

THE LONG NOW of education NOW

OAK 02026



THE RECAP

JUNE 25 -26, 2026

Hosted by
the Collaboratory at Head-Royce School



HEAD-ROYCE
SCHOOL

OVERVIEW OF GOALS

The Long Now of Education 02026 (LNE02026) was hosted by equity designer and educator David H. Clifford at the Collaboratory at Head-Royce School in Oakland, California. Over two days, twenty-four people brought together diverse lived experiences, generations, fields, and forms of expertise. We gathered to meet with intimacy, curiosity, courage, and care to explore one shared question:

How might we co-create dignity into everyday behaviors and structures, and shape the future of learning, now?

We practiced the ways of relating that might make those futures possible, with three major goals:

- Move participants through an experience arc of *Mirror, Window, Threshold, and Through*, examining inherited “used futures.”
- Listen to young people as descendants of today’s design decisions.
- Imagine dignity-filled learning worlds in 2043, and translate those visions into worldbuilding prototypes that can be enacted tomorrow.



About the Long Now of Education

Launched in 2024, LNE is an emerging movement for transformation and a source of optimism. The overarching purpose is to catalyze transformative, not incremental, human-centered change in education. Convenings are co-designed to prioritize the participant experience, dignity, and action.

OVERVIEW OF AGENDA

Day 1 9:00 am - 4:30 pm

- 9:00 Welcome + Intro to Experience Arc + Relationship by Design
- 9:35 Co-design for Dignity and the Learning Conditions
- 10:15 Imagine an Embodied, Dignified Future in the year 2043
- 11:15 Notice, Reflect, See the System
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:45 OG AI + Think Pair Share
- 1:00 Empathy for the Future
- 1:45 Inquire + Define
- 3:00 Build: Talisman-making for the Future
- 4:15 Notice and Reflect, Closing
- 4:30 Break, Then Dinner

Day 2 9:00 am - 3:45 pm

- 9:00 Warm Re-entry with Reintroductions
- 9:45 Prototype: Worldbuilding the Future
- 10:45 Signals of Dignity PAUSE in Our Worldbuilding
- 11:15 Feedback + Iterate Worldbuilding the Future
- 12:15 Lunch
- 1:00 Artifact Share
- 1:15 Full Space Share Worldbuilding
- 2:15 Inquire + Imagine + Try
- 3:00 Closing Circle + Pinning Ceremony
- 3:45 End

THE LONG NOW OF EDUCATION 02026 EXPERIENCE - CO-CREATING THE SPACE



Before asking participants to imagine a more dignified future, they entered a space already practicing one in the present.

We set a banquet-style table as an act of radical hospitality. Each artifact, action, smell, and sound was intended to signal:

We anticipated you.
You belong here.
Your presence matters.

Each place greeted an individual with a personalized placemat that also served as a map and toolkit for the two-day journey, along with a laser-engraved journal, a customized Liberatory Design framework deck, and a thrifted coffee mug (to challenge single-use culture). Small signals of care, attention, and co-design possibility.

Guided by Shalini Agrawal's Love Space practice, the group was invited to co-design the physical and relational conditions it needed to learn, imagine, and build together.

Participants moved furniture, examined how the room held power, and transformed one area into a communal gathering place. Standing in a circle without a front or back, everyone could see and be seen.

The room began to belong to everyone, not just the hosting facilitators.

“Creating and being in a loving space is a prerequisite for opening up our internal selves to feel more alive—to learn, share, and commune with others.”
—Victor Cary

THE LONG NOW OF EDUCATION 02026 EXPERIENCE INTENTIONAL DESIGN



The *Mirror, Window, Threshold, and Through* experience arc was punctuated by **intentional pauses** to slow urgency culture, listen to the body and each other, remember our ancestors, attend to our descendants, and reenter the work with intentional care.

We moved through activities including:

- Embodied liberatory futures
- Used futures inquiry
- Empathy with young people
- Future feels synthesis
- Worldbuilding
- Copper talisman-making, and
- Behavioral bridge experiments.

Together, these experiences formed a choreography of heads, hearts, and bodies. The deliberately designed experiences mattered. So did the laughter, meals, ambiguity, breaks, and conversations between.

What emerged was a shared orientation:

- Trust is infrastructure.
- Dignity is practice.
- Relationship is design material.
- Liberatory futures come alive in small, repeated behaviors.

The prototypes revealed that **more liberatory futures begin with who is invited, believed, and trusted** to make mistakes, whose knowledge counts, who shares power, and how people are cared for in the ordinary moments of learning.

The gathering also surfaced an important tension in our own design. Listening to young people is not the same as sharing power with them. Future gatherings must invite young people not only as people to empathize with, but **as sustained co-designers.**



EMERGING IDEAS AND THROUGH-LINES

Across the prototype share-outs participants moved past designing activities, tools, or programs and into a deeper question:

What would it take for dignity to become real in the everyday behaviors, spaces, rituals, relationships, and power arrangements of learning?

The prototypes that emerged all pushed against the same inherited pattern: school as a place where adults hold the knowledge, define the future, and manage the risk, **while young people are asked to comply, perform, or wait until later to become fully human.**

Ideas for designing with dignity conditions include moving from:

- Young people as future adults to young people as full humans now.
- Adult expertise to shared knowing.
- Polished performance to first draft culture.
- Compliance to trust.
- Dignity for adults as a condition for dignity for students.
- Objects, rituals, and spaces as bearing futures.
- Designing for young people to designing with them.

The scale of these ideas is intentionally small. **Small practices are how systems rehearse the future.**



“I came without expectations. I leave my heart full.”
—Imène Ghernati



PROTOTYPES

The ideas on the previous page did not stay abstract for long. Each group moved from a single empathy interview, a story a young person told them, into a specific practice they are willing to try, fail at, and revise. What follows are eight prototypes born directly out of the 02026 conversations.

1

Dignifying Recess: Listening to Noon Supervisors and Reimagining Play

Grounded in one participant's work across 76 Oakland Unified schools, this prototype starts from a hard truth about the adults closest to children's play: noon supervisors, yard duty staff, and recess coaches are asked to create joy and safety every day with no professional development and low pay. The group built the idea backward, starting with the embodied, joyful experience they want students to have at recess, then asking what adults need to experience, receive, and believe in order to make that possible.

What they're trying: empathy interviews with noon supervisors designed to feel playful and embodied rather than extractive, potentially expanding to include principals and students.

2

Schools of the Future: A Ha Framework Strand for Radical Redesign in Hawai'i

This prototype connects the idea of moving away from polished performance culture with the Ha framework - breath of life and embodiment. The presenter, who helps organize Hawai'i's Schools of the Future conference, a statewide gathering of up to 2,000 teachers now in its 15th year, named a growing concern: the conference has drifted from schools of the future toward schools of the present, with educators sharing polished stories rather than pushing into new territory.

What they're trying: a proposed new conference strand where educators bring unfinished work instead of finished wins, treating their session as a first draft that the community helps build rather than a showcase to applaud.

PROTOTYPES

3 **Trust, Mistakes, Feedback, and Shared Power**

Built from a conversation with a 16-year-old whose stories included one about a bathroom redesigned near their classrooms only after students quietly complained among themselves for a long time before anyone spoke up. Their story showed how much responsibility a student has to feel before they'll offer feedback at all.

What they're trying: proactively inviting student feedback in small, warm circles rather than waiting for complaints to build, using personalized invitations rather than one-size-fits-all requests. The group named three elements they're designing across: space (incl. land, which they described as having its own voice), people (incl. more-than-human relationships), and interactions (games, closeness, and risk-taking that let the group, rather than the individual, hold mistakes).

4 **College Counseling as Trust Building: Helping Students Trust Their Ability to Cope**

A college counselor named the quiet, normalized harm in their own field: packaging a student into an efficiently digestible application to determine whether they're a good fit. Their reframe: if adults trust students, it helps students trust themselves, and specifically trust their own ability to cope when things don't go as planned. They see this as the real work behind the college process.

What they're trying: "unreasonable hospitality" in the first meeting. Students already fill out a low-stakes questionnaire before their first sit-down (favorite snack, music, a photo that resonates). They're considering going further: asking a student to pull up a video of themselves playing soccer, or, since they're a dancer themselves, inviting students who dance to take a short dance break in their office. The goal is to interrupt the high-stakes "college admissions cloud" long enough for a student to feel known before feeling evaluated.

PROTOTYPES

5 Safety, Dignity, and Opening the Aperture of Possibility

One participant, transitioning into a new role at Head-Royce without a classroom or traditional advisory, was struck by a student who equated being human with being an adult. He spoke with real joy about classes where he could ask philosophical questions and debate, but his sense of future possibility visibly narrowed when asked about what came next. The presenter's theory: safety (emotional, mental, social, family approval, freedom to fail) opens the aperture of possibility, and its absence closes it.

What they're trying: she mapped her areas of influence, spaces, processes, and relationships, and noticed her new office sits along a hallway students traffic on their way to engineering class, making it a natural hub for connection. Her intention: help young people feel empowered to envision and pursue possibilities by building an environment where they can express themselves, be seen without judgment, and with trust.

6 Ninth Grade Storytelling and Iteration Camp

An idea was born of the belief that high school culture has to start in ninth grade, not senior year, and was drawn directly from a student who described a summer-camp-like program at his school as his favorite time of year precisely because it let him take off the mask he wears the rest of the school year. The presenter had had previously built a youth entrepreneurship program in Hawai'i that mixed public, private, charter, and homeschool students in teams of four, guided by outside mentors, ending in a celebration of both what they built and how they iterated to get there, deliberately not styled as a pitch contest.

What they're trying: a ninth-grade launch camp built on storytelling, documentation, and iteration, with teachers going through the identical experience side-by-side with students rather than being trained separately, on the theory that shared vulnerability changes the power dynamic of professional development itself.

PROTOTYPES

7 **Know & Tell: Children as Knowledge Holders from the Beginning**

A dignity-centered riff on show and tell, built on the premise that children carry knowledge, memory, and lineage from birth, not from the moment school starts teaching them. The group drew a link to a colleague's reminder that knowledge begins at zero to five, an age range schools rarely treat as a source of legitimate wisdom, and to a colleague's own memory of bringing an object into show and tell as a young child and, in that moment, owning a piece of the room's knowledge.

What they're trying: a recurring ritual, starting as young as age two, where a child brings an object and shares what it means to them, building a classroom archive over the course of a year that a teacher can draw on to understand a class's collective knowledge from day one. The group also used a concrete example to describe the spirit of the practice: instead of reaching for a phone to answer "what's the weather today," the ritual starts by asking what the room already senses and knows together. They named the everyday habit of calling a space "kid-friendly" as a quiet tell of the problem they're working against - spaces as adult-default and children as an accommodation - when the deeper claim is that every space already belongs to children as fully human from day one.

8 **Community Ritual as Design Artifact: Attaya Tea**

Not a formal share-out, but a hosting practice that ran alongside the whole gathering. One participant, a former metal shop teacher, learned to make Senegalese attaya tea, loaded with caffeine and sugar, from a friend and former colleague who taught wood shop. He spent the session quietly brewing and pouring cups for anyone willing to take one.

This reminds us that prototypes don't always have to be programs.

Sometimes the prototype is a ritual, an object, or a repeated gesture of hospitality.

RECOMMENDED AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS FOR PARTICIPANTS



Leverage the initial experience to nurture our emerging professional learning community through ongoing communication and idea sharing sessions.

Put your Long Now innovative idea into practice. Modify it based on feedback and share your journey with us and others.

Use or adapt some of our activities to support futures thinking within your organization.

Collaborate with one of us to design and facilitate a futures workshop for your organization or community.

Host a Long Now of Education gathering to help build the larger movement and drive powerful change.

Make your learning and work public - gather feedback to keep your learning and practice human-centered.

Seek out and exchange new resources - books, articles, websites, podcasts, gatherings from which we can all learn.

Nurture your own futures orientation with community-connected practice and continued learning.



The future cannot be controlled or predicted, but it can be envisioned and brought lovingly into being.

Donella Meadows

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

To expand our aperture of possibility in futures work, we must question inherited assumptions, develop new ways of being, and build our capacity to navigate complexity. Here are three books you might enjoy in your efforts:

- ***Things Become Other Things*** by Craig Mod cultivates attentiveness and observation on a 300 mile walk through Japan.
- ***The Score*** by philosopher C. Thi Nguyen reveals how games, systems, and incentives shape our thinking.
- Vanessa Machado de Oliveira's ***Hospicing Modernity and Outgrowing Modernity*** invite us to move beyond used futures and status quo thinking toward more pluralistic and regenerative futures.



2027
Locations
Coming
Soon!

STEWARDS OF THE LONG NOW OF EDUCATION

Deborah Parizek: An experienced nonprofit leader and educator, Deborah is widely known for cultivating the conversations, empathy, and capacity critical to addressing complex challenges. She leads Henry Ford Learning Institute's vision, strategy, and work to advance excellence in education for all by developing dynamic learning environments; new models for teaching, learning and leading, all with HFLI's signature Deeper Learning by Doing^(R) engagement framework; and attention to participants' wellness through an intentional focus on Shared Purpose, Shared Work and Shared Joy. The Long Now of Education is a project incubated by HFLI.



Tom Thorpe: Tom coaches executives, founders, and leadership teams at pivotal moments, from identifying root causes and shaping innovative ideas to putting strategic plans into action. Combining storytelling, human-centered design, and iterative testing, he helps leaders turn real-world results into discoveries rather than verdicts. Over 27 years, Tom has built, led, and scaled mission-driven programs. He spent 13 years at Colorado Academy before co-founding and directing the REDI Lab, growing it from a campus prototype into a center serving hundreds of students. His work reflects two tenets: impasse is not an option, and absorb the risk, give away the credit.



STEWARDS OF THE LONG NOW OF EDUCATION



Paul Kim: During his career, Paul has taught everything from kindergarten to college, receiving both teaching and coaching honors along the way. Over the years, Paul has used design thinking to transform his teaching practice and various school-wide programs. He is currently the program administrator for Next Arvada, a GED+ program within the Zero Dropouts network. Most recently, Paul worked as a researcher and writer for Transcend Education and as a member of the collaborative Design for Emergence. He co-founded a children's book publishing company with former students and has been involved in regional and national equity initiatives.



David H. Clifford: Rooted in love, David challenges white dominant culture in schools as a designer, shop teacher, leadership coach, benevolent agitator, and catalyst for equity-centered creative courage. He serves as Director of Design + Making at Head-Royce School's Collaboratory, an ecosystem where imagining, designing, and making are acts of care for ourselves, our communities, and our shared planet. David is also a co-creator of Liberatory Design, Redesigning White Dominant Culture, Equity Design Collaborative, design school x, and East Bay School for Boys.