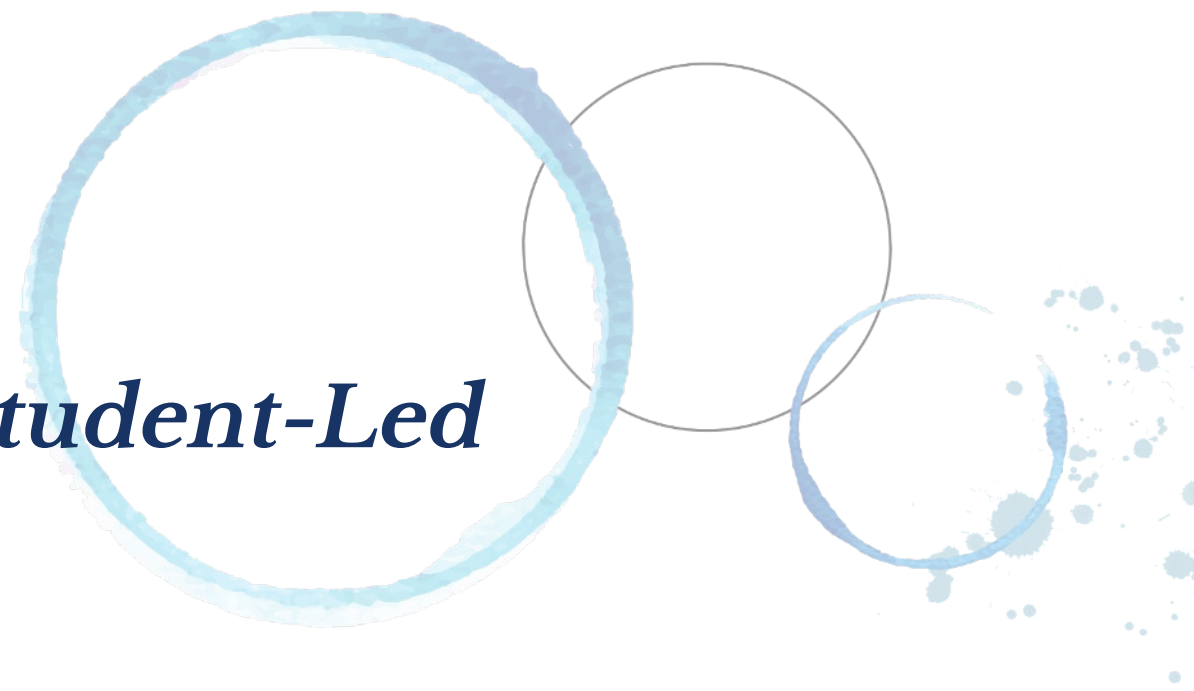
4 grade levels.

**Hundreds of ideas about how
to make school better.**



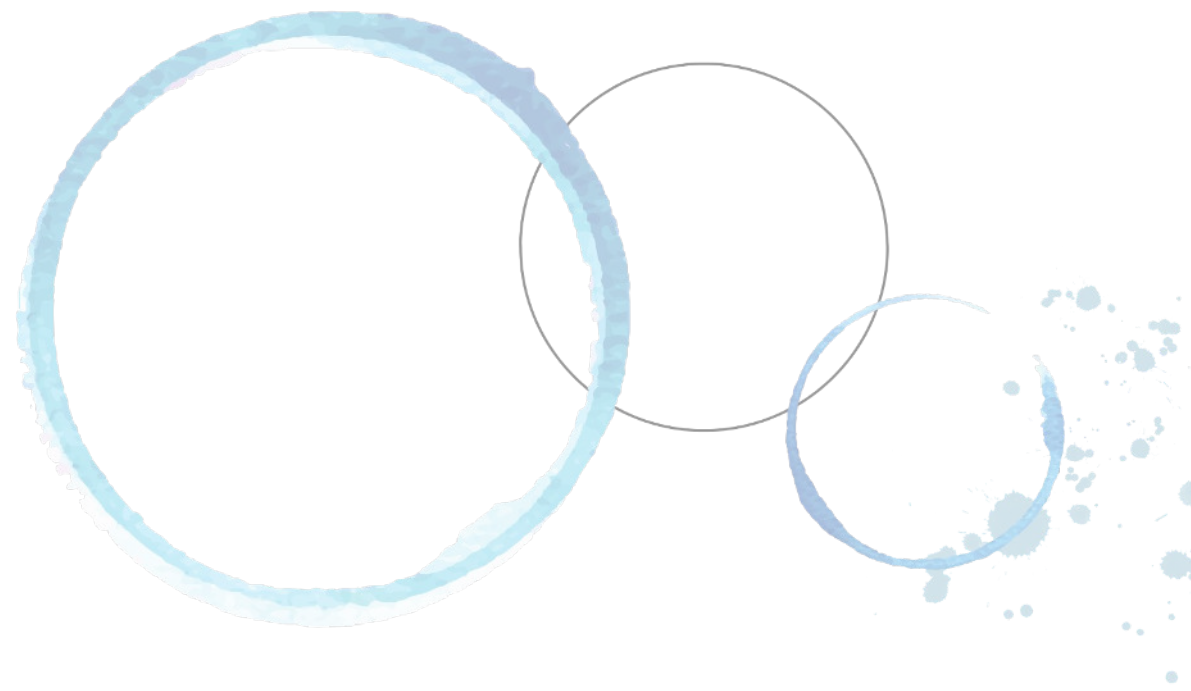
Part 1

Paradigms & Possibilities: Student-Led Investigations



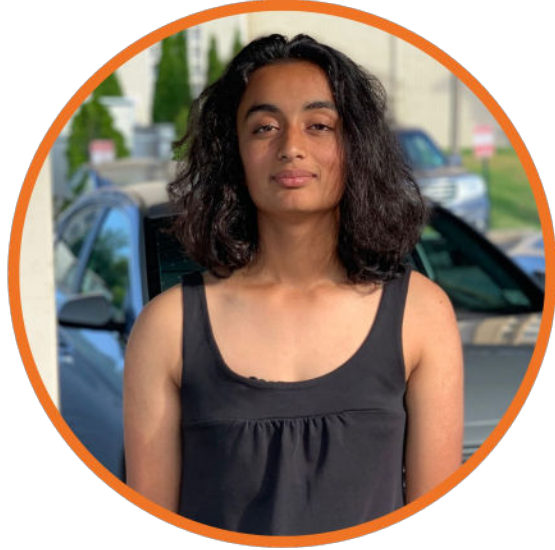
Part 2

Paradigms & Possibilities: Collaboration and Co-Design



Part 1

Paradigms & Possibilities: Student-Led Investigations



Aanika Dalal

Austin, TX



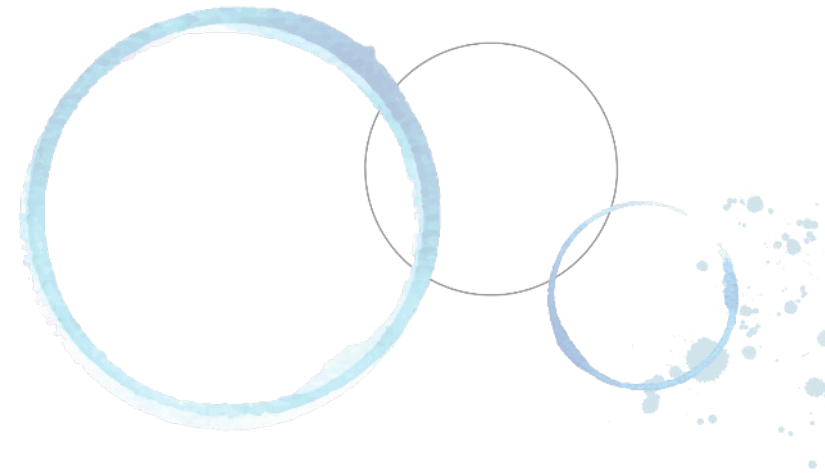
Donelle Nalder

Boise, ID



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly

Crompond, NY



Aanika Dalal

Austin, TX



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AUTHOR INFO

Aanika Dalal,
Age 18, she/her

From: Austin, TX

Describe yourself in 5 emojis: 🧐📝📖📌📎

Best learning experience: Writing a paper on curiosity

Most curious about: The relationships and connections between seemingly unrelated knowledge

EXPLORING

Youth Advisory Council

TIME-BOUND/RIGID SCHEDULE wastes time, but it reduces learning. I have had the opportunity to do self-paced learning. From my experience, the main benefit of self-paced learning is that it allows students to move over their learning. This encourages students to take ownership of their education and makes them more motivated. Additionally, self-paced learning allows students to schedule around learning opportunities, such as the opportunity to do an internship or a job, and then do the internship and catch up on the work.

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Key Resource: [Scheduling for learning, not convenience](#)

Acton Academy (HS)

- 8:30-8:45 - Socratic discussion
- 8:45-12:00 - Student Core Skills
- 10:00-10:15 - Students work independently to meet their goals/assignments
- 12:00-12:30 - Lunch
- 12:30-12:45 - Socratic discussion
- 12:45-2:50 - Quiet work
- Students work together on a "big project" every day
- 2:50-3:00 - Clean up
- 3:00-3:15 - Socratic discussion

All asynchronous work takes place over 5-6 week blocks. Students have a certain amount of "blocks" they need to participate in to graduate, but when they complete these blocks it is up to them and flexible around their schedule.

IN THIS EXAMPLE: This model of education and the flexibility it provides allows students to better pursue interests and projects outside of school. It also leads to greater engagement in learning as it allows students to learn at a pace that is right for them in the way that is right for them.

The major downside of this system is that it is very easy for students to fall VERY behind and not be able to catch up. Self-paced learning can also be taken a little too far to the point where it hinders students ability to get help that they need. Additionally, students can end up pushing themselves too hard or too little without the proper guidance.

GATHERING IDEAS FROM OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE...

Thoughts about school scheduling and self-paced learning?

"I don't think it's possible to do fully self-paced or fully not. You have to do some things with other people which requires a schedule- there should be a balance of both."

"It is amazing!"

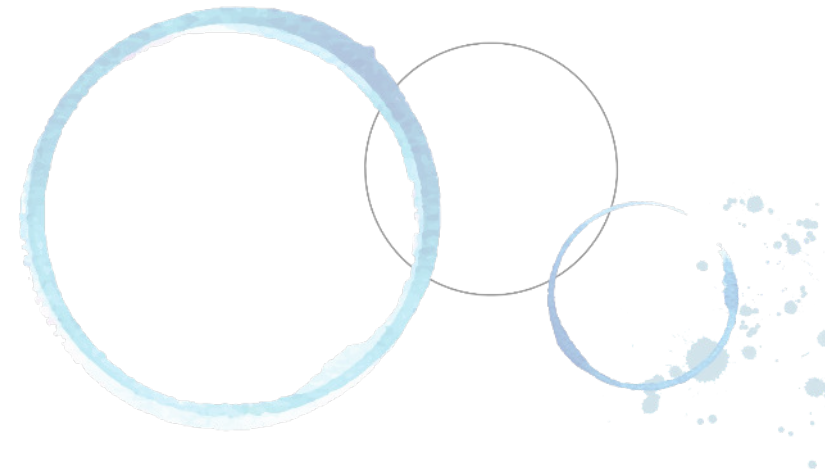
"It's cool that as I've gotten older Acton lets me do more self-paced work."

"Asynchronous work seems to spring mostly from leftover time after the lesson/class (as in time for self-paced work is not often set aside purposefully). It also seems like the effectiveness of asynch. work vs. synch work depends on the class; students may just need more individual practice for some classes or more instruction/explanation for others."

Exploring Scheduling

Can flexible scheduling create the conditions for student agency?

Check out the full publication!



Donelle Nalder
Boise, ID

Exploring Active Learning

Does hands-on, project-based learning affect student engagement?

Check out the full publication!



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AUTHOR INFO



Donelle Nalder,
Age 17, she/her

From: Boise, ID

Emojis that describe me:
🧐 📖 🦋 🐸 🐟

"My best learning experience ever was Biology Club. We dissected some cool stuff, like gophers and ducks, and did lots of bird watching and got to feed the tank full of super awesome fish."

"I'm curious to learn more interesting, blow-your-mind facts. I love knowing crazy and hard to believe things about the human body, animals, the world, etc."



EXPLORING

Youth Advisory Council

PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE LEARNING

to look at why students, like taking notes, teaching, doing worksheets, reading, "untraditional" ways of learning on activities, experiments, scenarios, real-world projects.

Not all students learn the best by reading textbooks. And then tests/exams, or just aren't good bored when they are not actively engaged. And when students are bored, they don't learn and grow. In my experience, what needs to happen is learning and the students' level of engagement that happens in our education.

KEY RESOURCES:

- [Why choice matters to student learning](#)
- [To engage students, give them meaningful choices in the classroom](#)
- [The secret of student motivation: Motivation is a choice](#)

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

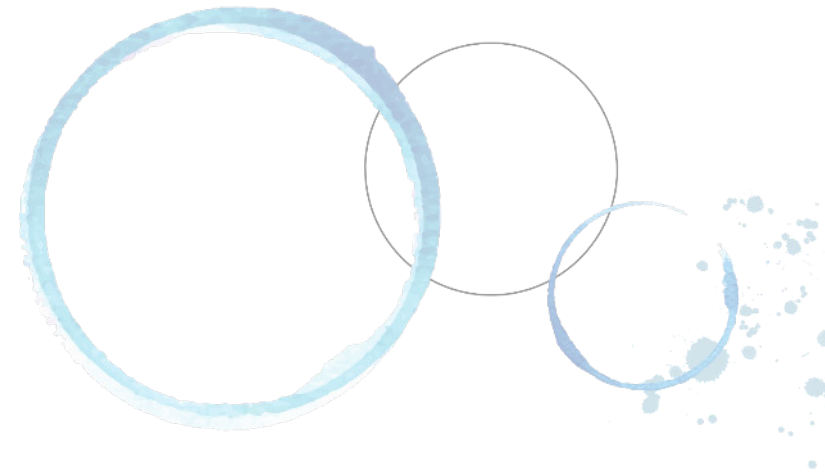
Giving students the choice about the tasks to perform, ways to report, and learning goals improved results and engagement. It helps them feel ownership.

Motivation can be fueled by extrinsic motivators (rewards, praise, grades, punishment, shame), but the long-term goal should be to develop intrinsic motivation (enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose) resulting in more meaningful learning.

In one example that worked well, a teacher gave her students the choice of the context for the math warm-up problem they would be doing at the beginning of class. The results were great - the students were more engaged in the warm-up problem and tardiness decreased.

In another example, that didn't work as well, a teacher gave students the choice of what set of problems to work on, depending on difficulty. The students were bored and tended to pick the easy ones that weren't challenging them.

I learned from these examples that not all choices that are presented to students will motivate them in their learning. It can all depend on little details of the choice being presented, like if there are too many or too few options, if the students understand the choice and how it's important or relates to them, if they feel separated because of their individual choice or not, and how big or small the choice is.



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly

Crompond, NY

Exploring Final Exams

Are traditional, fact-based, multiple-choice exams the best metric of student learning?

Check out the full publication!



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AUTHOR INFO



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly,
Age 17, she/they

From: Cortlandt Manor, NY

5 Emojis that describe me:



"In middle school, I was fortunate enough to have a classical theater class - playing Nicholas Bottom and Rosalind (and practicing my accent with assorted trees and mirrors) gave me a ridiculous amount of happiness!"

"I want to understand the words that run the world - to be able to dig through a hundred page pdf in legalese and emerge with the loophole we need to better the system."



EXPLORING

Youth Advisory Council

USING CONTENT-BASED ASSESSMENT: I'd like to see traditional, two-hour exams as a metric of student mastery. The fundamental purpose of education is to teach specific concepts, but also to prepare students for the workforce. Even the most skilled workers face high expectations that are not always met. Students must sum on command; rather, they should be able to solve (or perhaps even more so, explain) a complex problem. With this in mind, traditional content-based exams may not achieve their stated purpose of proving student mastery. To ensure that students have internalized course concepts, a guarantee of sufficiency in the crucial abilities a course is supposed to teach. In addition, a variety of confounding factors - test anxiety, physical setting, learning disabilities, reading/writing ability where literacy is not the skill being measured - further invalidate results.



A culminating effort that requires students to apply concepts in an original manner would be a better means of truly measuring the extent to which a learner is equipped to operate outside of the classroom (i.e. in the workforce). The broadness of this metric is limitless - a verbal report followed by questioning, thesis style; an experiment; and writing word problems with realistic scenarios that use a specific math technique are all viable alternatives to the traditional final. Incorporating an element of choice that enables students to select whatever option they feel will best showcase their proficiency additionally makes the nontraditional "final" a more accessible and accurate assessment. For example, high anxiety individuals (me!) may opt for a video project filmed outside of the classroom in a low-stress environment that enables optimal performance.

This is not to say that grades are an easily removable component of public education - quarterly averages may continue to serve as a source of incentive/proof that necessary material is understood. However, one massive content-based final that is commonly weighted at 20% of the entire course grade simply makes no sense - even students that memorize all of the factual information may have an off-day, rendering the final inefficient in terms of measuring content knowledge in addition to competency (ability).



COMPETENCY:
MEANINGFUL LEARNING

READ THE WORLD

- Contextualize sources
- Engage and critique ideas
- Evaluate use of techniques and technology
- Learn from the past

INQUIRE & REASON

- Frame a research question
- Hypothesize and experiment
- Collect original data
- Analyze and interpret data
- Use and develop models
- Solve problems

LEARN

INTERDEPENDENTLY

- Develop a purpose and plan
- Monitor progress and adjust
- Reflect on learning and collaboration

CONNECTEDNESS:
IN COMMUNITY

SUSTAIN WELLNESS

- Nurture my identity
- Engage and disrupt internalized oppression
- Build affirming life practices
- Advocate for myself and others

NAVIGATE CONFLICT

- Recognize and process my feelings
- Recognize and respond to the feelings of others
- Apply strategies to work toward resolution

BUILD COMMUNITY

- Cultivate belonging
- Build relational networks
- Nurture and sustain relationships

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS:
TO BETTER THE WORLD

EXPRESS IDEAS

- Find inspiration and ideas
- Determine purpose and audience
- Choose & develop my message
- Develop craft
- Prepare the medium
- Finalize, practice and/or prepare

DESIGN SOLUTIONS

- Define and explore a problem
- Generate and select ideas for prototyping
- Test and iterate

CREATE A MORE JUST WORLD

- Examine enduring problems
- Take action to improve my community and the world

reDesign's Whole-child Competency Framework



Design Solutions

- Define and explore a problem
- Generate and select ideas for prototyping
- Test and iterate

reDesign's **Whole-child Competency Framework**



Design Solutions

I can use an inclusive, deliberate process to solve problems.

LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
I can identify and define a design problem that has significance in my community.	I can identify and define a design problem and explain its significance and impact on one or more communities.	I can identify, define, or reframe, an enduring and significant design problem that impacts one or more communities.
I can gather, record, and analyze information that will help me understand the problem and key design constraints (e.g., time, budget, ethical factors, impact on others).	I can gather, record, and analyze information to help me understand the problem and its context from multiple perspectives, and to articulate key design constraints.	I can gather, record, and analyze information to help me understand the problem and its context from multiple perspectives, and to articulate key design constraints.
I can create criteria for a successful design solution.	I can draw on multiple relevant sources to inform my research (e.g., online data, user experience data).	I can draw on multiple relevant and diverse sources to inform my research.
	I can create and prioritize design criteria while acknowledging trade-offs in decision and design.	I can create and prioritize design criteria with critical detail and precision while working to minimize the impacts of trade-offs in decision and design.

the big idea.

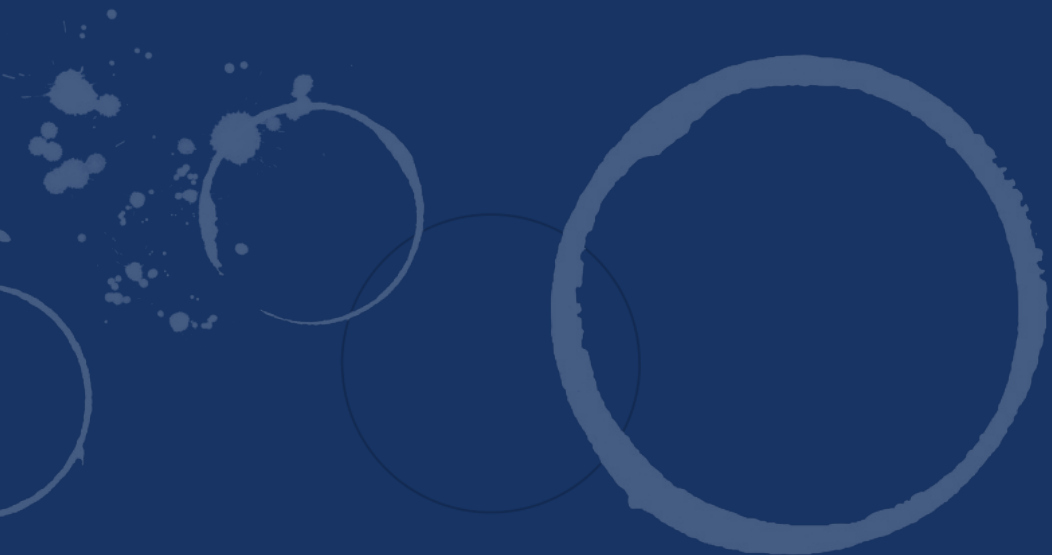
1. **Students can (and should) be your creative partners** in addressing the paradigms that aren't working in your school community.

the big idea.

1. **Students can (and should) be your creative partners** in addressing the paradigms that aren't working in your school community.
2. Leading an exploration into educational paradigms & possibilities is **an opportunity to develop meaningful skills** in an authentic context.

Part 2

Paradigms & Possibilities: Collaboration and Co-Design



our design challenge.

The curriculum we have:

- Rigid hyper-focus on a handful of siloed, “core” disciplines.
 - Ties learning to mandatory, high-stakes tests.
 - Limited set of perspectives, even more limited representation of identities.
 - Ignores crucial skills like problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, etc.
-

The curriculum we want:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| - Inquiry-Based | - Self-Directed |
| - Interdisciplinary | - Scaffolded & Accessible |
| - Inclusive | - Adaptable & Affordable |
| - Non-Linear | - Educator-Designed |
| - Visual | |

our
(proposed)
solution.

EXPLORATIONS (noun)

: a learner-centered research tool.

: a collection of carefully curated interdisciplinary, multimedia resources (think: texts, links, videos) organized around a single focal point — a delicious, provocative, compelling question.



Check out our
prototype!

our big questions.

INTEREST — *Do students care about the issues raised in these boards? Are questions framed to pique their interest? What about sub-questions?*

ACCESSIBILITY — *Can students use the boards? Can they follow the learning arcs? What other support or scaffolding would they need to do this independently?*

QUALITY — *How did students feel about each board? Are there wide variances in perceived “quality”? What assumptions are being made by staff about what students like/dislike?*

our students' answers.

“When I’m asked those kinds of questions [about my values], it goes a long way to making me feel heard.”

— Alex, YAC member

I think a big opportunity with the exploration boards is avoiding the feeling of “we don’t have enough time/space” that encourages people to explore only a few perspectives, a few people.

— Sonya, YAC member

For me, these questions are more about being exposed to new ideas, than to learning deeply about them. They might be an interesting way to decide what to write an essay about, but not how I’d write the essay itself.

Aanika, YAC member

I think the questions could be really helpful for guiding your learning about something new... it’s hard to know what questions to ask if you don’t know anything about the topic.

Ava, YAC member

our
students'
answers.



Aanika Dalal
Austin, TX



Donelle Nalder
Boise, ID



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly
Crompond, NY

the big idea.

Reimagining education for the modern world has to happen
with students.

got questions?



Aanika Dalal

Austin, TX



Donelle Nalder

Boise, ID



Sabbia Gale-Donnelly

Crompond, NY

a gift for
the road.





AURORA INSTITUTE

Symposium

OCTOBER 24 – 26, 2022 | VIRTUAL

Thank you for joining us!

Share Your Thoughts

Participate in our one-minute poll (link in chat box)

