



Doing More with Less: Community Resources That Can Transform Our Schools

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In March, 2009 an extraordinary group of educational leaders and reformers gathered in Pasadena, California. This gathering of more than fifty educators, designers, legislative analysts, futurists, and students met at the inaugural **dreamTeam Symposium** with a single purpose: to envision a contemporary transformation in our schools; transformative change that will equip our students with 21st century skills and encourage the practice and perfection of those skills in environments that inspire a lifetime of learning. All Symposium attendees have dedicated their professional lives to this transformation and while the task is not new, the current grassroots enthusiasm to carry forward such change certainly seems to be. Your leadership in advocating these innovations, for the benefit of students worldwide, promises a renewal of educational systems and comes at a time primed for positive change. All **dreamTeam** colleagues stand with you, ready to invest their talents to see that promise realized.

dreamTeam members are committed to sharing their skills with schools, school districts, and communities throughout the United States and abroad. **dreamTeam-ers** are experts in legislative advocacy, funding, school design, community partnerships, educational programming, “futures” conferences, and advanced technologies. We believe the resources for transformative educational change are present in every community and we are eager to partner with local entities to identify and creatively employ those resources, revitalizing learning environments for students, teachers, and citizens.

What are the circumstances and conditions that invite educational revitalization and innovation? What leads one education system to continue with the status quo, while others nurture on-going program improvement and out-of-the-box thinking? We have never before been faced with such a clear necessity for innovative thought and subsequent action. Some organizations wither in the face of such a challenge, counting only limitations associated with their financial hardships; others will employ bold, new strategies that meet the needs of their students creatively and efficiently.

True innovation begins with the cultivation of collaboration, professional challenge and development, and encouragement. A school climate based on these principles invites meaningful input from students, teachers, and the larger community - and responds to that considered input with suggested improvements. Effective organizational systems grow stronger, employing a skillful blend of leadership, collaboration and political savvy. Long-term improvements cannot be contingent solely on the actions of a strong leader, nor on the collective wisdom of the group; there must be a balance of factors, mobilized by political wisdom that encourages systemic change, to make a positive difference.

Inviting detailed, creative solutions in a school environment, perhaps in connection with a specific project, relates a sincere interest in doing things differently from the way they were done in the past. Innovative solutions are carefully considered: eliminating prep rooms, while providing laboratory space for students to work on involved, long-term projects; widened student passageways may become extensions of the learning environment, used for project-based learning and collaborative group work; de-centralized libraries can put resources closer to every classroom; soft pine wood can reduce the off-gassing associated with vinyl-covered tack boards.

The essential discussion that precedes any programmatic change begins with questions that clearly define the learning process: how do students learn best; what is the role of the teacher; how will students engage with their peers, staff members and community members; how will students be grouped for learning; how will intern- and externships be employed to enhance learning opportunities? Once the learning/teaching model is identified, the facility decisions that follow can provide each student with a variety of learning opportunities using, for example: personal work stations; tables instead of desks; ergonomically appropriate furniture and equipment; students able to work in groups with adjacent lecture and laboratory space.

The **dreamTeam** Symposium generated three important documents – guidelines to transformative change, programmatic and/or facility-based: *A Call to Action*, the *Student's Bill of Rights*, and *Building Learning*. These documents, included below, outline the actions we consider essential in helping schools and communities adopt beneficial educational change; change that ignites a passion for learning in their students, accommodates a variety of teaching and learning styles, and conserves both financial and environmental resources.



A CALL TO ACTION

1. We dedicate ourselves to the transformation of our schools, to meet the demands of this new age. This will occur only if we take an active part in that transformation, offering our skills to communities, schools and school districts in planning learning programs and environments responsive to students and teachers. Together, we can identify and gather the resources to expand learning opportunities for students, school by school.
2. We support a new purpose for schooling: firing the imaginations and nurturing the minds of all students. This can be accomplished when schools actively teach and engage students' multiple intelligences, educating complete and whole individuals, curious and capable.
3. We support a refreshed approach to teaching, re-connecting educators to the excitement that brought them into education in the first place. More than teacher training is necessary to enliven teachers' efforts: include them in brainstorming/ "futures" sessions that discuss educational innovations, applicable now and in the future for their classrooms and students.
4. Each community must determine how best to use their intrinsic resources in support of their students, helping each young person to reach their highest potential. Discussions can begin with a focus on learning, not schooling; what environments and curriculums help students to learn and enjoy learning? Learning takes place in and outside of school; it is a community-based relationship.
5. The **dreamTeam** will author basic guidelines to assist school districts, cities, and neighborhoods in this vital, collaborative process. We will develop community partnerships, enriching student experiences in the greater community and on campus.
6. Provide a forum for "ordinary" citizens to learn and talk about the big issues in education. Show the public great examples of successful schools. Give them hope and talk about what is happening across our country and around the world to bring about change. Help communities/citizens formulate a direction for their own community action.
7. Include the greater community in the school environment by designing and dedicating spaces for nonschool uses, as well as joint uses.
8. We pledge to do more with less, employing our collective creativity in so doing. We will help schools and communities make the best use of their resources.
9. We pledge to seek student input continually, learning why students drop out and helping our student members build an active company of peers, aware of their potential and insistent on receiving the varied, excellent learning opportunities they deserve. Students' voices can be heard at educational conventions,

Board meetings, community gatherings, and through written articles in newspapers and on-line sources; we will encourage students to speak out and to write, identifying opportunities for them to do so.

10. We will study models of transformational, positive change in society: the Slow Food movement improving nutrition and farming practices throughout America; the Green/Sustainable movement, continually alerting us to sustainable lifestyle practices; as part of a responsible global community.
11. Support people other than teachers will teach; professionals in various fields can assist teachers, while motivating students to explore career opportunities /advanced education.
12. We will identify the obstacles preventing our schools from producing knowledgeable, citizens ready to take their place in the workforce and take effective action to help change that.
13. We advocate community-centered learning environments that promote:
 - 1) Engaged, personalized study.
 - 2) Collaboration and trust among students and teachers.
 - 3) Flexible and adaptive times and spaces for learning.
 - 4) Problem-centered education that imparts knowledge of concepts while building student competency.
 - 5) Cooperative learning opportunities within the community, inviting businesses and charitable organizations to partner with schools and offer students “real world” experience.



STUDENT'S BILL OF RIGHTS

We, the undersigned fellowship of active believers, support the Student's Bill of Rights:

1. We dedicate ourselves to the transformation of our schools, to meet the demands of this new age, and realize this will occur only if we take an active part in that transformative process.
2. We support the right of every student to follow his/her own educational interests; to play while learning; to engender a passion for learning that encourages the practice and development of skills through meaningful internships or mentorships; to learn the foundational, governing principles, theories and philosophies that define our world.
3. Every student shall be prepared for an ever-changing world economy that is essentially without borders, in which they will take their place as global citizens.
4. We support the adoption of an Oath for Educators and a Statement of Intent for students, to honor the highest office in any land - the office of Citizen. These documents will reflect the essential role of education in society, and in the lives of every student.
5. We will assist every community in determining how best to use intrinsic resources in support of their students, helping each young person to reach their highest potential. The **dreamTeam** will author guidelines to assist communities in this vital, collaborative process. We will develop neighborhood partnerships, enriching student experiences in the greater community and on campus.
6. We pledge to do more with less, employing our collective creativity in so doing. We will enlist the help of our elderly citizens and all community members, who want to share wisdom, experience, and practical assistance with today's students.
7. We commit to ensuring all students receive a quality education, offered without excuses; the education "product" will be accessible and attractive to students, a product they want to "purchase" because it is relevant, necessary, and contemporary.
8. We are committed to resource equity, moving from "haves and have-nots" to "have differences", taking full, advantageous account of each student's unique attributes, and thereby boosting educational opportunities for all.
9. We pledge to continually seek student input, learning why students drop out and building an active company of students, aware of their potential and insistent on receiving the varied, excellent learning opportunities they deserve.

10. We will identify the obstacles in any educational system that prevents the transformation of our schools. We will move beyond perceived obstacles to the ultimate transformation of our schools; we will lead with a spirit of the possible, not the impossible, and reveal the abundance of resources available, not their scarcity. We will effectively employ every political tool, understanding that all politics (including educational politics) is local and that each of us can be effective in transforming our educational system, if we understand the process and mechanisms of political prudence.
11. We promise to identify and support enterprises that effected transformation in education or in society, bringing about positive change: the Slow Food movement improving student nutrition through school lunches; the Green/Sustainable movement alerting us to necessary change in our lifestyles, as part of the greater global community.
12. We will implement a learning environment that permits tinkering and lingering, allowing students to discover their passion and perfect its art, as they work collaboratively with mentors and fellow students.
13. We will employ our talents and influence to provide rich educational environments for students, supportive of learning through their thoughtful planning and design. Included in these productive environments: artifacts exemplifying basic educational principles; the celebration of local traditions and resources; opportunities to study physical and scientific principles, evident in the building and environmental systems; fully accessing the interior and exterior learning environments, teaching students how to become good stewards of our resources.
14. We will publish a user's manual for schools, supporting teachers and students in their exploration of the curriculum inherent in their school environment.



BUILDING LEARNING

We will employ our talents and influence to provide rich educational environments for students, supportive of learning through their thoughtful planning and design. The built environment must “disappear” in the face of effective learning activities, without impeding learning in any way. We will push beyond the familiar in designing these environments, open to new concepts that transcend all we think we know about effective educational facilities.

We support the implementation of learning environments that permit “tinkering and lingering”, allowing students to discover their passion and perfect its art as they work with mentors and fellow students, and as they quietly reflect on their work. Adaptable learning environments should accommodate individual students’ interests.

We believe schools are places of nurture, supportive of human development, beyond academic achievement. Nurturing environments must include small-scale indoor and outdoor spaces for teachers and students, where learning, teaching, play and socializing are accomplished in a more intimate setting.

Learning environments must exemplify variety: their design fights boredom by offering indoor and outdoor learning spaces; exemplifying flexibility in those spaces, with furnishings and building features that accommodate whatever is being taught; providing collaborative space for multi-age student groups and multiple teachers; allowing “virtual” travel to expand student horizons and entice; provide space for individualized technology time, or time with mentors/tutors.

1. Flexible structures that encourage curiosity and imagination, through multiple learning activities/methods; recognition of multiple intelligences/brain development and function, in designing educational programs.
2. We will exemplify beauty in our designs, employing light, color, and order to frame the “personal touches” of teachers and students, with dedicated space for artwork, plants, and displays.
3. Keep schools close to neighborhood centers, locating them on smaller sites, near local cultural resources, with inherently smaller enrollments; the schools stay open and active in the community.
4. Moving students into the community for learning creates genuine understanding and connection to others.
5. We support schools that support one another: small schools with different focuses can serve together as a larger learning community.
6. Sustainable, “green” buildings that enforce good stewardship and respect for the environment. Teach how to be good citizens of the environment.

The classroom of the future may not be a classroom at all. To envision education’s future, we must today encourage collaboration, strong and purposeful leadership, and a look ahead that anticipates the needs of our students in the world of tomorrow. A learning environment that is responsive and supportive at every level, offers students and teachers the best educational experience, and holds the promise of a brighter future.



ATTENDEES LIST

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