Equity Action Toolkit, released by the Consortium of School Networking, indicated that in 2015, three out of four school districts surveyed did not have any plan for student connectivity once they left the school campus (Consortium of School Networking, 2016).

As two dads of school-age girls, we only want our daughters to be computer scientists if that's their passion. As they get older, we only want them coding if it's what they want to do. We want them to follow their passions and dreams—not what they think the world is telling them, as girls, to do. What we don't want, and what we can't have, is an educational system or a society that pushes the girls of future generations—and our students of color—away from high-octane classes and dynamic opportunities. Our nation needs their gifts and abilities. We need their genius.

You are part of the solution.

The Need for Schools that are Future Ready

The electric light did not come from the continuous improvement of candles.

Oren Harari

The traditional model of schooling in which students are taught to regurgitate information, ultimately preparing them for the industrial model of the past, must dramatically shift to a more personal approach if we are to prepare this generation of students to become successful citizens in a global society. No longer is this notion some idealistic, utopian-esque, desired outcome. We believe that with all that is known about how students learn, the predictions regarding the world they will face upon graduation, and the vast disparities of inequity that have existed for centuries, utilizing a traditional, one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning is educational malpractice.

By virtually every metric, too many of today's schools are failing to adequately prepare students for life after graduation. Nearly half of Hispanics, African Americans, and American Indians do not graduate on time with their classmates. *Nearly half*. Nationwide, more than 1 million U.S. high school students drop out each year. That means an American high school student drops out of school every 29 seconds (Watson & Gemin, 2008).

Today's generation of students, regardless of the zip code they call home, deserve and need greater opportunities than the traditional education structure has previously afforded them in the past. This isn't simply an educational issue to debate but an economic issue that will have a lasting impact on generations to come. The future stability of all nations depends on the educational choices their school leaders make today. We must intentionally design our schools and transform the student learning experience.

You are part of the solution.

Organization of the Book

Eight Keys for Intentional Design

This book outlines eight keys to intentionally designing tomorrow's schools so today's learners are prepared for success far beyond earning a high school diploma and are ready to create new industries, find new cures, and solve tomorrow's world problems. Each key, individually dissected in a chapter, serves as a puzzle piece for redesigning our K–12 education system of teaching and learning. The eight keys for designing tomorrow's schools, today, are as follows.

Key #1: Leadership and school culture lay the foundation. School improvement efforts rely heavily on high-quality, collaborative leadership. Educational leaders are tasked with establishing a collective vision for school improvement and initiating change to spur innovation, ensure student learning, and increase achievement. In a world where the acceleration of change continues to grow exponentially, school cultures need to evolve at a faster rate to keep pace with these changes if the ultimate goal is to prepare today's learners for future success. The overarching emphasis is and must be about making a difference in the lives of children. Leading and teaching is challenging work that requires a high level of understanding and patience in order to transform a school's learning culture to one that is valued by students, educators, and other key stakeholders. A new foundation must be established through relationship-oriented, innovative leadership practices in order to create a culture of learning that will prepare students for their future, not our past.

Key #2: The learning experience must be redesigned and made personal. Studies in neuroscience have indicated that students traditionally forget most of the factual information that they 'learned' while in school.

We have all experienced a time when we crammed for a test, earned a passing grade, and promptly forgot the information a few weeks later. These studies indicate that simply shoving factual information into students' brains is ultimately a waste of time and resources. Such practices have led to an engagement crisis, which isn't surprising since students are often told what to learn, when to learn it, and how it should be learned. Very rarely do students have the opportunity to follow their passions, explore their interests, and engage in relevant opportunities that break down traditional classroom silos. Student agency must become the norm, not the exception. Instructional pedagogy must become focused on higher-order skills and problem solving while anytime, anywhere learning must become a realistic possibility for today's "Netflix generation" of students.

Key #3: Decisions must be grounded in evidence and driven by a Return on Instruction. The evolution of the U.S. educational structure has created a generation of students that is hyperfocused on grades, not learning. Students need to be afforded authentic opportunities to use real-world tools to do real-world work that matters. Technology provides educators with the means to allow students to demonstrate conceptual mastery and develop ownership in ways never before imagined. Changing the way and means by which we assess is a step in the right direction, but a more concerted effort to provide evidence that technology is actually affecting learning and achievement is the ultimate goal. School cultures must begin to focus on the Return on Instruction (ROI). When infusing technology, there needs to be an ROI that results in evidence of improved student learning outcomes.

Key #4: Learning spaces must become learner-centered. A shift in pedagogy mandates a shift in learning space design. Such changes are not simply an idea from the latest Pinterest board but one of necessity. Schools and classrooms must transform from an industrial era model with teacher-centric environments and orderly rows of desks and students all facing the same direction to spaces that are learner-centered, more personal in nature, and correlate with research on how space affects learning. Educators who want to build collaboration, problem solving, and higher-order thinking skills yet have spaces that resemble the classrooms of the industrial era are inhibiting innovation and missing the opportunity to unleash student genius. Learning spaces need to be flexible, provide areas for movement, and promote collaboration and inquiry. These types of modern spaces resemble the local Starbucks more than they do a nearby cemetery.

Key #5: Professional learning must be relevant, engaging, ongoing, and made personal. The notion of effective professional learning is something that has been discussed for decades. A comparison of the philosophies of today's school districts yields results that fall across a continuum of who controls and owns the learning. Various studies indicate that the top-down, one-size-fits-all, hours-based, sit-and-get approach to professional learning shows little-to-no impact on student achievement. Nevertheless, many districts continue down this path. We believe that equating seat time with accountability is teetering on negligence. The professional learning that occurs in many districts today must undergo radical reform, as the traditional model is outdated and ineffective. A personal approach to professional learning, where growth is valued more than hours obtained, is needed to shift instructional pedagogy. Who owns the learning is key.

Key #6: Technology must be leveraged and used as an accelerant for student learning. Much of the money spent on technology today has little-to-no impact on student learning. In many classrooms, technology is used simply to digitize outdated practices. Many of today's classrooms have amazing 21st century tools being used in 20th century learning environments. Research also indicates that one of the most common forms of integration—the digital drill-and-kill—has no effect on achievement. Even with stagnant budgets, school districts continue to buy more educational technology than ever before, often with little to show for it. However, when effectively used, technology can amplify great instructional pedagogy, adapt to the individual needs of the learner, and help make learning a more personal, engaging, and rigorous experience. Intentionally designed schools also ensure equity in access and opportunity for *all* students.

Key #7: Community collaboration and engagement must be woven into the fabric of a school's culture. Parents are instrumental in the academic success of children, yet walk into many schools, and the range of parent engagement is all over the map. Some schools work to create a welcoming environment where the community is seen as a tremendous asset. In these schools, you'll see parents working side by side with students, laughing at lunch with a group of students, working in classrooms, and collaborating with staff in various capacities. By contrast, some schools create cultures in which parents hardly feel welcome at all. In these schools, parents are seemingly locked out and left standing at the front door, with the possible exception of a few planned events per year. Every business and university in our country is located within school boundary lines, yet the

vast majority have little to no relationship with the schools that line the same streets. From daily collaboration to consistent, relevant communications to supporting home access for students in need, intentionally designed schools are collaborative partners and the hub of the local community.

Key #8: Schools that transform learning are built to last as financial, political, and pedagogical sustainability ensure long-term success. A budget impasse. A political attack. A shift in instructional pedagogy. How will your school district's success stand the test of time? Will one budget cycle or a defeated referendum sink the ship? Will a shift in school board politics undo recent progress? Will instructional growth continue as your teaching staff changes? With the average district superintendent tenure lasting only a handful of years and the pending retirement of a generation of experienced school leaders, long-term sustainability is needed to avoid turmoil that will negatively affect future generations. Is your school built to last?

Toward the end of each chapter, you'll hear from some of the best educational minds working in schools today. These school leaders are breaking through barriers, overcoming obstacles, and helping families break the chains of poverty, all while providing dynamic learning opportunities for all students by fundamentally redesigning the educational landscape in their districts. These vignettes, shared as Innovative Practices in Action and written by the school leaders themselves, relate success stories from districts large and small, from urban to rural, and from some of the most economically challenged communities. Each of these school leaders has intentionally designed his or her way to amazing student success where learning has been transformed.

We can no longer wait. Time is of the essence. It is our obligation to prepare our students for their future and not our past. We must create and lead schools that are relevant for the world our students live in—not the world our staff grew up in. We must do this . . . starting today.

You are part of the solution.