Join Us in Pursuing Our Learning Agenda

To accelerate innovation in the creation and spread of innovative P-12 education models

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Dear friends and colleagues,

We are so excited to share with you, and invite you to join in developing insights for, version 1.0 of Transcend’s (ever-evolving) learning agenda.

We developed this learning agenda based on listening to the toughest, most important, unresolved questions facing Transcend’s partners—most importantly our school operator partners, but also our community of researchers, R&D talent, and funders. The idea was to identify areas where evidence-based insights could most accelerate the design and spread of learning models that will far better prepare children to thrive in—and transform—the 21st century.

We collected over 100 relevant questions and prioritized the most prominent questions facing our stakeholders. This set makes up the first iteration of our learning agenda. For each question, we will be engaging with expert researchers (in learning science, psychology, implementation science, and other relevant fields) as well as practitioners from around the world who are doing cutting edge work, to identify what they are finding, synthesize the insights most relevant to model design and spread, and codify this knowledge into a form that is actionable for school operators working on the frontier of school model innovation. As our school partners apply these insights and try their own approaches, we will harvest the learning from their efforts and add this to our knowledge base. During this journey, we will share everything we learn transparently with the field, to hopefully accelerate everyone’s progress and to inspire new research efforts.

As we investigate each of the questions below, we will bring several lenses to our inquiry:

- **Empirical evidence**—What light do rigorous research processes and on-the-ground practice shed on the questions?

- **Equity**—How can we ensure that our inquiry process includes all of the relevant voices (especially those who are too often marginalized by traditional power structures) and, wherever possible, that our process serves to question or disrupt systems of oppression.

- **Exception As the Norm**—How can our insights and our inquiry process avoid treating people as a monolithic “average” but consider every learner and every member of the system as a unique individual, particularly ensuring that we honor various “learning differences” among learners.

We know that the questions in our learning agenda aren’t new and certainly aren’t unique to Transcend. We have great respect for all of the incredible people and organizations who have been grappling with these questions for decades. It is with great humility, curiosity, and a spirit of collaboration that we seek to tap into this long tradition and join together in pursuing this learning agenda, which you’ll find on the next page. To that end, if you have ideas for people, schools, or other organizations who are working on these questions and who may have great insights, could you please email your suggestions (or any other feedback/ideas) to Jenn Charlot, who is leading this work at Transcend?

Together, we can build the future.

Sincerely,

**Jenn, Aylon, and Jeff**
The Learning Agenda Questions

KEY LENSES

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

EXCEPTION AS THE NORM

EQUITY

What features of learning environments best enable children to grow and develop?

What do effective models come about, spread and influence systems?

- What learning outcomes will best prepare students to thrive in and transform the 21st century?
- How can neuroscience, psychology & cognitive science inform how we cultivate successful learners, including those with learning differences?
- What is the optimal ratio of different instructional modes (e.g., DI, PBL, SDL, other) to foster enduring understandings and key skill development? How does this change by developmental stages, contexts, subjects?
- How can learning environments foster student agency, while accounting for variation in students’ readiness for autonomy (including students with learning differences)?
- In general, what are the best ways to measure students’ growth and mastery of social emotional habits? And in particular, what instruments can be used to measure individual habits (e.g. curiosity, drive, empathy, teamwork, personal growth)?
- In general, how do students develop social emotional habits? In light of this, how should social emotional habits be scaffolded, and taught across students’ developmental trajectory?
- What are the most effective ways to cause and sustain a paradigm shift among adults from a school-centered paradigm to a more personalized, student driven, learner-centered paradigm?
- What conditions (political, social, etc) and strategies can districts and school networks pursue to foster the creation and spread of innovative, learner-centered models (learning environments / “schools”) throughout their system?
- What does it take to build an internal culture of innovation, learning, and creativity within a ‘school’?
- What are the best processes and methods to enable school operators to develop a robust vision for innovative school models? 
  - to effectively develop, test, and iterate on their model components?
  - to enable school operators to develop a plan for a new model?
  - to capture, codify, and spread model components?
  - to help others adopt and adapt existing model components?
- When codifying school models, what are the characteristics of the format, packaging, and dissemination strategy that will most effectively facilitate adoption by others?
What’s Next

As we pursue this learning agenda we aim to embody the following attributes in our process:

1. **We focus on actionable insights** that will help practitioners make concrete decisions about building new school models or adapting effective school models into new contexts.

2. **We work collaboratively** with practitioners, communities, and domain experts to ensure that these insights represent the best and most current thinking and practice across the sector.

3. **We ensure that these insights are dynamic and flexible** as we and our partners make new discoveries and find new evidence.

The diagram below illustrates our process of producing initial insights and shows the feedback loop between our school partners, communities, and domain experts. Taken together, our learning agenda will produce insights that will evolve and become richer over time as we, and our partners, discover new breakthroughs and evidence. We look forward to building this platform of actionable knowledge with you!

If you are interested in collaborating to collect and codify insights related to these questions, please reach out to Jenn Charlot at jenn@transcendeducation.org. We feel committed to ensuring there is as much alignment across the sector as possible.