

9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

(*Because “Normal” Wasn’t That Great to Begin With)



Homa Tavangar
Will Richardson
BIGquestions.institute



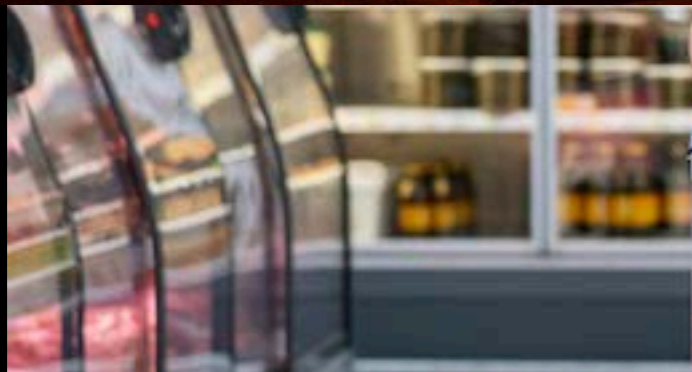
This has been hard. Really hard.



is
^

This ~~has been~~ hard. Really hard.





Freedom in the World 2021

Democracy under Siege

[Explore Country Data >](#)

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As a lethal pandemic, economic and physical insecurity, and violent conflict ravaged the world, democracy's defenders sustained heavy new losses in their struggle against authoritarian foes, shifting the international balance in favor of tyranny.



We are all exhausted.



Exclusive: Exhausted teachers 'pushed to the brink'

The demands of remote education this term have left teachers struggling physically and mentally, Tes survey shows

Catherine Lough

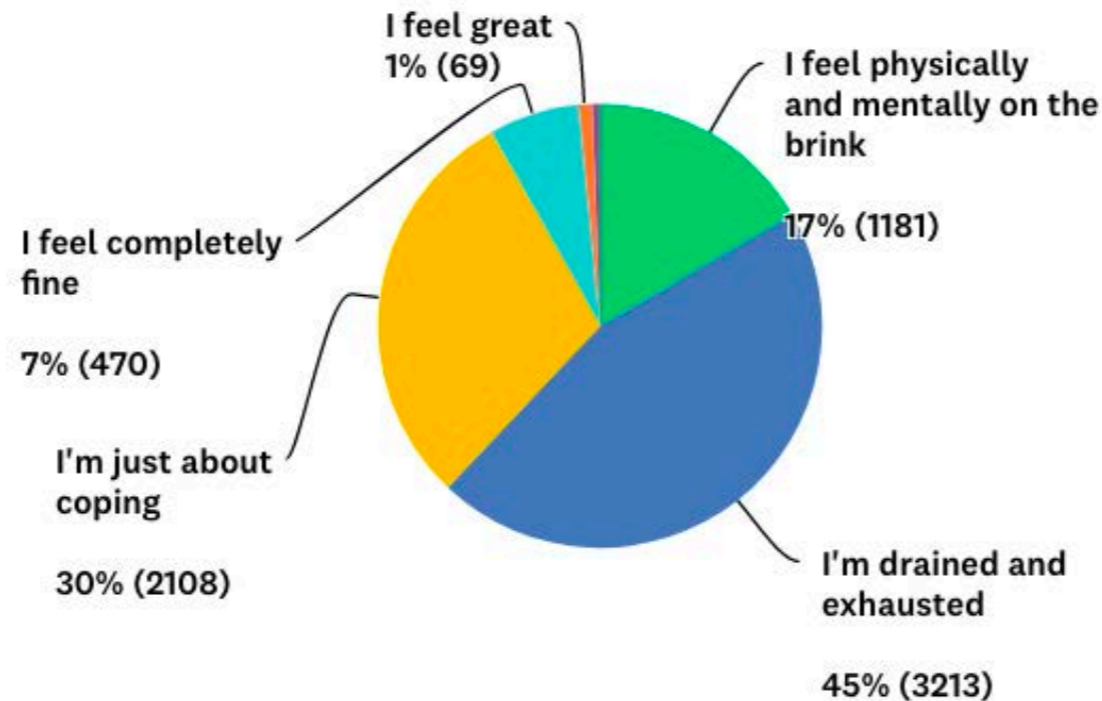
13th February 2021 at 8:00am

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Which of the following best describes your own health and wellbeing this term?

Answered: 7,081 Skipped: 1,337



Should every Colorado kid get a mental health exam after enduring coronavirus? It won't be easy.

Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet, a Commerce City Democrat, isn't sure how to accomplish the logistics, but she thinks her idea is a matter of school safety and statewide health



Erica Breunlin

5:05 AM MST on Feb 18, 2021



Parents and students pick up backpacks filled with school supplies at the central administration offices of Adams 12 Five Star Schools in Thornton on Friday, Aug. 21, 2020. (Kevin Mohatt, Special to The Colorado Sun)



“Things are not getting worse, they are getting uncovered. We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil.”

adrienne maree brown



Life & Arts

+ Add to myFT

Arundhati Roy: 'The pandemic is a portal' | Free to read

The novelist on how coronavirus threatens India — and what the country, and the world, should do next



“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”



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"The most important lesson from 2020 is the reminder that deep and powerful learning only happens when it's relevant, real-world, collaborative, driven by inquiry and passion, and shared transparently."

9 BIG Questions Ebook



Mark Ulfers	Mel Taylor	Sonia Keller	Will Richardson wil...	Katie Koenig	Rebecca Juras	Rick Weinland
Sarah Putnam	Sean Goudie	Joshua Garrett	Kevin Bartlett	Ted Faunce	Sherry Miller	Kimberley Black
Jen Tickle	Richard Boerner	863836	waynerutherford	Larry Mcllvain	Dana Watts	Bridget
Adrian Leece	Shaysann Kaun CNG	Jan Humpleby	Mary Jeanne Farris	Sonia Bustamante	Peter Burnside	TLoughrin
Jane Andrews	Debbie Downes	Tim Carr	Evelyne Estey	Joseph Levno - KC...	suzanne	DJ Condon
gerri-annfriedman	Sarah Fleming	Joanne Mallery	The Jane Group	Kathryn Dillette	Liz Head	Kevin Glass
Universal America...	Camille Du Aime	Michael Thompson	Marie Jean Baptiste	Paola Torres de Pe...	Kili Lay	Bonnie Ricci

1/3

1/3



IF
YOU
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ANOTHER
ONE





THE AAIE NEW NEW SCHOOL PROJECT

ADAPTIVE CHANGE
COMMUNITY
LEARNING
CAPACITY
EQUITY
WELL-BEING
EVIDENCE





LEADING ON PRINCIPLE: A COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

**ADAPTIVE
CHANGE**



“WE USE FEARLESS INQUIRY TO CONTINUALLY INTERROGATE AND SHED EMBEDDED PRACTICE THAT DOES NOT AMPLIFY AND INSPIRE PROFOUND LEARNING THROUGHOUT OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.”

CAPACITY



“WE DEVELOP THE CAPACITY IN OUR PEOPLE TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS IN A TIME OF RAPID AND UNMITIGATED CHANGE.”

LEARNING



“WE ENSURE DYNAMIC, ENGAGING, IMPACTFUL, AND JOYFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OWNED AND DRIVEN BY LEARNERS.”

COMMUNITY



“WE CO-CREATE CARING, ENGAGED, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES, CLEARLY DEFINED BY A COMMON LEARNING LANGUAGE, AND A COMMITMENT TO SHARED LEARNING VALUES.”

WELL-BEING



“WE CO-CREATE A CULTURE THAT NURTURES THE INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS.”

EVIDENCE



“WE REJECT OVERDEPENDENCE ON NARROW METHODS OF ASSESSMENT. ALL LEARNERS AND SCHOOLS MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS USING RICH AND DIVERSE DATA AND METHODS.”

EQUITY



“WE COMMIT TO IDENTIFY, CONFRONT, AND DISMANTLE STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS OF INEQUITY, TO EXAMINE OUR PRIVILEGE, AND TAKE ACTIONS TO INCREASE JUSTICE AND ENSURE BELONGING.”



The problem with “normal.”





“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

George Orwell



So, what is “normal” in schools anyway?

NORMAL



So, what is “normal” in schools anyway? (Truthfully)

NORMAL



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- *an increasing illiteracy to recognize misinformation.**
- *self-worth as measured by numbers.**
- *power over as opposed to power with.**



So...

NORMAL



So...

NORMAL

...why do we want to go back to that?



9 BIG QUESTIONS SCHOOLS MUST ANSWER TO AVOID GOING "BACK TO NORMAL"

(*BECAUSE "NORMAL" WASN'T THAT GREAT TO BEGIN WITH)



BY WILL RICHARDSON AND HOMA TAVANGAR

CO-FOUNDERS OF THE BIG QUESTIONS INSTITUTE

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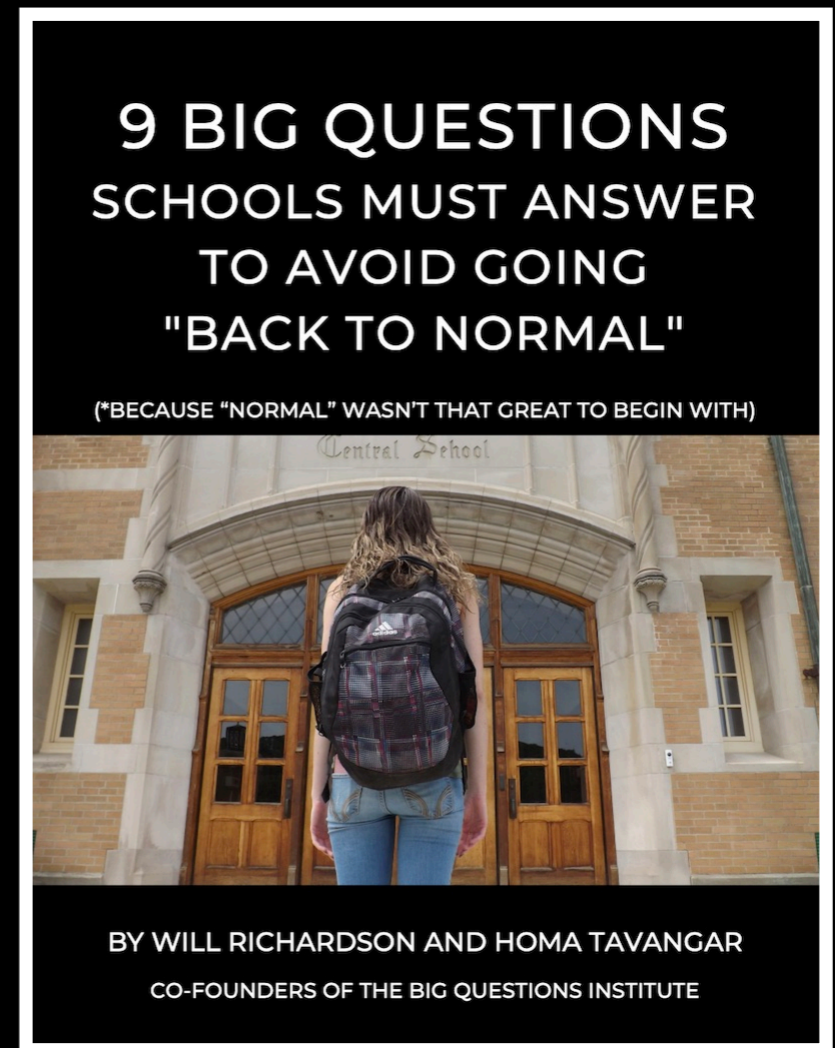


"Questions that have the power to make a difference are ones that engage people in an intimate way, confront them with their freedom, and invite them to co-create a future possibility."

Peter Block, Community



9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

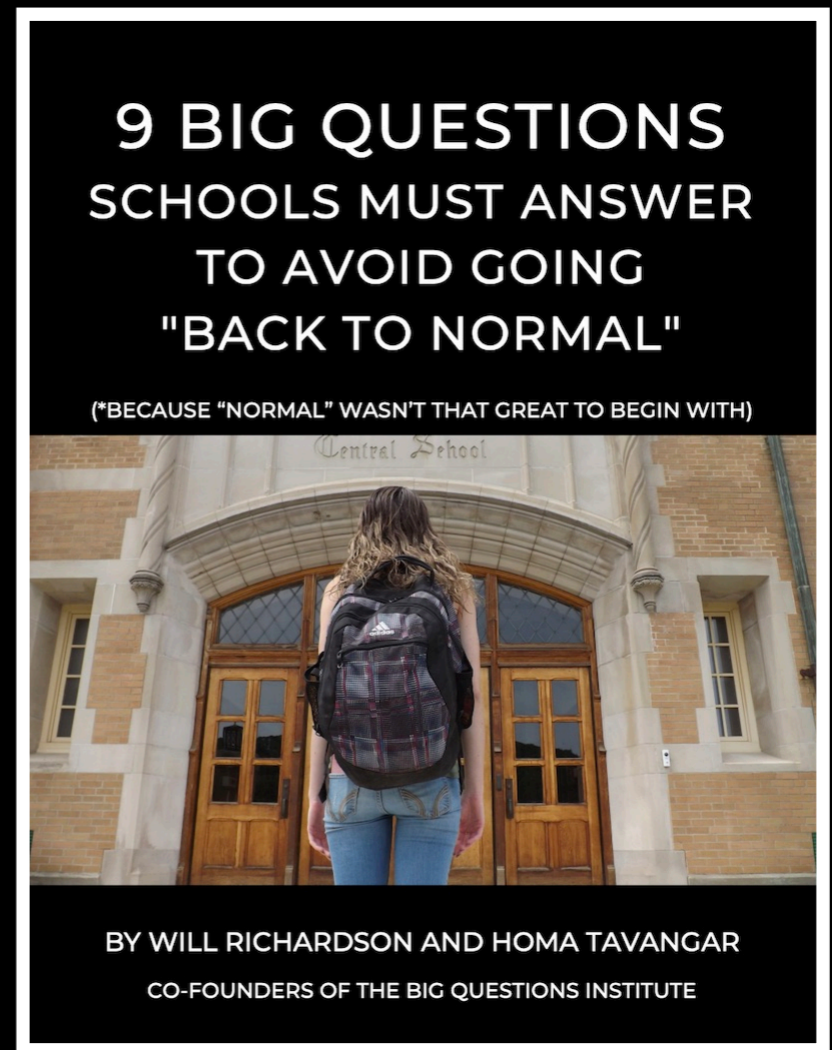


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9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?

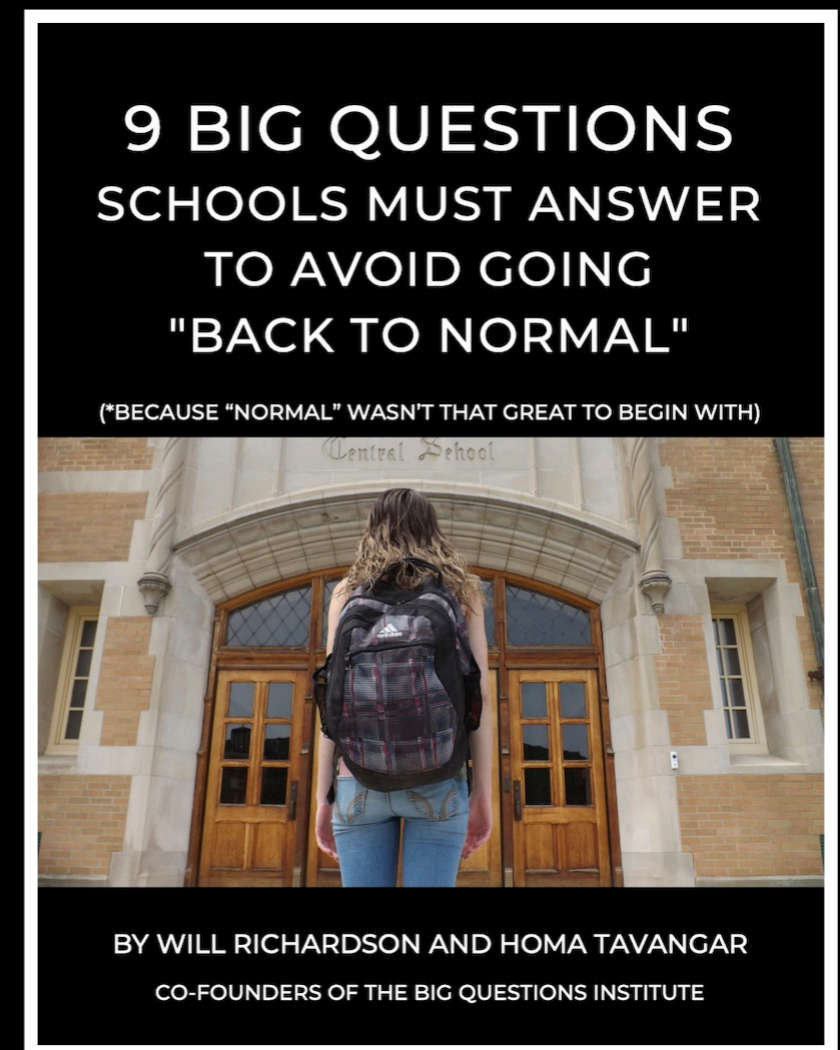


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9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
What is learning?



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Audit activities/questions:

- Convene a diverse working group to create and articulate a definition of learning.
- How do you personally learn most effectively and powerfully? What conditions exist when you are learning most effectively?
- Ask a random sampling of teachers, students, parents, and other members of the community to define learning. What do their answers tell you about coherence and clarity regarding learning? What are the implications for how students experience your school?
- Along with creating a clear and coherent definition of learning, make a list of the conditions that will foster that kind of learning. Are they consistently present in your school?
- Would your school community describe learning as an event or as an ongoing practice? What are the implications of each?



Towards a new normal:

- Instead of “students” and “teachers,” refer to everyone in the school as “learners.”
- Commit to filtering every decision through your definition. Ask regularly, “Does this promote more powerful learning experiences as we have defined them?”
- Compile stories of students and teachers who are learning by your definition inside and outside of school, and share them regularly with your community.
- Increase the freedom that students (and teachers) have to learn on their own terms wherever possible.
- Make sure that students understand how what’s being asked of them aligns with your definition of learning.

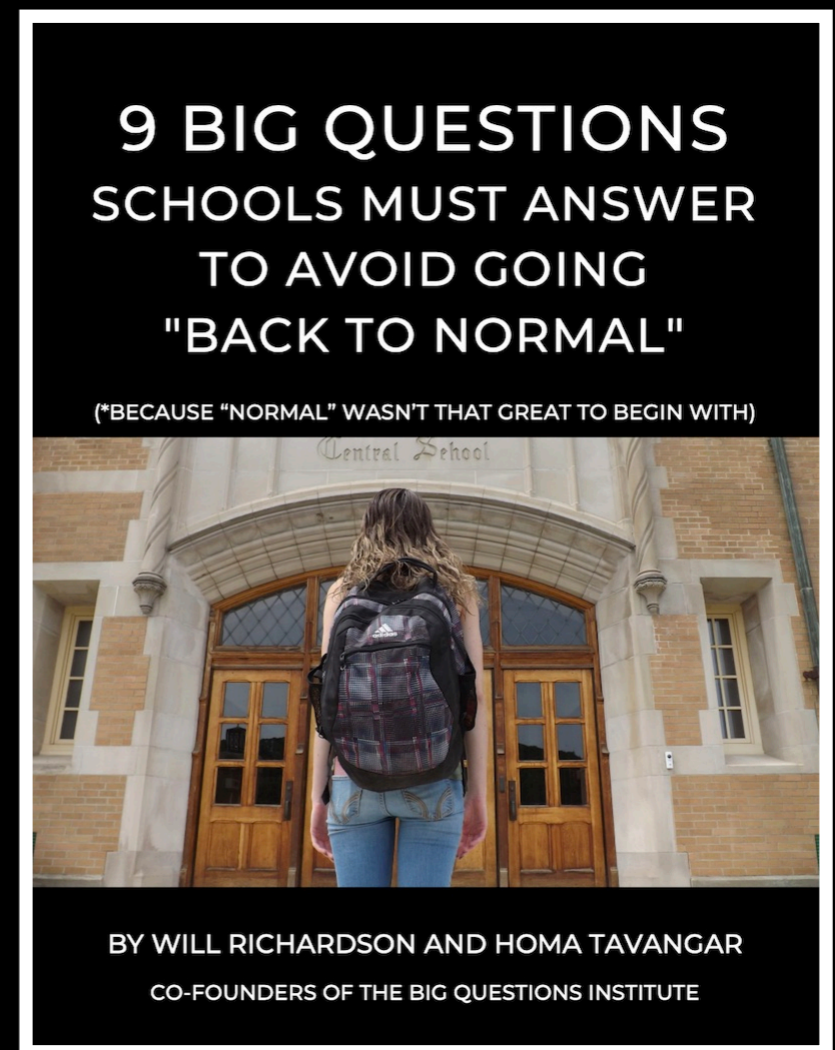


9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?

What is learning?

Where is the power?



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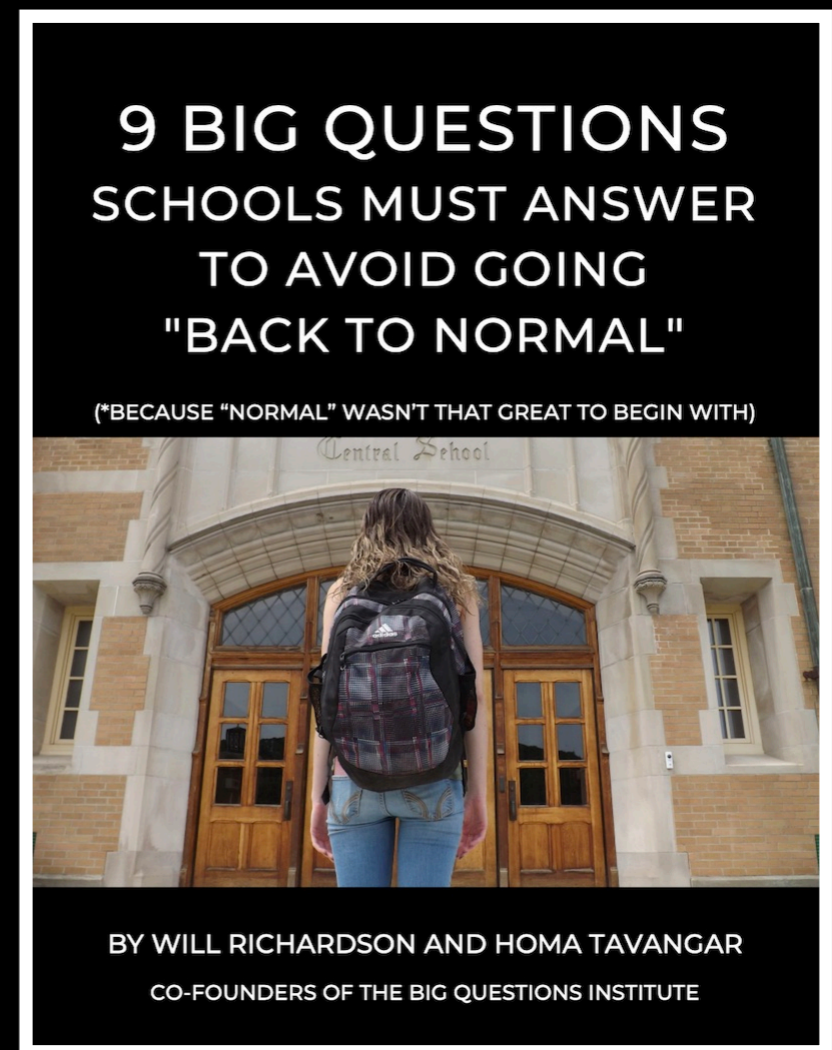
9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?

What is learning?

Where is the power?

Why do we _____?



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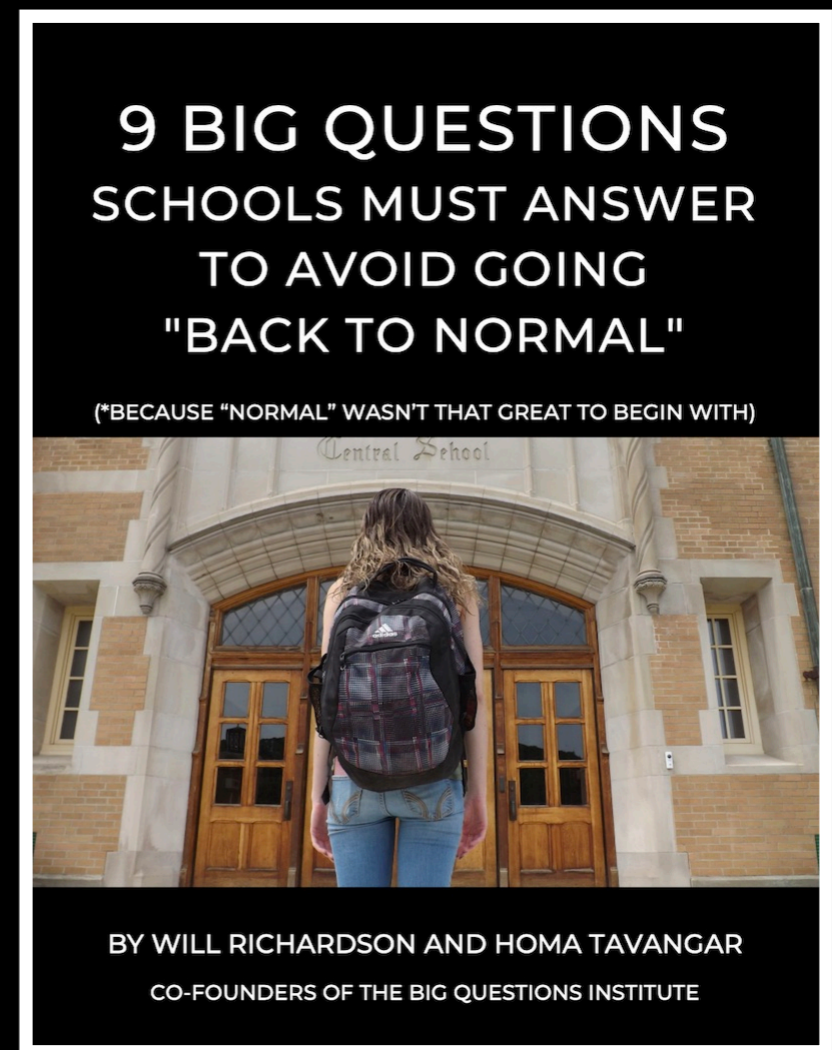
What is sacred?

What is learning?

Where is the power?

Why do we _____?

Who is unheard?



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Audit activities/questions:

- Review U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights data on discipline for your school district ([search here](#)) or comparable schools if you are not in the database. Note the disparities by race, gender, ability. What are the patterns?
- What is the demographic composition of students assigned to special education? To honors, advanced, and gifted programs? Does this reflect the community you serve?
- How are you nurturing relationships with underserved students, and seeing their actual stories as the data that drives decisions?
- Which parents are engaged in volunteering, fundraising, other roles? How might more parents feel welcomed to offer their service, knowledge, experience?
- Do hiring practices adequately recruit and retain diverse staff and faculty to reflect the community you serve?



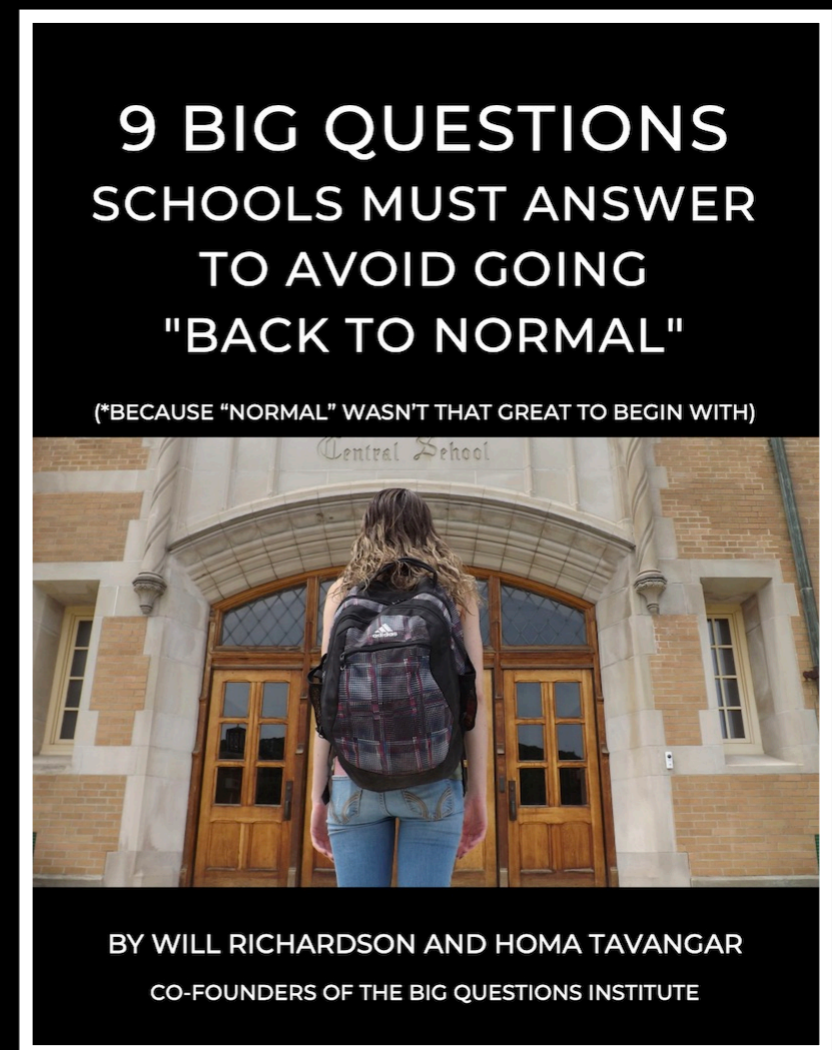
Towards a new normal:

- Consider what “decolonizing education” looks like in your specific role. Who are the experts you learn from? What sources of knowledge, traditions, practices need to be questioned, added or replaced?
- Identify and collaborate with champions who share your commitment to equitable and anti-racist education - whether they work in your building, or on the other side of the world.
- Identify units of study in each grade that uplift diverse authors, scientists, innovators and thought leaders. Whose work has been overlooked in your traditional canon?
- Expand your network of diverse professional relationships well before you need to fill a leadership role. If personal networks serve as a crucial pipeline for jobs, how can we expect robust, diverse recruitment without significant, upfront effort to nurture authentic relationships?
- Take personal responsibility to learn the pernicious effects of racism – historically, systemically, emotionally. If you are not Black, consider any discomfort you might feel as a healthy start to a vital learning and reconciliation process our students deserve.



9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
What is learning?
Where is the power?
Why do we _____?
Who is unheard?
Are we literate?

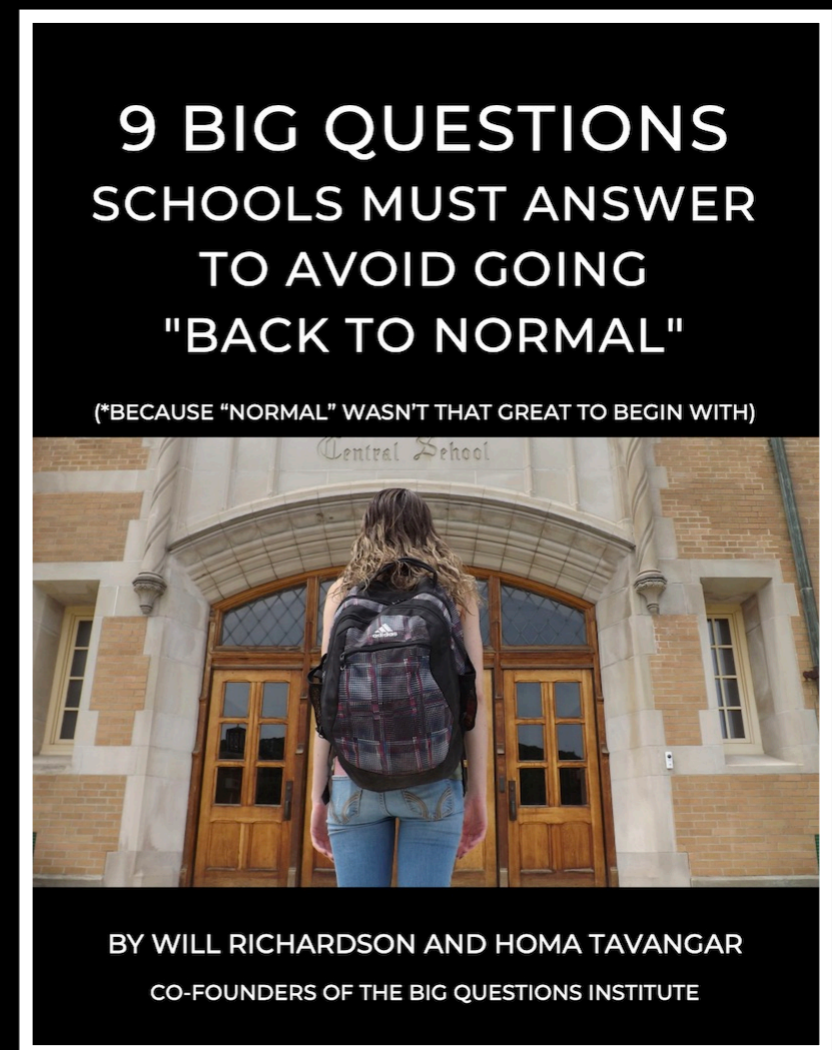


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9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
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Are we ok?



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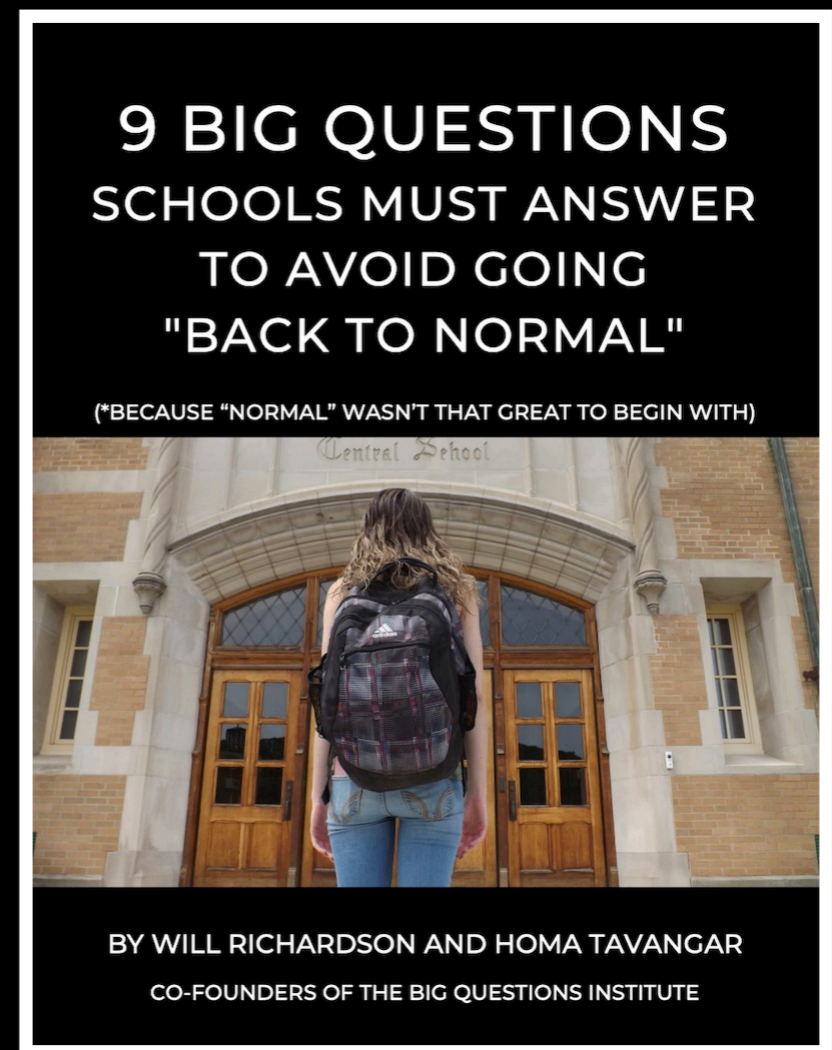
Why do we _____?

Who is unheard?

Are we literate?

Are we ok?

Are we connected?

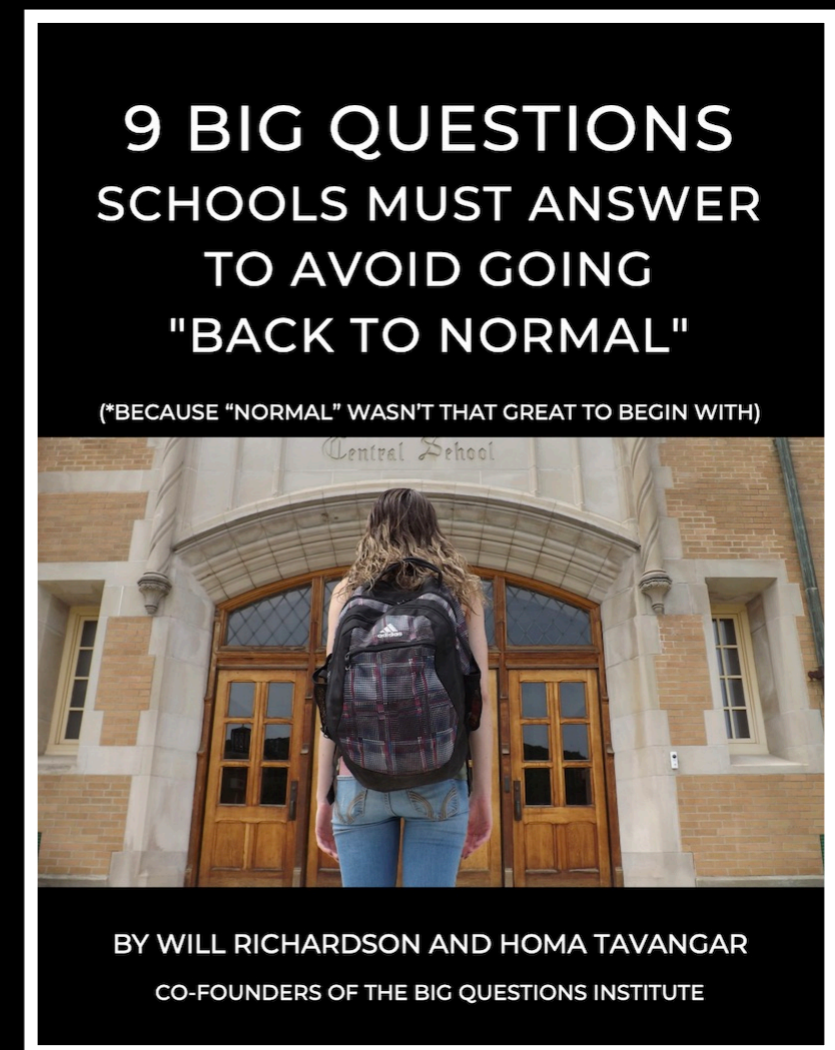


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9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
What is learning?
Where is the power?
Why do we _____?
Who is unheard?
Are we literate?
Are we ok?
Are we connected?
What's next?



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the_AES_Director
@AesDirector



Enjoying plowing through this great read by [@willrich45](#) and [@HomaTav](#) [@AESDelhi](#) has taken huge strides toward defining learning, the principles, the practices for our "learners". This work has been assisted by [@CGCKevin](#) and my amazing team of lead learners! [#aeslearning21](#)

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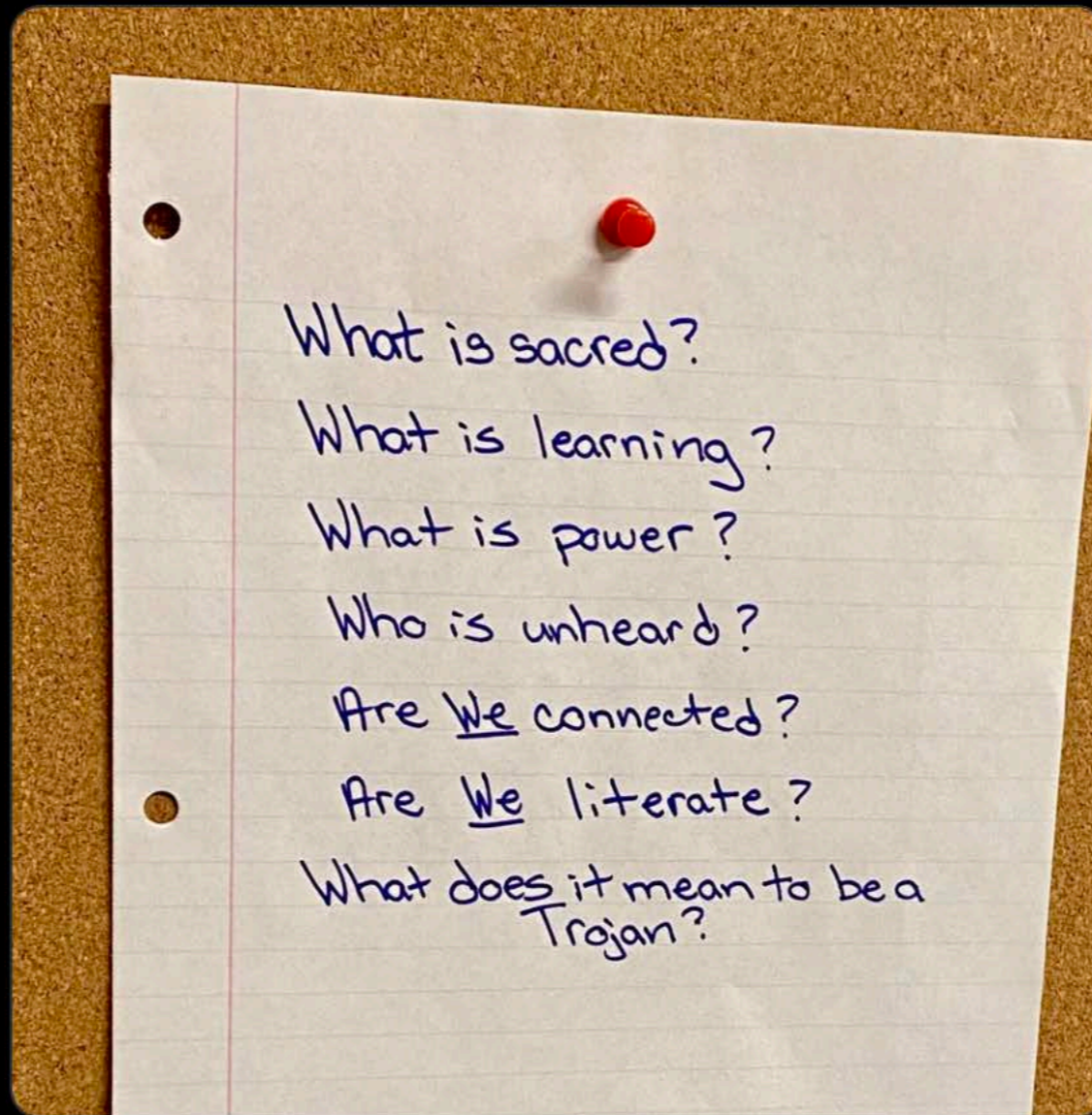




ATLIS
@theatlis

...

BIG QUESTIONS: Found on the bulletin board of #indyschool tech leader @DonnaWeth -- look familiar, @willrich45 and @homatav? We can't wait for your keynotes at the #ATLISundaunted 2021 Annual Conference. The #ATLIS community is ready to learn from you. theatlis.org/annual-confere...



1 Retweet 1 Quote Tweet 5 Likes



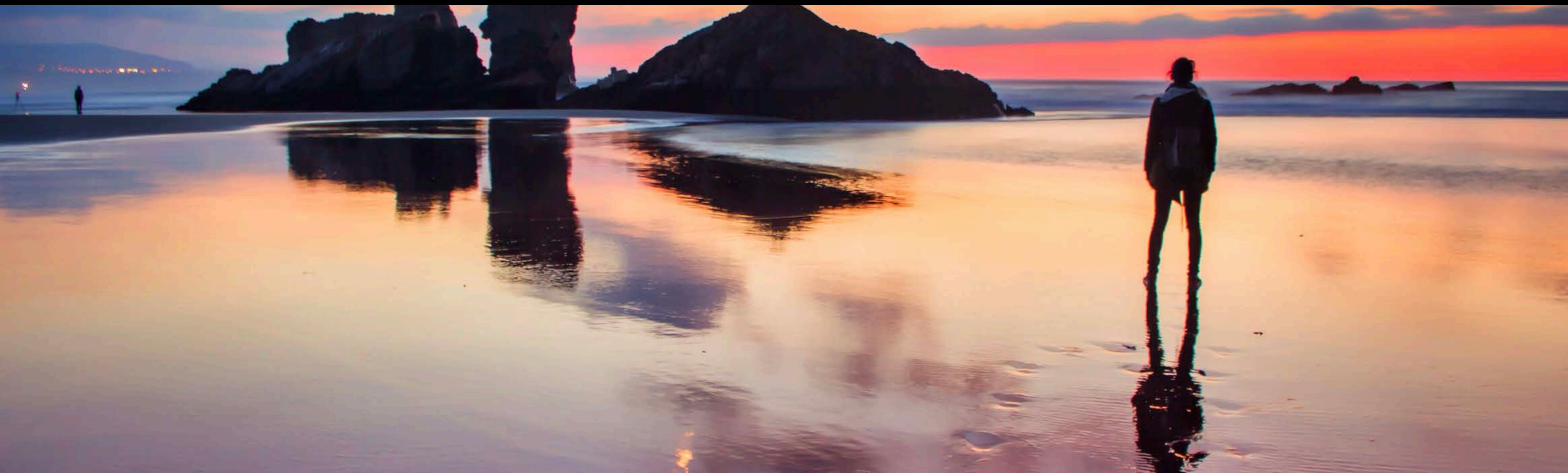
A framework for moving forward from this moment.



The New 3Rs for Educational Leaders



Step 1: Reflect (Past)



Step 2: Reset (Present)



Step 3: Reinvent (Future)



F E A R L E S S I N Q U I R Y

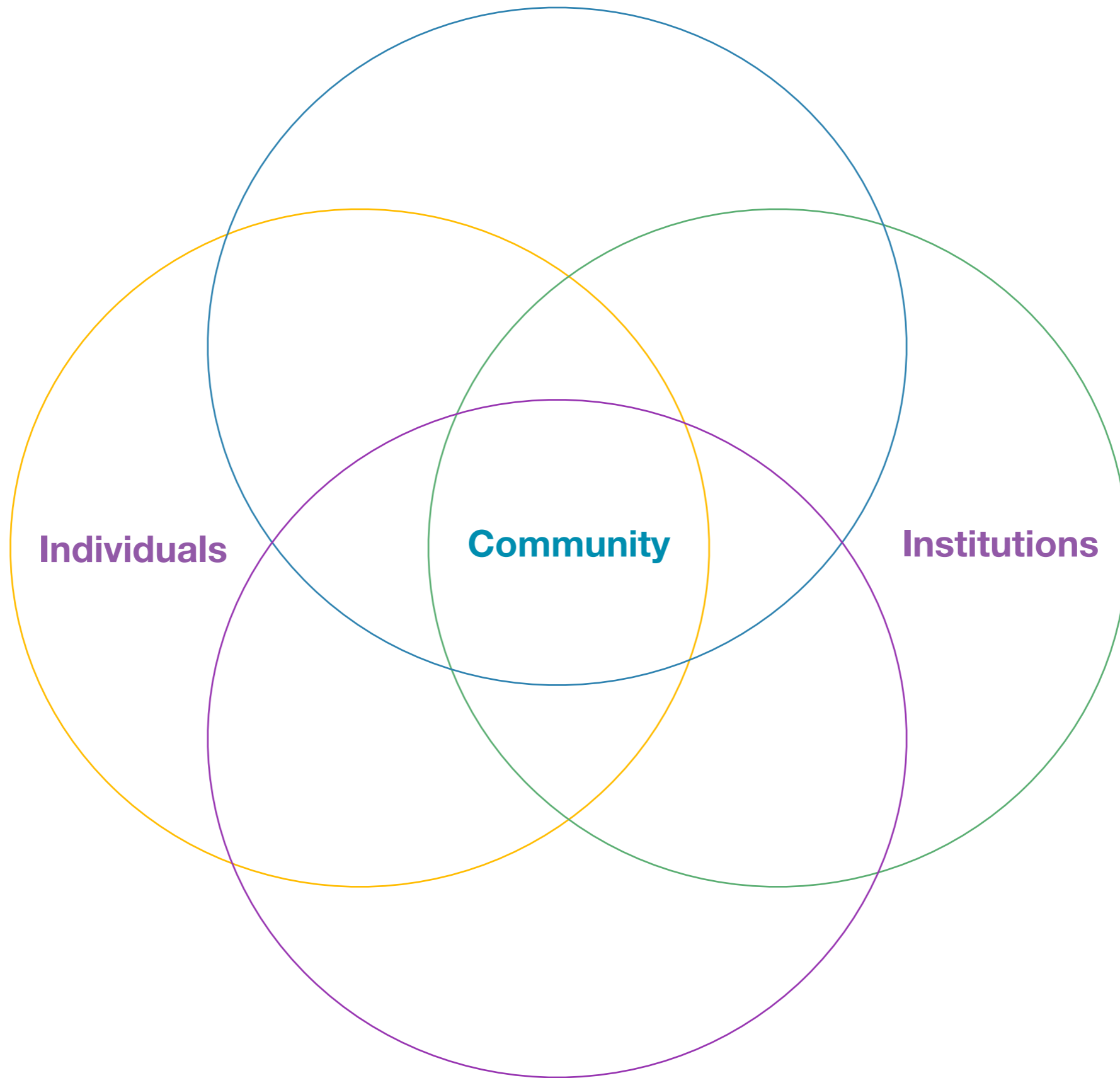
P E R S O N A L G R O W T H

C U L T U R A L C H A N G E



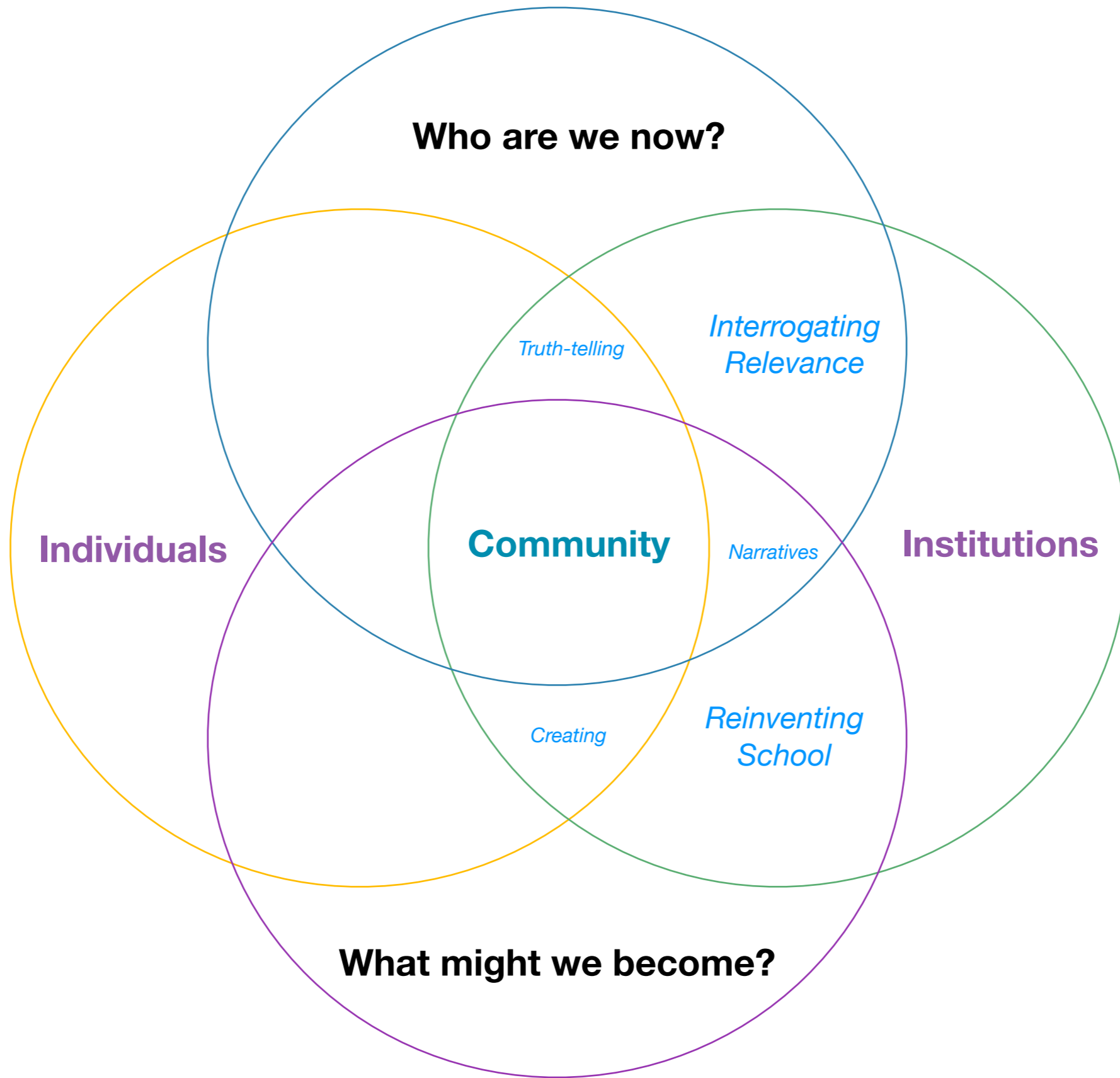
C O N T I N U O U S L E A R N I N G











F E A R L E S S I N Q U I R Y

P E R S O N A L G R O W T H

C U L T U R A L C H A N G E



C O N T I N U O U S L E A R N I N G



The Importance of Community



F E A R L E S S I N Q U I R Y

P E R S O N A L G R O W T H

C U L T U R A L C H A N G E

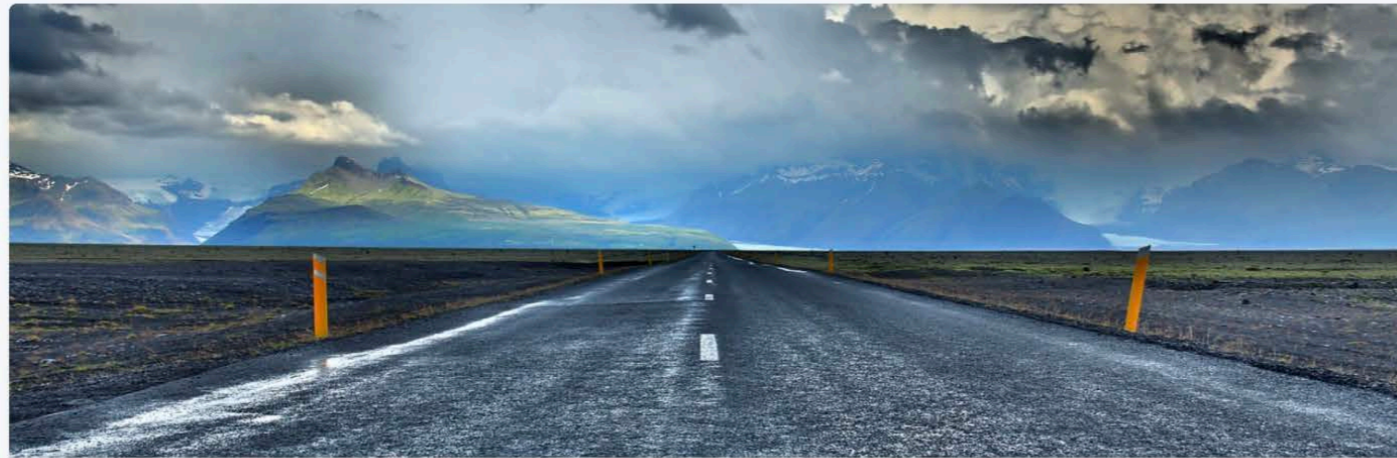


C O N T I N U O U S L E A R N I N G



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 - 📢 Events / Announcements
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 - 📖 9 BIG Questions EBook
 - 🔒 User Guide (Coming Soon!)
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We're on a Journey!

This is a moment that requires deep, fearless inquiry into the systems and practices of schools who are facing an increasingly uncertain future in which to educate our kids. We are a reflective, respectful, forward-thinking community of global educators who are willing to "go there" and discuss the difficult questions around our value and our relevance in a vastly changed world. [We invite you to join us on this journey!](#)

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Honing in on what is causing change in our schools
- Will Richardson
Schools Were Not Built for Learning
- Steve Shapiro
Greetings from Columbus, OH





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