pr**imer**

a guide to human centric education

We will help each other to change the destiny of worlds, perhaps even to bring mankind back to humanity.”
The **HUMAN RESTORATION PROJECT** supports progressive educators in building systematic change within schools. By providing free resources, professional development, and materials, we can form a coalition of like-minded educators who can revolutionize the education system from the ground up.

We appreciate the sharing of our resources. This booklet, as well as all our materials, are available for free and can be modified and shared with attribution.

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**It is an incredibly daunting task to reshape one’s mindset. And it can be tempting to fall back into comfortable and traditional routines.**

This work doesn’t provide firm answers or simple solutions. These do not exist in solving the complex, nuanced issues of the education system which is rooted in inequity, lack of proper funding, and systemic racism, sexism, and greed. This primer outlines the philosophy of progressive education, which is the antithesis of the growing movement to test, retest, and dehumanize the education process.

It may challenge or conflict with one’s ideas - which is why this style of education is needed. Unless educators seek to deconstruct and rebuild the underlying systems of the system, little to no change will occur. Instead, we’ll see more and more educators become burnt out and demoralized as they continually try to make the broken systems work as promised.

A human-centered classroom is needed now more than ever. In a time of growing uncertainty, global challenges, and increased threats to democracy, children need space to question, reflect, and actualize a meaning to their lives. These young people, along with their educators, will build a new future of love, care, and respect for all.
WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION?
We value changing broken systems. We don’t want strategies that make do with what we have.

- buzzword-free
- cooperative, not competitive
- adopt critical pedagogy
- a cross-subject curriculum
- radically reduce homework
- use experiential learning
- eliminate or redefine testing
- eliminate grading
- build an inclusive space
- integrate grade levels
- promote literacy
- connect with the community
- form a path to purpose
- support a reflective space
- build strong relationships
- use restorative justice
- reform food systems
- allow for self-direction
- strong teacher support
- authenticate student voices
have you ever been bothered by...:

- a student falling asleep in your class
- students not being engaged in a well-planned lesson
- students not retaining information from courses
- a lack of inclusion in the curriculum or school
- posing a question, but no one responding
- the stress of learning due to home situations
- the same students failing every year
- a student trying hard on an assignment, yet failing
- wanting to start class, but students want to talk
- having to take hours of work home with you

...and thought to yourself:

- why don’t my students care about school?
- all kids care about is video games and their phones.
- what’s the point of even teaching anymore?
- I’m fed up with the education system.
- why doesn’t anyone know the answer?
- I wish I could do more to help my students.
- why don’t kids take school seriously?
- are certain courses only possible for some students?
- can I waste time by talking with my students?
- why don’t school systems support their teachers?

perhaps the fault isn’t the teacher or student, but the system:

- letter grades or numbers
- a colonized curricula
- the expectation of silent classrooms
- misinformed, direct instruction
- traditional discipline systems
- an emphasis on four, separated core subject areas
- a lack of legitimate connections made in schools
- the idea that educational standards are infallible
- a belief that any deviation from a lesson is wasted time
- little support for students after school
- a focus on making the curriculum exciting, rather than deep or meaningful
- an inherent focus on testing and standardization
RESEARCH-BACKED

A humanistic education isn’t just moral, it’s also backed by extensive research. Drill and kill, faux rigor, and extensive standardization may make students better at tests, but we’re focused on the big picture.

intrinsically motivated


When giving feedback, no grades combined with purely written or oral comments for improvement had the highest impact on continued motivation of students.


Multiple experiments reveal that students, when pressured with a grade, are less likely to be motivated and/or would be less likely to perform as best as possible.


When members of a group knew that their contribution would be visible and graded, they shared less relevant information in comparison to those who were not expecting a contribution grade.


Students who were presented with their grade cards halfway through the year showcased decreased motivation, engagement, and performance after receiving a low marking.

removal of testing


High-stakes testing has made no improvement to students’ learning, instead demotivating and hurting outcomes.

self-determination


Study shows how children, when left alone to develop their own structure, are better at self-directed processes in the future.

purpose finding


Adolescents had incredibly close ties between their purpose and identity. When teenagers understood their place in the world, they took more purposeful actions and understood more about who they were.


Research finds that 9th and 10th grade students had greater life satisfaction and depressive symptoms when they found meaning and love in their lives.

equity


An overview of 186 research studies in K-12 that demonstrate new racism – hidden racism within schools in the curriculum and in systemic practices.


An overview of understanding school inequity through the lens of race, including arguments from law and social studies.

restorative justice


A heavily researched account of why restorative justice is needed in schools.

Hundreds more of these studies can be found on our website.
**buzzwords**

- 21st century skills
- instructional scaffolding
- brain break
- guided reading
- higher-order thinking
- hands-on
- discovery learning
- chunking
- deductive thinking
- flexible grouping
- data-driven
- SMART goals
- individualized instruction
- **Daily 5**
- everyday mathematics
- growth mindset

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These buzzwords can be important.

Yet financial opportunity and a lack of pedagogical understanding leads to the corruption of practices, in conjunction with a lack of agency in changing the underlying system.

**Project-Based Learning** (PBL) is a buzzword. Hundreds of companies are rolling out professional development on PBL. Each has a separate system or acronym to sell. But PBL is mirrored in experiential learning, a well-documented pedagogy that supports student growth and development.

However, when we pair PBL with traditional systems and structures, or try to make a quick sale with inefficient training, we destroy the original meaning of the term. What happens when we take learning by doing and morph it by:

- ...tying it to state standards and test scores?
- ...inserting subject knowledge from every traditional core content area?
- ...having teachers design the entire project up front?
- ...forcing students into doing the project?
- ...not allowing students to craft their own projects?

Eventually, PBL isn’t PBL anymore. It’s a manifestation of the traditional system in a new form. Then that system will be replaced by a new buzzword that follows the same trajectory. It’s a pattern that needs to be broken.
PROGRESSIVE VS. NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION
Some strategies that are commonly marketed to educators do not fix the underlying problems in the school system. Progressive practices are differentiated because they’re not about acronyms or buzzwords, but are based on research-backed educational ideas that have existed for centuries.

**neoliberal**

- a well-planned game that engages students in course content
- changing the grading system to 1-4, rather than A-F
- practicing mindfulness to get students through the school day
- setting aside an hour each week to support student interests
- setting aside “nice to know” from “need to know”
- supporting relationship building to control one’s classroom
- hooking students with pop culture references
- always being positive, energetic, and optimistic
- controlling student movements to moderate the classroom
- finding ways to pair projects to content standards
- seeing one’s classroom content as unrelentingly important
- visioning oneself as a savior to rescue students
- believing an education is needed to get ahead in society

**progressive**

- a project that motivates by impacting the community
- eliminating grading practices and shifting to narrative assessment
- supporting the opt-out movement for standardized testing
- redoing the schedule to place student interests at the forefront
- centering most class projects and learning on self-determination
- supporting relationship building to connect with students
- helping students determine their unique path to purpose
- regulating one’s behavior, while not supporting toxic positivity
- letting students freely move around the room
- finding ways to co-create student-centered projects
- recognizing one’s classroom content as a means toward future motivation
- valuing the immense knowledge in a student’s lived experience
- fighting the narrative that an education is competitive
Dewey (likely with the aid of his daughter, Evelyn Dewey) wrote the cornerstone works of progressive education. Focusing on preparing democratic citizens, Dewey championed experiential learning and the need for reflective thought.

Montessori, who founded the Montessori method, advocated for a mixed grade education that focused on play and hands-on learning. Montessori wanted to capitalize on the natural self-determination of young learners in a natural environment.

Piaget was the pioneer of the constructivist theory of knowing, a cornerstone of progressive education. His theory bases knowledge on students building on their own backgrounds and experiences.
Paulo Freire

1921-1997

Education for Critical Consciousness 1965
Pedagogy of the Oppressed 1968
Pedagogy of Freedom 1996

Freire advocated for his concept of critical pedagogy - the need to recognize learners for who they are, teach based on their lives, and disestablish systems that place them at a lower echelon than educators.

John Holt

1923-1985

How Children Fail 1964
How Children Learn 1967
Escape from Childhood 1974

Holt, a champion of the unschooling movement, wrote extensively on how traditional schools do a poor job at preparing students to live healthy, happy lives. He was an advocate of children’s rights and of student independence.

Jonathan Kozol

1936-Present

On Being a Teacher 1981
Savage Inequalities 1991
The Shame of the Nation 2005

Kozol has spent much of his life detailing the inequalities of communities, particularly through the school system. He finds that students in poor areas are not being presented a fair opportunity in life and are set up for failure.
Henry Giroux

1943-Present

teachers as intellectuals
1988
pedagogy and the politics of hope
1997
on critical pedagogy
2011

Giroux, a prolific author of over 50 books and 400 articles, is a contemporary of Freire who writes on the dangers of neoliberalism and corruption of the education system due to corporate control and consumerist culture.

Bell Hooks

1952-Present

ain’t I a woman?
1981
teaching to transgress
1994
teaching community: a pedagogy of hope
2003

Hooks, a feminist and social activist, writes on the oppressive nature of schooling and the ways that race, capitalism, and gender affect the classroom. Her works help support educators in understanding what an inclusive space means in reality.

Alfie Kohn

1957-Present

punished by rewards
1993
the schools our children deserve
1999
feel bad education
2011

Kohn dedicates his writing to critiquing the traditional education system, calling upon educators to seek out a pedagogy of unconditional love that puts students at the center.
Meier, a champion of the small schools movement, is the founder and director of the Central Park East school, which put progressive education in practice.

Engel, a child developmental psychologist, focuses on the development of curiosity, play, and teaching. Her work is centered on the cognitive development of children.

and many more...

Francis W. Parker  
Caroline Pratt  
Carleton Washburne  
John Goodlad  
George Dennison  
Ted Sizer  
Jerry Bracey  
Frank Smith  
Ira Shor  
Gloria Ladson-Billings  
Peter McLaren

Antonia Darder  
Pam Moran  
Ira Socol  
Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz  
Gilda Ochoa  
William Damon  
Cornelius Minor  
Michael Apple  
Linda Darling-Hammond

*and the educators doing this work daily.
In the following section, we’ve described each systematic change needed in the education system with additional links to learn more.

Every year, new processes and buzzwords propagate the educational sphere. Teachers must understand best practices beyond a step-by-step guide to their implementation - they must understand the why of their use. This takes time and energy, and not all buzzwords are worth exploring. Teachers should be encouraged to seek out, as experts, initiatives in education and share what they learn with the entire staff.

Corporations often co-opt buzzwords to try to sell ways to marginally improve traditional educational practice, which wasn't succeeding to begin with. Our schools need an underlying philosophical guidance that questions the system and works towards systemic change - something that cannot be accomplished with acronyms.

The 500-Pound Gorilla by Alfie Kohn

Our classrooms have become catalysts for competitive behavior. It's all about the individual. Graded assessments of individualized behavior and extrinsic motivators that reward some but not all ruin a chance at cooperation.

Building cooperative classrooms takes time, trust, and problem-solving. There will be many moments of trial-and-error of mediating students as they communicate and run into issues. This is paramount to students developing teamwork skills and necessary for a democratic society to flourish.

The Value of Cooperative Games by Suzanne Lyons

The classroom can be a place to escape oppression. To achieve these goals, our curricula must be liberating - taking a political stance to provide students with the resources they request and require.

To remain neutral on challenging the status quo is to take the side of the dominator (which is the banking model of transferring content). When we take the side of students by teaching them systemic issues and social justice, valuing their inherent knowledge, allowing them a true voice, and establishing a learning community, we will provide them with the means of empowerment.

The Banking Concept of Education by Paulo Freire
People don’t operate in silos. Students fail to see connections between their work when there’s no emphasis placed on doing so. In fact, many teachers would be hard-pressed to see a connection between their work and other classrooms.

Therefore, all classrooms must aim to, at minimum, collaborate constantly and infuse their content. If possible, schedules must be adjusted to have teams of teachers and students guiding work. This will require changing or de-emphasizing content standards. In addition, certain subjects should not be regarded over all others, such as STEM -> Humanities -> The Arts. This hierarchy warps a student’s view of achievement and devalues growth in multiple ways.

Deeper Learning, Why Cross-Curricular Teaching is Essential by Ben Johnson

By scheduling every moment of time into well beyond the school day, we’re leaving little room for students to reflect on their lives, play, socialize, and de-stress. Research shows that practice-based programs designed to drill content, typically through worksheets after school, create little to no gains in a child’s growth.

Typically, well-regarded homework assignments consist of learning that is done over an extended period of time, with ample amounts of work time given at school to complete it. Children already have crammed schedules as it is, and an overindulgent amount of busy work will lead to increased academic and social-emotional issues.

When Is Homework Worth the Time? by Adam Maltese, Robert Tai, & Xitao Fan

Experiential learning (or PBL) is essential for fostering knowledge. Coined by John Dewey in the early 1900s, experiential learning is hands-on, learning by doing, and reflecting on what one has done. Reflection includes growth from failure and documentation of what’s been learned.

Strong elements of experiential learning include students having voice and choice in what they do (beyond contrived faux choices; for example, a poster or paper), connecting with the community, and projects with real-world value. Experiential learning mirrors what actual people do and, if possible, is simply what one does (not a fake assignment, but an actual end product with value.) It is not learning, then doing: it is learning while doing.

HRP’s PBL Guidebook
Standardized testing is a plague on the school system that does little to hit its intended goals. If we are to measure success of our students, then we’re on the wrong path. Traditional standardized testing simply reflects the inequities present in society.

If standardized testing must remain, why not cater it to the elements we need to promote in schools? Why not have standardized testing that measures students’ intrinsic motivation to learn? Or how valued they feel as individuals in their classrooms? Just as scientists measure soft skills in research studies, we could redefine the testing scenario to one that provides actual information that’s valuable to schools.

Scientifically Tested Tests by Susan Engel

Grading must be eliminated. It’s a broad measure, but research showcases how much grading causes students to seek out a reward rather than be intrinsically motivated to learn (one doesn’t see kindergartners asking if something will be on the test.) When one eliminates grading, motivation increases. Similarly, faux grading scales such as mastery-based ones are well-intentioned, but fall into problems. Whenever a grade system is introduced, students are conditioned to focus on achieving growth in that system, rather than on learning for themselves.

Great assessment is one that incorporates common, one-on-one, feedback. Tools, such as a portfolio of learning, allow educators to provide quick, authentic feedback to students.

Abolishing Grading Is the First Step to Better Assessment in Mathematics by Sunil Singh

First and foremost, schools need to feel safe. If not everyone is accepted and seen as equal, then the institution is harming the community. A school’s staff needs ample training on how to deal with all issues of inclusion, tolerance, and empowerment.

These issues cannot be ignored, as they will not disappear if not spoken of. All classrooms need to have a critical and open dialogue of multiple perspectives. The more students see the perspectives of those who are disenfranchised, or of those who have a different voice than their own, the more they will fight for those of different backgrounds. Including anti-bias and anti-racist training among staff is unarguable.

Love as the Practice of Freedom by bell hooks
Elementary communities have been fairly progressive until recent changes in mathematics and reading standards. Relationships have come first, and students are encouraged to seek out what they love to do. Homework is typically minimal, and teachers encourage empathy over discipline. However, this tends to change as students grow older. Why must we separate students based off an annual, ever-changing school year?

In middle and high school, learners become increasingly drilled to learn more content, often at the expense of their willingness to learn. College prep programs often siphon the soft skills needed to navigate an ever-changing world, instead opting for test preparation. The experience of progressive education must mirror the elementary style of learning, regardless of age.

How Not to Get Into College by Alfie Kohn

Reading is proven to increase a child’s abilities more than any other factor. The way that schools often teach literacy discourages future reading, and, as a result, people grow up disliking books. A draw of extrinsic rewards undermines the joy of reading. Classrooms assign deep-reading activities for novels students may not enjoy. They become disinterested as a result.

Reading for pleasure should be encouraged. Silent reading at certain points during the day and ample amounts of relevant books do well at promoting literacy. Notably, reading should not be enforced as long as others are not being distracted. Literacy should be promoted for its innate joy, rather than any other motivator.

Can Reading Be Saved? by Kelly Gallagher

A school should be open to the rest of the world. Just as learning doesn’t occur within only four walls - the community must be allowed within. Staff must take every opportunity to invite and structure meetings with families and all others.

These partnerships will flourish into authentic audiences for student work, experts in the classroom, and additional relationship-building, which will drive and transform the school into a greater learning center.

On Schools Where Students Want to Be: A Conversation with Deborah Meier by Marge Scherer and Deborah Meier
When students are asked what they want to be when they grow up, especially as they grow older, they respond with blank stares or prestigious jobs they know little about. Students consume content more and more, with little to no time spent creating work of their own. Because school is taxing and possibly not connected with real learning opportunities, students lack the drive and energy to explore their own interests.

Schools must schedule time for students to inquire and put their passions into practice. This must be multifaceted: ample amounts of self-discovery, encouraging teacher passion in the classroom, and allowing for community voices to showcase opportunities.

Purpose, Hope, and Life Satisfaction in Three Age Groups by Kendall Cotton Bronk et al

Reflection is the most important step of learning. Educators tend to evaluate their teaching based on test scores or on how they’ve best fit into the system. As a result, creative solutions and larger issues may be ignored. All educators must obtain feedback from as many sources as possible and reflect constantly on changing their behavior.

In the same way, students must be given many chances to reflect on their own learning experiences. Sometimes, students working on hands-on projects are not able to communicate what they’re learning, as they’re just doing - not recognizing the value of their work. Therefore, incorporating ample reflection gives time for them to communicate and express growth.

How We Think by John Dewey

Relationships are fundamental to education. Without a strong connection between students, teachers, and administration, learning can not occur organically. Central to the dogma of progressive education is a constant focus on relationship building - content is secondary.

Strong relationships are built on authentic empathy and care. Teachers constantly engage students in conversation, seek out their passions and interests and incorporate them in the classroom, and act as mentors in every step of their lives. Relationships are much more than icebreaker activities: they are the fuel to everything.

The Effects of Teacher-Student Relationships by Emily Gallagher
The policies of most school systems do nothing to remedy or discourage negative student behavior. Zero-tolerance mandates, which punish students for certain behaviors through automatic suspensions, often hurt those who are most vulnerable.

It’s incredibly important that aggressors are dealt with promptly. By embracing the practice of restorative justice, one can empathize with the aggressor to talk about, reflect on, and find a solution to their behavior. Children act out due to greater problems at home or school, or because of mental illness. To find and diagnose the root of each problem, schools can embrace a more loving, caring community.

The Little Book of Restorative Justice by Howard Zehr and Ali Gohar

Our students (and adults) are facing a health crisis, partially due to the complete non-focus on quality food in schools. Students who come from economically scarce communities are less likely to have access to quality food and don’t have the option of bringing their own lunch. As a result, there’s a growing disparity of food intelligence and access to quality ingredients.

Promoting relationships between local farms, providing adequate funding to school lunch programs, and giving food employees a platform to change the district’s lunch policies are needed to eventually grow a breakfast, lunch, and free dinner program for students who need it. Countries with the capacity to afford luxuries should never have children going hungry.

Things Fall Apart S3: E17: What’s Up With School Lunch? w/ Jennifer E. Gaddis

In order for schools to successfully implement student learning, students must want to learn. Everyone innately wants to learn more about the world - it’s a human trait. Therefore, if a curriculum encourages students to adapt and create their own curriculum - based on their interests - learning will occur.

During work, students can't be micromanaged. Students must understand (and be advised) on how to properly use electronics and other distractions. No one will look over their shoulder once they leave school (unless, of course, they’re called into their boss’s office). This training of responsibility must be opened for children to succeed.

Classroom Applications of Research on Self-Regulated Learning by Scott G. Paris and Alison H. Paris
The best administrators are those who empower teachers while rigorously promoting the vision of a school. Administrators, just like teachers, are guides of classrooms. There’s no top-down micromanagement, long lectures, or extreme punishment. Administrators are the structural support and champion of teachers. Administrators are the chief enforcers of the school’s vision. They continually need to keep everyone in line to support the school’s vision, built by the entire learning community.

Further, schools must support their teachers with effective planning time, rest and recuperation, and expert-level pay.

Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It by Desiree Carver-Thomas and Linda Darling-Hammond

Voice implies that students can drastically change school policy if warranted. Giving up control is a difficult thing to do for anyone, so empowering students is challenging. In the classroom, voice is centered on being able to change assessment, content, and philosophy based on the needs and desires of students. Students should feel welcome to ask driving questions that change the pre-built notions of the course, with a teacher who guides and inspires their growth.

Beyond the classroom, voice is encouraged and structured into staff meetings and curriculum design. Students need real opportunities to express change. Notably, many schools would face dramatic differences if students had this power - a statement that resoundingly shows a problem in education.

The Student Voice in Well-Being by Amber Halliday

These systems work together.

As soon as one goes down the rabbit hole of progressive education, it becomes readily apparent that by adopting one system, we adopt all systems. We can’t have authentic experiential learning without promoting student voice and choice. We can’t adopt restorative justice without strong administrative support.

When we adopt progressive educative policies, we’re certifying that a human-centered mindset is at the center of all we do. We’re not finding ways to co-opt students into doing what we want by masquerading a policy, such as promoting mindfulness, to help students make it through state testing. Rather, we are reformulating systems to those that intrinsically support our students. These policy changes are possible, and once the dominoes begin to fall we’ll have an entirely progressive education system.
HOW DO I DO THIS?

There’s not a silver bullet. There’s not a specific teaching strategy. Every school and classroom is different. Yet there is general advice we can offer:

Systemic Change Takes Time

Students have been conditioned for years to expect extrinsic rewards, to respect authoritarianism, and to follow the teacher’s path. When we change these systems, it’s expected that things won’t go as planned. In fact, it can take weeks, months, even years to see the change that progressive pedagogy brings. Our call to action is not to give up at the first point of failure, and to push forward with what research supports. In order for students to understand these changes, they must have a chance to experience them, grow, and develop. Trust the process.

Tinkering Doesn’t Work

Small changes won’t be enough to transform the lifeblood of the classroom. Any change that helps students can be worthwhile, but systemic changes - such as gradeless classrooms - won’t see any benefit if only certain assignments are utilized or if an equivalent assessment is used. A full embracing of human-centric practice is needed.

These Practices Aren’t Easy

As bell hooks states, “Given that our educational institutions are deeply invested in a banking system, teachers are more rewarded when we do not teach against the grain.” When we work against the status quo, we will encounter adversity. However, to go along with the status quo is unsustainable. There’s a certain level of revolutionary thinking that goes into being a progressive educator.

Take Risks

Progressive education isn’t about a one-size-fits-all methodology. We must take actions, see how they work out, and readjust. After spending a lot of time on something new, we must reflect on the practice and find ways to reinstate the practice. Most important to our work is our mindset - do we know why we’re doing what we’re doing, and does it align with our purpose of education?

Build a Coalition

For many reasons, not all administrators or coworkers will support this style of education. However, students and parents who are properly informed will understand the value of research-backed, progressive methods. Taking extensive time to explain each practice, with various articles to back oneself up, is needed to ensure success. Finding other teachers, either in one’s building or online, will help you with problem-solving and, more importantly, morale in such a difficult transition.
MYTHS OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

There’s only one way to do things.
This is about a mindset, not a specific strategy. There’s not only one way to structure a gradeless classroom, nor only one way to build a cooperative classroom. What’s important is that one understands the underlying purpose of education: to find ways to intrinsically motivate students by being loved, discovering their purpose, and ultimately - building a better future.

Progressive education eliminates all legacy school practices.
Taking on the mantle of a progressive mindset does not mean one should abolish all traditional notions of school. Restorative justice isn’t applicable in every situation, and students do not need to always be 100 percent self-directed. Almost every element of progressive education calls at times on elements of established educational practice. Again, the mindset is key - is what we’re doing framed by a radically pro-student philosophy?

Results will be quickly notable.
Having a student adopt these ideals is not an easy task. It’s not just the teacher who needs to change their mindset, but also the students. By placing more learning in the hands of a student’s self-discovery, there’s more emphasis on self-advocacy and purpose-building. Sadly, these concepts aren't often explored in schools, and many will struggle to adopt these norms. It can take weeks, months, even years to actualize progressive education for many students.

Students have complete freedom at school.
A classroom with a pro-student mindset does not mean that students are free to do whatever they want. Safety - physically, socially, and emotionally - is still an educator’s top priority. Classroom norms and school rules will still apply (although those rules should be analyzed for biased rhetoric.)

This will take a ton of planning.
Although there’s a lot of work in frontloading this mindset, such as understanding the underlying reasoning of the pedagogy, much more of a progressive educator's workload will shift to being at school, rather than out of school. Because these educators understand the value of home life and refraining from consistent academic assessment, educators have time to recharge out of the building as well.

This isn’t possible to do in some buildings (or I’ll be fired).
The majority of adults want progressive ideals for their children, but they may not see the underlying system for how potentially dangerous it is. Risk mitigation is important - how far can you push change? Yet it’s not uncommon for educators to be praised for attempting something new or to drive innovation in their classrooms. Understanding underlying research, the why of the practice, is key for success.
WHAT CAN I DO TOMORROW?

- Read an article or book
  - The end of the rainbow by Susan Engel
  - Progressive education by Alfie Kohn
  - What’s on your list? by Pam Moran

- Listen to a podcast
  - S3:E9: Cornelius Minor
  - S3:E2: It All Orbits Purpose
  - S2:E20: Ira Socol

- Talk to a student about their school experience
  - StuVoice: Mental Health
  - StuVoice: Gifted and Talented

- Co-develop a project
  - HRP PBL Guidebook

- Discover a non-profit

- Connect to a PLC

- Upcoming HRP events
Progressive education goes against the status quo, but it’s not a new model or passing fad.

We often hear it said that a child’s will should be “broken” that the best education for the will of the child is to learn to give it up to the will of adults. Leaving out of the question the injustice which is at the root of every act of tyranny, this idea is irrational because the child cannot give up what he does not possess. We prevent him in this way from forming his own willpower, and we commit the greatest and most blameworthy mistake. He never has time or opportunity to test himself, to estimate his own force and his own limitations because he is always interrupted and subjected to our tyranny, and languishes in injustice because he is always being bitterly reproached for not having what adults are perpetually destroying.

*maria montessori, 1909*

We are not willing to have the children dominated by subject matter. We want them to form strong habits of first-hand research and to use what they find; we want them to discover relationships in a concrete manner, so that they will know they exist when they deal with abstract forms, and will have habits of putting them to use. ...Subject-matter of the past and the distant present contains fewer opportunities for these than does the environment of the children.

*caroline pratt, 1927*
I think that only slight acquaintance with the history of education is needed to prove that educational reformers and innovators alone have felt the need for a philosophy of education. Those who adhered to the established system needed merely a few fine-sounding words to justify existing practices. The real work was done by habits, which were so fixed as to be institutional. The lesson for progressive education is that it requires in an urgent degree, a degree more pressing than was incumbent upon former innovators, a philosophy of education based upon a philosophy of experience.

John Dewey, 1938

Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression. This accusation is not made in the naive hope that the dominant elites will thereby simply abandon the practice. Its objective is to call the attention of true humanists to the fact that they cannot use the methods of banking education in the pursuit of liberation, as they would only negate that pursuit itself.

Paulo Freire, 1968

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

Bell Hooks, 1994
A PATHWAY FORWARD

step 1: research and understand

Dive into the world of progressive education by reading, listening to, and participating in progressive PD. The best educators are those who understand the why of their practice. HRP offers all of these resources for free.

step 2: begin implementation

Using your newfound knowledge, start to try a systemic change in your classroom. This won’t be easy, nor will it solve any problems immediately. However, over time there will be results! Remember, these systems work together. You’ll soon be changing other systems that work in tandem.

step 3: build the coalition

As you move forward on your journey, you need people to back you up. Explain your why and your specific practices to students, parents, coworkers, and the community. Make connections online. The more people you have in your coalition, the more successful you will be.

step 4: reflect and revolutionize

Continue to find ways to improve on your practice and implement radically pro-student policies. Then take this work to your colleagues and district. How can these systems be changed at their core? How can coworkers band together to see change at the district level?
(RE)DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE
A human-centric education is just as valuable for educators as it is for students. Most of us entered this profession with an innate desire to connect with children, help them grow and develop, and build a better future. Yet many of the systems in education hamper or harm these possibilities.

A pro-student future requires educators to band together and demand change. Creative noncompliance, taking mitigated risks, and spreading the practice are requirements. This change will only occur from the bottom up. Without the steadfast support of all involved, we will never see the radical change needed to transform our school districts.

Protocols like these energize and ignite our desire to teach, as each system is eliminating the banal regulations that come between teacher-student relationships. As we utilize progressive educative practices, we are becoming more and more connected to our greater purpose.
Students and teachers are human beings. Schools must bring this to light.

human restoration project