

# Suggestions from the Frontlines

Response to Ontario Ministry of Education's Open Call:

*From Great to Excellent*

Eric Rosenberg

Educator, Educational Strategist, Systems Designer

[eric@lifewellspent.ca](mailto:eric@lifewellspent.ca)

I am a practicing educator and educational strategist living in Toronto. My work integrates with the public high school classroom to address both curriculum standards and foster development of critical thinking, creativity and collaboration in participating students and teachers. The orientation of my work is towards human-centered, project-based learning, and I have facilitated in a broad spectrum of communities, including working with some of Ontario's most marginalised populations.

My participation in the *Great to Excellent* consultations affirmed that my experience and learning offers a distinct and valuable perspective as the Ministry of Education gathers input from across the province. What started out as a brief memo has now turned into an informal white paper – a combination of both my research and practice in this sector.

My hope is to broker a dialogue on some low-cost, high-impact opportunities to help Ontario's public schools thrive in the 21st century.

## **The Institution as Guardian**

'What kind of builder are you' is one of the first questions I like to ask students. Most do not see themselves as builders, and are unsure how to answer. Over my past eight years as a high school teacher and youth facilitator, I have found this question can prompt a conversation that shifts the culture of learning. Their responses - and the subsequent perspectives that emerge - encourage students, teachers, administrators and parents to take ownership of learning in ways most conventional classrooms do not.

Schools tend to prioritise their role as custodians. Public guardians set an agenda that addresses the common interest, and schools do their best to meet these standards. The result is a predictable routine that keeps students safe. Access to quality education is a proven method for future opportunity, and great effort is given to ensure all students develop base level-competencies. Integration is an important function of public education, and one that Ontario serves well. Comprehensive curriculum targets, clear standards of performance, and outstanding rates of graduation and literacy are all well established.

Except the academic prescription is proving a less viable path to success. The contemporary world requires capacity to navigate complexity, adapt to shifting environments, leverage skills and resources, and mobilise networks. In an effort to get schools to address this shifting context, focus is being turned towards a skill set that includes critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

This capacity for self-determination, to make one's own choices, is distinct from capacity for integration, and public school is dysfunctional in its current relationship to decision making. That is, we are really good at setting up the obstacle course and making sure everyone goes through. We are lost when it comes to dealing with the unknown, and avoid these circumstances as much as possible. Consequently, most educational stakeholders are characterised as either institutionalised or apathetic, and a culture of passive, consumer-oriented learning is entrenched in our schools.

This does not dismiss the real need to accommodate disability and support disadvantage. Simply, deficiency is detrimental as a starting premise. When we use the things one cannot do as a foundation for engagement, we foster a cycle of dependency. If I feel that I'm without, and you can provide me with means, then I look to you as my means forward. For students to flourish in the contemporary world, we must challenge this belief system, especially within our most marginalised populations. In recognising our inherent capacity 'to do', we discover that we are never completely 'without'.

## **On the Job, and at Work**

Consider the notion that the most underutilised resource in education today is students. Most sit idle, waiting for instructions, entrenched in top-down learning models.

There is also missed opportunity in the jobs asked of teachers. Most begin in the hope of making a difference in the lives of young people, yet their classroom responsibilities are towards administration and presenting as subject experts, which rarely corresponds to their interests and talents. As a consequence of being charged to do something with which they cannot thrive, teachers seek control and avoid uncertainty, an element in top-down learning. Imagine what it might look like if teachers were invited to build from their interests and strengths. Teachers would be better able to express their care for students, and help them learn how to be excited about learning.

I want to be a thriving teacher, and I have learned to make distinctions between my job and my work. At job, I put

my productive energy into efforts of someone else's direction. Student jobs tend to include school assignments, homework and household chores. By contrast, my work is characterised by putting my productive effort toward pursuits of my own direction. In an ideal circumstance, "work" and "job" come together; however in the circumstances of most Ontario schools, they do not.

Most students struggle to find joy in working, because we assume they will discover value in the tasks we assign. Before long, students come to recognise that waiting for them on the other side of this job is just another "have-to-do". Many teachers feel the same way. School becomes one long series of have-to-dos. For those who prize access, they become institutionalised, looking to gatekeepers to tell them what to do next. The rest grow apathetic, seeking the least troublesome path back to idleness.

We have every opportunity to confront this dysfunction. As we help students distinguish between their work and their job, they recognise themselves as interested and enabled. Teachers serve to legitimise and support the efforts students make towards successes of their own determination.

This does not suggest throwing open the doors of education, but rather to make efforts that encourage students to step forward into an increasingly open, ambiguous space. Students gain confidence and assuredness when they recognize their own capacity to navigate uncertainty and come out the other side with rich experience and dynamic strategies for managing complex problems.

Some believe we need more innovative programs, and point to digital technology as the path forward. Except expert-designed educational programs compete for attention with those developed by Nintendo and Microsoft. They both say, 'hey kid, come here and be part of an amazing adventure'. But Nintendo's not trying to get you to eat your (metaphorical) vegetables. Besides, technology is a means for acceleration, and in the current state of passive education, digital tools serve to entrench the status quo. Look no further than the billions spent on bringing computers into classrooms, which are often used as digital textbooks, rather than transforming classrooms into emergent learning spaces.

A space where students can flourish, and where educators need not compete with the entertainment industry, is through student-centered, project-based learning. As students experience the satisfaction that comes with putting themselves into efforts that hold personal meaning, they become immersed in initiatives that no one else can design for them. That is why I take the time to ask my students, what kind of builder are you?

As I stated previously, few students know how to answer the question. Many say that they know they want to be successful. They just don't know what that looks like. As a start, I ask students to describe people they already see as successful. I tend to hear stories about famous people, like Jay-Z, and close relatives, like mom. I try to get students to consider that the people we see as successful are people who have invested themselves in something; Jay-Z learned to dance and sing, and mom helped raise her children and nurture a loving family. Nobody told them they had to do these things; they did it because it was something they valued. That is, success comes from putting ourselves into productive enterprise. This is the nature of investment. No matter how well we might do at our job, the common element in success is stewarding initiatives that might go up in value.

## **The Principles of Financial Literacy as a Mechanism for Positive Psychology**

'Spend on things that might go up in value' may resonate as a principle of finance, but in holistic approaches to building wealth and well being, it is a perspective that can be applied to a broad spectrum of experience. Be it family, community, health, spirituality, skill development, or relationship to self, it is impossible to prescribe the practice of healthy habits. That is, there is no prescription to success. A diverse community holds different values, and we each have our own unique gifts, challenges and perspectives. In education, we are in position

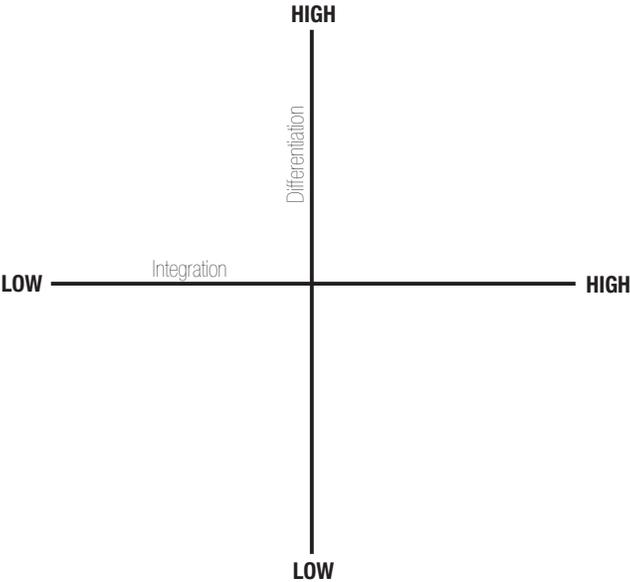
to help students recognise and share those values, and invest themselves accordingly. A foundational skill that transcends values and perspectives is the importance of learning to manage limited resources and allocate them in manners that best serve our interests. This relates to diet, finance, relationships, and the day-to-day reality of making our way through the world. This is the practice of effective decision making, and developing this capacity serves both our personal and public interests.

We can broker development of this skill set by asking students about their interests and inclinations, encouraging students to see themselves and each other as enabled and engaged, and to make connections between their productive efforts and the community at-large. This can happen without loss of safe space or the capacity of schools to serve as social custodians.

People I speak with suggest that this is the way things work in the Alternative Education space. If you want differentiation, go to Waldorf or Montessori. Yet these programs are also challenged to balance the interests of differentiation and integration. Most established educational spaces see these two functions as binary, on a spectrum where a school must choose where to position itself.

**INTEGRATION** ←—————→ **DIFFERENTIATION**

This binary suggests an adversarial dynamic, where one must develop at expense of the other. It is a false conflict that can be overcome by taking these interests off a spectrum and onto a quadrant, where we recognise that opposing tendencies can be simultaneously addressed. We must challenge traditional dichotomies if we are going to develop schools that enable future generations not just to raise the floor on failure, but to push the ceiling on success.



**Integration and Differentiation**

The fundamental challenge facing public schools is how to meet the dual interests of integration and differentiation. Conventional notions put these two elements at opposite ends of a spectrum, two irreconcilable tensions that must be balanced.

Ontario has made significant attempts to allow for differentiation in learning. Individual Education Plans, Special Education programs, Distance Education, Online learning, University College and Workplace streams, the initiatives are endless. Yet evidence shows that a significant percentage of Ontario's students remain bored in school. How can this be?

The current approach to differentiation is within integrative boundaries. This is a false partnership, because genuine associations provide authentic spaces where each function can flourish. Consider a situation where an authority provides a space and says, within these bounds you shall be free. Like a smothering parent who struggles to see that they are the ones who must take a step back for their child to flourish. Contrast that with a situation where guide ropes are available into an open field. That feels more like genuine freedom. In the second scenario, common requirements can be met through touchstones, rather than restrictions. This perspective better reflects the spirit of differentiation.

Consider that teachers are being asked to achieve both interests; integration and differentiation. Teachers monitor student progress towards mandated requirements, and deliver lessons that engage diverse groups of learners. It's as though there are two distinct jobs to perform.

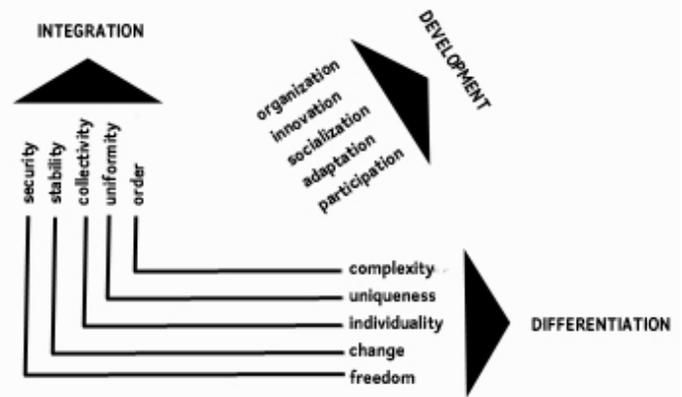
Yet, as it currently stands, teaching is largely an administrative job. Each day a teacher is expected to have a plan for what is going to happen. Then they execute that plan, and provide feedback to students regarding their achievement relative to predetermined standards. Then teachers provide evaluations and process those evaluations, outputting results that can be compared to the results from other classes. From this perspective, efforts to differentiate are understood as more work for the teacher, because teachers serve as the lynchpin in all classroom activities. It is this model that incentives sameness and encourages passive learning experiences on the part of students.

Streamlining lessons and evaluations allows teacher to streamline data collection and processing. Teachers are responding to incentives. Should a teacher fail a student, they had better be able to prove every effort has been made to support that student; from phone calls home, to extra help, to other forms of accommodation. Regardless whether these are reasonable expectations, it makes clear why attention is given to the integrative aspects of the job, and why so few students receive failing grades.

If, at the end of the day, a teacher is measured on whether their students make it through the gate, then that becomes the focus. It makes sense for teachers to roll out the same program year after year, and that students chase prescriptive success, or else grow complacent when faced with more of the same.

It follows that when we talk about 'great' teachers, we talk about those teachers who meet their administrative mandates while also mentoring the uniqueness in their students. Given the incentives towards administration and disconnect with authenticity, it seems obvious that the current dynamics ensure that great teaching remains all too rare.

For instance, one of the most difficult things for a 20th century to say to a group of students was "I don't know." In the 21st century, teachers need to be able to say that, and as a community we need to better create spaces where teachers feel supported to stand in uncertainty, and still believe that they're doing their job.



From Jamshid Gharagedaghi's Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity (2005)

How can we begin to reconcile the dichotomy between integration and differentiation, so that we might steward a more human experience of learning while simultaneously assuring collective interests are met?

## Two Distinct Pursuits

In 1993, Toronto-resident Jane Jacobs wrote 'Systems of Survival', a book that describes two forms of human occupation; custodianship and enterprise. She uses the example of hunter-gatherer society to make clear the distinction.

Imagine a tribe is using materials from their region. After some time, they exhaust what's available and go looking for more. Eventually they come to land occupied by another tribe. Perhaps they enter their neighbour's lands and take what they find. In turn, their neighbours enter their lands and take from them. Each tribe has incentive to protect their boundaries. They want to maintain what they already have. Jacobs calls this guardianship.

Alternatively, the tribes may meet and discover that each has something that the other desires. This recognition leads to trade. Jacobs calls this commerce.

'Systems of Survival' presents a compelling case that each occupation, Guardianship and Commerce, is valuable and necessary in a functioning society. The two occupation streams are distinct, with their own set of interests and behaviours, what she calls syndromes. Each syndrome has its own set of perspectives and behaviours, and must learn to coexist in a mutually agreeable dynamic.

Jacobs is especially concerned with the moral hazard inherent in crossing syndromes; for a guardian to engage in commerce, or a commercial interest to serve as guardian. Such instances lead to corruption and other types of immoral behaviour. However, it is quite possible for the same person to assume both roles, just not at the same time. By example, consider someone who earns their living in business and also serves on the board of their local library. In their professional capacity, they would not make decisions to benefit the library, nor as board member, would they broker sales with their business.

At the moment, our public schools are entrenched in guardian-minded practice, setting program for others to complete. We are foundationally disregarding an aspect of society that thrives in the spaces beyond are schools. And even as we consider differentiated learning, we tend to do so from our view as custodians, rather than stepping towards a more enterprising perspective.

By example, this excerpt from Ontario Public School Boards' Association 'A Vision for Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age' indicates the disposition of many educational leaders when it comes to innovative practice:

"An example might be a Grade 10 Civics lesson where students are encouraged to look at human rights codes that prevail in a range of societies, search human rights cases that have been featured in various media, and discuss the implications in the students' own world. In the process they are incorporating appropriate social practices into their learning process, addressing ethics, values and human relations in an environment that connects students across the world."

The starting premise is prescribed; why human rights codes? This is something that administration cares about, not students. What might it look like if the things students cared about were used as a launch point? How would it impact the learning experience?

Some foundational elements should be fundamentally oriented towards the inclinations of student, rather than

those of administrators. Activities like: Who Do I Admire? What are my Hobbies? and other Show-and-Tell type sharing offer a portal in to this world. Teachers serve as coach, encouraging and nurturing, which is distinct from classroom administration. Our practice must embody the principles of innovation, collaboration and empathy if we are going to foster these capacities in our youth.

If we want students to develop both the capacity to integrate within community as well as solve complex problems and iterate into the unknown, then we ought to develop systems that recognises these dual functions. Like the human throat can both breathe out and swallow in, we need to better consider how to simultaneously serve as guardian and foster self-determining membership.

## **The Culture of Systems**

People want systems. Notice the way we do the things we do, and patterns emerge. Out of chaos comes order. Should we throw away a system, another emerges in its place.

Systems tend to repeat themselves. Once I have decided where to leave my toothbrush, I will leave it there again. That is, we are inclined to do what we have done before. It is known, comfortable and effective (at least, it seems to have worked for me so far).

Therefore, we are reluctant to change. We prefer what we already know. It is only when we become convinced that the present course will lead to our inevitable downfall that we consider alternatives.

The challenges associated with the industrial roots of our education system are well recognised. Sir Ken Robinson has famously explained why school kills creativity, and others have documented the implications of one-size-fits-all solutions. Still, it seems foolish to suggest we throw away our current system believing a new design will solve these difficulties. More worthwhile is the notion that we can work with what we already have, looking for opportunities to shift towards more effective functioning.

Leadership is about influencing those elements that we do not control. In the case of schools, we must foster spaces that allow for high degrees of integration as well as high degrees of differentiation. Already, we have a well-established learning culture, and most will resist change. Because of comfort, fear, and other legacies of a bygone era, people will hold on to what they know. Policy mandates and the latest technologies will have little impact on the existing system without a corresponding shift in the culture of school.

Look at most any Ontario classroom, and you will see teachers trying to enforce rules and students either abiding or trying to avoid getting “caught”. Right and wrong answers, asking permission to use the washroom, sneaking cell phones under desks and talking in the back row. These are all aspects of a culture of compliance, where integration is the rule of the day. Nonconformists and failures are seen as problematic, and are coerced towards the target, moved out of the classroom, or ignored altogether. This is a dehumanising space in which to live and work, seeing little value in nuance and idiosyncrasy. In the current context, we either put our distinctions away, make them fit into predetermined portals, or become alienated from the rest of the establishment.

This dynamic is not exclusive to student and teacher relationships, but extends to every aspect of our education system. Teachers look to principals as their students look to them. Did I get it right? Am I in trouble? How much longer do I have to sit in this meeting? For Ontario’s public schools to thrive in the 21st century, we must look to uproot our culture of compliance that pervades every level of our system.

In place of compliance, we can find other ways to ensure common standards are met, while also recognising the

unique dynamics of our diverse membership. This is a system that embraces both integration and differentiation, and it characterised by a culture of trust.

By example, most entrepreneurs report their own income taxes. It is required by law, and subject to audit. To falsify claims is a serious offense. Some filings may not be completely accurate, but we seem satisfied knowing that most people report with integrity most of the time. We trust the guardians of our system to catch fraudulent claims, and because of this trust, we are able to offload a significant portion of the system's administration onto members. Imagine if entrepreneurs had to sit down with a government representative and go through every aspect of their file. It would be an excruciating process, and one that most of us hope to avoid. Yet these are the exact dynamics of our current school system.

By contrast, what would it look like to offload aspects of the administration onto students? For instance, are students capable of taking attendance? Do they know whether or not they are in class? Perhaps it is because we do not trust students to be honest and we incentivise compliance that we students will file false. In fact, Ontario law requires teachers take the attendance.

Maybe if we start incentivising integrity, this dynamic can change. For my part, I have experimented with a platform that invites students to track their own attendance. The student record is matched with the teacher's account, and if the two correspond, the student earns Integrity Points. It is irrelevant whether the student was in class or not. The requirement is for students to access the platform and log an accurate record.

As students accrue Integrity Points, they prove their word can be trusted. Then they gain opportunities to access aspects of classroom decision making, including deciding on their homework tasks, and what content will be covered in class, and even how they are graded on assignments. They are in position to influence their own learning experience in a manner that holds them accountable for the consequences of their choices. I call it "Hacking the Curriculum". Students are always subject to auditing, and falsified reports and misinformation result in the loss of Integrity Points, as well as a corresponding loss in their ability to make choices for themselves. My experience shows, when students believe they are trusted influencers and they will not be punished for honesty, they are inclined to speak truthfully, often providing a clearer view on their performance than the adults with whom they are working.

In order to implement student-directed learning in the conventional classroom and offload aspects of administration onto students, I have learned to provide structures that support students to transition into open spaces, feeling safe and with a clear understanding of the requisite touchstones. In essence, I have embodied the challenge of moving back and forth from integration to differentiation, and back again. It is an ongoing movement, and each subsequent iteration allows for increasing levels of complexity. To allow too much openness throws the whole community into disarray, and closing the portals for individual expression has the same unwanted effect.

Shifting from a culture of compliance towards a culture of trust requires no additional spending or policy change. It is no further away than our willingness to embrace a different way of doing things. So how do you encourage people to change their behaviours, when we are inclined to repeat the patterns we already know?

## Why School?

Students, Parents, Teachers, Administrators and the Community-at-Large. These are the stakeholder groups we tend to consider when it comes to public education.

Students want to

- have fun with friends
- experience success

Parents want their children to

- develop positions and skills required for success in adulthood
- socialise
- be healthy and safe

Teachers want to

- make a difference in the lives of young people
- earn an equitable living

Administrators want to

- develop communities of thriving students
- maintain accountability
- earn an equitable living

The public-at-large wants to

- steward a future of effective and engaged citizenship

Schools can become a place where students look to themselves as enabled actors in communities of practice. In this context, teachers can serve as coaches and auditors, helping navigate problems and ensuring mandated requirements be met. Administrators and parents can support these functions as well.

We have an opportunity to mobilise our existing infrastructure to foster a more human-centered core. We can achieve these goals while also holding our system, our students, and our teachers to a higher standard – one that truly meets the demands of today's complex and ever-evolving global community.

Much of today's education talk seems to focus on the 'What'. What curriculum standards? What teaching techniques? What digital tools? It is the opinion here that those questions are secondary to the issue of 'How'. How does our membership experience school? How do stakeholders relate to inequity, disablement and suffering? How do we foster an ongoing process of discovery, collaboration and development? 'How' addresses the way we do the things we do, and addresses the importance of culture in our educational systems.

"Any genuine school reform is dependent upon empowering those at the bottom, not punishing them from the top." Carl Cohn, San Diego Unified School District superintendent.

## What I'm Suggesting (Tactics)

The changes in perspective that this paper proposes will not happen overnight. Like a drop of green dye, it will take time for these movements to make their way through the system. To realise these suggested ambitions, it makes sense to identify those aspects of schooling that are most susceptible to change and those leverage points that can connect to other nodes in the system. The following is a list of actions that are currently available

and require little more than willing actors.

- Substitute teachers; generally the job of a substitute is to take attendance and make sure no one gets hurt. Absent teachers expect so little of their fill-ins that substitutes do little more than write instructions on the board. This is a prime opportunity to introduce coaching and mentorship into the classroom. In my role as substitute teacher, I have asked students what it is they want to do today. Some choose to focus on the assigned textbook work, while others shrug their shoulders with indifference. I let them know that I have things I am interested in, like learning about sketch comedy. Sometimes this leads to terrific conversations, and sometimes not. I might also spend my time walking around the classroom, checking in with individual students, getting to know more about their interests and their work. In a few cases, we've had impromptu session of Maker Show-and-Tell. If we make a committed effort to develop the coaching capacities of our substitute teachers, we are in better position to bring mentorship into the classroom. Besides, if learning comes to a halt when a teacher is absent, that is a sure sign of a teacher-centric classroom.

- 'Can I go to the washroom?'; Few things seem more concerning than teenagers having to ask if they can go to the washroom. If a student can't decide if and when they leave the classroom, how are they ever going to manage the complexity of the world beyond our doors? I prefer for students to take responsibility for deciding when they leave class. We use simple systems where they record how long they expect to be gone, and where I can find them in the event that I need them. Location-based digital applications provide means for guardians to locate students without having to grant permission to leave the classroom. For my part, I try to keep students from wandering the halls by fostering an interesting and dynamic classroom space. The consequence for absenteeism is missing out on the great things we do in class. That seems an especially effective way to encourage students to take care of personal business outside of class time and hold them accountable for being away from the learning space.

- Financial Literacy; I have enjoyed great success using money talk as a means to encourage students to take ownership of their learning. I prompt the class with a basic lesson on investment, spending on things that might go up in value, and then invite them to commit to goals of their own choosing. The intent is to have students put their productive effort towards projects that have relevance and meaning. They then track their process using tracking tools and document their ongoing experience through journals and on-line blogs. Then they share with each other, celebrating their process. Throughout, teachers have an opportunity to connect the students' experience to the principals of financial literacy.

- Portfolios and Trackers; Many teachers already use portfolios in their classrooms. The distinction here is that it is up to students to make connections between the content of their portfolios and the mandated curriculum standards. In effect, by gaming requirements, students are learning curriculum design. I call it the Human Portfolio Project, and essentially it is a student-centered approach to evidence-based learning. Consistent with Ontario's curriculum standards, portfolios have four distinct sections; Knowledge, Communication, Critical Thinking, and Application. Teachers and students work collaboratively to develop appropriate strategies for each set of skills. They may include research notes (knowledge), summaries (communication), opinion frameworks (thinking) and photos of ongoing student initiatives (application). Students are in position to make connections between the evidence in their portfolios and the mandated curriculum. As the curriculum structure is the same from kindergarten through Grade 12, once a student is comfortable with the mechanics of curriculum design, they gain capacity to continue this practice in subsequent years, having already learned the rules of the game.

- Team Teaching; two teachers work together, one focused on coaching and the other focused on auditing. The coach works with students to help them commit to projects of their own choosing, as well as supporting student development towards mastery of relevant skills. The auditor checks in with students to ensure they have met the mandated requirements, working together to make connections between student-directed projects and

the curriculum. The auditor may run teacher-centric programs that support students to address integrative requirements in an efficient and effective manner. Business Studies and Library Science classes are already oriented to having teachers fill two distinct and cooperative roles.

- Teachers' Induction Programs; in the 20th century, the most difficult thing for a teacher to say to a group of students was "I don't know". Now it is essential for a teacher to be confident saying "I don't know" as often as possible. Having teacher candidates participate in project-based, student-centered learning will help them gain confidence to lead students into unknown spaces when they enter the classroom. Introducing culture-shifting practices through teacher induction programs is a terrific way to model the experience and prove its merit.

## Next Steps

I write this with the hopes of collaborating with the Ministry, to explore, research and prototype some of the ideas proposed in this paper. The following are a series of next steps based on previously described tactics that would be the roadmap to realising these ambitions.

### Phase 1: Systems Mapping

- Reach out to relevant/representative stakeholders involved in Ontario's education system
- Convene stakeholders for participatory systems mapping exercise
- Review of content to identify key lever points
- Produce strategy report with recommendations based on validated intervention and innovation opportunities in the system

### Phase 2: Design Labs

- Identify teachers and administrators interested in participating in Design Labs
- Convene stakeholders for Design Labs to explore:
  - prototypes for regional-specific program pilots
  - identify necessary supports for pilot projects
  - create collaborative/co-operative groups who will share knowledge and support during pilot phase
  - create working definition of Collective Impact/Collective Success
  - co-design evaluation strategy for pilot project

### Phase 3: Implementation

- Support teachers/administrators to work collaboratively with students to pilot program
- Convene teachers throughout process (at specific intervention points) to share knowledge
- Collect feedback/evaluation

### Phase 4: Knowledge Mobilization

- Work with pilot participants to co-design knowledge mobilization strategy for sharing best/promising practices province-wide
- Establish interdisciplinary working group to support implementation

Eric Rosenberg is a teacher, facilitator, and curriculum designer. With training in finance, fine art, and education – Eric’s work brings learning from each of these disciplines to his life coaching and educational innovation practice at The Rosenberg Development Studio. For clients, he marries the practices of financial investment with the principles of positive psychology, to help his clients develop a foundation from which they can design a life of their own choosing, a Life Well Spent. Eric is a client of MaRS Discovery District, an advisor to Studio Y, and facilitator of a personal finance classroom program for high school students.