False Prophets and Wise Choices:
A Humane Approach to School Reform

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Proleer Meeting

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What is.

NGLC

English
(4 years)

Math
(3 years)

Science
(3 years)

Social studies
(2 years)

P.E.

Required
Attendance: #
days in school

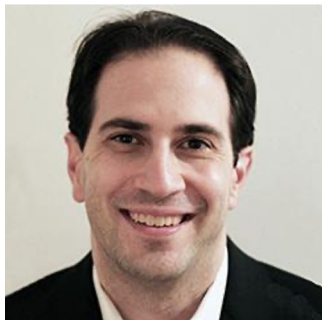Problem-solver

Communicator

Collaborator

Self-directed lifelong learner

Creative & critical thinker

Entrepreneur

Contributing community and global citizen

What should be.

Our Journey

- ❖ 27 schools *recommended* schools in Boston, Cambridge, Providence, New York, Washington, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, San Diego + a two anonymous suburbs and one magnet not located in a city
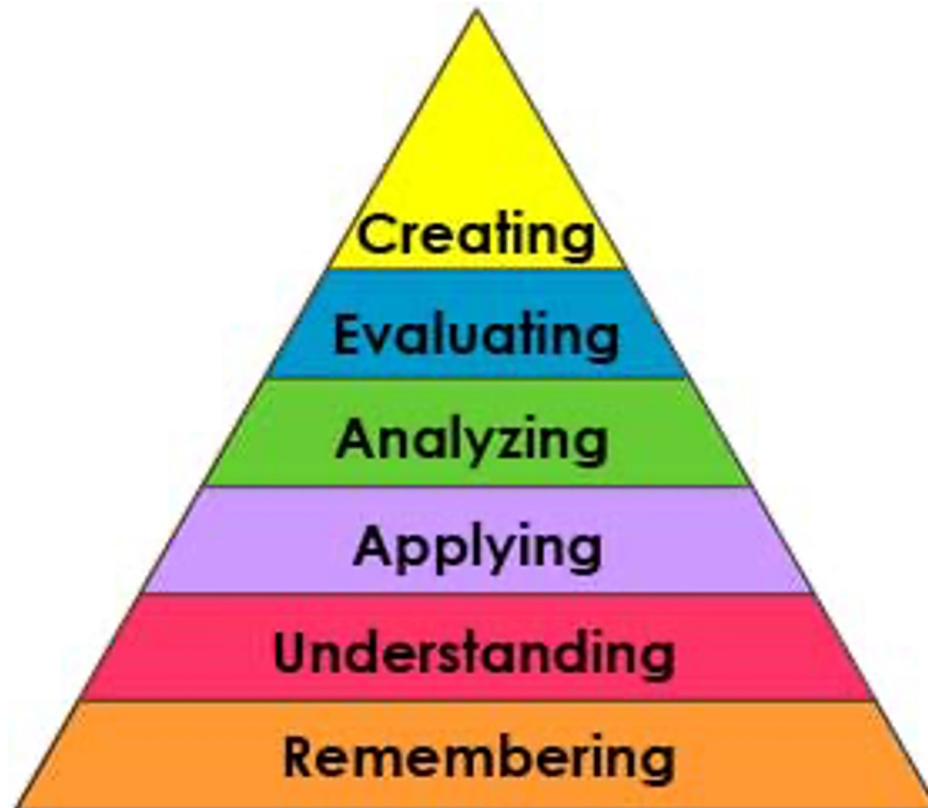
- ❖ Pluralistic sample (progressive, no excuses, STEM, International Baccalaureate, traditional comprehensives, urban, suburban)

- ❖ Charters, small schools, magnet, traditional public; oversample on schools serving poor and working class students

- ❖ 750 hours of observations, 300 interviews
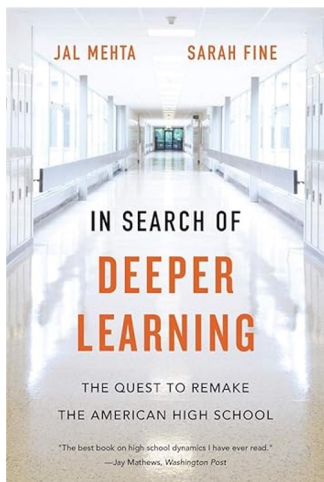
- ❖ Grounded theory and strategic sampling:
    - ❖ 4 deep dive schools (20-30 days)
    - ❖ 6 medium dive schools (5-10 days)
    - ❖ 17 shallow dive schools (1-4 days)

- ❖ Deep dives on theater and debate (3 month-long immersions in full cycles of theater/debate, interviews with all participants, etc.)

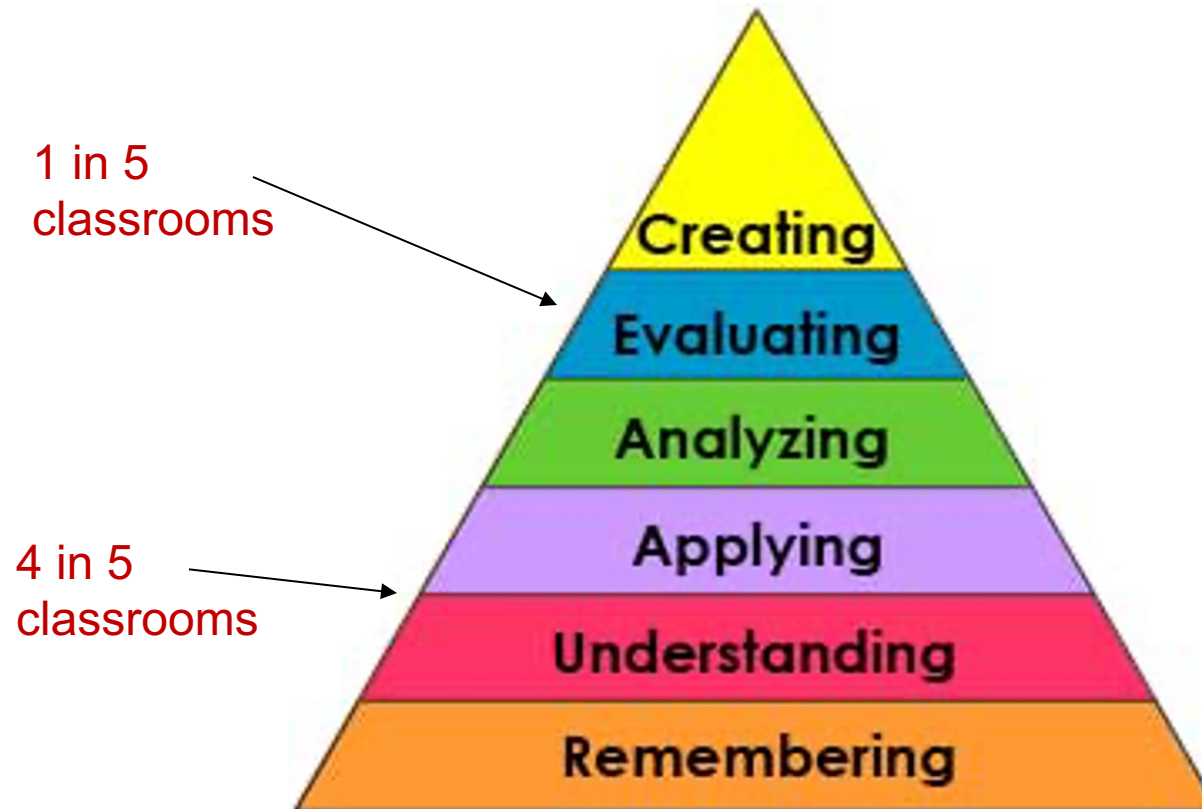- ❖ Deep dives on 7 of the most compelling teachers in our journey

Deeper Learning:
Cognitive Perspectives

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

Challenging Tasks Exception to the Rule

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

1 in 5 classrooms

4 in 5 classrooms

Creating

Evaluating

Analyzing

Applying

Understanding

Remembering

Source: Measures of Effective Teaching Study, 2012

3 Disheartening But Common Patterns

1. "Waiting for Godot" pattern – Basics first, "deeper learning" later

   - Particularly acute in high poverty schools and places where students were "behind"

1. Asking higher-order questions but then answering them themselves

1. Mistaking student-centered learning for deeper learning

Mission-Oriented Schools Had Trouble Integrating Different Virtues Important for Learning
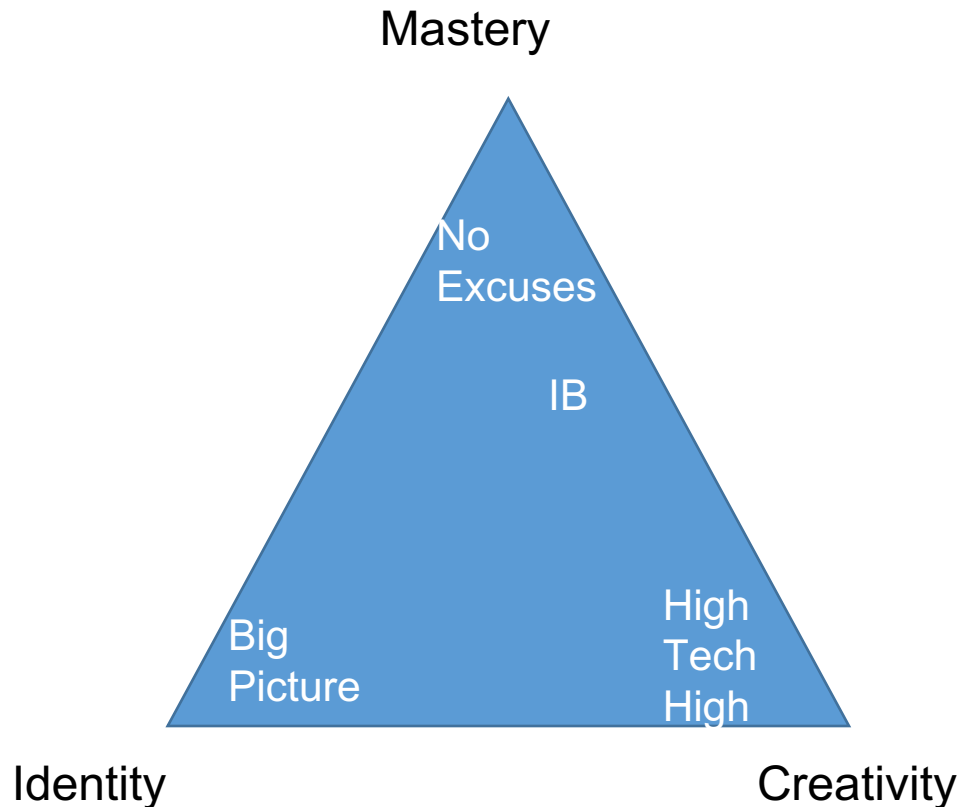
Why Is Ambitious Teaching So Rare?
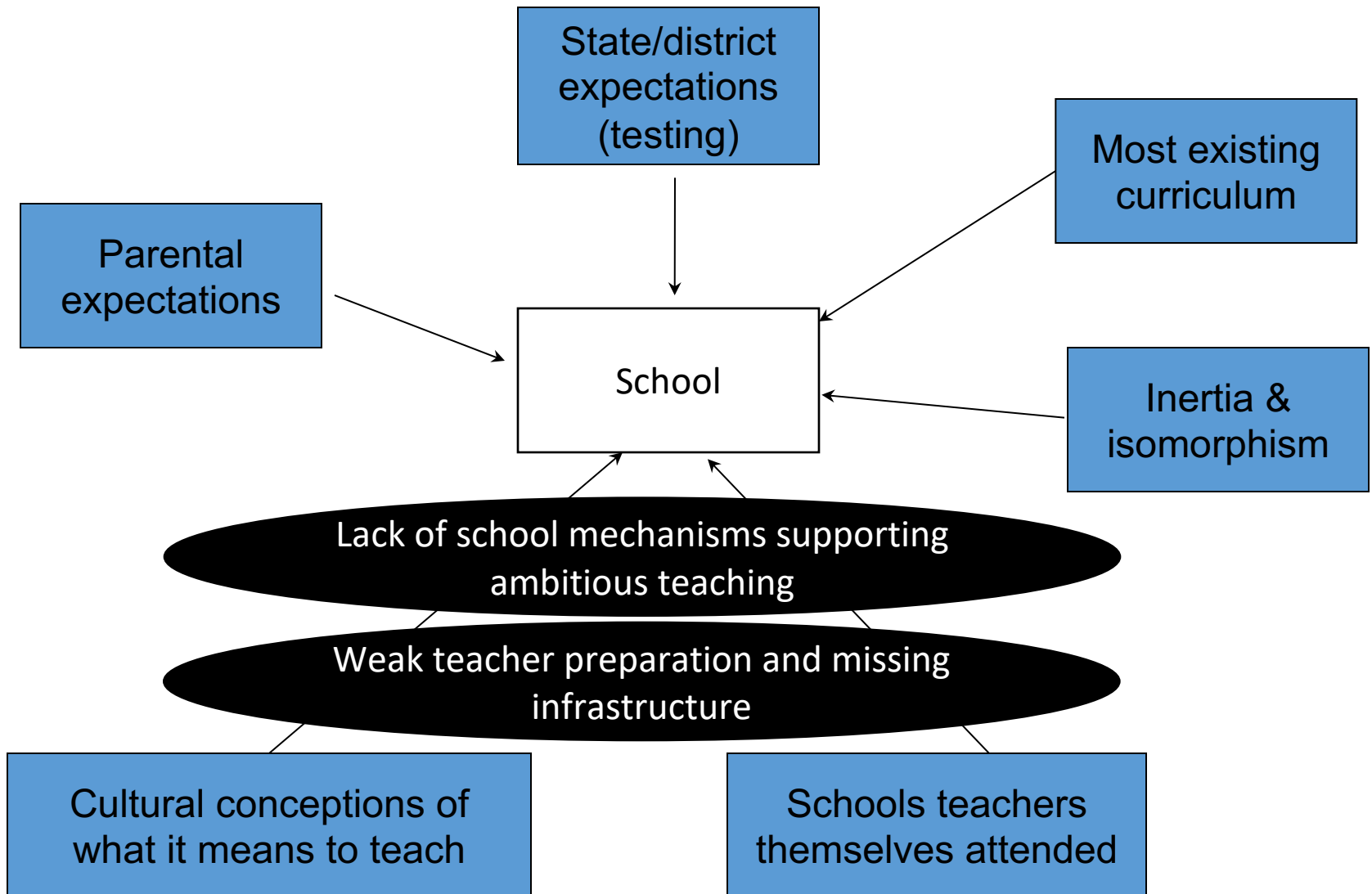# Omissions and Constraints

State/district expectations (testing)

Most existing curriculum

Parental expectations

School

Inertia & isomorphism

Lack of school mechanisms supporting ambitious teaching

Weak teacher preparation and missing infrastructure

Cultural conceptions of what it means to teach

Schools teachers themselves attended

Ready for some good news?

Extracurriculars: Theater

- Purposeful arc towards public performance

- Choice

- Community/family

- Apprenticeship learning

- Whole game at junior level

(Consistent with what we know about how people learn, research on youth development, not consistent with how we do school)

Science: Methods of Scientific Inquiry

(Urban Traditional High School)

❖ Design an experiment around an authentic research question (ex: does music make you more focused while studying?)

❖ Choice and agency

❖ Conduct literature review

❖ Design the study, given financial and logistical constraints

❖ Adjust hypothesis when null results happen

Project Based Learning: California Innocence Project

XONR8 Project (High Tech High Chula Vista)

- ❖ Meet with real exonerees
- ❖ Meet with lawyers at the CIP
- ❖ Read & analyze a "training case"
- ❖ Work on a pending case
- ❖ Present cases to the CIP lawyers
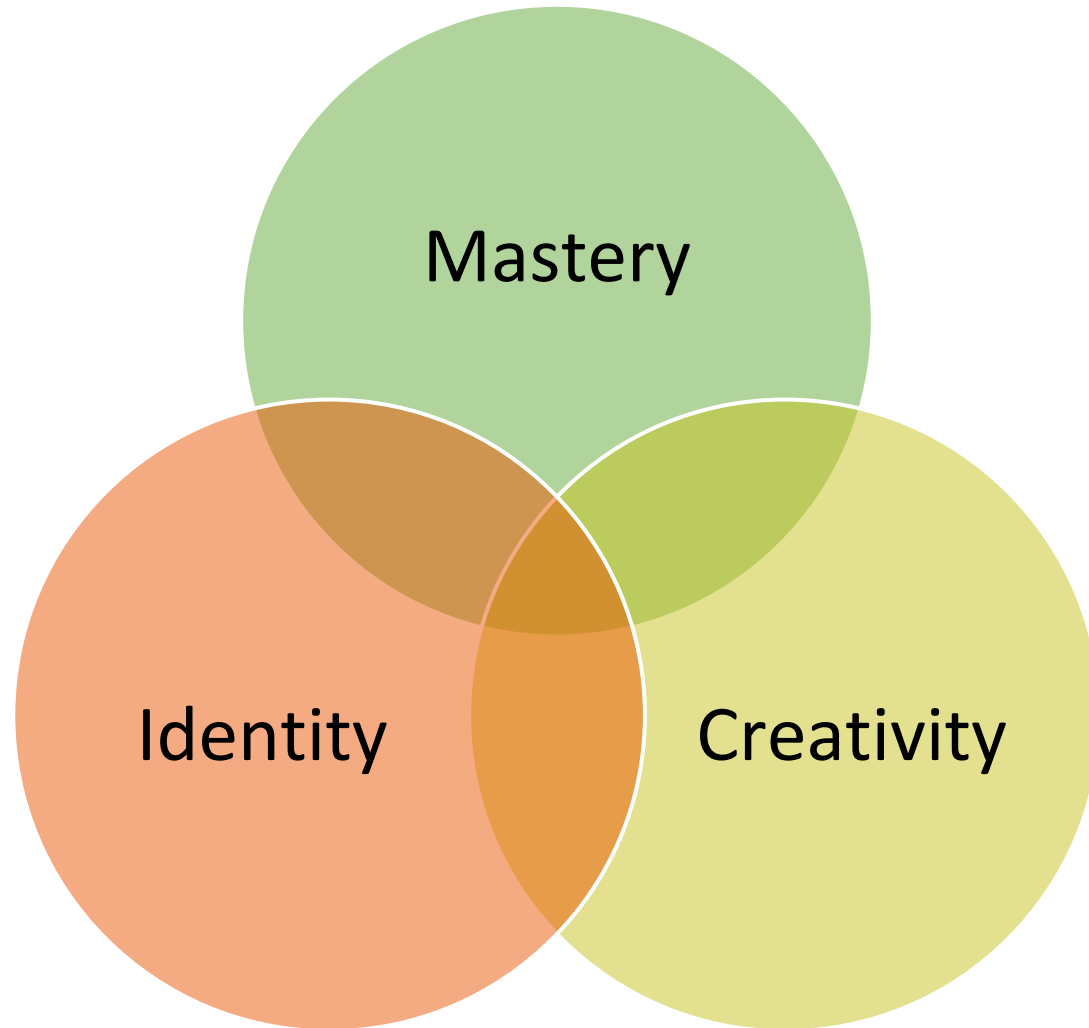- ❖ Write a final argumentative essay

What do these learning experiences have in common?

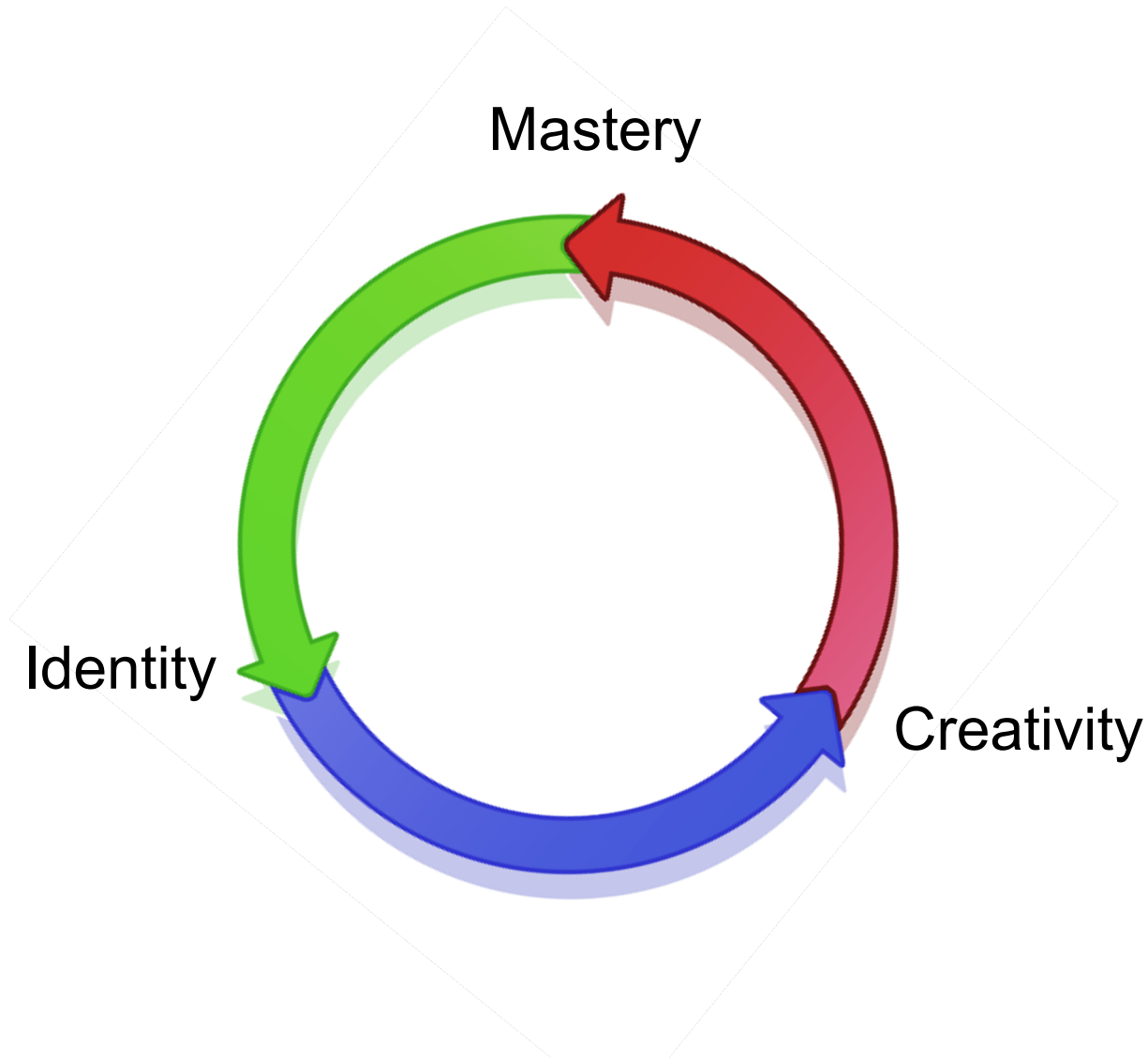# What does deeper learning look, feel, and sound like?

Word cloud: exciting, immersive, desirable, story, transformative, ecosystem, collaborative, communicative, focused, reconciliation, learning, inspiring, creating, galvanize, identity, curiosity, happiness, authority, empathy, noisy, whole, equity, agency, electric, joy, co-construction, iteration, active, create, culturally-sustaining, reimagine, growth, authentic, belonging, reflective, apprenticeship, creativity, bedrock, change, failure, connection, empowerment, collaboration, producing, codesigning, holistic, hard, visceral, challenging, beehive, purpose, co-creation, complexity, reciprocal, relevant, symmetry, engagement, reflection, opportunities, excitement, public, flow, loud, commitment, love, trust, creations, greenline, community, explosive, powerful, scaffolded, task, rounded, meaningful, reinvent, vibrating, intersections, seen, skill-based, game, worthwhile

What Happens in Consequential Learning Experiences?

Deeper Learning in the Long Run

Apprenticeship

Slow Down

Philosophy as Literature

Whole Game Teachers: The Stance

|	**Most Teachers**	**"Whole game" teachers**
Educational goal	Cover the material	Inspire to become a member of the field
Pedagogical priorities	Breadth	Depth
View of knowledge	Certain	Uncertain
Role of student	Receiver of knowledge	Creator of knowledge
View of failure	Something to be avoided	Critical for learning
Ethos	Compliant	Purpose + play

What Differentiated Whole Game Teachers: The Who

❖ Importance of seminal learning experiences in the disciplines:

"Another interesting thing is—I think back at my own education. It wasn't until I did an independent study in my senior year that I really got involved in doing some of the kinds of things that we ask the students to do in the MSI class, my senior year in college. I really didn't get good exposure to a lot of stuff until I became a grad student and started doing research of my own. That was a whole different experience than all the coursework that I had taken prior to that."

"I suppose, if I didn't go to graduate school, I wouldn't be the same person I am. I'm a constructivist, because that's the training that I have. I practiced constructing models that reflect the data that I collected. I can't separate that experience from who I am now, as a teacher of these kids."

Unlearning: Assumptions to Let Go Of
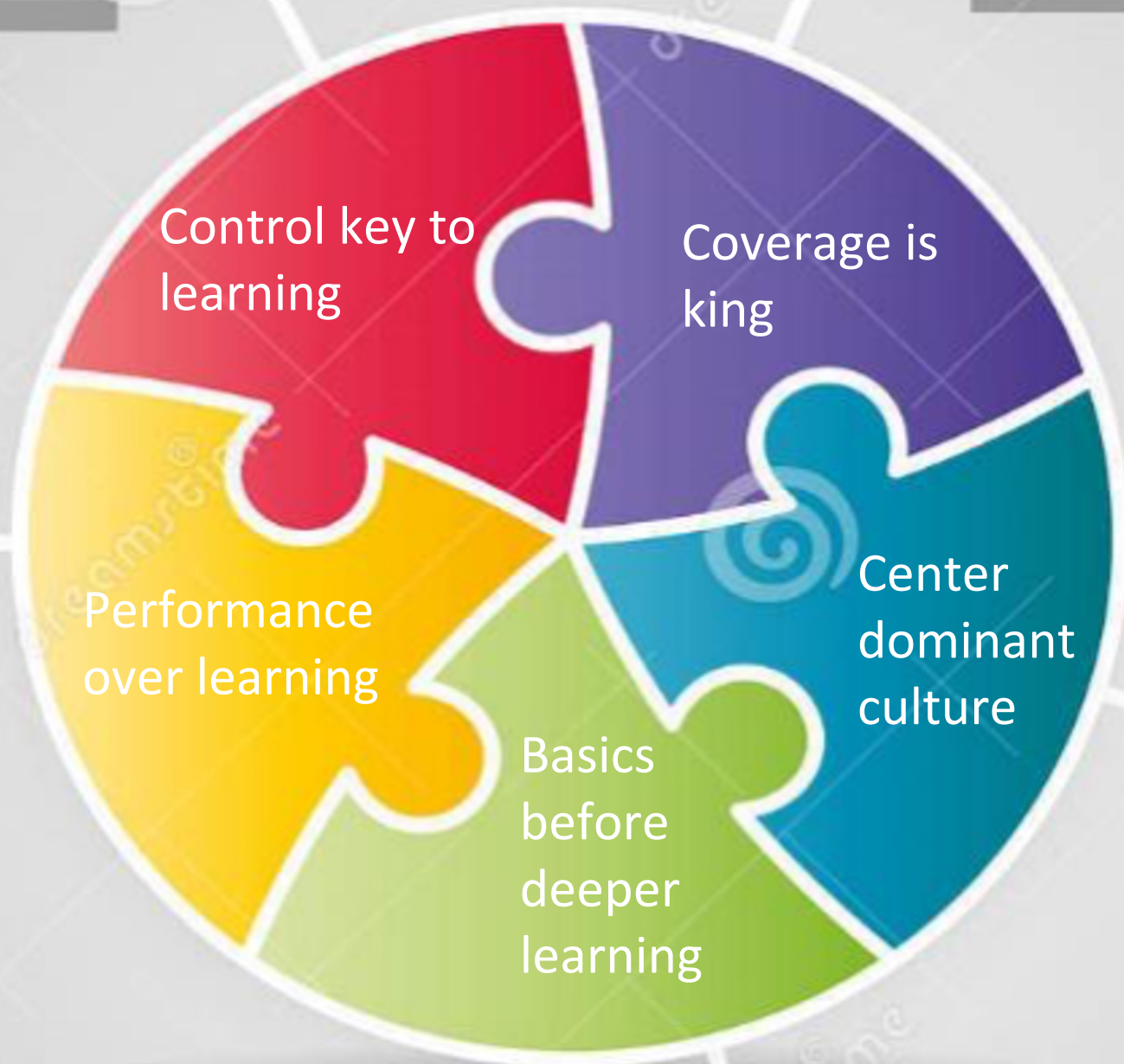
New Assumptions to Embrace
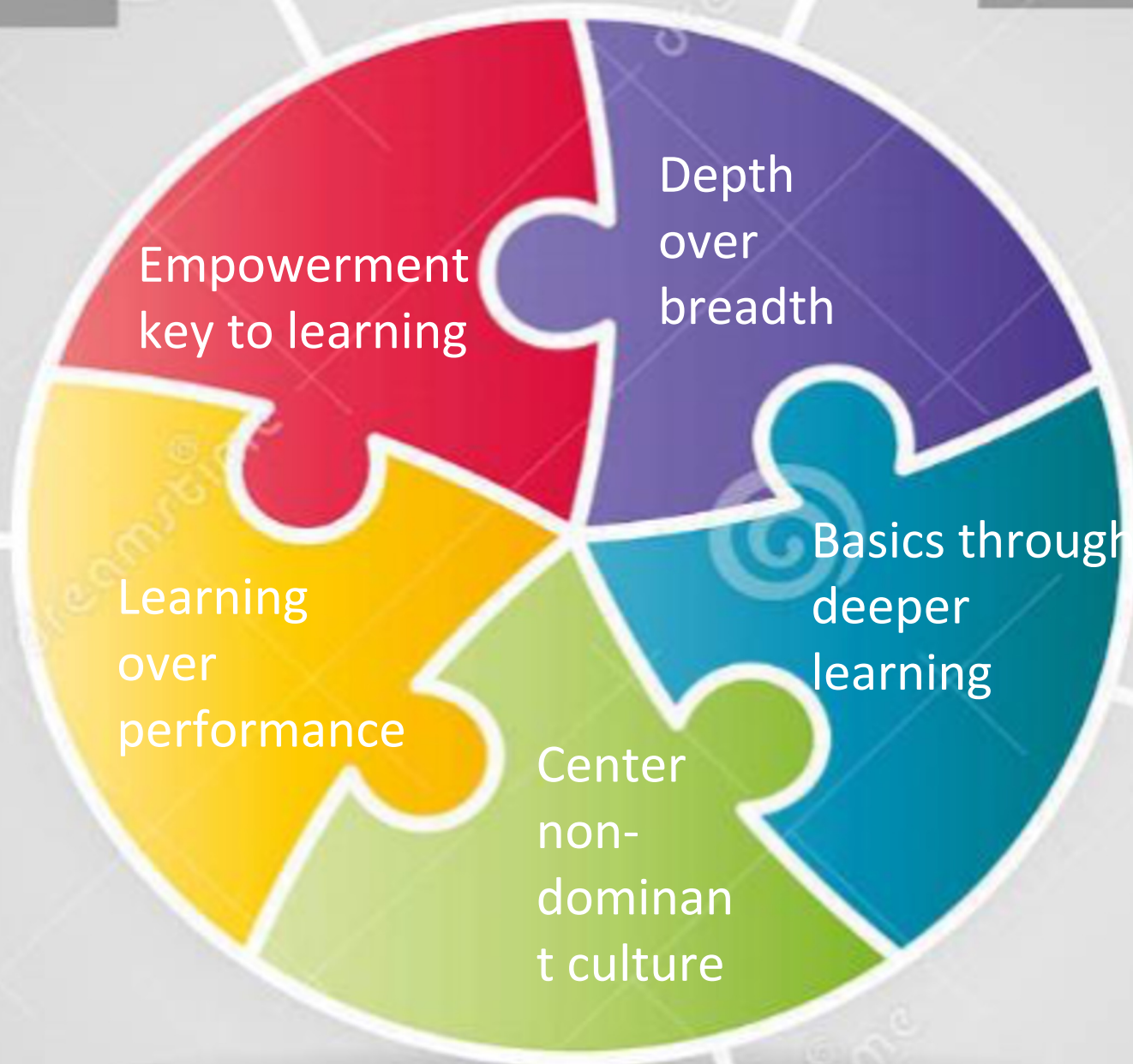
How Could We Build a System to Support Deeper Learning for All Students? (A Reformist Agenda)

1. Credentialing: More content knowledge; less out of field teaching

2. Teacher Training: Deeper Learning stance

3. External testing: From coverage to depth

4. Symmetry: Deeper learning opportunities for adults

Symmetry:
What Do Adults Experience?

■ Command and control

■ Faddish and churning

■ "Driving change"

■ Batch processing

■ Death by powerpoint

■ Absence of trust

(20th century mode of leadership: Command and control, management by objectives, Newtonian metaphors)

Symmetry:
What do Adults Need?

- Competence, autonomy, relatedness

- Agency and choice

- Opportunities to experience as adults the learning we want for students

- Below the green line: Trust and relationships

(21st century mode of leadership: Listening leader, ethic of care, below the green line, emergence, culture of rigor and joy)

The "Grammar of Schooling"

Age graded schooling

Egg crate classrooms

Siloed subjects

Leveling and tracking

"Is this going to be on the test?"

A New Grammar of Schooling

	Existing grammar of schooling	New grammar of schooling
Purpose	Assimilate pre-existing content	Student as producer
View of knowledge	Siloed and fixed	Interconnected and dynamic
Learning modality	Teaching as transmission	Learning through doing
Roles	One teacher, many students	Various roles: Apprenticeship learning
Boundaries between disciplines	Strong	Permeable
Boundaries between school and world	Strong	Permeable
Boundaries between academic and practical	Strong	Permeable
Places where students learn	Schools	Various, including schools, community centers, field sites, online
Choice	Limited	Open, multiple
Time	Short blocks of fixed length	Longer blocks, space for immersive experiences
Assessment	Seat time, standardized tests	Worthy products in the domain: projects, portfolios, performances, research

Some Potential Structural Changes

- Change the Purpose: Meaningful tasks, agency, choice, and voice

- Change the Relationships: Every student seen, known, and heard

- Change the Curriculum: Marie Kondo the Curriculum

- Change the Time & Schedule: 3 blocks, 60-75 student teacher load

- Change the Assessments: Performance assessments

So how are we going to make these changes?

"In their book Leading from the Emerging Future, Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer describe three "openings" needed to transform systems:

- **opening the mind (to challenge our assumptions);**
- **opening the heart (to be vulnerable and to truly hear one another);**
- **and opening the will (to let go of pre-set goals and agendas and see what is really needed and possible).**

"These three openings match the blind spots of most change efforts, which are often based on rigid assumptions and agendas and fail to see that transforming systems is ultimately about transforming relationships among people who shape those systems. Many otherwise well-intentioned change efforts fail because their leaders are unable or unwilling to embrace this simple truth."

– Landon Mascarenaz and Doannie Tran, *The Open System: Redesigning Education and Reigniting Democracy* (forthcoming)

Opinion

Make Schools More Human

The pandemic showed us that education was broken. It also showed us how to fix it.

A Different Way of Seeing, Relating, and Being

	Model A (The Old Way)	Model B (The New Way)
Key values	Control, rule following, impersonal relationships	Learning, innovation, flexibility, relational trust
Leadership	Hero (control)	Host (distributed)
Social organization	Hierarchical	Flat (circular)
Relationships	Shallow and transactional	Deep and vulnerable
Approach to problems	Blaming, finger pointing	Collaborating, possibility creating
Approach to equity	Performative and defensive	Distributing power and learning together
Relationship to research	Evidence-based (linear model—unidirectional)	Evidence-informed (inquiry model – bidirectional)
Approach to scale	Implement with fidelity	Networks of networks
Overall approach	Bureaucracy	Public profession

Conclusion: A Mini Manifesto

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1. We are raising young people, not simply transmitting knowledge.

2. Schools should model and help students build a better democracy and a better world.

3. Care and relationships are the foundation for everything else.

4. Tasks should be grounded in purpose and meaning.

5. We should think in terms of wholes and not parts, connections and not silos.

Conclusion: A Mini Manifesto

6. There is no one-size-fits all solution. Different approaches make sense for different contexts.

7. We need to think long-term rather than short-term, act on underlying systems rather than visible symptoms, and move at the speed of trust.

8. External interventions are only helpful to the degree that they help cultivate the above qualities as opposed to diminish them.

9. Inequity is baked into many of our assumptions and structures; we will need to uncover, disrupt, and re-form these mindsets and structures anew.

10. Change will come not by policy but by social movement; these principles work, and as more people adopt them, they will spread epidemiologically until they entirely replace what came before.
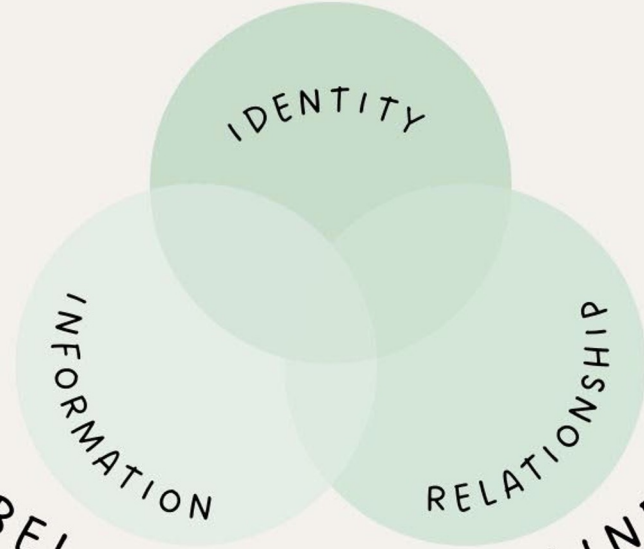
Extra Stuff

"ABOVE THE GREEN LINE"

STRUCTURE

PATTERN

PROCESS
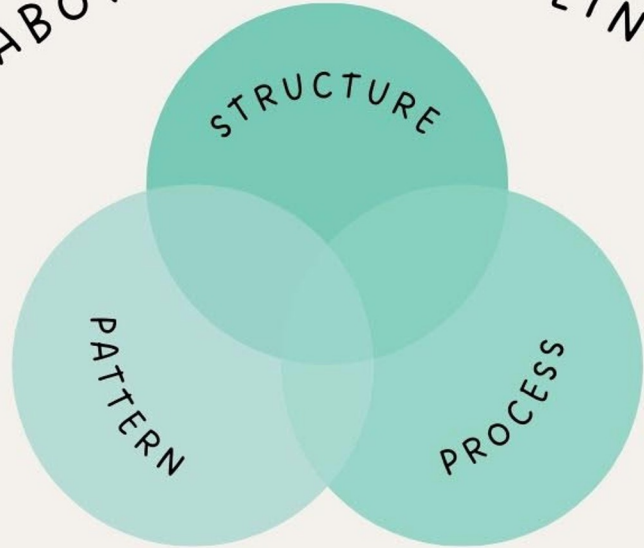
6 CIRCLE MODEL. (WHEATLEY, ET AL.)

IDENTITY

INFORMATION

RELATIONSHIP

"BELOW THE GREEN LINE"

39

The Deeper Learning Dozen

Abbotsford School District

Arlington Public Schools

Burlington School District

Cowichan Valley School District

Kentucky Department of Education

Kootenay Lake School District

Madison Metropolitan School District

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

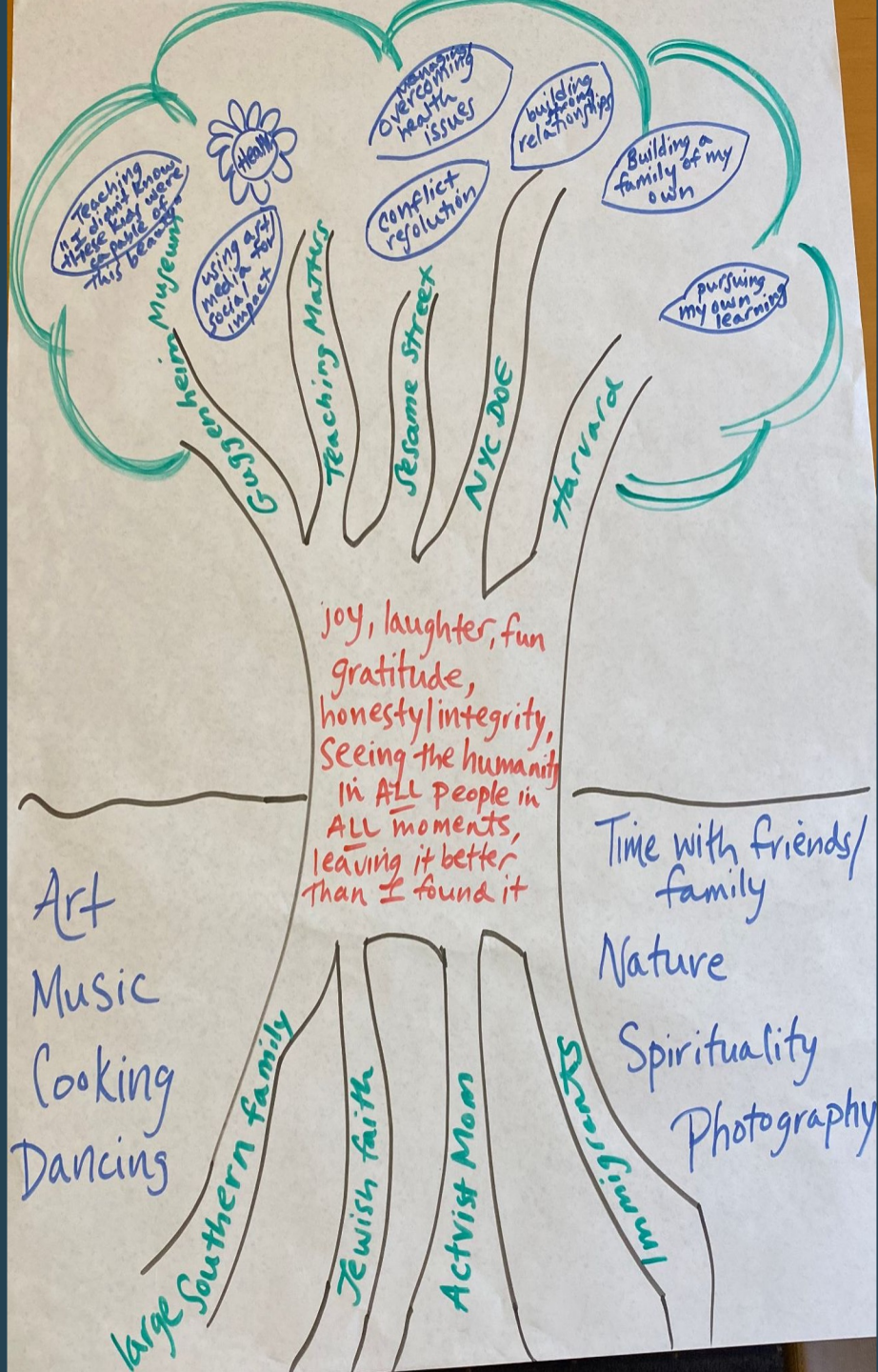Nisga'a School District

Revere Public Schools

Vancouver School Board

West Contra Costa Unified School District
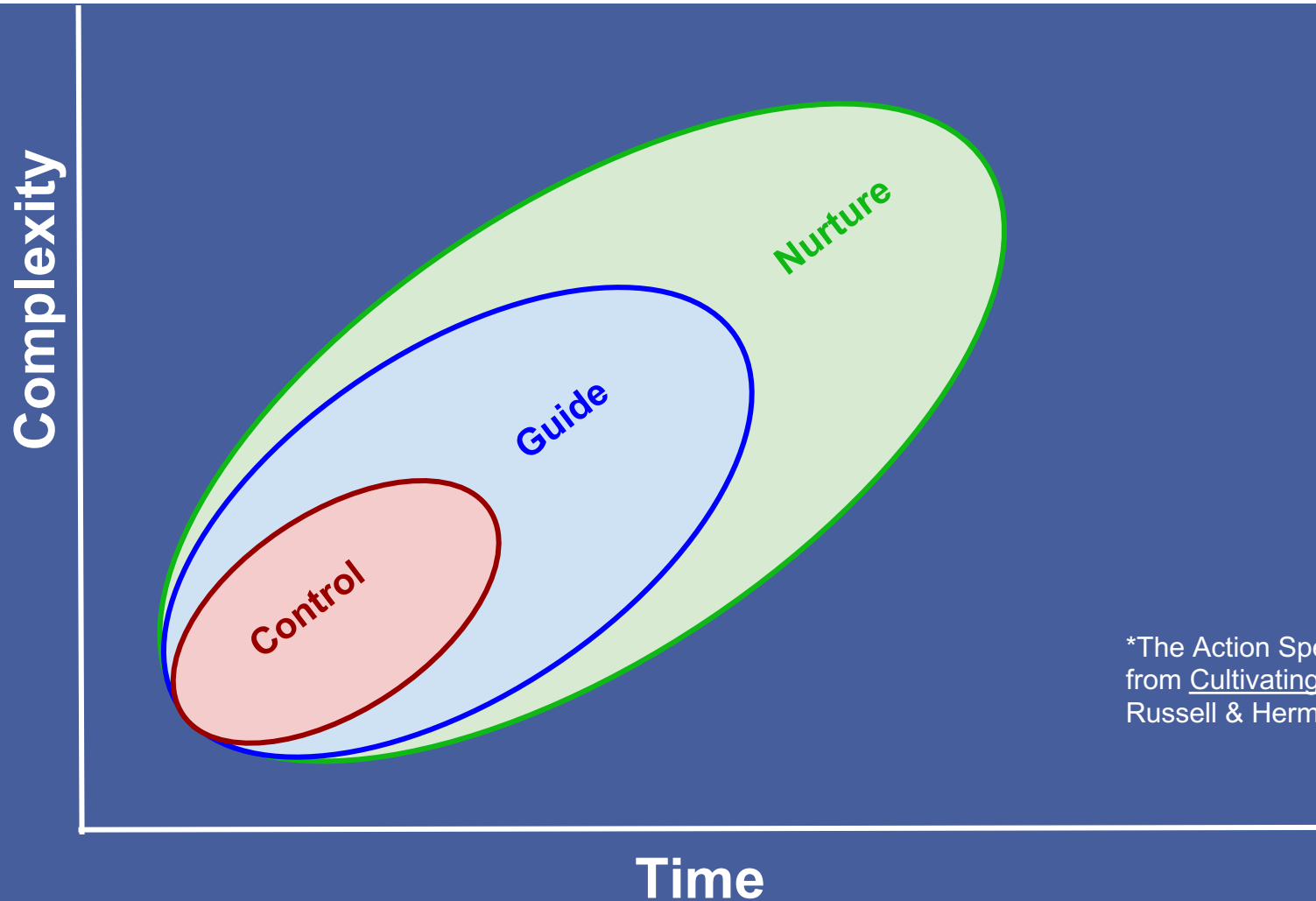
Performance to Learning

Building Trust

Jam Session

Figure 2. The management of complexity

Leadership: "Control, Guide, and Nurture"*

Complexity

Nurture

Guide

Control

Time

*The Action Spectrum, adapted from Cultivating Flows, Jean Russell & Herman Wagter

COMPLEX

Unknown problem: it is unknown how to handle the problem within a situation and the solution cannot be known in advance

Decisions are uncertain and solutions only apparent in hindsight

Use "Safe to Learn" Experiments

Emergent Practice

COMPLICATED

Knowable problem: The problem is knowable within a situation and some predictability of solution is possible

Decisions require expert knowledge

Use analytical techniques to determine facts and options

Good Practice

UNORDERED SYSTEM

DISORDER

ORDERED SYSTEM

CHAOTIC

Unknowable problem: The "crisis" is unknowable but the solution needs to be stabilized

Decisions need to be made quickly to address the situation

Use single or multi-actions to stabilize a situation

Novel Practice

OBVIOUS

Known problem: There is a known right answer for the problem within the current situation

Decisions are obvious

Use standard operating procedures

Best Practice

The Four Habits of Inclusive Design

Empathy — Understanding the views, feelings & needs of others

Co-Creation — Working together to create and/or implement a solution to a challenge

Inclusion — Bringing in diverse voices, building a sense of belonging

Reciprocity — Exchanging or sharing power/privileges for mutual benefit

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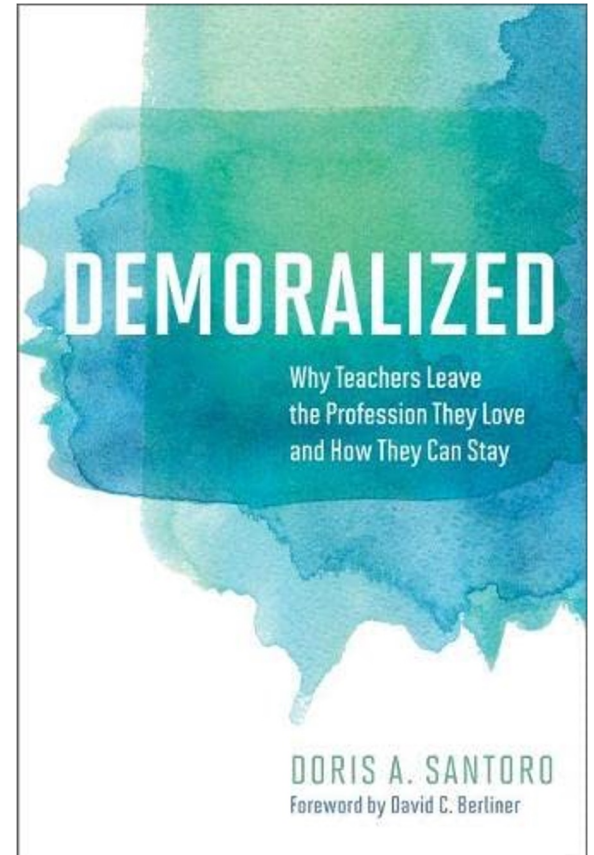
Extra Stuff

The Status of the Teaching Profession Is at a 50-Year Low. What Can We Do About It?

By Caitlynn Peetz — November 15, 2022 · 5 min read

DEMORALIZED

Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay

DORIS A. SANTORO

Foreword by David C. Berliner

Theater: Servant of Two Masters

(Suburban Traditional High School)

- Authentic Purpose: Arc towards public performance

- Student agency

- Choice

- Community/family

- Whole game at junior level

Science: Methods of Scientific Inquiry

(Urban Traditional High School)

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CONSTRUCTED
Patterns, Processes,
Structures

EMERGENT
Relationships, Identity,
Information, Flow

Develop Your Own Convictions About What
You Think is Really Important for Young
People and What Success Would Look Like

ASPIRATIONAL
Vision and Incentives
(Collective & Personal)

Develop Infrastructure That
Supports Consistent and
Equitable Deep Learning

Build a Culture of Inquiry &
Humane & Equitable
Continuous Improvement

Re-envision Key Elements
of Schooling Towards
Deeper Learning

Galvanizing Common Purpose
Towards Deeper Learning

Disrupt Through Emergence:
Cultivate a Variety of Change Agents
Throughout the System to Spur the
Emergence of a New World

Cultivate Cross-Cutting Habits of
Mind and Ways of Working
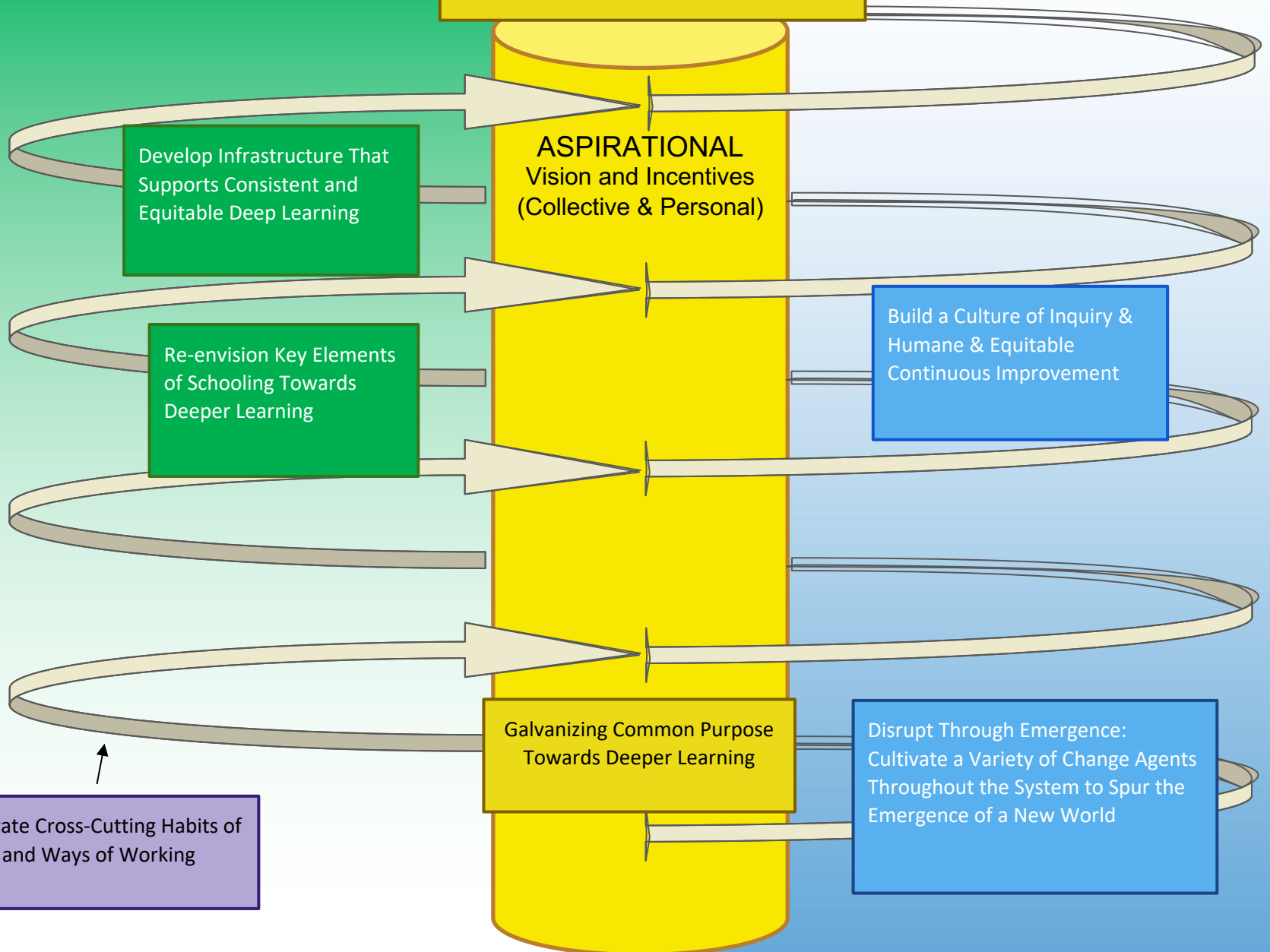
California Exonerate Project

❖ "Why do I feel like I need to do well in this project? Because we're just part of something so big. It's like we're holding somebody's life in our hands."
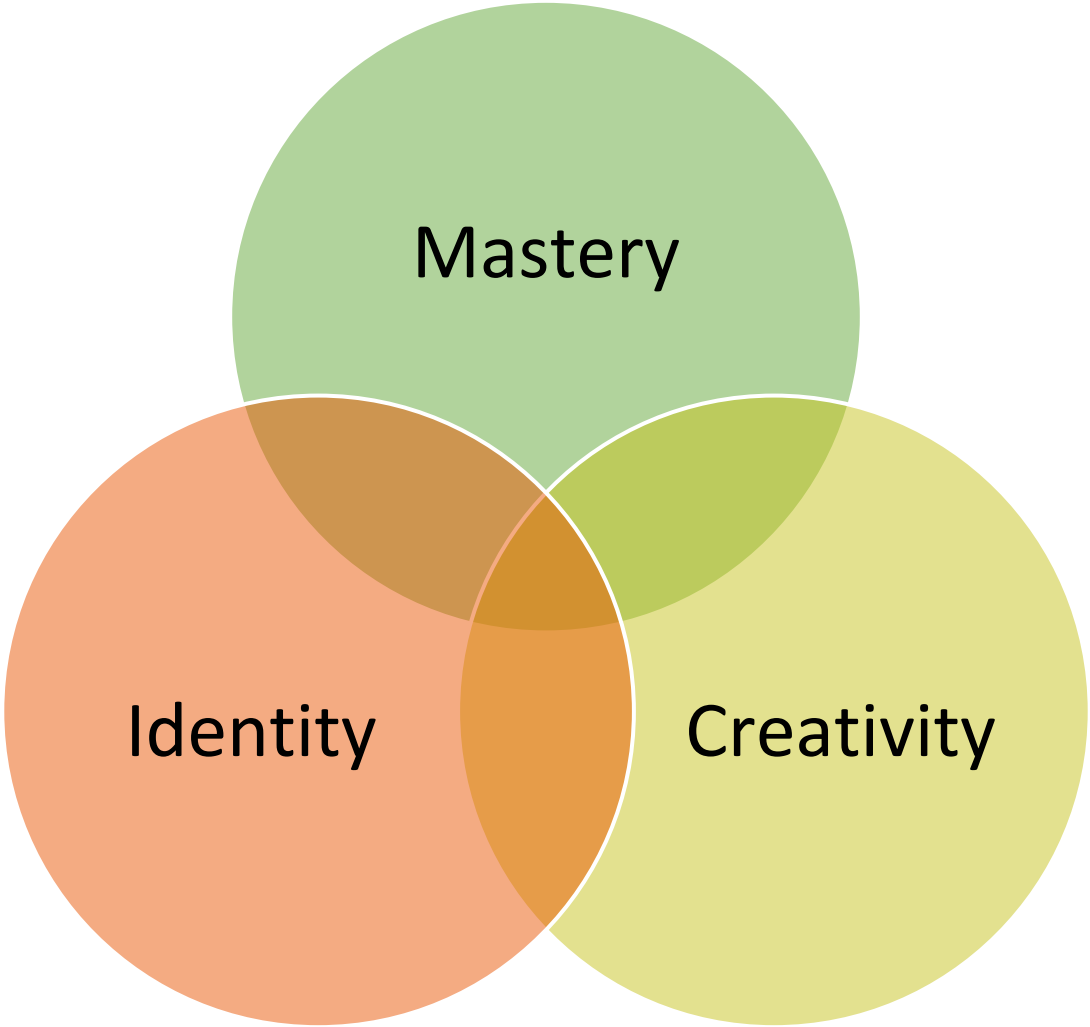
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Powerful Learning Experiences Brought Together
Mastery, Identity, and Creativity