

Learning2025

Working Paper From a Grantmaker Convening

September 30 - October 1, 2010, Chicago, IL



“Leading a whole nation of school systems through a radical paradigm shift is a big deal, so if we can get a lot clearer about the leverage points of the vision and really [begin] taking steps forward, that would be great.”

—Grantmaker

The prospects for educational innovation may never have been so promising. Among many other things, the US Department of Education has created incentives for scalable innovation, consortia of state-level leaders are thinking about transformation versus reformation, and investors are looking at new ways to support educational entrepreneurs. Across the board there is a growing sense that incremental solutions are insufficient to meet the evolving needs of learners—or to address the inequities that have plagued industrial-era education systems.

This is a period that demands new mental models. Teaching and learning will be transformed in the next decade. Grantmakers can just begin to glimpse pieces of an emerging picture of a new world of learning and new possibilities for working as an intentional community of investors. How can we make better sense of that picture? Might we develop a shared framework that lends greater coherence to the field, targets opportunities for innovation, and enables more efficient coordination and collaboration?

These were the questions that framed Grantmakers for Education’s (GFE) recent convening in Chicago, *Learning2025: Forging Pathways to the Future*, which brought together representatives from a dozen grantmaking organizations to create a shared understanding of emerging directions for the next generation of learning systems and deepen our understanding of how these organizations are investing to advance this work.

The Learning2025 convening is a chapter in a longer strand of work that GFE has been pursuing to help grantmakers to focus on the ways that education systems can and must evolve to better meet the needs of learners. Our Chicago meeting was born out of an April 2010 GFE member briefing in San Francisco, *Innovation in Education: Redesigning the Delivery System of Education in America*, which brought together 50 grantmakers to use scenario thinking, user-centered design and systems analysis to envision new models for American education—and use that understanding to ensure our education systems meet the needs of learners today. Subsequent discussions with GFE members surfaced a desire to align innovation efforts across the field. In collaboration with Collective Invention and KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and with financial support from KnowledgeWorks, we have continued to prototype new ways to do just that.

In the last few months we conducted a series of interviews that yielded great insight into grantmakers’ priorities and perspectives on next generation learning approaches and framed the Learning2025 convening in Chicago. Our goal in Chicago was not to sign off on a single vision of the future of learning. Instead, we sought to learn more about investments in this emerging field of work by:

- Exploring the theories of change held by various funders, paying particular attention to the ways they intersect and/or differ
- Learning about specific investment strategies for the next 24–36 months
- Mirroring back what we are learning about grantmakers’ efforts to transform learning.

Based on the outcomes of the Learning2025 convening, this document lays out a strategic framework that supports student-centered approaches to learning and indicates investment patterns across the grantmakers who participated. It is designed to indicate where we are and are not yet aligned in the field, highlighting the creative tensions and dilemmas to be managed as we seek to collaborate. It is a working document that is grounded in a moment of time, but which offers threads for further development and iteration among grantmakers in the months and years ahead.

The April 2010 briefing in San Francisco yielded a draft set of design principles for a learner-centered future. These themes were refined into a set of strategic pathways that drew upon the April conversation; subsequent interviews with two dozen GFE members; as well as findings from work done by the MacArthur Foundation, the Stupski Foundation, the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, the Singapore Ministry of Education, and VanderArk/Ratcliffe. We brought an initial draft of the strategic pathways to the first day of the Learning2025 convening and revised them in response to participants' reflections that day.

The resulting framework describes 10 high-leverage pathways in which GFE members intend to invest to build the world of learning we imagine for the year 2025. The descriptions of the pathways on the following page look back from 2025 to describe what will have been achieved if each outcome has been successful in moving our learning system forward.

Our Investments Will Have Succeeded by 2025 if...

Pathway 1: We have fostered public will for new kinds of learning and new learning outcomes.

People have reached agreement about the value of cultivating deeper learning along with the basics and have come to take digital media seriously as a learning tool. As part of this culture shift, federal, state, and local governments have dedicated significant budgetary support for student-centered learning, and state and local policies have shifted to support learning designs that help achieve it.

Pathway 2: We have advocated policy that enables new kinds of learning and new learning outcomes.

People who had been leading the shift toward new kinds of learning and new learning outcomes have become active participants in shaping policy, which now supports the new learning system. More importantly, policy structures have evolved to be flexible and nimble enough to support ongoing change as the learning system continues to develop.

Pathway 3: We have innovated funding mechanisms to enable greater choice, equity, and/or new learning models.

Mechanisms for funding learning have diversified to help enable a variety of learning experiences reflecting stakeholders' interests and needs. Some approaches enable greater choice among learning experiences, others seek to address concerns about equity, and still others support the implementation of new learning models.

Pathway 4: We have identified new forms of governance.

As with funding mechanisms, new forms of governance have emerged to help enable a variety of learning experiences reflecting learners' interests and needs. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, governance models are tailored to the particular context in which they operate.

Pathway 5: We have fostered personalized learning in a community context.

The boundary between "school" and "community" has blurred, with people having come to see the communities as assets and learning environments. Learners have rich opportunities to apply their knowledge in context. Learners benefit from cross-sector support systems that address both academics and non-academics, and their activities are seen as strengthening their communities. It's not just place-based communities; young people also contribute to interest-based communities across a variety of media. They have become active agents in a learning culture that supports their identity development, sense of efficacy, and resilience and whose emphasis on relationships provides a sense of belonging.

Pathway 6: Defining new critical skills and knowledge.

People have come to a common understanding of what skills and knowledge are critical. That understanding looks ahead to what learners will be doing in their work and lives and incorporates research into what will help people succeed in a global world. The critical skills and knowledge have been seamlessly integrated into learning experiences and form the focal points of assessments.

Pathway 7: We have prototyped and/or scaled new models for learning.

Student-centered schools support learning along interest-driven pathways along with the development of academic skills. A cloud infrastructure supports a network of connections among learners, learning agents, and mentors. People access this learning infrastructure using mobile devices both inside and outside of schools. It all comes at a cost that is lower—or at least no more expensive—than the learning system that prevailed back in 2010.

Pathway 8: We have delivered on the promise of digital media.

Digital media is now taken seriously as a learning tool. A sophisticated cloud infrastructure enables networked learning in many cities, and a massive array of high-quality learning products developed by the private sector forms part of the learning ecosystem. Some of these products are offered for a fee, some are free, and some

are open source. But it all adds up to a learning system that supports learners across a variety of rich, digitally-based learning experiences.

Pathway 9: We have reimaged assessments for (and of) learning.

Assessments have become central to helping learners, parents, and other stakeholders understand where learners are on their learning journeys. Assessments measure the attainment of the critical skills and knowledge. They inform teaching and learning so deeply that real-time assessments and feedback—from peers as well as from learning agents—are embedded in all learning contexts, including informal ones. All of this adds up to an approach that helps learners amass and assess bodies of work performance with a focus on learning.

Pathway 10: We have framed a research agenda for a new world for learning.

Flexible and adaptive research methods inform practice and policy, providing ongoing insight into what works and what doesn't and providing insight into the equity gap. Looking across disciplines and situated in real learning environments, the research itself—along with strong dissemination methods—drives immediate impact on learners. With research and evaluation having become the norm at the local level, the learning system actively develops human capital capacity for learning and design.

Pathway Milestones

Pathways	Pathway 1: Fostering Public Will for New Kinds of Learning & New Learning Outcomes	Pathway 2: Advocating Policy That Enables New Kinds of Learning & New Learning Outcomes	Pathway 5: Fostering Personalized Learning in a Community Context	Pathway 6: Defining New Critical Skills & Knowledge
2010 - 2012	<p>Education philanthropy develops common language</p> <p>People refuse to fund what doesn't work</p> <p>Studies/research/experts begin to popularize this pathway</p>	<p>Policy barriers are removed</p> <p>Waivers are put in place</p>	<p>Capacity-building occurs</p> <p>Waivers are tried</p> <p>Gather stories demonstrating impact</p>	<p>Skills vs. knowledge debate is over</p> <p>Common understanding of new skills required</p> <p>New skills are assessed</p>
2013 - 2015	<p>Education field & community develop common language/interest</p> <p>New models of learning find greater purchase with parents</p> <p>Schooling designs include informal, peer-driven network</p>	<p>System allows for more nimble implementation & adjustments to policy as change takes place</p>	<p>Policy impediments removed</p> <p>Assessment/evaluation framework is built and tested</p> <p>Create instruments to measure</p> <p>Rules & regulations enable credit acquisition</p> <p>State code is reformed to facilitate funding</p> <p>New system for assessment, evaluation, & continued improvement is implemented</p>	<p>Results are researched</p>
2016 - 2020	<p>Community leaders begin to ask how current system delivers/compares</p> <p>Significant lobbying activity & coalition/movement emerge</p> <p>Broader appeal of ideas is accepted</p> <p>Funding formulas change system design for education to include informal, peer-driven network</p>			<p>A cycle of research-policy-practice takes place</p>
Outcomes	<p>People agree on the value of cultivating deeper learning & regard digital media as a learning tool. Federal, state, & local governments support student-centered learning.</p>	<p>Change leaders now shape flexible & nimble policy that supports new learning system. Policy structures support ongoing change as the learning system develops.</p>	<p>People see their communities as assets & learning environments. Learners apply their knowledge in context, benefiting from cross-sector support systems. Young people contribute to interest-based communities across variety of media & are active agents in a supportive learning culture.</p>	<p>People share a common understanding of what skills & knowledge are critical. By looking ahead to learners' work & lives & incorporating research into succeeding in a global world, critical skills are integrated into learning experiences & assessments.</p>

This activity and subsequent conversation highlighted unequal interest across the pathways. Four of the pathways—pathways 1, 6, 7 and 8—seemed most central to participants' visions for learning in 2025. In contrast, no participants articulated milestones for pathways 3 (funding mechanisms) and 4 (governance), despite acknowledging that "we need a whole new governance system for a new high-tech learning world."

Pathway Milestones

Pathways	Pathway 7: Prototyping &/or Scaling New Models for Learning	Pathway 8: Delivering on the Promise of Digital Media	Pathway 9: Reimagining Assessments for (& of) Learning	Pathway 10: Framing the Research Agenda for a New World for Learning
2010 - 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student-centered schools exist Interest-driven pathways emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major set of philanthropic partnerships around building infrastructure is established Open standards on cloud use/data content development exist Publishers buy into platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment standards are created Platforms for formative & summative assessments are established New, progressive federal performance-based assessments are administered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research networks for informal & “deeper learning” are established Importance of funding research evaluation & seminal reports is understood
2013 - 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links inside & outside the system are established Link between academic skills & interest is made Cost structure is the same or lower than today 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School-based data are translated into standards-based format Teachers are given recommendations & resources Several cities “buy into” concept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal & informal data are integrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large-scale, rich data infrastructure is established
2016 - 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure supports the use of cloud and mobile devices in & out of schools Developer community is motivated to contribute Cloud infrastructure is built as a public good Data systems enable pattern recognition, propelling a deeper understanding of learner progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set of “learning maps” has been developed and gets better over time Standards are used as design constraints RFPs on innovation/next set of standards are issued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments are embedded in any context 	
Outcomes	<p>Student-centered schools support learning & a cloud infrastructure supports a network of connections among learners, learning agents & mentors. People use mobile devices in & out of schools. The system costs don’t exceed 2010 levels.</p>	<p>Digital media is now taken seriously as a learning tool. A wide learning ecosystem of products and services supports learners across a spectrum of rich digitally-based learning experiences.</p>	<p>Assessments have become central to the learning journey. They measure skills & knowledge while informing teaching & learning in real-time. Assessments are embedded in all learning contexts helping learners focus on learning & perform better.</p>	<p>Flexible & adaptive research methods inform practice and policy. Research & evaluation have become the norm at the local level & drive immediate impacts on learners. The learning system actively develops human capital capacity for learning & design.</p>

Scope of Current Investments

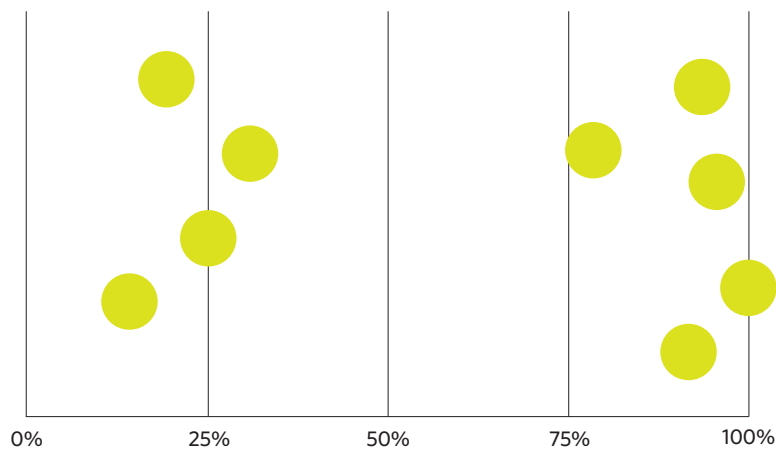
The 10 grantmaking organizations whose representatives participated in day two of the event mapped their current investments in work related to the innovation pathways. They began by identifying the percent of their education portfolios related to the Learning2025 pathways.

- Looking at their investments across all of the pathways, the portion of their education portfolios invested in these areas ranges from 15% to 100%, with five grantmakers either devoting most of their education portfolio (80% or more) to Learning2025 innovation pathways and with four devoting relatively little of it (30% or less).

Next, participants identified the pathways in which they had current investments, estimating what percentage of their Learning2025-related funds they had invested in each pathway.

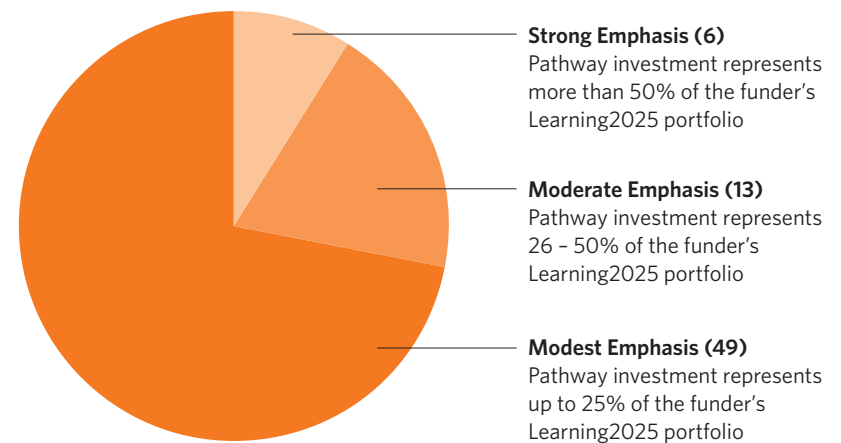
- Grantmakers identified a total of 68 investments. Most funders are making an assortment of modest investments across a range of innovation pathways. Thirteen (13) of the investments represent 26% to 50% of the Learning2025-related portion of the funder's education portfolios, and 49 represent up to 25%.
- Despite that tendency, 6 of the investments are heavily concentrated, meaning that a single pathway represents more than 50% of the funder's Learning2025-related education portfolio.
- The KnowledgeWorks Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and the New Schools Venture Fund are making these concentrated investments in one or two pathways, although not to the exclusion of investing in other pathways.
- The SGE Fund and the Walton Family Foundation are investing in the widest range of pathways (9 and 10, respectively).

Percentage of Education Portfolios Invested in Pathways



Degree of Concentration Across Pathways

To what extent are funders concentrating their Learning2025 investments in a few pathways versus spreading their funding across multiple pathways?



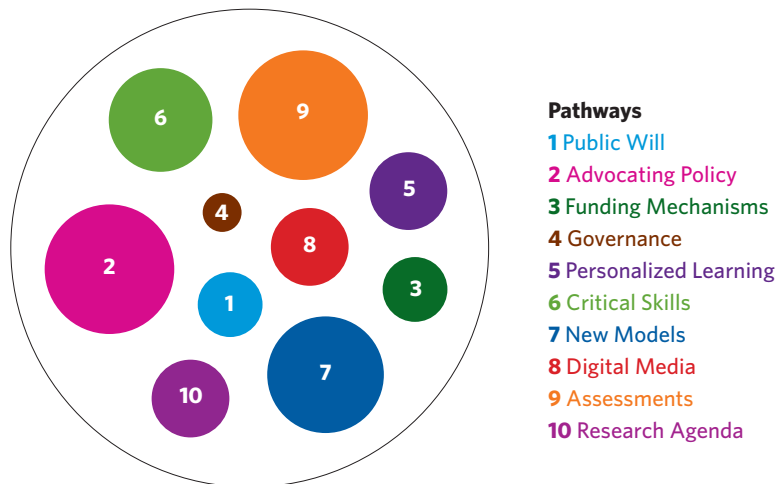
Relative Interest in the Pathways

The maps of current investment showed that grantmakers are currently paying uneven attention to the 10 investment pathways.

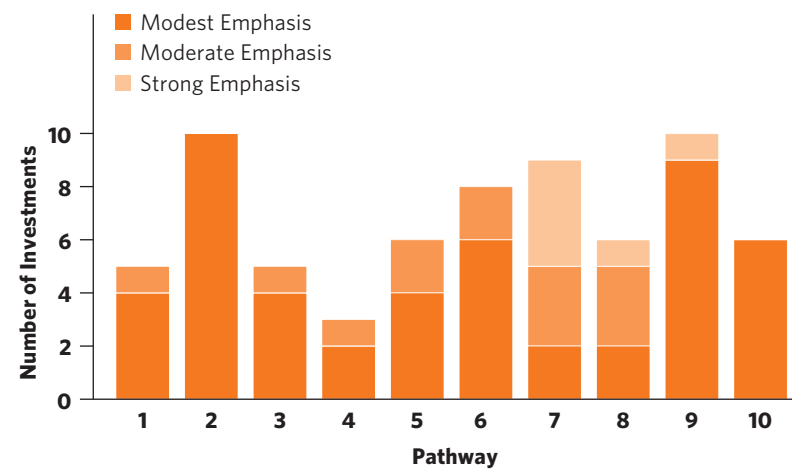
- Two pathways are currently attracting support from all the grantmakers who were present: Reimagining Assessments for (and of) Learning (10 funders) and Advocating Policy That Enables New Kinds of Learning and New Learning Outcomes (10 funders).
- Two are attracting a relatively large number of investors: Prototyping and/or Scaling New Models for Learning (9 funders) and Defining New Critical Skills and Knowledge (8 funders).
- Three pathways are receiving attention from 6 grantmakers: Fostering Personalized Learning in a Community Context, Delivering on the Promise of Digital Media, and Framing the Research Agenda for a New World for Learning.

- Grantmakers are paying the next greatest attention to Fostering Public Will for New Kinds of Learning and New Learning Outcomes and to Innovating Funding Mechanisms to Enable Greater Choice, Equity, and/or New Learning Models (5 each).
- Grantmakers seem least interested in Exploring New Forms of Governance (3 funders), both in terms of current investments and in terms of attention to critical milestones at the event.
- Their most concentrated (>50%) investments are clustered in Prototyping and/or Scaling New Models for Learning and Delivering on the Promise of Digital Media.

Number of Investments by Pathway



Concentration of Investments by Pathway



Sample Investments by Pathways

When mapping their pathway investments, participants were asked to provide examples of their current investments that relate to Learning 2025. For the purpose of illustrating the kinds of work that grantmakers are currently undertaking across pathways, the adjacent list contains a sample of their responses.

When describing their investments, some funders provided specific grant amounts, while others indicated what portion of their overall Learning2025-related portfolio an investment represented. In addition to describing the desired outcomes, they were asked to indicate the degree of risk involved and whether the investment involved prototyping and/or collaboration.

Because of the nature of this relatively quick exercise during a working meeting, grantmakers' names are not provided below. Please contact John Branam (john@edfunders.org, 503.595.2100) for further detail.

Pathway One: **Fostering Public Will for New Kinds of Learning and New Learning Outcomes**

- One funder is investing less than 25% of its relevant funds (\$8 million) to build public awareness and encourage dissatisfaction with the current state of the public education system. They consider this investment to be high risk and are working collaboratively with others.

Pathway Two: **Advocating Policy That Enables New Kinds of Learning and New Learning Outcomes**

- Another funder is investing 25% of its relevant funds to increase awareness and demand for the purposes of changing behavior, building sustainable public funding with private funders, and continuing innovation. The organization is prototyping new ways to further desired outcomes, particularly using digital media. They consider the investment to be risky and are collaborating heavily with others on the three- to five-year investment strategy.

Pathway Three: **Innovating Funding Mechanisms to Enable Greater Choice, Equity, and/or New Learning Models**

- One organization has invested \$1 million toward organizing community funding streams around what works for kids and to help a state implement reform within budgetary constraints. They are working with a variety of other private and state organizations on this multi-year initiative.

Pathway Four: **Exploring New Forms of Governance**

- Another organization has made a \$50,000 investment toward developing governance that fosters coherence and alignment toward a healthy and productive organizational culture. They consider this ongoing investment to be a risky one and are not collaborating with others on it.

Pathway Five: Fostering Personalized Learning in a Community Context

- One funder has invested between \$3 million and \$5 million to extend learning opportunities and to develop wrap-around support services in a low-risk way. They consider the investment an anchor strategy and are working with a variety of local funders.

Pathway Six: Defining the New Critical Skills and Knowledge

- One foundation has made a two-year, \$2 million investment to better evaluate and communicate what the new critical skills are and to nationalize that agenda. They are collaborating with others to identify common language and definitions and to achieve consensus.

Pathway Seven: Prototyping and/or Scaling New Models for Learning

- One foundation has invested 50% of its relevant funds in moving from isolated successes to multiple networks of successful, peer-based learning initiatives that are interest-driven. They consider this investment to be high risk, with a relatively high percentage of failures expected. They have heavily prototyped, and have collaborated on, this two- to five-year investment.
- Another organization has invested about \$1 million to increase the supply and quality of digital learning media. With this high-risk investment, they are more interested in helping early-stage non-governmental enterprises and social enterprises scale (via technical services, for example) than in providing direct capital. They plan to fund collaborations (and create platforms for collaboration) among educational/learning experts, designers/developers, and entrepreneurial and operational people beginning in spring 2011.

Pathway Eight: Delivering on the Promise of Digital Media

- One organization is investing \$5 million to \$10 million a year to increase the number of children learning 21st-century skills via high-quality digital learning media. They wish to deepen understanding of the learning potential of digital media, increase supply and quality and encourage greater demand for high-quality digital media. They consider this risky investment, which is based on pilot projects and early research and which depends on a number of unknown factors, to be a core focus of their program. They have engaged in prototyping and coordinating with other funders and are beginning to discuss collaboration. They consider the investment to be at least a three-year commitment that is likely to exceed ten years or more.
- Yet another foundation is allocating 40% of its relevant funds toward mapping digital media to the common core standards, providing new content and delivery mechanisms, and influencing market shifts. They consider the investment risk to be high, have prototyped in some instances, and have collaborated with other funders and partners. The investment will last approximately five years.

Pathway Nine: Reimagining Assessments for (and of) Learning

- One foundation has made a \$12 million investment in the next generation of assessments anticipating systemic reform. They consider this ongoing investment to be high risk. Having done prototyping via an artificial intelligence technology platform, they have investigated assessment questions and are collaborating with other funders around formative assessments.

Pathway Ten: Framing the Research Agenda for a New World for Learning

- One organization has made a \$4 million to \$5 million dollar investment in developing definitions, new forms of assessments, and evaluations, and in discerning how open technology platforms are transforming teaching and learning. They are prototyping open learning environments and are collaborating with other organizations to determine common definitions and engage in joint-funding opportunities. They consider this investment to be an ongoing one of undermined length.

Insights into the Future of Learning

Looking beyond the specific pathways and considering current research on the future of learning in general, participants identified several insights into the future of learning:

- The social practices around digital tools/media, not the technology per se, shape learning.
- The ability for learners to make and create content is core to the new world of learning, particularly in the digital realm.
- The opinions of peers matter greatly in a digital environment; adults can seem irrelevant.
- The three big policy issues for kids in a digital environment are safety, privacy and copyright.
- The vision is always going to be tempered by how you measure success.
- The capacity for self-assessment and peer-driven assessment could become a key student proficiency.
- We have to get past the debate of content versus skills.
- It's a high-stakes time to do this work.
- None of the language being used to describe new forms of learning resonates beyond those who have drafted it.
- The Common Core could be a platform on which people outside the system can innovate and from which people in the system can adapt.
- Informal ways to certify competency could replace formal certification.

In general, grantmakers were struck by the power of peer-to-peer assessment and accountability and the gap between interest-based digital learning and much of today's formal learning.

Things We Need and Things We Don't Know

During the course of the convening, grantmakers also articulated a range of needs and unknowns affecting their work and the learning system as a whole.

Things We Need	Things We Don't Know
We need accountability models for a decentralized marketplace of learning experiences.	We don't know what "student-centered" resources look like.
We need to accelerate the transition from research to application.	We don't know how to translate the motivation and enthusiasm from student-driven learning experiences into formal education systems.
We need mechanisms for translating from prototypes to mass adoption.	We don't understand the relationship between the Common Core and equity.
	We don't know enough about what other nations are doing and their results.
	We don't know how/whether the private sector can work in the public interest and how funders can most successfully engage with the private sector.
	We don't know how to have generative conversations to move forward.

How Grantmakers Can Support Transformative Innovation

Tensions

The discussions also revealed several tensions that affect efforts to innovate toward Learning2025:



Responding to the Current State of Education

In considering how they might support transformative innovation, grantmakers identified several stressors and trends affecting education in the US.

- The system is broken. Every dollar you put in when you know it isn't working troubles you as a grantmaker.
- Other institutions innovate faster than schools and after school programs.
- We need to pay attention to the "outliers"—those learners whose characteristics currently put them outside the mainstream. Some of the kids who look marginal now will be mainstream in 2025.
- We have a crisis of governance. School boards focus on governing now and locally, and they don't see the future that's coming.
- Learning is occurring on students' own initiative, through their own avenues. They're creating something that we haven't harnessed in a particular way.
- State Departments of Education are asking how they can become facilitators and collaborators.
- Where states allow it, kids are blending their own learning.
- There is a crisis of research capacity in this country.
- Incredible success could make it more difficult move the system. The system you've instantiated through structures and best practices looks like the best version of the current world.

Current State of Grantmaking

Funders also reflected on their own tendencies as grantmakers working to improve the education system.

- Philanthropies are generally resistant to adapting to new realities, yet some are ahead of the curve.
- Philanthropies respond to easy plug-and-play opportunities.
- We haven't been serious enough about funding innovation. We tend to be needlessly cautious when we could be best positioned to take risks.
- We too often don't act on what we know.
- Addressing public demand doesn't show up in how we work.

Reflections on the Future of Grantmaking

As they looked ahead, participants raised questions about what transformative innovation would mean for the field of education philanthropy.

- Is there going to be a dramatic transformation in how we do things?
- Who is looking at this whole thing? Is that a unique role for us?
- Our unique role could be to convene people.
- Grantmakers need to recognize that they can't have conversations about the future of education in a vacuum, and that many stakeholders must inform these visions and directions. The good news is that philanthropy is one of the few groups that views things from 30,000 feet. The bad news is that we are one of the few groups that is doing so.
- What is everyone best suited for and how do we knit together?
- How do we think about the interplay between philanthropy and private capital? How do we need to work with the private sector in developing, researching and scaling new learning models and the supporting infrastructure?
- How can we be more intentional about hypothesis testing? Can we be more explicit about differences in our theories of change, and then circle back to see what really played out from those different theories to inform our shared learning?
- We are a very fragmented industry. The next stage for is for greater strategic alignment of grantmakers. This will be difficult, because our budgets, metrics and decision-making processes all work against this.
- As an industry, we're very attuned to funding models and policies. We need to be more attuned to building public demand for new learning models.

How Grantmakers Can Support Transformative Innovation

Funders' Roles in Designing the Next Generation of Learning

With broad concerns about the state of education and the state of education philanthropy in mind, grantmakers reflected throughout the convening on their possible roles in creating the future of learning.

Future Roles for Grantmakers

Research

- Conduct research
- Engage in shared research
- Build an evidence base
- Fund & leverage research & evaluation
- Fund the coordination of data collection & analysis
- Use research to bridge the gap between interest-driven & formal learning
- Be more deliberate about testing competing research hypotheses
- Fund research networks

Communications

- Convene & facilitate conversations
- Build & maintain community investment
- Invest in building public demand for new knowledge/skills education
- Promote ideas
- Develop common definitions
- Cultivate demand
- Build relationships
- Build a movement

Questions Related to Grantmakers' Roles

- How can funders achieve a balance between grounding new initiatives in evidence and engaging in rapid prototyping?
- What areas of research would benefit from cooperative efforts among grantmakers?

- How can funders ensure that we engage the many different groups of stakeholders—including young people and their families—in shaping the future of learning?
- What vocabulary is helpful in describing new learning models and/or new visions for the future of learning? Where is vocabulary currently a barrier to communication?

Strategic Options

- Build capacity in rapid prototyping
- Fund research networks to accelerate new developments
- Engage in cooperative research efforts with other funders
- Strengthen mechanisms for disseminating research results

- Enhance facilitation and dialogue skills
- Work with communications experts to build capacity
- Use social media to extend communications reach
- Develop easy-to-grasp media conveying the promise of new learning models

How Grantmakers Can Support Transformative Innovation

Funders' Roles in Designing the Next Generation of Learning

Future Roles for Grantmakers

Advocacy

- Advocate
- Connect with other advocates
- Fund others' capacity to advocate
- Convene & support policy makers
- Ensure that equity is addressed
- Create demand for new learning models

Infrastructure Support

- Fund infrastructure development
- Investigate infrastructure needs
- Provide technical assistance
- Build capacity
- Co-invest in infrastructure with other funders
- Help early-stage NGOs/social enterprises scale
- Fund cloud computing infrastructure to establish it as a public good
- Build consortia of districts to adopt cloud/platform

Partnerships

- Pursue joint funding
- Explore innovations in public/private partnerships
- Collaborate with other grantmakers
- Collaborate across sectors
- Provide funding for collaborative efforts
- Create platforms for collaboration
- Understand the role of private capital and leverage private sector engagement

Exploration

- Conduct pilot testing
- Identify places where people are willing to take risks
- Support demonstration sites
- Engage in risk-taking and prototyping
- Support & demystify proof points
- Include student voice in developing the new models
- Develop new learning models
- Shape & build on what works
- Find ways to scale successes

Questions Related to Grantmakers' Roles

How can funders help create strong public demand for new models of learning?

How can funders build effective bridges to policymakers across changes in the political landscape?

How can funders anticipate what infrastructure needs will appear even further along the horizon?

What are the strategic investments for philanthropy in a market where there is also a strong role for private capital?

How can funders work with their boards and other stakeholders to create greater coherence and alignment around shared agendas?

What kinds of partnerships will be required by a new world of learning?

How can funders manage the tension between promoting proof points and scaling successes?

How can funders support improvements within the current system while looking ahead to a world of learning that could include a very different learning system?

Strategic Options

- Foster conversations about equity
- Build our own advocacy skills
- Build others' advocacy skills
- Engage policymakers in envisioning new possibilities for learning

- Fund digital infrastructures
- Provide capital to help organizations scale
- Collaborate with other funders to increase impact of investments
- Support open infrastructures and platforms

- Collaborate on shared, co-defined initiatives
- Explore new kinds of partnerships
- Advance boards' understanding of possibilities for learning
- Develop shared measures of success for grantees

- Adjust feedback cycles to support prototyping
- Engage students in authentic ways
- Fund new learning models
- Make long-term commitments while encouraging iterative design

What Grantmakers Need in Order to Support Transformative Innovation

In considering what it would take for them to assume these roles in moving toward the future of learning, the grantmakers at the Forging Pathways convening identified a series of needs.

Grantmakers need to be more nimble.

- We operate on theories of change but treat them as facts. We need to be more adaptive as a sector. We need to expose and test our thinking. We expect our grantees to be very nimble.
- Holding grantees to outcomes kills innovation strategies.
- We need a versioning way of working in philanthropy.
- We need to be willing to examine competing hypotheses and test them against how they play out.

Grantmakers need support in engaging others in transformation.

- We need more thinking about the board's role. We could have prominent people signal the need for transformation.
- We need to get more philanthropists on board.
- We need to continue to focus on understanding how to engage the public to increase demand for student-centered/next generation designs.
- Philanthropy is especially bad at message management. We need to partner with people who are great at that.

Grantmakers could use more coherence around transformation.

- Shared language is really important to enable better communication and coordination.
- If we were more aligned, we might have a richer ecosystem of people working with us.

Grantmakers could use help keeping track of innovative models that already exist.

- Maybe we could use a clearinghouse around innovation practices.
- We need to learn more about how kids are learning in their environments.
- Program-related investments and new public-private funding models may be key.

Grantmakers are interested in exchanging ideas about how to work toward transformation.

- There is no one way or right way for funders to work together. We could use information on different ways of funding or different ways of working together.
- Transformational change often comes from outside the system. We need to have a conversation about where we are making investments outside the system.
- Could there be a kind of peer-to-peer engagement of how to work?

What Grantmakers Need in Order to Support Transformative Innovation

Grantmakers are also interested in exploring partnerships.

- You have to identify a concrete problem on the ground that is compelling enough that you want to stay in conversation around disagreements. Joint funding requires that you stay in conversation.
- I'd like to know more about public/private partnerships and how to fund them.
- Hybrid learning models are coming faster than we'd thought. We need to work with colleagues who don't see them coming.
- For grantmakers, the next stage is much more strategic, aligned commitments. Our accounting and metric systems don't account for that collaborative nature.

In particular, grantmakers are interested in the possibility of shared research and a shared infrastructure.

- I could use more detail about how to co-develop research and infrastructure.
- There has been a lot of discussion about research outside "the system." How do we ground that in reality and think about researching/testing within "the system?"
- There should be accountability in education research for the benefits to accrue to schools and students in more direct and immediate ways than in the past.
- It might be possible for multiple funders to share the expense of building the infrastructure to support the proliferation of new models and digital media.

Particular supports in meeting these needs might include:

- "Deep dives" on particular strands
- Nimble, grid-like version of conferences or webinars
- Shared research initiatives
- Meta-analysis and meaning-making from shared research
- More "working sessions" and "receiving sessions"
- Moving from innovation conferences to innovation studios
- Inclusion of non-grantmakers in a "studio" process or other conversations

The Learning2025 convening is situated within an ongoing strand of convenings and conversations about the future of learning taking place at Grantmakers for Education. We look forward to continuing to test and refine these concepts as more grantmakers engage with this work. We have scheduled two opportunities to take our work on learner-centered innovation deeper, while inviting others to join the conversation. At GFE's annual conference in New Orleans (October 2010), funders were invited to participate in a discussion about the frameworks in this document. We are also organizing a second member briefing focusing on innovation and new models of learning which will take place in April 2011 (date and location to be determined). To share your feedback about this document, or for more information about upcoming conversations, please contact John Branam, GFE's director of programs (john@edfund.org).

Building upon our respective organizational expertise and success, Collective Invention and KnowledgeWorks have formed a strategic alliance to radically transform national thinking about learning in the 21st century.

KnowledgeWorks is bringing the future of learning to America's high schools and is creating widespread, lasting change in the communities and states we serve. Since 2006, we have worked with forecasting experts, studied data on the trends shaping our world, and joined conversations with others thinking about where education is heading. Through our work building our 2006–2016 Map of Future Forces Affecting Education and 2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning, we have come to understand how vitally important it is for our country's outdated education system to evolve into a 21st-century world of learning that reaches every student. As part of our model of starting with high schools and moving out through communities and states, our Organizational Learning and Innovation group works with our subsidiaries and with external partners to help create a vision for what that future could look like and the tools to help make it a reality.

Collective Invention is a social innovation firm. We build tools and develop programs that enable innovation for the common good: transformative approaches to education, health, sustainability and ethical enterprise. We work at the systems-level, designing ways for policymakers, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, NGO's and non-profits to collaborate meaningfully; we also facilitate innovation process for individual organizations such as the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, where we are designing a new academic curriculum based on NOCCA's proven pedagogy for professional arts training.

Collective Invention's practice draws on expertise in scenario planning, design, ethnography, organizational development and psychology. We have worked extensively both in the US and with the Singapore Ministry of Education as part of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" vision, first within the Ministry itself and eventually with a wide range of schools, administrators, teachers and students. Our current education work revolves around Learning2025. This process, which as been developed in cooperation with KnowledgeWorks, begins with a hybrid web/face-to-face simulation designed to help stakeholders (boards, investors, administrators, educators etc.) better understand the needs of learners in a rapidly evolving environment. From there, we define opportunities for learner-centered innovation and facilitate the process of prototyping and evaluating new solutions.

Work with us to explore the future and innovate in the present! Contact us:



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