

GETTING SMART ON



RETHINKING
PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING

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Graduate School of
EDUCATION

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Introduction – Focused Professional Learning

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01Introduction – Focused Professional Learning
Generic vs Coherent Teacher Preparation
- 04Transforming Professionals
Rethinking Professional Learning: Meet High Tech High Graduate School of Education
- 07Transforming Schools
Transform Schools through Strengths-Based PD
- 10Transforming Students
5 Power PBL Projects: Makers, Muppets, and More
- 13Conclusion – The Future of Professional Learning
The Future of Professional Learning: 4 Design Principles that Transform

GENERIC VS COHERENT TEACHER PREPARATION

Graduate schools of education offer an assortment of courses that provide broad exposure to historical concepts in education and human development, yet are often divorced from practice. While there are some benefits to a survey approach, they often don't add up to sufficient preparation to lead a great classroom or school.

We've inherited *sedimentary layers* of local, state, and federal EdPolicy — not a system designed one to prepare young people for the idea economy and not an easy system in which to teach. In contrast, we know that good schools are coherent — everything is mission-aligned to benefit teachers and students.

A COHERENT SCHOOL

One of the best examples of a coherent school is *High Tech High* (HTH) in San Diego. It was formed around four *design principles*: personalization, adult world connection, common intellectual mission, and teacher-as-designer. Everything at the school — structure, schedule, staffing, systems — works together for students and teachers.

"Most of life is a project and exhibition," said *High Tech High* founder *Larry Rosenstock*. Trained as a lawyer, Rosenstock taught high school carpentry. Larry's maker ethic is baked into the frequent exhibitions of authentic work at High Tech High.

Rosenstock thinks we should ask students to use their head and their hands, make things, think about things and should spend more time on production technology than consumption



technology. Rosenstock thinks school should be about revealing and uncovering — not just covering — content. He thinks students should do field work and demonstrate their learning.

Students in the 13 school HTH network cover less material than traditional schools but they trade superficial knowledge for deep understanding. Scan HTH projects and you'll appreciate how these learning experiences are memorable for a lifetime.

This famous school network is featured in the documentary film *Most Likely to Succeed*. Producer Ted Dintersmith is engaging students, parents, teachers and administrators on a 50 State Tour.

FROM HTH TO GSE

In 2006, HTH was the first charter network to launch a graduate school of education. Like the school network, the GSE attacks three standard practices: tracking, isolation from the adult world, and separation of thinking and doing.

HTH GSE “prepares educators to design and to assume leadership in programs with a parallel commitment to equity, rigor, and relevance for all students.” Network schools serve as clinical sites for learning, “an opportunity to take risks, reflect on practice and shape their own vision for effective teaching, learning and leadership.”



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The HTH GSE offers a one year hybrid online leadership academy program, two year teacher credentialing program (while teaching), and a masters degree in educational leadership. GSE also offers three day institutes, workshops, online courses, tours, and a journal.

PURPOSE-BUILT PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

While HTH GSE was among the first purpose-built graduate programs, several more have recently emerged.

Launched in New York in 2011, *Relay GSE* has a “curriculum that emphasizes the teaching and instructional leadership skills that have the greatest impact on student learning.” Rather than design principles, Relay reflects a framework of teacher and leader competencies identified at KIPP, *Achievement First* and *Uncommon Schools*. More than 1400 educators take blended courses (about 40% online) offered on nine campuses. Online courses are offered on *Coursera*.

WGU offers online credentialing and master’s programs and is the largest provider of math and science teachers in the country.

TEACH-NOW serves 650 candidates with an online program that “focuses on equipping, enabling and empowering teachers to be resourceful problem solvers through a collaborative, activity-based learning system in a dynamic and diverse world.”

TRENDS IN TEACHER PREP & DEVELOPMENT

Historically, most aspiring educators paid for expensive preparation programs and then a masters degree in order to qualify for an early career pay bump. There has been some movement toward subsidized preparation for high-potential candidates including Americorps awards, district/network contributions and debt forgiveness.

There is also growing **micro-credential momentum**. Relay provost Brent Maddin thinks it will be common to earn degrees and micro-credentials simultaneously. Post certification growth will increasingly be signaled with stackable micro-credentials. This will encourage more just-in-time learning from several different sources.

Maddin notes the big “got it, do it gap” in education — a teacher candidate may have conceptual knowledge which may not translate into effective classroom practice. For that reason, Relay uses classroom video extensively. Developments in virtual reality and immersive environments will make applications like ASU’s [Quest2Teach](#) a common practice environment supported by a social-professional network. These immersive experiences will provide an authentic and individualized practice for aspiring teachers that bridges theory and practice.

Design-built programs will increasingly incorporate **artificial intelligence to fully personalize the learning experience**, drawing on comprehensive learner profiles and assisting advisors in crafting customized sequences.

With the proliferation of school models, an increasing amount of preparation and ongoing development (marketed by micro-credentials) will be model-specific with strong links to specific networks (like HTH or New Tech Network) or district consortia.

TRANSFORMATION OF PROFESSIONALS, SCHOOLS, AND STUDENT LEARNING

When the link to a coherent network is present, such as with High Tech High’s GSE, a purpose-built approach to professional learning sets the stage for:

- Transforming professionals through opportunities to reflect on practice and shape a powerful vision for leading, learning and leadership;
- Transforming schools by building capacity and collaboration around common design principles; and
- Transforming student learning through a focus on equity, rigor and relevance.

The benefits of purpose-built, coherent teacher preparation hold the potential to extend quality learning to all teachers and students.

Transforming Professionals

Mary Ryerse, Director of Strategic Design, Getting Smart

RETHINKING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: MEET HIGH TECH HIGH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Imagine an amazing high school located in San Diego, known for its hands-on, applied and project-based learning design. Now imagine that school designing a graduate school that provides the same type of learning environment for its graduate students as for its K12 students.

Just six years after opening High Tech High (HTH), the team opened High Tech High Graduate School of Education (HTH GSE), offering an M.Ed. program in Educational Leadership. Along with myriad opportunities for professional education, from a hybrid, online program focused on transforming schools to three day residencies on project-based learning, HTH GSE offers a highly focused approach that is a refreshing GSE approach in contrast to the typical generic collection of survey courses.

We had a chance to talk with several members of the team — including Dean Steve Hamilton, CAO Ben Daley, and Directors Kelly Wilson and Laura McBain — about what distinguishes HTH GSE and how their model fosters professional transformation.



BACKGROUND

Opened in 2000, High Tech High (HTH) may be among the most commonly recognized school systems in the world. Among the best examples of applied and project-based learning, it prepares diverse students for a complex world and is the best example of school-centric community redevelopment.

In 2006, HTH GSE opened by offering M.Ed. programs in Teacher Leadership and School Leadership. It was the first school network-affiliated graduate school, and embodies the difference between the generic collection of survey courses typical of current graduate schools and a coherent, mission-focused and applied preparation for school leadership.

FOCUSED APPROACH

HTH GSE is distinguished not only by its dynamic team and connection to High Tech High, but in the high-focused efforts around equity and deeper learning. HTH's practices, such as project-based learning, are grounded in research and on-trend.

HTH GSE “aspires to serve as a center of inquiry and progressive practice related to teaching, learning, and leading, and an example of transformative graduate education that has a direct impact on K-12 schools. ”

Dean Stephen Hamilton reflects, “What makes graduate students’ experience transformational is our GSE’s embeddedness in a set of innovative K-12 schools, along with the modeling in the GSE of the pedagogical principles.” The HTH network sites serve as clinical sites for learning and provide students an opportunity to take risks, reflect on practice and shape their own vision for effective teaching, learning and leadership.

Equity Focus

Education has been called “the civil rights movement of our time.” HTH GSE’s mission has a foundational principle of equity. This was a fundamental commitment of the co-founders of High Tech High Larry Rosenstock and Rob Riordan and is shared by all staff. Because student-focused, equity-based, professional learning experiences are priorities for HTH GSE, graduate student projects are expected to align with this mission

Deeper Learning Focus

Deeper learning is a set of six competencies that lead to high-level achievement. Schools within the deeper learning network have shown higher graduation rates than similar schools outside the network. The graduate school design intentionally mirrors that of schools whose students have deeper learning outcomes and engages professionals in learning that mimics how we want students to learn. (We have written about this at Getting Smart in [Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning](#) and [Preparing Leaders for Deeper Learning](#).)

3 EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATION

We heard from HTH GSE Alumni about how they’ve been transformed:

Practicing PBL and Grounded in Equity
Kelly Lyn Wilson, HTH GSE Alum

Listening and Responding to Student Voice
Melissa Han, HTH GSE Alum

Being Okay with Vulnerability
Carol Cabrera, HTH GSE Alum

PLENTY OF WAYS TO BE TRANSFORMED

There are plenty of ways for people to engage with HTH GSE, ranging from day-long tours to degree programs. A glimpse at the professional leadership experiences and resources offered by HTH GSE is listed below:

- HTH Tours
- Residencies and Institutes
- Workshops
- Education Leadership Academy (hybrid online program)
- Online courses
- Center for Research on Equity and Innovations
- Unboxed journal.

The HTH GSE offers degree and credential-granting programs

- Credential: Two year teacher credentialing (while teaching)
- M Ed. Masters degree in educational leadership

HTH GSE also hosts an annual deeper learning conference — you can get a flavor for the 2016 event by watching this [video](#). No matter where people start, transformation of adults and the corresponding impact on students is what HTH GSE does.

Transforming Schools

Laura McBain, Director of External Relations and the Education Leadership Academy, High Tech High Graduate School of Education

TRANSFORM SCHOOLS THROUGH STRENGTHS-BASED PD

“You are allowed to be a masterpiece and a work in progress, simultaneously.”

What would professional development look like if we focused on our greatest strengths as opposed to our greatest deficits? Transformative change in schools begins with the recognition that every participant has a best practice to share. It is about helping teachers and schools become the best versions of themselves.

This was the mindset I had when I began working with an urban school called Chicago Tech Academy in the southside of Chicago. In May of 2014, the school was on the brink of being closed by Chicago Public Schools. Low test scores, low staff moral and low student engagement laid heavy on a school already struggling with the violence and equity issues prevalent in Chicago. If students wanted to use the restroom, they were escorted by a security guard.



After speaking with the staff, we knew they were familiar with outsiders coming in and telling them how to teach and how to fix their school. Therefore, when we started helping with their professional development we made a deliberate choice to focus on celebrations. We wanted it to be a rebirth of their passion for teaching and commitment to equity rather than a laundry list of things to fix. We thought about the assumptions of appreciative inquiry which suggest that:

- In every society, organization or group, something works;
- What we focus on becomes our reality;
- Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past;
- It is important to value differences; and
- The language we use creates our reality.

We began the work of designing a disruptive and celebratory professional development program. Our aim was not to merely shift the pedagogical practices of teachers but also create a program that cultivated a growth mindset toward teaching and learning.

We knew the teachers needed to experience deeper learning for themselves if they were to create it for their students, so we went out into the streets. On the first day of training we visited the most prominent neighborhoods students resided and investigated how a community creates and sustains a culture. In groups they explored, interviewed and created artifacts that represented their learning. Everyone

participated. Teachers, aides and leaders alike were involved in the work. After the day was over, we unpacked the learning experiences. We broke down every exercise, every facilitator move and more importantly acknowledged that some of our initial assumptions about the students were incorrect.

For me, this opening day activity served two purposes. First, it acted as an unifying experience to help bring the staff together. Second, it served to disrupt their current thinking about what teaching and learning was supposed to look and feel like.



But we knew a disruptive and unifying experience was not enough. Camille Farrington’s work on *Foundations for Young Adults* suggests that for a mindset shift to occur one must be able to habitually make meaning for themselves and share a sense of belonging in the community.

In the ongoing staff meetings we set about creating structures to engender reflection, community building and create an adult learning environment where staff felt valued and free to take risks. We hoped that if the staff felt a sense of celebration and accomplishment about their own work they could bring the same feeling to their students.

Two years in and what we started is working. The school has been given a three year waiver by Chicago Public Schools, attendance is hovering at 90 percent and 100 percent of seniors are about to begin academic internships. Instead of students escorted to the bathrooms, visitors see student ambassadors in every classroom and student work covering the hallways.

This June, each staff member will conduct a presentation on the success, challenges and growths of implementing deeper learning. The work is not done yet; as with many of us who work in schools, the process of change never is. Working with this school and its teachers over the past few years has been tremendously rewarding. It has challenged and reaffirmed my belief that if we want to change schools, we have to start with the adults. No school is a masterpiece, but if we can design professional development that allows adults to become the best versions of themselves, then perhaps then we can create classrooms that allow students to be the best versions of themselves as well.



WAYS TO PRACTICE TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Offer Disruptive Professional Development Learning Opportunities to Staff

- Send staff to museums to see how work is curated.
- Conduct a professional development day where every staff member does an internship in an area outside of education.
- If practicing project-based learning, ask teachers to do the project themselves *first* before they do with it with students.

Create a sense of belonging

- Start staff meetings with appreciative inquiry and celebrations.
- Create a collegial coaching program where teachers visit and exchange peer feedback.
- Create your own promising practices blog or bulletin board sharing best practices from *all* the staff.

Making Meaning

- Have teachers create their own personal learning plans that focus on their own success and challenges.
- Allow teachers to examine problems of practice by using protocol such as project tunings or consultancies with staff.
- Instead a formal evaluation system, allow teachers to share their learning from the year in a presentation to their peers.

And as Maxine Greene once said, “We are always in the process of becoming,” so take the time to celebrate, always.

Transforming Students

Mary Ryerse, Director of Strategic Design, Getting Smart

5 POWER PBL PROJECTS: MAKERS, MUPPETS, AND MORE

It's a project-based world, and *Personalized project-based learning* transforms students.

But where do professionals learn to effectively teach project-based learning? At *High Tech High Graduate School of Education (HTH GSE)*, they engage in personalized, project-based learning themselves and learn how to effectively provide it to their students.

Driven by a focus on equity and deeper learning, HTH GSE considers project-based learning the backbone of the learning experience. Director of the HTH GSE M. Ed. in Educational Leadership program, Kelly Wilson, reflects, "At High Tech High [and GSE], we define equity in schools as a condition where everyone exercises voice and choice, engages in work that is accessible and challenging and connects with the world beyond school. Students have the opportunity to co-design projects alongside their teachers, using their own questions to guide sustained inquiry. This leads to authentic engagement with and access to the learning environment. Multiple rounds of critique and revision of student work throughout the project provide personalized support, enabling students to not only demonstrate transformation of knowledge and application of skills, but growth over time."

Well-designed projects grounded in the principles described above have the power to transform both student learning and the students themselves. Here are five examples of student projects by current HTH GSE students and alumni that are transforming student learning:



1 | **BOBBY SHADDOX: PATHWAY TO THE PLATE** *King Middle School, Portland, Maine*

Project description: Students are on a quest to answer the essential questions: What are we eating? What pathways does our food take to get to our plate? They research and design pocket-sized food guides to educate consumers of the pros and cons of the various food chains in our modern food system. The research began during the expedition's kick-off in which students participated in a scavenger hunt at a local grocery store.

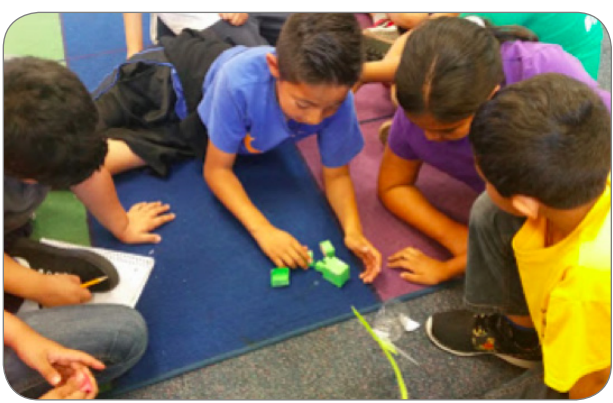
Student transformation: This learning transforms the way students think about food on a daily basis and redefine their roles as consumers and advocates for the improvement of our society's food system.



2 | KYLE LINNIK: MEALS AND MUPPETS
High Tech Middle Chula Vista ~ San Diego, CA

Project description: Through the Meals and Muppets project, our 7th graders set out to inspire and encourage their kindergarten buddies to establish and maintain healthy habits through balanced nutrition and physical activity. Using the magic of the maker movement through puppet building and filmmaking, our students transformed their learning about food justice, urban farming, and making healthy food choices into a professionally produced movie, using muppets as a tool to engage kindergarten students.

Student transformation: This work has been transformational for our students as they no longer were completing an assignment for a class, but rather taking on a meaningful challenge for an authentic audience. This shift in approach means their learning was no longer an expectation but a requirement for success, and therefore has lasting effect.



3 | MELISSA HAN: BIGFOOT CINDERELLA
Baker Elementary School ~ San Diego, CA @melissahan1116

Project description: During novel engineering, third graders created prototypes for "characters as clients" from the story Bigfoot Cinderrrrrella. Incorporating kind, helpful, and specific feedback during projects enabled my students to engage in authentic conversations because they wanted their products to work.

Student transformation: This type of feedback created space for students to listen deeply to one another because the work mattered to them.



4 | BRITT SHIRK: A TINY HOME IS WHERE THE HE[ART] IS

High Tech High Chula Vista ~ San Diego, CA

Project description: The Students of Team Sempiternal designed, drafted and built tiny houses for local artists in San Diego in order to provide affordable housing to keep art in San Diego. They also wrote and published a book entitled A Tiny Home is Where the He[ART] Is, which showcases the fourteen artists' lives, work and stories leading up to the designs of their tiny homes.

Student transformation: The Tiny House Project gave students the opportunity to delve into the

worlds of architecture, building and writing by collaborating with local professionals and creating a product with purpose and use outside of the classroom, as well as building a culture of trust, respect and peer empowerment within the team.



5 | NUVIA RULAND: BEYOND THE CROSSFIRE

High Tech High Chula Vista ~ San Diego, CA

Project description: Beyond the Crossfire is an investigative documentary led by 45 Chula Vista high school students and two teachers tackling the broader questions of violence in our country and its root causes. Beyond the Crossfire explores the mental health system, criminal justice system and mentorship programs as possible points of entry for systemic change to reduce violence in our communities.

Student transformation: For both students and teachers this was not just a project. Through their commitment to making real change, the students tackled social justice issues they were passionate about in and out of school.

In all of these examples, students are at the center. We see the ripple effect of the fact that when professionals are transformed, so are their students.

Conclusion – The Future of Professional Learning

Mary Ryerse, Director of Strategic Design, Getting Smart

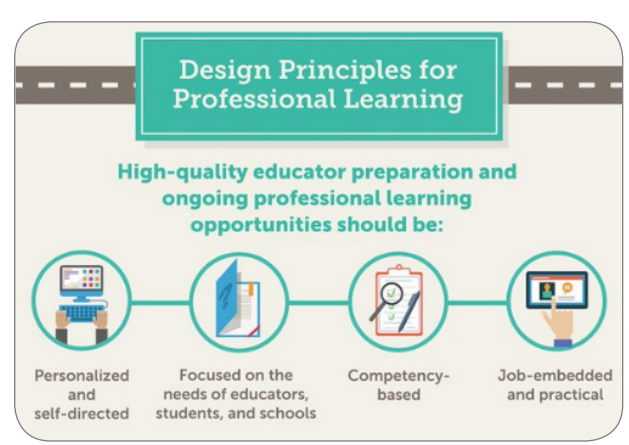
THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: 4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES THAT TRANSFORM

In order to create the professional learning experiences that will transform schools, future leaders need coherent, job-embedded, authentic, project-based learning opportunities to create and sustain deeper learning movements.

The current system of preparation (true for most, but not all, schools of education) typically does not foster the development of leaders who can create or sustain deeper learning environments. In my own journey I earned both teacher and principal credentials in a very traditional manner with discrete, disconnected courses. The process of earning my superintendent’s credential, however — in a deep, project and simulation-based program — was an entirely different story.

The former informed me about things like policy, curriculum and legal responsibilities. The latter transformed me by immersing me in big questions around social justice, equity and deeper learning.

The future of professional learning is bright when focused on design principles that foster transformation of professionals, schools, and students through rich experience.



THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Design Principles for Professional Learning
In *Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning*, *Digital Promise* and *Getting Smart* outline four design principles for professional learning. These apply to credentialing programs, ongoing professional learning opportunities and school or district-based initiatives. Graduate schools of education are in the perfect position to be leaders in the application of these design principles.

What if professional learning experiences offered a diverse set of entry points and future career paths?

Principles in Action: What it Means for Graduate Schools of Education

One example of a graduate school of education that is a leader in applying these design principles is High Tech High Graduate School of Education.

What follows are some examples of higher ed principles intrinsic to HTH GSE and beyond:

- **Focused on the needs of educators, students.** Most importantly, this focus must go far beyond rhetoric and be part of the design. One of HTH GSE’s strengths is its relentless focus on equity and deeper learning.
- **Personalized and self-directed.** In addition to providing personalized learning experiences for students earning degrees, HTH GSE offers personalized learning experiences at a variety of entry points such as school tours, conferences, residencies, an online [Education Leadership Academy](#), a [Center for Research on Equity and Innovation](#) and more.
- **Competency-based.** Like students, educators deserve a clear map of what they need to know and be able to do, multiple ways to learn, and options for demonstrating mastery. In most cases, the future of professional learning will be marked with a stackable series of micro-credentials. HTH GSE is looking to scaffold offerings to build stackable credits.
- **Job-embedded and practical.** Every adult has a personal learning plan which helps connect “professional learning” and the “day job.” The future will hold no more random courses for continuing ed credits, just highly relevant, job-linked learning.

THE IMPACT OF SUCH LEARNING

When built on these articulated design principles, the future of professional learning will experience nothing less than transformation. Here are some examples of how professional learning transforms educators, schools and students.

Transformation of Professionals

With this focus on equity and deeper learning, professionals are transformed in powerful ways. For example, when they engage in project-based learning experiences — particularly those grounded in an equity and deeper learning focus — they are transformed.

The six areas of deeper learning that have been identified for today’s students are also critical for the development of leaders. No matter what our age or experience level, Hewlett’s [6 competencies of deeper learning](#) apply: mastering core content, thinking critically to solve complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating, learning how to learn and an academic mindset.

This happens through experiences such as field trips and research (funnel). In doing so we can solve budget, policy and complex issues.

Transformation of Schools

In her blog on transforming schools through [strengths-based professional development](#), Laura McBain said “You are allowed to be a masterpiece and a work in progress, simultaneously.” For example:

- Build on strengths
- Offer disruptive professional learning opportunities
- Create a sense of belonging
- Make meaning
- Celebrate

The tips Laura provides are timeless — and they work.



Transformation of Students

As students practice principles of deeper learning and engage in personalized project-based learning, they learn to redefine roles (for example, through Bobby Shaddock’s Pathway to the Plate); take on meaningful challenges (Kyle Linnik’s Meals and Muppets); listen deeply and create products for “the real world” (Britt Shirk’s Tiny Home); and perhaps most importantly, ignite passion and tackle big issues like social justice (Nuvia Ruland’s Beyond the Crossfire). Across the board, learning is not simply an expectation but a requirement for success.



BUILDING A LEGACY OF LEADERS AND IMPACT

Ultimately this rethinking of professional learning builds a legacy of leaders who embody the competencies of leaders as outlined in *Preparing Leaders for Deeper Learning*. The result will be leaders who set and convey a vision for deeper learning, innovate and manage the shift to deeper learning, and engage and scale deeper learning.

The future of professional learning will not only inform, but transform how we learn and who we are.

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