

Learning Reimagined:

RADICAL THINKING FOR EQUITABLE FUTURES



IDEO



BIG PICTURE



Our known systems, everyday routines and relationships have been radically disrupted.

This report, which came out of a partnership between Imaginable Futures and IDEO, sets out to capture the global disruption of our education systems and to offer an evidence-based vision of the future, that takes into account both the constraints and the opportunities of this historic moment. It references a moment in time, amidst a rapidly changing world; as our ecosystems continue to evolve at unprecedented rates, so will the insights in this report.

To arrive at these insights, we have leveraged the tools of design fiction and futuring: analyzing the **drivers of change** (a global pandemic and economic fallout, and movements towards racial justice), citing early **signals of hope** (the heroic response of educators and supporting community, for whom this report holds a deep reverence) and sketching **future scenarios** (opportunity areas and imagined outcomes that can help us better understand and plan for what is to come).

Given the enormity of changes, we purposely pulled out of our typical areas of focus to better understand even broader possible implications for children, families, educators and more.

While reports can feel like a sealed chamber, we've designed this as an open invitation for dialogue. Which of these scenarios do we strive to avoid, and how? Which are an inspiring call to action? In articulating broad opportunity areas, we hope to hear from global communities with diverse perspectives about how they would adapt these ideas. Our hope is that we might collectively imagine a better future and begin thinking about what it will take to get there.

We also acknowledge that we are standing on the shoulders of giants. This report would not exist without those who have long invested in building and improving our education systems: teachers, school leaders and caregivers alike. There is much demanding, complex and important work being done already in response to the seismic shifts of recent history. If not for those leaders, radical and optimistic imagination would have no foundation from which to grow and thrive.

Amy Klement *infrina* Ally Naylor Molly McEal

What's Inside

1 STATE OF EDUCATION

This section clarifies the current reality of our communities and education systems, amidst the seismic shifts of this moment.

2 STATE OF THE FUTURE

Here, we anticipate alternative futures across global education.

We clarify seven different Drivers, or major societal shifts, across our ecosystems.

Within each Driver, we explore signals - or early indicators of how they are beginning to play out today.

Lastly, we share potential imagined Scenarios for each Driver, and Opportunities within them.

3 NAVIGATION TOOLS

We close the report with a section dedicated to resources to help navigate this time with compassion and lead through complexity.

4 CONCLUSION

We conclude with deep belief in the power of collective action to radically reimagine more equitable systems of learning.

5 APPENDIX

Visit the appendix for a deeper dive into the research and methodology behind our seven Drivers and predicted futures.

01 STATE OF EDUCATION

The historic inequities embedded in our education systems — race, gender, geography, wealth, income, culture — have been further brought to light by the recent seismic shifts in our society. Our everyday routines have shifted, and so have the routines of learning.

We need leaders who can redistribute power and co-create with community members meeting this moment with brave and radical redesign.

These profound and heart-wrenching ruptures mean that we can no longer wait to ask the fundamental questions about what we teach, how we learn and who has access.



WHAT IF,

at this moment of disruption, our systems of learning could be redesigned to eliminate the inequities that are embedded in our schools and our communities? **The urgency to evolve, to deploy radical imagination, is here.**

1.3 billion children

are out of school worldwide due to school closures linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

Source: UNESCO

50% of students

worldwide don't have computers at home.

In sub-Saharan African, **89% of students** don't have computers at home.

Source: UNESCO

63 million teachers

(primary and secondary) around the world are affected by school closures in 165 countries.

Source: UNESCO

368.5 million children in 143 countries

who normally rely on schools for daily meals must now look to other sources.

Source: UNSDG

100% of governments

pressured to protect and prioritize education funding in future budgets.

The financial and social burden of returning to school include diagnostic assessment of student preparedness to learn, learning gaps assessment and cost to retool the physical space.

Source: Brookings

02 STATE OF THE FUTURE



‘Futuring’ allows us to *imagine possible outcomes* with the hope of exploring, better sensing and equipping ourselves for the potential realities ahead of us.

We use the tool of Futuring so that we might better understand what’s coming, and thus more effectively make choices that support the futures we hope to see. We cannot predict the future but we can actively practice defending against its negative effects and intentionally accelerating its positive ones.

This section of the report is an exercise in anticipating alternative futures across global education.

THE HIERARCHY OF FUTURE FORECASTING

The following terms help us define the different stages and components of the Futuring process, referenced across the remainder of this Report.

DRIVERS



Major societal shifts that will have broad impact on the future of learning.

SIGNALS



Examples, or early indicators, of how each Driver is beginning to play out today

FUTURE SCENARIOS



Scenarios help us to explore the future by looking at what might come to pass, depending on how current trends evolve and what actions people take to influence them.

These "what if" questions are intended to jolt our traditional ways of thinking.

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities are the particularly vulnerable possibilities and hopeful antidotes to collapse. All imagined – we play on their potential utility within the identified future scenario.

THE DRIVERS

These *Drivers* help us categorize the trends that are *influencing the future* of education, informing *design opportunities*.

1. SOCIETY

The Social Contract of Public Education is Changing

2. TECHNOLOGY

Learning Technology is Mandatory; *Relationships are at a Distance*

3. PLACE

Space & Time Bend; *Power Displaced From Proximity*

4. ECONOMY

Back to Basics in the Informal Economy; *Future of Work Redefined*

5. TEACHING

School as Caregivers and Families as Teachers

6. COMMUNITY

Interconnectivity, in Tension With Isolationism and Neo-Tribalism

7. HEALTH

Mental Well-being is Headlining; *Compassion is Required*

FUTURE SCENARIO ARCHETYPES

Although we cannot predict the future in full, we can begin to arrange our speculation into logical patterns that help us organize and envision what may come. We use the Growth, Transformation, Collapse, Constraint framework to identify the nature of our diverse Future Scenarios, acknowledging that not all change evolves in a binary – simply positive or negative – direction. Each Future Scenario across our “State of the Future” section is identified as one of these 4 archetypes of change.

Growth



The growth archetype identifies scenarios within which education largely flourishes, though current issues remain inadequately addressed. It is characterized by overall growth, together with some unrealized goals and even some setbacks.

Collapse



The collapse archetype identifies scenarios within which education is beset by rapid breakdowns and forces of change outside its control. It is characterized by total erosion or rapid decline, deeming the current system obsolete and replacing it with another.

Constraint



The constraint archetype identifies scenarios within which education continues, but with a diminished role. It is characterized by an inability for the system to keep pace with evolving or emerging needs, thus lessening its influence or value in society.

Transformation



The transformation archetype identifies scenarios within which education establishes a successful new paradigm for itself. It is characterized by a total metamorphosis of what we knew to be true, towards a previously unimagined and higher utility new reality.

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

The Social Contract of Public Education is Changing

The notion of "success" in public education is up for redefinition. The value of learning will be questioned as new access gaps emerge.

50 %

of the world's children have relied on their school for a daily meal. [Source: WFP](#)

1 in 4

Brazilian students did not receive any instructional content during the pandemic.

[Source: CNN Brazil](#)

Note: Imaginable Futures co-funded this research.

6 in 10

parents in the US say they would be likely to pursue at-home learning options instead of sending back their children this fall.

[Source: USA Today Ipsos Poll](#)

[Read more about the research & methodology in The Appendix](#)

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

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“It is reassuring to come together and recognise the cognitive load of taking responsibility in the middle of these extraordinary times. As the Teach for Pakistan Director told us, ‘For us, this is not about COVID-19. This is about the beast we already know (educational inequality).’”



Felicity Powell, Teacher and Teach First NZ Program Participant (New Zealand) [via Twitter](#)



SIGNAL
Nova Escola

Nova Escola started over 30 years ago as a teacher magazine and is now the most recognized teacher brand in Brazil. Their professional development platform is now supporting teachers in returning to the classroom in a post-COVID world, but also directly supporting the mental well-being of teachers.

Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures



SIGNAL
Granny Cloud

The 'Granny Cloud' is a network of volunteers connecting with students with less resources, supporting their learning at a distance, while cross-pollinating different perspectives. Volunteer 'grannies' use Skype to connect with learners across geographies, via virtual informal learning environments.



SIGNAL
Cohort Families

As communities around the world are starting to open up, many families are forming new communal structures, where they share in child care and household duties. Early experimentation has happened in New Zealand and Belgium.

WHAT IF SCHOOLS TRULY BECAME WHOLE CHILD CENTERS?

Education is no longer place based, and schools therefore become whole child hubs for other social service needs. As food and employment insecurity deepen, they morph into community centers for other social service organizations, offering much more than lessons and meal boxes. Families and child-less residents come by for pediatric services, adaptation support groups, informal economy business training and adult off-grid-sufficiency lessons such as growing food and making clothing. As the role of schools expand, so does the expansion of who educates. With support, parents, neighbors, local leaders and friends can step into that role, and learning is no longer dependent on the institution of school.



WHAT IF STUDENT AGENCY BECAME THE MOST IMPORTANT MEASURE OF LEARNING?

Learner-centered mindsets and social emotional development become a new critical measure of learning success. Meanwhile, standardized tests become obsolete. Fed up with practicing for life, kids build real solutions - merging ideas, perspectives and contributions to tackle global problems as the world drifts toward climate disaster. Kids democratize learning. As personalized project-based learning and real-world experiences become the norm, learning becomes blended, flexible and personal. Schools pivot: learners define learning goals for the year, work with mentors/teachers to find and structure curriculum from across the internet or lived environment, build work plans for themselves or form working groups.



WHAT IF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT IS ALREADY BROKEN, AND FAMILIES DECIDE NOT TO RETURN TO SCHOOLS?

There are already deep racial, cultural or socio-economic divides in school systems, and due to the pandemic, those learners who were unable to have educational experiences or access online learning at home suffer immeasurable learning loss. The mix of historical inequity and trust in schools, compounded by health and economic challenges enhanced by COVID-19, leave parents unmotivated to send their children, especially girls, to school in the first place. Divides continue to deepen, triggering an influx of child labor and gender violence; communities retreat into the safety of their own families and culture and gender parity slides backwards. Education content becomes a political weapon, with deep schisms based on beliefs, income, culture or race.



Collapse





Student-Led Curriculum Councils

Students now control their learning trajectory and measurement of their growth. A new age frontier, the pedagogy is oriented towards an ‘explorer in outer space’ mindset. National governments work in partnership with localized student councils to crowdsource the Space Explorer Curriculum, a global movement, localized to cultural contexts, that equips students all around the world with the structure, templates and measurement tools to build their own learning experience.



IGHL: Institute for Global Home Learning

Parents and caregivers apply and are accepted into a need-based, global program to support at-home learning. As a member of IGHL, parents receive, free of cost, access to at-home teaching supplies, curriculum guidance, social and child care support, child and parent therapy services and unrestricted at-home learning ‘funds’. Resources are delivered via ‘care packages’ each month.



Rotating Community Task Force

Each month, a lottery is set up to decide which community members, ages 20–70, are selected to lead immersive, community-based pedagogy at virtual Whole Child Centers.

Equipped with schedule templates and airtime on the local radio or television, they lead adaptation support groups, skill-building sessions, or relevant socio-emotional peer discussions, based on their community’s needs.

**Imagine with us.
Methods to push your
thinking further.**

*Testing application in
your lived reality.*

Do these design opportunities feel useful within your local context? If not, how would you shift or morph them? Use the tools in section 3 to imagine and contextualize your own design opportunities.

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

Learning Technology is Mandatory; *Relationships are at a Distance*

Read more about the research behind this driver in [The Appendix](#)

There has been a shift from the what of teaching and learning to the how. In the most resourced contexts, technology and digital media such as video conferencing and edtech platforms are democratizing access, connection and content, but not necessarily learning.

< **50%**

of the population has internet access in 71 countries

Source: UNICEF

41%

of teens haven't attended an online or virtual class since in-person school was canceled

Source: Common Source Media

6.8, 3.4%

Broadband adoption rates in Black and Latino or Hispanic households lag behind white households, respectively.

Source: Brookings Institute

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

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“The crucial task of education is to teach kids how to learn. To lead them to want to learn. To nurture curiosity, to encourage wonder, and to instill confidence so that later on they’ll have the tools for finding answers to the many questions we don’t yet know how to ask.”



Sal Khan, Founder and CEO of Khan Academy (USA)

The One World Schoolhouse: Education Reimagined



SIGNAL
Ubongo

Through the tales and adventures of characters on screen, Ubongo supports numeracy, pre-literacy, language skills social/emotional learning, health, advanced math, science, technology, engineering, life skills and character development. During the pandemic, Ubongo has partnered with over 10 African country governments to broadcast its television and radio programs for children in kindergarten and primary school.

Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures



SIGNAL
Khan Academy Kids

Khan Academy Kids has reached 1M new learners in the first months of the pandemic. They also increased their reach to underrepresented families +21% and have evidence on the impact of 0.7 effect size in pre-literacy gains and 0.6 in phonological awareness for children from low-income backgrounds.

Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures

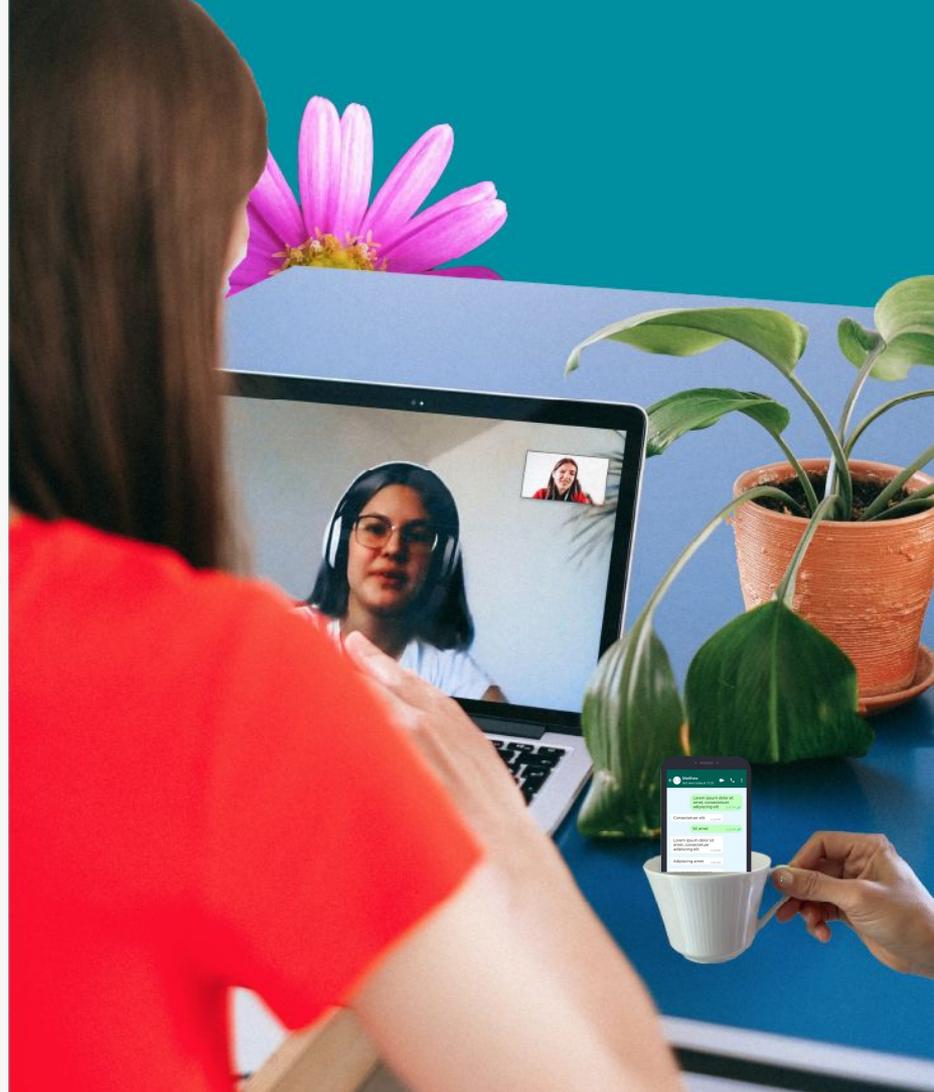


SIGNAL
PenPal Schools

PenPal Schools connects half a million students from 150 countries to practice writing, create original projects, and make friends from around the world. Beginning in March 2020, they granted free access to the platform for the duration of the pandemic so that learners everywhere can access high-quality online learning materials while maintaining the social interaction necessary for their continued development.

WHAT IF TECHNOLOGY CHANGED NOT JUST WHAT STUDENTS LEARN BUT HOW THEY LEARN?

As technology becomes our closest means for intimate connection, amidst now-normal social distance restrictions, for many it represents a watered down version of what we once had. However, many are surprised to observe the ways in which technology begins to humanize us, enhancing relationships by bridging distances, broadening access and encouraging consistency. Teachers, families and learners are using tech to connect in ways they never did before; friends keep in touch at a distance with more consistency than ever. The value of human relationships is reinvigorated by the reminder of our mortality that COVID-19 provides. What if, as a result, teachers were freed from focusing on exams, enabling them to more deeply support learners?



WHAT IF LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION WAS ONLY FOR THE PRIVILEGED?

The investment community focuses even further on the emergent opportunity of fully immersive remote education, spawning a frenzy of R&D in haptic, VR and AR technology. As products come to market, the most resourced private schools are able to offer learners experiences going for real walks around town with their classmates and teacher virtually present for live discussion, and controlling biology lab equipment from home with a pair of gloves. This dramatically exacerbates an already wide gap - that exists within populations and even within one school or classroom. 'Education' begins to look *even more* different for different communities.



Constraint



WHAT IF OVERSATURATION OF DIGITAL CONTENT GOT EXTREME?

To battle screen fatigue and intermittent scheduling, public schools take on more experiential, project-based and community-centered learning opportunities. Eventually, some learners are only learning through applied formats, segmenting learners across street smarts and book smarts, forcing postsecondary institutions and more traditional employers to filter intelligence via very different mechanisms.



Collapse



WHAT IF LEARNING BECOMES ANTI-RELATIONAL?

With learning technologies focused on content and not relationships, learning becomes an act of individuality versus a social collaboration. Learners visiting low-tech classrooms one at a time to pick up written assignments and homework. They struggle with crowded home environments and increased anxiety, craving more time alone. Local communities begin constructing additional rooms and spaces – often makeshift – for learners to learn from in quiet. Isolation grows and peer motivation slows. Complex problem solving, compassion and emotional intelligence decline. Identity development fundamentally shifts as our young people are deprived of social, peer-to-peer connection for months on end.



Collapse





Screen Time Sensor

School districts are legally bound to distribute screen sensing technology to classrooms, teachers and learners. No matter how long it takes a student to do their work, they are alerted to stop and remove themselves from screen engagement for the next 12 hours, to ensure healthy learning. Students who ‘work faster’ get farther in lessons and eventually, large learning milestones. Anxiety rates across learners worldwide, go down.



One Student Classroom

One-room classrooms have inverted. Low - cost structures, made of polyolefin foam panels, galvanized steel, and heat resistant polymer plastic, are shipped out by governments to support learners in under-resourced areas in finding private, safe spaces outside of the home to learn. School agnostic, classrooms are set up across rural communities - like single-use internet cafes, with sanitary resources, wifi access and water. Learners can sign up for free use on a weekly schedule.



Connected Curriculum App

Human connection becomes a measurement criteria in student pedagogy. The Connected Curriculum app, a video and text platform, supports learners in tracking, scheduling and logging their connectivity to peers, family members and far away friends. Data is fed back to school districts, as a means of evaluating how well students are rebuilding social enmeshment amidst increased COVID-19 isolation. Scores in connection are as important as scores in Math class.

**Imagine with us.
Methods to push your
thinking further.**

*Honing in on the now to more
creatively imagine the future..*

Considering dynamics within the current reality can help envision creative futures. What is your experience with interpersonal connectedness and technology at present? Can you imagine tools or services that might make the intersection of relationships and technology more transformational or more dystopic, for you?

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

Space & Time Bend; *Power* *Displaced* from Proximity

Without physical buildings, learners connect with learning their teachers, and peers virtually. The relationship between time and learning is changing. The power of place and physical proximity is disrupted.

22%

of schools planning to open as usual.
75%+ planning to be in some sort of online
or blended.

Source: Washington Post.

42-66 million

children could fall into extreme poverty as
a result of the crisis this year, adding to
the estimated 386 million children already
in extreme poverty in 2019.

Source: UN

7 million

students from primary and secondary
education could drop out of school due to
the income shock of the pandemic alone

Source: World Bank

Read more about the research & methodology in [The Appendix](#)

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

[Marcos, butcher shop owner] “I always open the Wi-Fi internet access to my customers. One day, he [Willian] came here and asked to use the internet, and I allowed it. He sat on the park bench, using his cell phone and taking notes in a notebook. I was curious and asked him what he was doing. He explained that he had asked for the internet to study, because at his house he didn't have access to it.”



Willian Marciel Vieira Dantas,
studies on a bench (Brazil) [Globo](#)

Customize Your Child's Learning



Explore Any Interest
From phonics to AP Physics to Minecraft to Piano, Outschool feeds your kid's curiosity and elevates their learning with a variety of 15,000+ classes.



Learn With Peers
Grow your learner's confidence in and out of the classroom with live video classes that meet in small groups.

In Our e professional and inspire. Int share. Int

SIGNAL
Outschool

Out-of-school, online learning that helps families and organizations to access high-quality content in an array of subjects. Flexibility and breadth of content on the platform engages learners around the world and facilitate the expansion of new learning communities outside of standard schooling.



SIGNAL
Sunrise Movement & Sunrise School

Sunrise Movement is a youth-led organization working to stop climate change. Soon after school closures, the organization developed an online learning experience called Sunrise School, designed to train thousands of new leaders in how to push elected officials to pass a Green New Deal.



SIGNAL
Shujaaz

Shujaaz Inc. is a network of social ventures based in Nairobi, Kenya. They believe this generation of young people can transform our global society for the better – that's why they work to break down barriers so that young people can take control of the future. During COVID, they are harnessing SMS, USSD and social media channels to stay connected 24/7 with 7.5m young people.

Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures

WHAT IF SOCIAL INTIMACY AT SCHOOL DISAPPEARED BUT TEACHING RELATIONSHIPS FLOURISHED?

Harkening back to the one-room-schoolhouse, schools turn to multi-room schools, with more 1:1 experiences for every learner. Schools build individual cubicle pods that allow learners to come to class and see the teacher lecture without breathing on one another. The world is one where relationships with peers have degraded significantly, but intimacy with teachers increases given there is no longer a one-to-many connection of the pre-COVID-19 classroom. Learners with cognitive and behavioral disabilities thrive with increased teacher attention and direct provision of services.



WHAT IF A NEW POWER EMERGES?

Young people, connecting on social media, consolidate a new kind of virtual power, not reliant on where you are or how long you've known someone. These young people develop voice, organize for change across politics, climate, systemic inequities and even their own learning. Schools and institutions of higher education are developed and governed by the learners, by local communities with clear needs and design principles.



Transformation



WHAT IF POWER IS CONSOLIDATED NOT FRACTURED?

Depleting proximity widens access and resource gaps; those with power are able to further consolidate, and for the have nots it becomes further out of reach, as projected. Power, who holds it and how it is managed, is further secured and guarded - leaving systems with more inertia than previously conceivable. Community based organizations and parent unions are also able to mobilize and consolidate influence - whilst they strive to innovate and shift policies in our new world of learning, they struggle to enact tangible change due to the stickiness and further cementing of pre-existing power dynamics.



Constraint



WHAT IF LEARNING PROGRESSIONS WERE BASED ON COMPETENCIES, NOT SEAT TIME?

Learning is structured into one week segments that can be started and paused at any moment, with ‘class cohorts’ organized instead by mastery level rather than geography or age. As families struggle to lead curriculum and coaching for multiple learners, siblings begin to slide into learning at each other’s grade level—a leap for some and a significant setback for others. Learners formerly learning in rural, digitally connected settings are ahead of the curve in this reality - adapting more quickly than communities who have been over-reliant on formal infrastructure (e.g., connectivity, sophisticated transportation, formal seat time).





School's Out Database

A student led, reddit-like database of learner communities exploring hobbies, fun activities outside of the classroom, and different ways to pass the time in isolation. Learners begin to build relationships outside of their immediate classroom, getting to know students from all over the world. Database accessible via a mobile phone with wifi access.



Long Distance Friendship Pop Up

Maintaining friendships at a distance, especially for those who were never forced to build emotional relationships in this way, becomes a highly sought after skill. In some cases, it becomes the difference between emotional wellness and lack thereof, for isolated learners. Corporations capitalize on this, and an influx of products that clout everything you need to build friendship at a distance, emerge on the market. Talking scripts, a calendar to organize hang outs, an index of best virtual connection technology, and a gamified points system.



Learner Teacher Collaborative Grants

Learners apply for government issued micro-grants, in partnership with a teacher mentor. All they need to do is submit a two minute video, and paragraph note about their idea. The grants system distributes power and allows those closest to the learner experience to redesign, in microscopic ways, access to resources, how school is experienced and what they believe must change.

**Imagine with us.
Methods to push your
thinking further.**

Go for wild ideas. Play at the extremes.

We're often conditioned to censor ourselves from imagining outlandish or entirely edge scenarios. Sometimes there's not a whole lot of difference between ridiculous and brilliant. In Futuring, the reality is often one we can't quite conceptualize – what design opportunities might you uncover when you push yourself to imagine beyond what is comfortable or familiar?

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

Back to Basics in the Informal Economy; *Future of Work Redefined*

Read more about the research behind this driver in [The Appendix](#)

A new class of worker emerges, those that are essential. Reskilling programs and resources for adult learning are needed immediately. The joblessness predicted for the future has become today's reality.

2.7 billion

workers affected by partial lockdown, representing around 81 percent of the world's workforce.

Source: ILO

6.7 %

decline in working hours in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.

Source: ILO

273 million

projected young people in NEET (Not in Employment Education or Training) in 2021

Source: ILO

Read more about the research & methodology in [The Appendix](#)

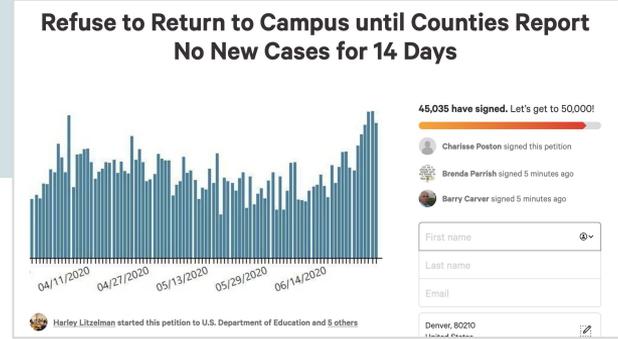
HUMAN EXPERIENCES

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“Africa’s workforce will exceed a billion people by 2035. COVID-19 is showing companies everywhere that remote work can be very effective. I believe that if we are able to upskill our young African talent (while the rest of the world is aging), we will have an asset that the rest of the world doesn’t have. We have an exciting opportunity to place top African talent in global jobs without the brain drain.”



Fred Swaniker, Founder, African Leadership Group (Kenya)



SIGNAL

Universal Basic Income

Frustrated by the slow response of governments around the world to provide a financial safety net for the recently unemployed, Pope Francis released a letter to the members of popular movements and organizations, in which he suggested that it may be time to consider a universal basic wage.

SIGNAL

Microsoft Global Skills Initiative

In response to the skills gap accelerated by the pandemic, Microsoft, along with its LinkedIn unit, launched a global skills initiative to help job seekers acquire skills for in-demand roles. The goal is to increase the digital skills of 25 million people worldwide by the end of 2020.

SIGNAL

School Reopening

Even as COVID cases are rising, schools and districts across the United States are moving to reopen their doors in the fall. In response, teachers are raising questions about the risks and unions are starting to push back against reopening plans. On social media, teachers promoted the hashtag #14daysnewcases, calling for the refusal to return this fall until counties report no new cases for at least 14 consecutive days.

WHAT IF UNEMPLOYMENT FUELS A SHARP SHIFT IN CURRICULUM, A NEW-AGE BARTER ECONOMY?

Employers, overwhelmed by applicants and pressured by citizens to do their part to support social safety nets, begin to explore curriculum that aligns only with their most urgent hiring needs. As efficacy begins to show, some financially struggling universities explore acquisitions to embed directly in employers. For learners, this means filling intermittent education with informal short-term jobs in new professions like cleaning and sanitation, distance enforcement, and repurposing commodities during shortage. There is a rebirth of trade apprenticeships, with learners out of school or so far behind they can't catch up, turning to family friends and community members offering training in exchange for low-cost labor. A new age barter economy.



Collapse



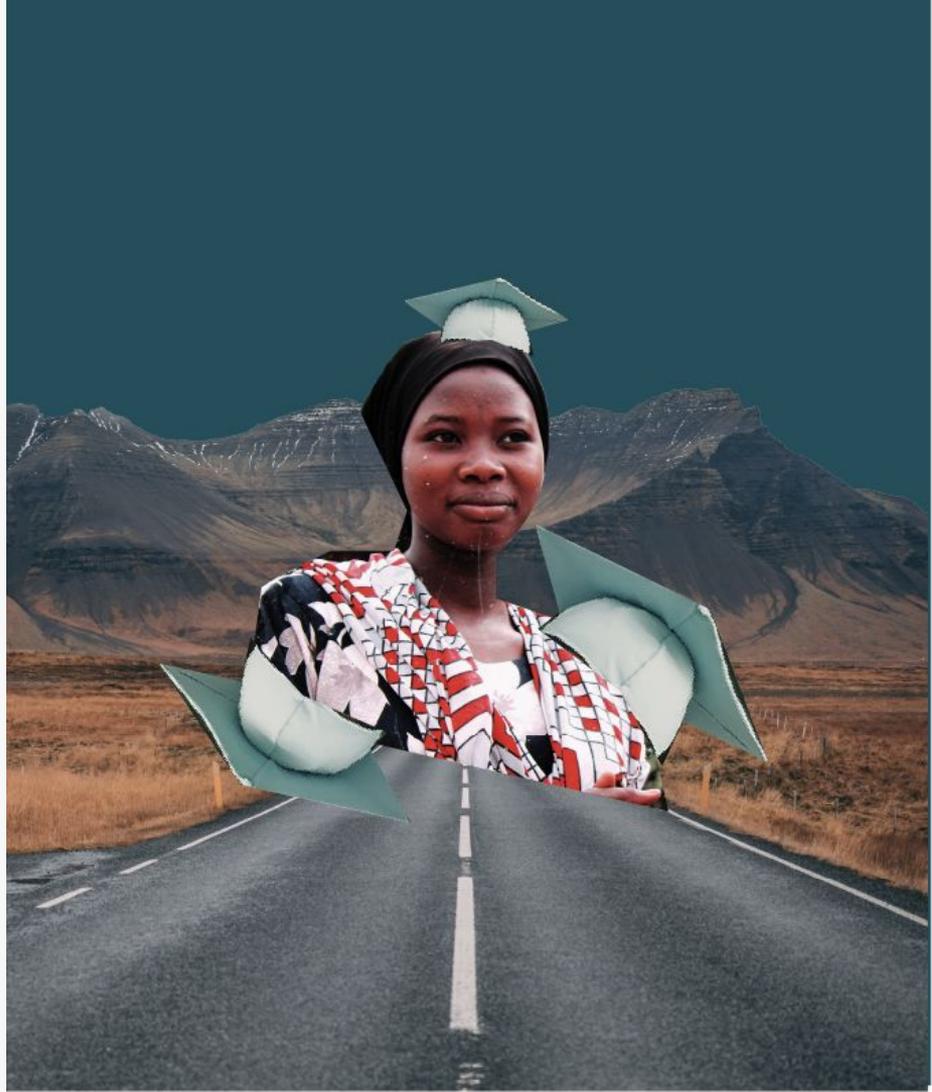
WHAT IF RESKILLING BECOMES MORE FIT-FOR PURPOSE?

A massive disruption in economies as reskilling and jobs become ‘just in time’; meaning anytime and anywhere, bite-sized and more competency-based. Due to the urgent need for more health professionals, medical school curriculum is standardized and made widely available at a low cost. This cascades the standardization and accessibility of other professional schools, including law school, enabling more people to access them. To ensure quality, certification examinations increase in rigour, but more people are able to study for them. However, now that most public resources are accessed online, those without this skill suffer the most. More governments begin to require digital literacy in curriculum; they also begin to control curriculum more than ever, reducing autonomy across teachers and sectoral leaders.



WHAT IF TEACHERS BECOME COMMUNITY COACHES?

Teachers, unable to adapt to online learning, intermittent school schedules and concerns about personal health redefine their role as coaches. This allows them to take on a smaller number of known learners and expand their expertise to social, emotional and community development. Their role shifts to include school counselor, student mentor and family financial coach. Coaches support learners and families across the full learning journey. For early childhood and K-12, this includes a partnership with parents who don't have access to digital resources and struggle to teach their children skills they have never learned themselves. For older learners, this looks like personalized support to take jobs in the informal economy or have real work experiences.





Working Liberal Arts

Frustrated with shifting higher education systems, students with no other choice but to live off informal short-term jobs in burgeoning professions (cleaning, sanitation, distance enforcements) unionize to find ways to express their thoughts, political opinions and perspectives. A radical collective of “Working Liberal Artists” emerges, driving trends in thought provoking street art, ad-hoc flash mob performances and speakeasy style learning clubs, to name a few.



Med School in a Box

A fast track, made affordable version of medical school – accessed entirely online. Suddenly, students are able to certify for hundreds and thousands of dollars less, on a much shorter timeline. Residency is done via virtual reality applied learning, spanning only 5 months. Volume of health providers increases, while patients grow increasingly anxious about the quality of care. Some previously accredited doctors approve – suggesting our former systems were outdated, inequitable and unreasonable.



Teaching Coach Certification

Many teachers rush to become ‘coach-certified’. Boosting their employability and utility in the classroom. Beyond teaching, they are trained in counseling, digital literacy skills, personal leadership, small business ownership (in case they choose to move beyond the teaching profession) and positive clinical psychology. A new evolution of teacher emerges.

**Imagine with us.
Methods to push your
thinking further.**

*Build your own design
opportunity.*

Go simple. Think about a future user profile, future action and future result. Just these three foundational components can build the basis for an imagined future scenario, and thus, design opportunity. Use the Opportunity Madlib exercise in Section 3 to explore.

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

Schools Transforming as Caregivers, Families Partner with Teachers

Read more about the research behind this driver in [The Appendix](#)

Social distancing requirements have cut families off from most of their typical child care resources. The purpose of school is shifting as schools focus on caregiving and families become teachers.

67 million

people globally are domestic workers and 80 percent of them are women. 90 percent of them are excluded from protections such as paid sick leave and unemployment benefits.

Source: ILO

48%

of lower income households in the US report that they do not have, or don't know if they have, the ability to return to their childcare arrangements.

Source: Medium

3x

women spend 3x as many hours as men doing unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their access to decent work.

Source: ILO

Read more about the research & methodology in [The Appendix](#)

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

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“Not only am I lacking #childcare support, but I worry as a nurse I'll be put into an emergency situation w. someone else's child & be unable to get home to my own kids. As an essential worker, I had to sacrifice my income to stay healthy.”

Jaye, Essential Worker (USA)

Via [MomsRising Twitter](#)



SIGNAL
Caring for Each Other

Sesame Workshop's "Caring for Each Other" initiative offers free resources that help caregivers and their children navigate the "for now normal" of the pandemic, including animations on healthy habits and activities that caregivers can use to spark learning.



SIGNAL
#LearningatHome with UNICEF

With almost 95 percent of enrolled children temporarily out of school due to COVID-19 across Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF launched a regional outreach campaign called #LearningAtHome, providing a fun new activity every day that parents can adapt and share with others, from treasure hunt puzzles to creative toy spiderwebs.



SIGNAL
From Home-Based Child Care to Microschools

As parents seek smaller settings for their children, Wonderschool, a company designed to launch and support home-based child cares, announced a new solution to help with the formation of microschools led by parents, teachers or other community members.

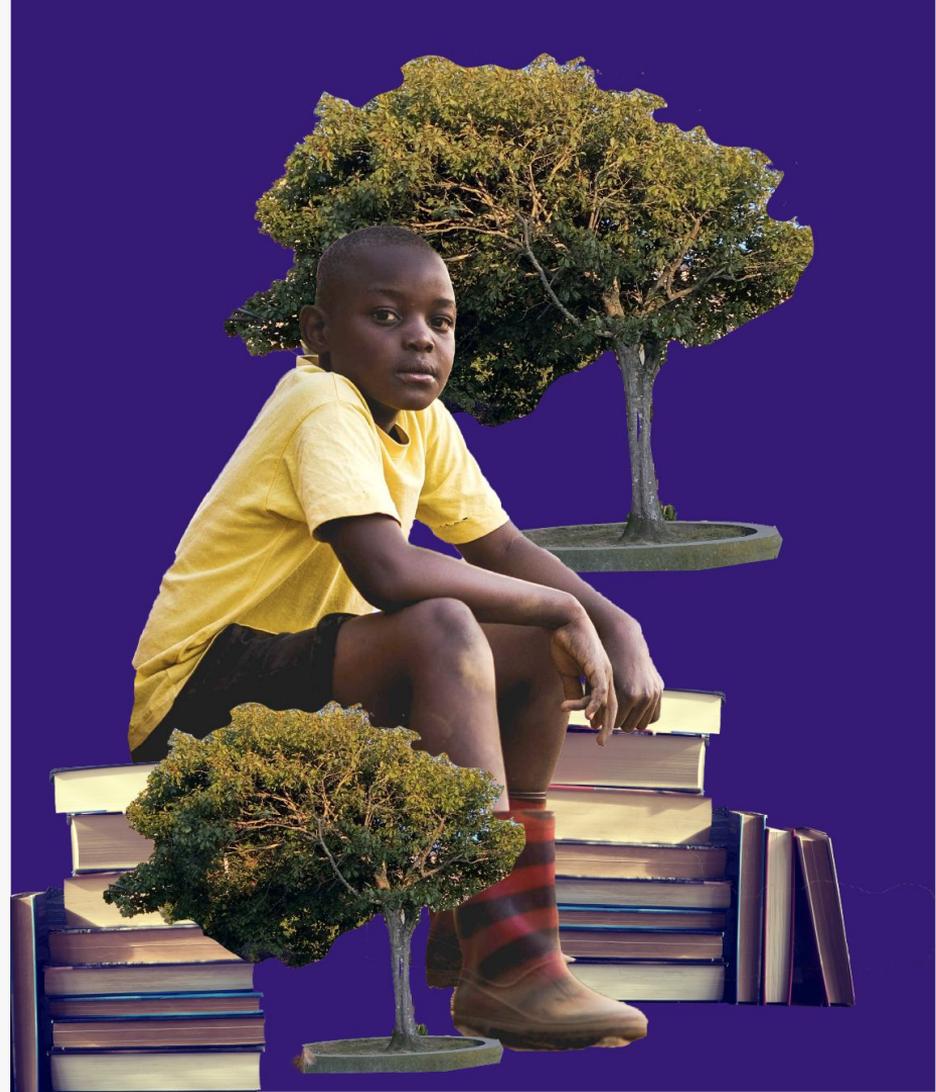
Note: investee of Imaginable Futures

WHAT IF HOMESCHOOL BECOMES THE NEW SCHOOL?

With rampant unemployment and fears of health and safety, 50% of families have one parent leading homeschooling. There are varying degrees of preparedness for this, and many children do not learn enough to participate in the formal economy. Family owned pop-up schools emerge, with vastly different learning quality options depending on high and low income markets. The hyperlocalization of education segregates learning along economic and racial divides, widening the inequity gap and creating tears in the social fabric of communities. At the same time, the fastest growing job becomes the live-in au pair / tutor / proctor. Seeking employment, young people struggling to find work go to live for extended periods with wealthier families who wish to have education support in person to guide child virtual and blended learning, without the disease risk of a babysitter coming in and out of the home.



Constraint



WHAT IF TRUST BECAME THE POLICY INDICATOR FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS?

In the process of reopening, schools take a whole child approach by holding community listening, storytelling and redesign sessions. Teachers, parents, learners and local leaders are invited to collaborate on redesigning their schools. Based in equity, empathy, and new narratives, communities design together their new schools based on a shared understanding of the value and impact of learning. School systems leaders (states, districts, principals), over saturated and unclear on policy recommendations, lean into compassionate leadership, using both collective efficacy and social network analysis to track trust, collaboration and strengths of relationships.



WHAT IF MICRO CARE CENTERS WERE ACKNOWLEDGED AS A NORM?

Gone are the days of large child care centers and big preschools. Parents favor, and are often forced to opt into, smaller child care settings, with a rise of home-based child care and elder care. Multi-generational homes are recreated with grandparents renewing their traditional caregiving role in families and communities. Teachers are family members and family members are teachers. With home/ micro-care becoming the norm, society finally invests in supporting a formerly fragmented system through public and government resources, such as customer protections and subsidies.





Parent Teacher Payment Trust

Governments and philanthropists collaborate to create trusts, meant to fund parents who are suddenly teaching, alongside caring. A new age homeschool fund.



Women-Parent Social Services

Most parents pushed to adopt the teaching role due to school closures tend to be mothers, as well—increasing the burden on women. Additionally, pay for at-home parents who are teaching creates malicious dynamics in certain cultures – disempowering and even endangering women. A new vein of social services emerge, meant to protect the rights and safety of women-parents also teaching at home.



Equity Circles

Schools—the physical spaces, as well as curriculum and system values, are co-created and redesigned alongside the communities they serve. ‘Equity Circles’ become the new tool for evolving learning—teachers, parents, students and local leaders come together to discuss equity, build empathy, construct new narratives and design together their new schools based on a shared understanding of the value and impact of learning.

**Imagine with us.
Methods to push your
thinking further.**

*Spark fresh ideas by
minimizing judgement.*

We often limit our thinking by judging ourselves and worrying what others will think. Try resisting those urges; you’ll be amazed at how much more creative you may feel. What future design opportunities surface, when you remove judgement and create space for currently unaccepted concepts?

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

Interconnectivity, in Tension with Isolationism and Neo-Tribalism

Read more about the research behind this driver in [The Appendix](#)

This moment is bringing people together in new configurations — tri-state resource collaboratives, formerly out of touch family members, neighbors becoming friends, countries feeling solidarity through a shared infection rate.

College students are remotely tutoring younger peers worldwide.

Source: [Medium](#)

Individuals and companies are making face masks for health care professionals.

Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)

> 200

collective clinical trials launched, bringing together hospitals and laboratories around the globe.

Source: [New York Times](#)

Collaboration informs coronavirus policy by analyzing data associated with the pandemic

Source: [Medical XPress](#)

Read more about the research & methodology in [The Appendix](#)

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

—
“The morning of May 15, 2020 marked the beginning of a new era for our country. Every national TV broadcaster and cable TV operator, most radio stations and NGOs offering online education, sat in a virtual meeting with the Minister of Education, to sign an agreement offering, among all of us, 15 hours of daily academic material, validated by the Ministry of Education.”



Yolanda Eleta, Director, Grupo Eleta (Panama)

[OpenIDEO Reimagine Learning Challenge](#)



SIGNAL

Mutual Aid Networks

There has been an explosion of mutual aid spreadsheets in response to the pandemic. One such monster list contains links to more than 140 mutual aid groups spanning many US states, plus additional links for groups in Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany. Habits of collective care—like neighbors getting groceries for the elderly in their area—have grown alongside access to these resources.



SIGNAL

Bail Funds

As Americans responded in protest over police brutality against black people, many grassroots organizations turned to community outreach, social media and payment processing platforms like PayPal, Venmo and Cash App to raise funds to secure the release of individuals who are awaiting trial behind bars because they cannot afford their bail. Donors have given more than \$90 million to help buy the freedom of those awaiting trial behind bars.



SIGNAL

Wide Open School

In late March, the nonprofit media organization Common Sense convened a group of big names in education, media and tech to launch WideOpenSchool.org, a free and open collection of quality online learning resources to educators and families.

Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures

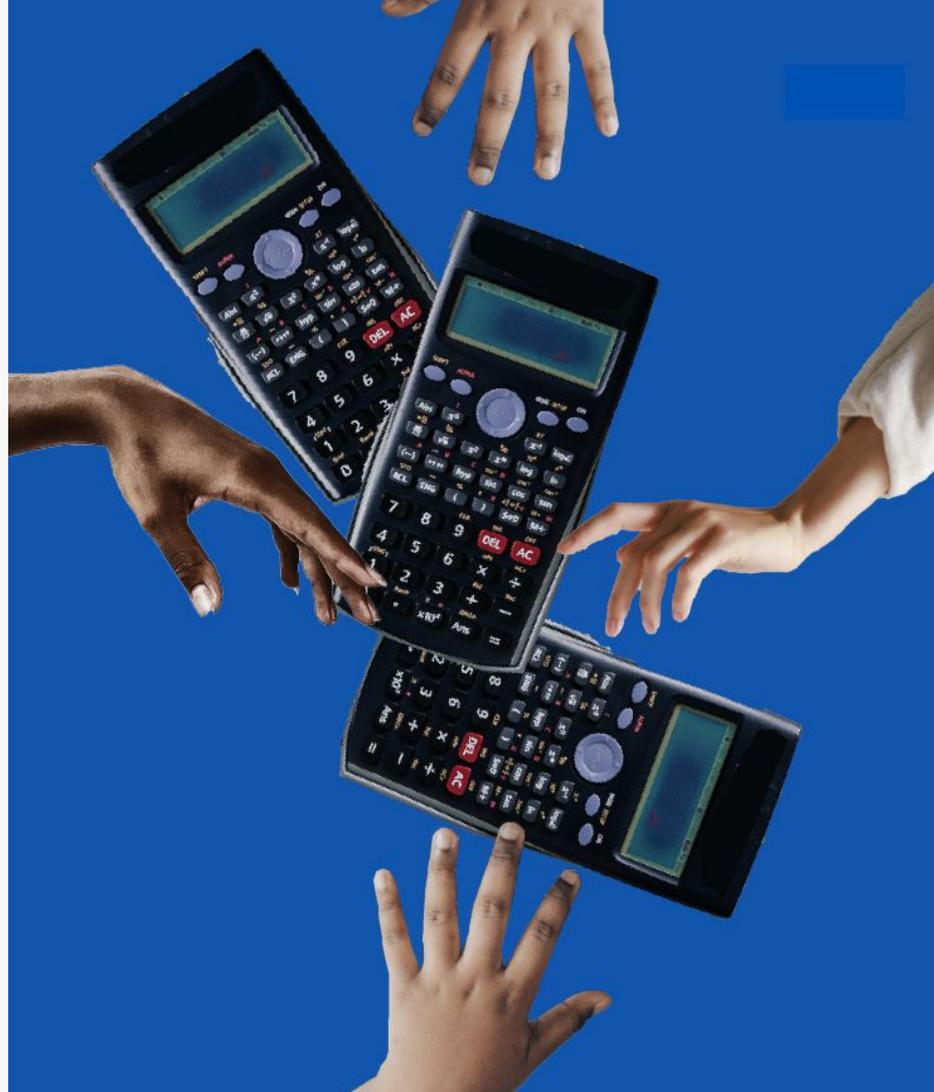
WHAT IF SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS REWORKED CONNECTIONS?

The resourcing of local schools was often determined by property taxes. But as parents find they aren't tethered to a location, and as the remaining scarce jobs become accessible from anywhere, economic opportunity decentralizes and families move to lower-cost-of-living locations or, for the upper class, more desirable locations close to family or nature. This loosens the hold of school as community glue and shuffles community resourcing, breaking down 'nice' school districts. It also disorients the pattern of resource distribution between urban centers and rural environments.



WHAT IF EDUCATION CENTERED ON THE SHARING ECONOMY?

Foreign aid invests in distribution of learning materials at unprecedented rates. Donation drives soar and systems are set up to recycle materials between grade levels as learners move up. Redistribution of resources is well executed, but quality of materials suffers as they move further towards serving last mile settings.



WHAT IF WIDENING DIVIDES PUSHED US TOWARDS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP?

A new flavor of school is born, which promises parents the development of a global citizen, focused on virtual classrooms that are entirely mixed across borders. School has suddenly become about growing leaders—nourishing the next generation to lead with a blend of compassion, deep understanding of systems complexity and a capacity to empathize with the viewpoints of others.

Foreign governments, recognizing the need for all learners to succeed for a highly interconnected world to work, prioritize the cultivation of teachers, requiring all young people to participate in schools and accepting only the very best for long-term employment, transforming the profession to one of the most sought after careers.



Transformation





Urban Rural Home Exchange

Communities are now being asked to socially distance and be self-sufficient. Much harder in large urban centers, those who are able, move towards more rural settings. A shift in housing markets and cost of living, means those who have never been able to afford urban centers, suddenly consider the notion. This reverse migration, rift with social tensions, also offers a moment for collective collaboration: community-based organizations set up Urban Rural Home Exchanges. Airbnb meets the sharing economy, as families and students of different walks of life 'trade spaces', encouraging connection across populations that otherwise only existed in urban/rural silos.



School Kit Delivery

Via WhatsApp, you can schedule pick up or delivery for excess or needed school supplies. As simple as a text request and location share, learning resources are redistributed seamlessly within communities and across the world. Redistribution is funded by local governments, and executed by community care workers.



Cross-Border Classrooms

A select, highly competitive program across governments recruits teachers to manage Cross Border Classrooms. For students, they are placed in a geographically diverse learning setting for 1/3 of their weekly curriculum. Learners from Mumbai connect with students from Lagos, seated virtually alongside a child from Oklahoma. Web services enable immediate translation, during sessions. Teachers, discouraged and bored with the shift towards online learning, crave to be involved in this profession-bending moment of new challenge, global connection and inspiration.

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Methods to push your
thinking further.**

Assumption flip.

What we can imagine for the future is constrained by our current assumptions about the way our world works. Try totally flipping these assumptions—in order to stretch your thinking about what's possible. Use the step-by-step Assumption Flip exercise in section 3 to try this activity.

DRIVER > SIGNAL > SCENARIO > OPPORTUNITY

7. Mental Well-being is Headlining; *Compassion is Required*

Mental health issues are being amplified by racial violence, family and community death due to COVID, dwindling financial security, loss of relationships and lifelines, domestic abuse and more. We are learning how social and emotional well-being may be more important than academics.

71%

of parents say that managing distance/online learning for their children is a significant source of stress

Source: American Psychological Association

59%

of people of color reported stress related to accessing healthcare amidst the pandemic, compared to 46% of white people. People of color are more likely than white individuals to report significant stressors in their life as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, including getting coronavirus (71% vs. 59%, respectively) and basic needs (61% vs. 47%).

Source: American Psychological Association

>1 in 4

young people reported an increase in losing sleep because of worry, feeling unhappy or depressed, feeling constantly under strain or experiencing a loss of confidence in themselves.

Source: Center for Promise

Read more about the research & methodology in [The Appendix](#)

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

“We know that sustained trauma in early-years (0–10 years) results in stunting and failure to thrive the effects of which can be felt for life. Children are going to carry this trauma into schools, and it is going to hinder their ability to access content, engage in learning and build healthy relationships. As the impact of the pandemic unfolds, it is becoming abundantly clear that traditional learning models have ill-equipped our children to respond to the current crisis.”



Suchetha Bhat, CEO of Dream a Dream (India)
TimesTech



SIGNAL
GoNoodle @Home

GoNoodle @Home is a collection of free activities, videos and games that focus on movement so kids still have an opportunity to be up and active—engaging their brains, improving focus, and helping kids and parents deal with stress and anxiety in healthy ways.



SIGNAL
Dream a Dream

By placing the child at the center of their approach, Dream a Dream works to empower children with the skills necessary to adapt and tackle everyday challenges with confidence, in the presence of an empathetic adult.

Note: investee of Imaginable Futures' sister organization Omidyar Network India



SIGNAL
Dignitas

Dignitas is a leading education development organization. Their innovative training and coaching approach empowers schools and educators in marginalized communities to transform students' opportunities. They imagine a world where schools are a vibrant place for all children to develop the skills and strength of character to thrive and succeed.

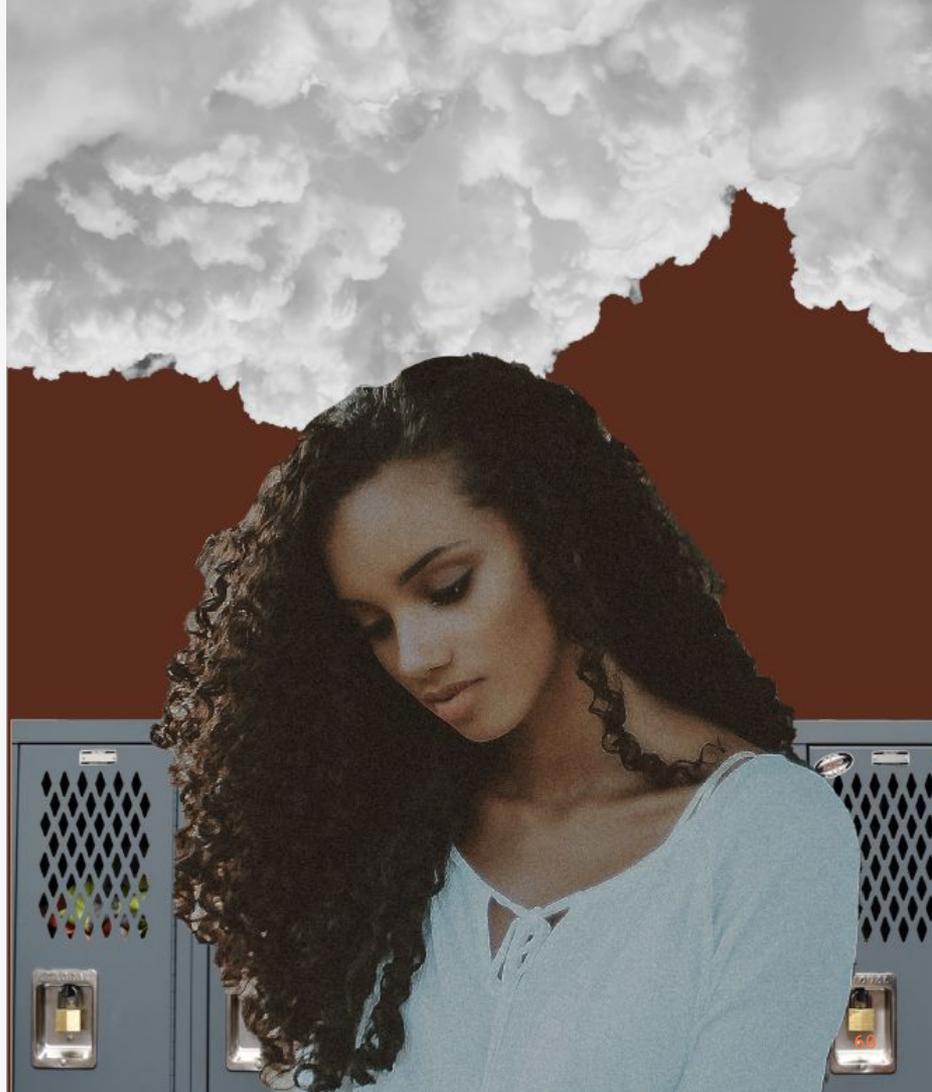
Note: Investee of Imaginable Futures

WHAT IF SCHOOLS REOPEN WITHOUT ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUITIES?

Schools reopen without carefully addressing the outrage and awakening on systemic racism and structural inequities, prioritizing the 'role' of education as maintaining the status quo. In bypassing this crucial shift in our system, schools no longer hold the capacity to connect the social fabric of our society. Compassion in communities declines, as schools do not make racial justice part of their culture or curriculum. Distrust between racial, cultural, geographic communities and schools deepens, and some families choose not to send their children back to school, widening the equity gap. Educators, unprepared and thus unknowingly spreading racial anxiety, further instill racial stereotypes. Despite the positive shifts across society, schools are more segregated and inequitable than ever before.



Collapse



WHAT IF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING WAS A PEDAGOGICAL MANDATE?

Compassion becomes an imperative in school leadership to support teachers to weave social emotional well-being into learning experiences. Core lesson plans such as biology and history are redesigned so that curriculum can also support mental health. Teachers learn to track progress in mental health alongside learning goals. Support for teacher well-being is prioritized across school budgets, as well. Stigmatized conversations suddenly become more commonplace, encouraging a reinvigorated exploration of a learner's internal world and emotional well-being. Young people entering higher education and the formerly unemployed see the growing opportunity in mental health, and flock to the profession, further growing this base.



WHAT IF CITIES DEFUNDED THE POLICE AND REINVESTED IN COLLECTIVE CARE?

With additional funding, every school puts mental health at the front door and increases the ratio of mental health counselors to learners, in addition to learner-teacher ratios. To achieve higher ratios, schools massively scale access through counseling, thanks to a surge in funding for this. Virtual counseling, seen as a silver bullet solution, addresses certain mental health needs, but fails to support more serious responses to our shifting world. Parents and sibling caregivers are forced to take on popularly growing DIY certification courses – caring for struggling learners at home. As families, workplaces and neighborhoods incorporate well being into leadership and relationships, a new system of community-led, collective care—not dissimilar to traditional indigenous practices—thrives globally.





ReSchool Emotional Wellness

With anxiety and uncertainty on the rise, philanthropists and governments unlock funding to support schools in incorporating emotional wellness and regulation, as well as general coursework on compassion, psychology and the human condition. Psychologists become highly sought after, collaborating with kids to build “Curriculum ReDesign Leagues”—co-designing how kids want to learn about wellness, and what type of support they need in the classroom.



Local Safety and Care Coordination

Police services are abolished and funds are redirected towards addressing social issues, like poverty, homelessness and mental disorders. Cities build Local Safety and Care Coordination task forces—a role that is highly respected and regarded amidst community members. Students can now study to work in Local Safety and Care Coordination—taking on internships over the summer to support community based programs, studying racial justice and psychology as primary topics within school curriculum, and pursuing continued degrees to help shape Local Care policy.



Targeted Mental Health Support

Imagine a digital mental health app, built entirely for and created with the input of, low-income teens and teens of color? Teens in low-income communities or communities of color face greater barriers to accessing mental health care due to lack of information about mental health care and social and cultural norms that make it difficult for them to start the conversation with their families.

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thinking further.**

Futures Wheel

Identify the consequences of a change you'd like to initiate in an imagined future scenario. Use the Futures Wheel activity in section 3 to map these insights towards potential design opportunities.

03 NAVIGATION TOOLS



How might we face
the future honestly,
considering *both*
collapse and
transformation?



Starting tools to *help*
navigate with compassion
and lead through
complexity

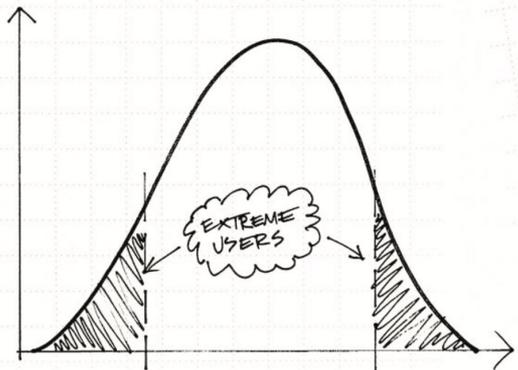
The partnership between Imaginable Futures and IDEO was designed to build capabilities for sensing, sense-making and deciding in quickly changing times. It was a learning opportunity to bridge deep expertise in systems thinking with a human-centered approach towards problem solving. These times require new ways of thinking, leading and acting. The following are starting tools to support you in continuing to be equity-centered sense makers and future casters.

“We can and we will take action. How can we unleash the potential of learning, if we do not?”

Amy Klement, Managing Partner, Imaginable Futures

TOOLS

RULES FOR BRAINSTORMING



SHARE YOUR IDEAS [#LearningReimagined](#)
[@imaginablefut](#) [@IDEO](#)

01. Defer judgement. You never know where a good idea is going to come from. The key is make everyone feel like they can say the idea on their mind and allow others to build on it.

02. Encourage wild ideas. Wild ideas can often give rise to creative leaps. In thinking about ideas that are wacky or out there, we tend to think about what we really want without the constraints of technology or materials.

03. Build on the ideas of others. Being positive and building on the ideas of others take some skill. In conversation, we try to use “and” instead of “but.”

04. Stay focused on the topic. Try to keep the discussion on target, otherwise you can diverge beyond the scope of what you’re trying to design for.

05. One conversation at a time. Your team is far more likely to build on an idea and make a creative leap if everyone is paying full attention to whoever is sharing a new idea.

06. Be visual. In live brainstorms we write down on Post-its and then put them on a wall. Nothing gets an idea across faster than drawing it. Doesn’t matter if you’re not Rembrandt!

07. Go for quantity. Aim for as many new ideas as possible. In a good session, up to 100 ideas are generated in 60 minutes. Crank the ideas out quickly and build on the best ones.

TOOLS

FUTURE OPPORTUNITY MADLIB

Because technology is mandatory
for learning, in 5 years,

“Students that are [future profile]

will [future action]

resulting in [future result]

”
.

SHARE YOUR IDEAS [#LearningReimagined](#)
[@imaginablefut](#) [@IDEO](#)

TOOLS

ASSUMPTION FLIP

This is a fun exercise that will help you and your team let go of current assumptions as you plan for the future. *It will also help you imagine a future under the tight constraints of an assumption that's no longer valid.*

SHARE YOUR IDEAS [#LearningReimagined](#)
[@imaginablefut](#) [@IDEO](#)

Step 1

On a piece of paper, have everyone write an assumption or truth about the education system today. It can be serious or silly (e.g. curriculum is rarely rightsized for the learner, or teachers are frustrated by demands of the virtual classroom).

Step 2

Sitting in a circle, pass your assumption to the person on your left.

Step 3

Now ask each person to state the OPPOSITE of the assumption they're holding. (e.g. curriculum is customized and rightsized for the learner, or teachers are not frustrated by demands of the virtual classroom).

Step 4

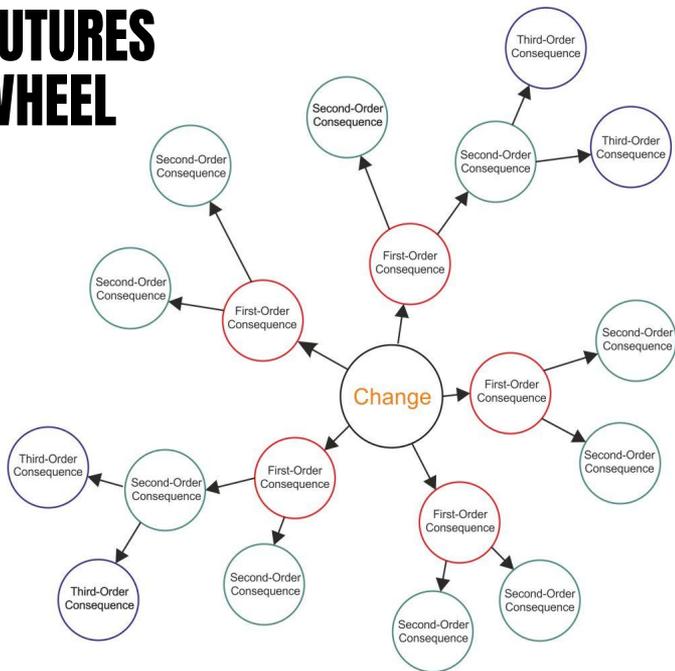
Now, for each flipped assumption, imagine how that would impact your future food system: (eg: In a world where curriculum is customized and rightsized for the learner, what possibilities would that open up, what new challenges would it create, what would have to happen to make it so?)

Step 5

Write down a few of these possibilities for your future education system.

TOOLS

FUTURES WHEEL



This time-tested Futurecasting exercise was developed by John Glenn in 1972 to help identify the potential consequences of trends and events. Here, your team will identify the consequences of a change you'd like to initiate for your education system, following these steps for developing a Futures Wheel.

Step 1: Identify the Change

Write the change that you need to consider in the center of a piece of paper or on a flipchart. This could be an event, trend, problem or possible solution.

Step 2: Identify Direct, First-Order Consequences

Now, brainstorm possible direct consequences of that change. Write each consequence in a circle and connect it from the central idea with an arrow. These are "first-order" consequences.

Step 3: Identify Indirect, Second-Order Consequences

You now need to brainstorm all the possible "second-order" consequences of each of the first-order (direct) consequences that you wrote down in Step 2, and add them to your diagram in the same way.

Then, repeat this by identifying the third-order consequences, fourth-order consequences, and so on.

Tip 1: You may find it useful to color-code each "level" of the wheel, as we have in figure 1, above. This makes it easier to prioritize and analyze consequences once you've completed your brainstorming.

Tip 2: Remember that consequences are not necessarily negative.

Step 4: Analyze Implications

Once you've completed all of the levels of the Futures Wheel, you'll have a clear picture of the possible direct and indirect consequences resulting from the change. List these.

Step 5: Identify Actions

Where the possible consequences that you've identified are negative, think about how you'll manage them (our article on Risk Analysis gives some useful pointers). Where consequences are positive, think about what you'll do to take full advantage of them.

SHARE YOUR IDEAS [#LearningReimagined](#)
[@imaginablefut](#) @IDEO

TOOLS

RESOURCE LINKS

ANTI RACISM

- [White Accomplices](#)
- [Teaching to Transgress by bell hooks](#)
- [Array 101](#)
- [Black Teacher Project](#)
- [National Equity Project](#)
- [Black Lives Matter Curriculum](#)
- [White Fragility by Robin Diangelo](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- [Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire](#)
- [Campaign Zero: We can end police violence in America](#)

DESIGN

- [Equity Centered Community Design](#)
- [Liberatory Design Cards](#)
- [Design for Equity Meal Kit Design Kit](#)
- [Field Guide for Human Centered Design](#)
- [Design Thinking for Educators](#)

SAMPLE RESOURCE — DESIGN THINKING FOR EDUCATORS



DOWNLOAD

CONCLUSION



Collapse is painful, but it carries within it the seeds of transformation. As we live through the effects of a global crisis, we feel a shared urgency to demand a more equitable future. In collective action, there is hope.



Our hope is that this report will serve not as a persistent North Star, but as a starting point for thoughtful provocation about the role we each play in this evolving world.

What is clear from this snapshot, is that the world and our communities need brave collaboration now more than ever.

Moving forward, let's continue to talk, continue to work together and continue to hold hands across divides towards growth and evolution. The time to think beyond what we know is now. We consider ourselves lucky to be alongside each and every one of you reading, in that journey.



Imaginable Futures is a global philanthropic investment firm that believes learning has the power to unlock human potential and aspires to provide every learner with the opportunity and the tools they need to imagine, and to realize, a brighter future. By taking a systems approach to solving complex education challenges, Imaginable Futures works across public, private and social sectors to bring to life transformational ideas in local, national and global contexts for learners of all ages. With a deep commitment to on-the-ground partnership and co-creation with those we serve, Imaginable Futures is empowering learners, families and communities to be the changemakers of the future.

openIDEO

OpenIDEO, the social innovation practice of IDEO, exists to accelerate diverse communities of problem solvers in their work to transform the world into a more equitable, sustainable and empathetic place. Through [OpenIDEO's open innovation platform](#), people from all over the world with diverse skills and perspectives, come together to spark conversation and innovation where it's needed most.



The Teacher's Guild, born out of IDEO's Design for Learning practice, is a professional community that activates teachers' creativity to solve the biggest challenges in education today. Their collaborative learning programs leverage Design Thinking, and a learner-centered approach to problem solving. Teachers tap into their inner designer by trying new ideas and discovering what works and why for their students and schools.

Acknowledgements

This report was produced by Imaginable Futures and OpenIDEO in partnership with the Teachers Guild. The partnership was designed to build capabilities for sensing, sense-making, and deciding in quickly changing times. It was a learning opportunity, to bridge deep expertise in systems thinking with a human-centered approach towards problem solving. These times require new ways of thinking, leading and acting.

We would like to thank the following contributors:

@imaginablefut: Ashley Beckner, Luis Duarte, Rebecca Hankin, Isabelle Hau, Amy Klement, Teresa Mbagaya, Erin Simmons (Project Lead), Nathalie Zogbi

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@The Teachers Guild and Design for Learning: Shoshana Berger, Molly McMahan, Tracee Worley

APPENDIX

Learn more about the
academic research
behind our seven
Drivers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Drivers surfaced in this report grew from interviews, discussions and desk research by a team of designers at IDEO & philanthropic investors at Imaginable Futures. The research was undertaken in an effort to sense, and make sense, of the once-in-a-generation moment in which we are all living, working and surviving.

The trends reflect data from primarily three continents (Africa, North America and South America) and five countries (Brazil, Kenya, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States).

The team used a **four-part process** including: conducting internal and external interviews, surfacing signals across the ecosystem via focus group workshop discussions, synthesizing trends and identifying opportunity areas. Through a series of iterative cycles, the team arrived at seven (7) global megascopic drivers, synthesizing over 100 data points from across the research process. These seven drivers reflect 'of-the-moment' shifts relevant to education, at all levels, around the globe.

9 Looking In Interviews

with philanthropic investors at Imaginable Futures, representing diverse geographies and education ecosystems.

6 Looking Out Interviews

with experts across the education and innovation sectors.

5 Focus Group Discussions

Workshops hosted across geographic regions, with education experts.

100+ Data Points

Feedback on signals and trends that influenced the 7 decided upon drivers. Surfaced through interviews, desk research, focus groups

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:

*Drivers &
Supporting Data*

The Social Contract of Public Education is Changing

Data and citations

According to a poll by [USA TODAY/Ipsos](#):

- 1 in 5 teachers say they are unlikely to go back to school if their classrooms reopen in the fall, signaling a potential wave of resignations.
- 2/3rds of teachers say they haven't been able to properly do their jobs in an educational system upended by the coronavirus.
- 3/4ths of teachers say having to rely on distance learning is making their students fall behind in their classwork.
- 6 in 10 parents say they would be likely to pursue at-home learning options instead of sending back their children this fall.

Whole Child Centers, More Than Academic Centers

Globally, systems of schooling are designed around different aims—citizenship, job preparation, economic mobility—and worldwide that contract is changing. Families and communities are waking to the reality of the many roles public education has played. Families are questioning and redefining what happens in a school and what they can expect from public education, from childcare to mid-day meal, or teacher as the guide/leader in child's education. And as schools plan to come back online or in person, many are considering how to balance the importance of social and emotional development with academic learning loss.

Rise of Self Directed Learning

Bright spots are emerging for some learners as they become directors of their own learning and facilitators of their peers' learning. Where homework and lessons are no longer being distributed, some are turning to past assignments, downloading mobile learning applications, and seeking real world opportunities. Having agency of what, when and how you learn has the metacognitive impact of young people better prepared for life, to navigate the complexity of the work and world ahead of them; and yet, have our schools thus far prepared our learners to be successful, self-directed, agency-filled students?

The Value of Impact & Learning

The value of traditional schooling (beyond early childhood) will be questioned. Learners will wonder why they are spending time and money on school when they can access so much remotely or within their communities, the prestigious academic institutions will need to reinvent to stay relevant. As learning will continue to come from anywhere and everywhere, there is a sense that we'll need to place an even higher value on truly credible content. That means "success" in learning looks like it is up for redefinition. The traditional metrics of learning and succeeding must shift to reflect the rich learning happening outside the classroom and the gaps that are forming. Perhaps the new model might include: social well-being, financial well-being, community well-being and career fulfillment.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Learning Technology is Mandatory; Relationships are at a Distance

Data and citations

- According to [UNICEF](#), in 71 countries worldwide, less than half the population has access to the internet. Despite this disparity, 73 percent of governments out of 127 reporting countries are using online platforms to deliver education while schools remain closed.
- According to a [survey](#) conducted by Common Sense Media, nearly one in four teens say they're connecting with their teachers less than once a week. Almost half (41 percent) haven't attended an online or virtual class since in-person school was canceled. 42% feel "more lonely than usual."
- According to a [survey](#) by Center for Promise at America's Promise Alliance, 30% of young people say they have more often been feeling unhappy or depressed since schools closed, and nearly as many say they are much more concerned than usual about having their basic needs met.
- In a survey focused on students of color conducted by [Our Turn](#), 65 percent of students surveyed state that their mental health has worsened during this pandemic, and 28 percent state that their physical health has also worsened during this time. More than half (56 percent) are concerned about their mental health in both the short- and long-term.

From *What* Students Learn to *How* They Learn

There has been a shift from the *what* of teaching and learning to the *how*. The task of teaching—building skillsets, mindsets and competencies—without being physically in the same room has ushered in a surge in experimentation with technology of varying fidelity. Previous in-person project-based, peer-based learning experiences are endangered.

Education Is Based on Relationships

Being in proximity to others creates the space for more dynamic, life-giving relationships. The play essential for learner engagement is fading, and at risk of being lost entirely. Some community efforts are helping young children learn from home through physical material mailings and new, distanced social interactions.

A New Access-to-Schooling Crisis

In less resourced contexts, governments and schools are turning to SMS, radio and TV, including offering solar powered radios for families living on less than \$1 a day. Teachers struggle to measure reach and efficacy—“I don't know if they are learning” and “I don't know if I'm teaching.” In low-tech communities, teachers are exploring schools as exchanges: Lessons left on chalkboards and on paper stacks in abandoned classrooms are the channels used to transmit curriculum, with learners stopping by. In Brazil, early reports show nearly one in four learners have not had any access to learning resources during the pandemic. Special population and learners with disabilities are unable to receive the services they need.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Space & Time Bend; *Power Displaced from Proximity*

Data and citations

- Nearly [half of the world's schoolchildren](#), some 310 million, have relied on their school for a daily meal, including 100 million children in India, 48 million in Brazil, and 9 million each in Nigeria and South Africa.
- According to the [United Nations](#), an estimated 42–66 million children could fall into extreme poverty as a result of the crisis this year, adding to the estimated 386 million children already in extreme poverty in 2019.
- The [World Bank](#) estimates that close to 7 million students from primary and secondary education could drop out of school due to the income shock of the pandemic alone.

Power Displaced from Proximity

Without place-based power, we observe a broadening of the gap between those with access and those without it. While formerly a parent could enter the principal's office to share feedback, the wayfinding towards power is now less straightforward. Access to supports and information, and an ability to enact change, become opaque and challenging to navigate. This shift influences parents, learners and even teachers.

Social Networks Dislocated

Social networks are disrupted and become more virtual, some fall apart unable to develop the virtual currency required to withstand. Suddenly, society is rapt and present on social media platforms, though many struggle to connect with emotional depth beyond the screen. Movements catch fire, and although protests find thousands amassed collectively, unspoken contracts still keep some away from in-person connections in the interest of preserving or amassing social capital. As many attempt to reinvent new systems for building and managing social capital, with less emphasis on location, we wait curiously to understand how the desire to develop social bonds may shift.

Seat Time Becomes Useless

This moment is also changing the relationship between time and learning. Learning can happen anytime, anywhere and for any age; whether it is through remote learning or no-tech learning tools and intermittent scheduling. Some are considering breaking grade levels into semesters, for example grade 1a or 1b available both spring and fall, or planning the upcoming year to match local rhythms of community holidays. Not only is the where and when of learning changing, but how we measure education, and against which timelines, is morphing, as well.

Personal Spaces Blend & Inhibit School Life

Without physical buildings, learners are being forced online to connect with peers in new ways—having their families and personal spaces on calls and catching up through computer screen conversation instead of play. With multiple sibling learners working in one room, learning environments are at best noisy and cramped, and at worst untenable, making it hard to focus. Learners eventually draft away from peer and school communities, perhaps dropping out of school altogether.

Back to Basics in the Informal Economy; Future of Work Redefined

Data and citations

According to the [International Labour Organization](#), as of April 2020:

- Partial lockdown measures affected almost 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81 per cent of the world's workforce.
- Working hours are predicted to decline by 6.7 percent in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.
- Particularly in low- and middle-income countries, hard-hit sectors have a high proportion of workers in informal employment and workers with limited access to health services and social protection.
- [In 2016](#), there were 259 million young people classified as NEET, which rose to an estimated 267 million in 2019 and is projected to continue rising to 273 million in 2021.

Essentialism

A new class of worker emerges that includes doctors, nurses, teachers, caregivers, grocery store clerks, delivery drivers, and more. We are currently experiencing the worst global unemployment crisis in modern history, and the joblessness predicted for the future has become today's reality. Businesses that are closing today may never reopen, and the future validity of entire industries is in question. Economies that rely on oil and tourism are especially hard-hit at the outset. The only economic systems now functioning are those that must—those that are essential. Amidst this massive dislocation in the working economy, the rise of the essential worker—he or she keeping our necessary industries (health, food, education, delivery) afloat—creates a new “in-demand” class and hints towards a greatly restructured future workforce.

With Unpredictable Future of Work, A Return to The Informal Economy

National and regional economies will be deeply affected over the long-term, though recovery will vary greatly (for example: McKinsey anticipates 8% decline in Africa's GDP and nearly 20-30% job losses in Kenya). There is a sense that re-skilling programs and resources for adult learning are needed immediately, and may likely be driven by large private corporations alongside governments. The debate about which skills are worth learning for an uncertain future has escalated, as has the debate about how to make these programs accessible for all. Many formerly employed, turn towards the informal economy, amidst an unpredictable job market and the growing need for essential services.

Teachers Shortage

Within education, there was, before COVID-19, a shortage of teachers globally. Now, teachers are nervous to come back to work without sufficient sanitation and protection in schools that do not have financial or sometimes infrastructural resources to obtain these. Teachers' jobs change significantly, no longer relational but transactional, with limited funding or time allocated to the necessary reskilling. Further, schools face months, if not years, of intermittent disruptions, losing touch with its teaching population who are now attempting to do their jobs in the most impossible of circumstances.

Schools Transforming as Caregivers, Families Partner with Teachers

Data and citations

- The [International Labour Organization](#) estimates that there are 67 million domestic workers globally and that 80 percent of them are women. Yet 90 percent of them are excluded from protections such as paid sick leave and unemployment benefits.
- According to [Care International and the International Rescue Committee](#), worldwide, women perform three times more unpaid caregiving work than do men, accounting for 76.2 percent of the total hours worked.
- According to a poll conducted by [Morning Consult for The New York Times](#), nearly half of men say they do most of the homeschooling, while only 3 percent of women agree.
- According to the [United Nations](#), women spend 3x as many hours as men doing unpaid care and domestic work, limiting their access to decent work.

Trust Between Classroom and Home

Parents and communities are seeing school as far more than just education; they recognize school as caregiver in new ways. With homeschooling as the current norm, families understand better the importance of teaching and learning, the belief of educators as the sole way to learn is disrupted. And while schools discover their essential role in supporting the whole child with nutrition, social services, devices and more, their impact beyond academics becomes clear. What still remains true is that schools and homes need each other to fully support whole child development. With the onset of COVID -19, that trust between the classroom and home determined whether learning and social services continued or not; either reducing or widening the gaps between the classroom and the home.

Women Disproportionately Burdened

Social distancing requirements have cut families off from most of their typical child care resources. The day-to-day experience of lacking child care varies widely according to whether or not parents are able to work from home. While balancing the increased demands of homemaking while in the home, women are disproportionately burdened. Meanwhile, girls and women are projected to be most hard-hit by education pauses, as families prioritize tuition resources. In some contexts, fathers take on a renewed role in the household, taking on more responsibility for their children. Parents are busier than ever and more engaged than ever in their child's learning.

Childcare An Essential Value of School

Working parents of the youngest children in our education system have been challenged with not just teaching early learners, but also having the support of childcare. Beyond sitting and getting with digital media programs, early learners need a variety of activities and socialization with other children to learn and grow. But for many parents right now, it's the child care that they desperately need so they can continue to work and care for the household.

Interconnectivity, in Tension with Isolationism and Neo-tribalism

Data and citations

- [Stat News](#) shares, College students are [remotely tutoring](#) younger peers. Individuals and companies are [making face masks](#) for health care professionals. [House concerts](#) are being played to stave off growing loneliness.
- [New York Times](#): More than 200 clinical trials have been launched, bringing together hospitals and laboratories around the globe.
- [Collaboration informs](#) coronavirus policy by analyzing data associated with the pandemic
- [READY](#): Global consortium strengthening NGO preparedness for large-scale infectious disease epidemics and pandemics that become international humanitarian emergencies

New and Renewed Collaboration

This moment is bringing people together in new configurations—tri-state resource collaboratives, unlikely partnerships between governments and corporations, formerly out of touch family members, neighbors becoming friends, hyper local connections allowing counties and countries to tap into solidarity through a shared infection rate. In some geographies, citizens are both united and trapped under the COVID-19-era policies of ineffective leadership, and new legal restrictions on personal mobility confine one to their city, neighborhood, or home.

Rise of a New Sharing Economy, Focused on Learning

Some are imagining new ways to collaborate and create a sharing economy of resources and expertise. This is especially true for the education sector—whether resources to support parents in homeschooling, or open sourced curriculums abound. Connection is the bedrock of a school experience, essential in this time of increased learner anxiety and isolation, and many are experimenting with bringing connection into learners' lives, the lives of those teaching them, and our collective experience during this unprecedented moment in time.

New Social Contract To Address Structural Racism Emerges

New circles are compelled to address systemic and structural racism in their families, communities and countries. COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Black and Brown families, preying on the historic inequities produced by healthcare systems, education systems, housing systems and colonialism. The power of voice consolidates on the side of anti-racism and justice, demanding the dismantling and reimagining of public infrastructure and our social contract.

Divides Widen, Not Just Digitally

The dark side of these new circles of connectivity and unity are the boundaries and borders they create that were previously open. The world has gotten smaller for the individual, with an emphasis on the unit of cohabitation or unit of community, in addition to competitiveness for resources between groups. Political instability is amplifying anxiety and sowing distrust in systemic ability to respond and adapt to change in education. In the extreme, this looks like isolationist politics, locked borders, and governments over-exercising authority over individual liberty. Most recognize that something new is required of leadership, though few believe in their political system's ability to grow and adapt at pace with our shifting world.

Mental Well-being is Headlining; Compassion is Required

Data and citations

[Stat News](#) shares, College students are [remotely](#). According to the [American Psychological Association](#):

- 46 percent of parents with children under 18 said their stress level was high, compared with 28 percent of adults without children.
- More than 7 in 10 parents say that managing distance/online learning for their children is a significant source of stress (71%).
- People of color are more likely than white adults to report significant stressors in their life as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, namely getting coronavirus (71% vs. 59%, respectively), basic needs (61% vs. 47%), and access to health care services (59% vs. 46%).

According to a survey conducted by the [Center for Promise](#), more than 1 in 4 young people reported an increase in losing sleep because of worry, feeling unhappy or depressed, feeling constantly under strain, or experiencing a loss of confidence in themselves.

Race and Income Inequalities Exacerbated

The racial disparities surfaced during the pandemic across health, economy and education are impossible to ignore. Low-income communities of color around the world were adversely affected by the pandemic. These communities are dying at a higher rate, lost their jobs at a higher rate and were the families most affected by the digital divides as classrooms went online.

Anxiety on the Rise

This moment is adversely affecting the mental health of nearly every member of the community—children, teachers, adults, parents, caregivers and colleagues. Within schools and virtual classrooms, learners are weighed down by myriad new stressors—from whether a parent may get laid off, to new levels of isolation in their own household, to terror regarding health and death, to confusion and pain in observing civil unrest. Fears about dwindling financial security are amplifying mental health issues, and we are learning how social and emotional well-being may be more important than academics.

Students, Bored, Isolated and Uncertain

The pandemic has been traumatic for many learners. With in-person classes cancelled for the rest of the year, and uncertainty about childcare, schools and colleges opening in the fall, learners are facing dramatic change without the support and physical proximity of their schools and support systems. While there are stories of how self-directed learning is on the rise, many learners are bored, isolated and uncertain because the future has become unpredictable. The decline and absence of relationships to help navigate the ambiguity and anxiety is impacting both social and academic development.

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