IRA SOCOL | PAM MORAN | CHAD RATLIFF

TIMELESS LEARNING

How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-Based Thinking Change Schools

WILEY

"An ambitious book! The authors aim to show reformers at all levels of schooling what and how we could and should respond to the demand that 'all children' succeed. Each chapter is filled with practical accounts of real life stories of teachers and students who aren't willing to comply and give up. Instead, the narrative of *Timeless Learning* demonstrates the power of democratized and collaborative progressive education designed for contemporary learners."

– Deb Meier, public school teacher for half a century,
author of *Schools Belong to You and Me*

"Pam, Chad, and Ira have written a manifesto; they are not spouting blanket statements but rather revealing the intricate facets enmeshed in learning, teaching, and living. They are big dreamers and just as big doers, and their ideas and hopes are built from real experiences in walking the halls, breaking down walls, and hearing students and teachers alike. I've had the incredible fortune to spend time in conversation with these three, and this book is the next best thing."

– Stephanie Chang, Director of Educational
Programs, Maker Ed

"A thought-provoking and insightful read highlighting the rapidly shifting landscape of public education and the fixes that we so urgently need in our public schools. Moran, Ratliff, and Socol have crafted a thorough and detailed walkthrough of how one of Virginia's leading school districts has charged full-speed into the progressive era of education. This book serves as an excellent reminder of how far we've come from the comparatively primitive classrooms of the industrial era and gives a front-row seat to how America's public schools are embracing a new world of pedagogical possibility, and rethinking what it means to learn."

– Julian Waters, youth educational
provocateur and aspiring policy maker

"Schools do not transform. School administrators, teachers, and staff have to personally transform in order to cocreate individualized, meaningful learning journeys with every student. The authors with radical transparency share such a journey – a 'learn by doing' journey of overcoming financial restraints, physical space, fears of the unknown, and resistance to change by inspiring, trusting, and enabling teachers and students to cocreate the learning that will better prepare students for the Smart Machine Age. This book will capture your mind and your heart; it is an inspiring and practical read!"

– Ed Hess, coauthor of *Humility Is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age*, Professor of Business Administration and Batten Executive-in-Residence, UVA Darden School of Business

"Maker Learning is about providing students with opportunities to explore ideas that are personal to them. We give them a voice when we allow them to identify and create solutions to problems that are pertinent to their lives. Pam, Chad, and Ira have worked with the members of their community to create schools that support processes and spaces that provide fluidity in addressing the learning needs and desires of all students, and adults. Backed by a body of knowledge and direct experience, the words on the pages of this book will be an inspiration, as they provide ideas for establishing learning constructs for the learners of today and the future."

– Lakeysha Washington, Principal, Benjamin O. Davis Middle School, Compton, CA

"A must-read book by three of America's leading public school educators. Socol, Moran, and Ratliff paint a picture of what learning must and can look like in the twenty-first century, and how

to transform outdated schools into places of powerful student-centered engagement and learning. An inspiring, rich narrative from the front lines of K–12 education. Bottom line: If they can do it, so can you!"

– Grant Lichtman, author of #EdJourney: A Roadmap to the Future of Education and Moving the Rock: Seven Levers WE Can Press to Transform Education

"This book is the enactment of modern-day progressive education in Virginia and the shining example of how school and district leaders are an essential factor in the development of systems and dispositions that support youth and adults in becoming their best selves. It should be required reading for any educator interested in empowering teachers and students and investing in the future of public education. After years in the classroom, in schools, and in leading school districts, these exceptional educators share their blueprint for designing learning spaces for youth to own their learning and cocreate knowledge with teachers. At the heart of this blueprint is the belief that teachers and students should cocreate learning environments that are meaningful for them."

– Jessica Parker, Director of Teaching and Learning, the Exploratorium

"The single most important challenge our country faces is how to transform existing schools to prepare children for their futures. This remarkable team has done exactly that, advancing learning outcomes for kids in every school in a district that reflects the full spectrum of socioeconomic circumstances. Read this book and treasure it for the insights and pragmatic advice it provides!"

– Ted Dintersmith, author of *What School Could Be* and executive producer of *Most Likely to Succeed*

"Contemplating the visionary tool kit in *Timeless Learning*, one is shaken up, the mind is opened, and we are offered an open space to prepare for the critical evolutionary leap our schools must make. The authors provide an illuminating X-ray-like analysis of what has gone before, where past academic trails have led, and their clearing away and innovating forward in confidence breaks down walls to construct new open spaces, foster real world learning and promote an education our learners want and will need underpinned by a deep, palpable cherishing of *all* our children. A *must-read* tool kit for twenty-first-century learners of all ages."

– John Hunter, CEO, World Peace Game Foundation

"To prepare students for a bold new world we need to fundamentally rethink learning. The authors not only provide a compelling case for needed changes to the function of schools but they all have played an integral part in implementing transformative practices at the classroom, building, and district level. If you are interested in how to put theory into practice, then this book is for you."

– Eric Sheninger, Google Certified Innovator and Adobe Education Leader, and Thomas C. Murray, Director of Innovation, Future Ready Schools

"The authors challenge constraints often cited as barriers to contemporary progressive education. In their work to integrate innovative technologies, teaching practices, and learning environments they show how systems thinking and strategic design can lead to learning opportunities that were inconceivable a decade ago."

– Richard Culatta, Chief Executive Officer, ISTE

Timeless Learning

HOW IMAGINATION, OBSERVATION, AND ZERO-BASED THINKING CHANGE SCHOOLS

Ira Socol
Pam Moran
Chad Ratliff

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Pedagogy 101

by Alan Shapiro

Suited (I thought) and tied,

earnest as the day was very long,

I taught them when to be still,

why they needed to listen,

where Columbus was born,

how to answer textbook questions

and what the similarity was

between my decrees and their grades.

Sitting at bolted desks

while flies rambled on tall windows

they taught me when to shut my mouth,

why I needed to hear,

where they were coming from,

how to question textbook answers,

and what the difference is

between schooling and education.

18 April 1999

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Acknowledgments

None of our work would be possible without our professional colleagues who have worked tirelessly to enable the open and authentic learning that liberates our students. They are teachers and principals, assistant and deputy superintendents, bus drivers and cafeteria staff, department directors and computer technicians, learning coaches and network engineers, custodians, and more.

We also have learned much from the children who inform us of what matters to them. We have learned the power of listening to their voices. Our kids tell us in every way that their relationships with teachers and their peers matter. They want learning that makes sense. And, they want to actively participate in learning experiences fueled by their questions, curiosities, and interests in and out of school.

The educators and learners of Albemarle County Public Schools have courageously taken risks, many over decades, to create pathways to timeless learning for the young people we serve. We never fail to notice the educators who collaborate and work tirelessly before, during, and after school to make sense of today's learners' needs. When everyone believes in their power to make a difference, it does. Education is about everything children see, hear, and experience, and they are indeed fortunate to be surrounded by fabulous educators in our district and beyond.

In addition, each of us owes deep debts to people who were transformative in our professional lives. We appreciate Professor Ed Hess of the Darden School of Business who has kept us focused on social-emotional competencies such as empathy and that how learners learn is core to preparing young people for life in today's world. And, to Ted Dintersmith for shining a light on the need for deep change in American education. We value that he has shared our work with communities across America.

Pam: I'm grateful to my career mentor, the late Dr. John English, who inspired, taught, and coached me to see children as the priority in every decision. He defined progressive education through his leadership. And also to former superintendent Kevin Castner who said in the face of No Child Left Behind, "We need to keep passion in our classrooms"; from that, Design 2004 was born giving life to our division's work to empower learners. I am so appreciative to my husband, Jon, and son, Jason, who have grown up with me in the world of education. They gave up family time every day so I could participate in a career to better the lives of children and the educators who serve them.

Chad: I would like to thank three mentor educators for believing in me and giving me opportunities that many in their positions wouldn't consider: Tom Fitzgibbons, for my first job in public education. Your professional mentorship changed the trajectory of my life. Spencer Chang, for teaching me the value of character and humility. You made space for the important things and remembered not to take the rest too seriously. Pam Moran, for your tireless dedication to the mission, your ability to draw out the best in those around you, and the patience and unconditional love that sometimes requires.

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Please connect with us on Twitter!

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Pam Moran @pammoran
Chad Ratliff @csratliff

Foreword

Children are, or should be, at the center of education because ultimately they are reason for the very existence of educational institutions. But unfortunately, children are too often forgotten in discussions about education. Adults involved in education too often don't see children. They see curricula. They see standards. They see test scores. They see timetables. They see technology. They see battles over funding policies. They see math and reading wars. They see fights over public schools. They see disputes about teacher unions. They see everything about the operation of schools except for the very reason for which schools exist: children.

Timeless Learning is a book that directs our attention to children. The authors implore us – everyone involved in education – to see children. They share their lessons about learning to "be much much better at seeing children."

When we are good at seeing children, we recognize that they are diverse. They arrive at our schools with different talents, passions, skills, knowledge, relationships, dispositions, attitudes, and experiences. Each and every child possesses a jagged profile of strengths and weakness. Each and every child has something that is worth celebrating and developing. Each and every child has a dream that is worth realizing. Each and every child has unique needs that we can help meet.

When we are good at seeing children, we understand that all children are first and foremost human beings before they are students. All children have the universal human right of self-determination. All children need respect, autonomy, to love and be loved, and opportunities to create value for others. All children deserve to be treated equally in schools as adults.

When we are good at seeing children, we accept that all children are natural-born learners, although they may be interested in or good at learning things that we may not value. All children are curious and creative. They want to explore, experiment, and express. They are naturally motivated to learn new things for genuine purposes. When they are not engaged in what we want to them to learn, we need to question ourselves rather than blame them.

When we are good at seeing children, we know that schools exist to serve the interests of children, not the other way around. Curricula exist to provide children opportunities to learn, not to limit their explorations. Standards exist to guide the development of learning opportunities for children, not to judge their worthiness. Tests and assessments exist to facilitate children's learning, not to shame and label them. As a result, we are never to allow children's learning to be dictated by curricula, standards, or tests.

Timeless Learning is a journal of three brave educators who embarked on a journey to learn to see children better. In this book, Ira Socol, Pam Moran and Chad Ratliff honestly document their exciting, exhilarating, and emotional journey to "a future destination in which all children will thrive in school because of their diverse interests, range of background experiences, and identities – not in spite of their differences." They see themselves as humble learners and fallible humans, so they don't hide their frustrations, their stumbles, or their struggles, nor do they hold back their happiness, joy, and excitement along the way.

In many ways, Pam, Ira, and Chad are ordinary people. They reflect on their own experiences as students and realize that they were drastically different. Each of them had their own good fortune and bad luck with their own schooling, just like everyone

else. What makes them extraordinary is that they took their reflections many steps further. When they became educators, they realized that they had the power to make changes, to make schools a better place for children like them. Then they went beyond the realization and took actions.

Their actions took place in an ordinary public school district, which suffers from the same suffocating test and accountability educational policies applied in all American schools. They faced the same challenges of inertia, resistance, and the legacy of an outdated education paradigm as change-seeking educators in schools all over the world do. They had the same concerns and anxiety as every change maker has: the lack of guaranteed success and acceptance of the planned changes. They understood the risks; they learned from others; they prepared themselves; and they took actions. They took "rapid, yet deeply considered actions to change the educational system we have inherited."

But the actions, they knew, were not a one-time fix that would solve all the problems once and for all. Instead, the actions – any actions for that matter – will solve some problems and create others. Thus once actions of change are taken, the change maker has embarked on a never-ending journey of change actions. The authors knew that their "desired state is a world of opportunity and success for every child, but the path to that desired state is a very long, very difficult climb."

Timeless Learning is not a cookbook, although it contains plenty of recipes for a stimulating meal. Nor is it a prescriptive roadmap, although it provides abundant tips about traversing the difficult terrain of educational transformation from experienced travelers. As I read it, this is a tale of morally driven individuals who want to right the wrongs in education that they experienced. They do not want to see more children suffer from schools that are ostensibly institutions to help them. More important, they want schools to see the children and serve them well.

This is a critical time for education. The human society is going through an episode of tumultuous changes. Political instability, widening economic gaps, environmental degradation,

rising racial tensions, growing nationalism, and rapid technological changes are all working together to affect the future world our children will occupy and we (at least some of us) will retire in. This future is extremely uncertain. It is impossible to get our children ready for a future so uncertain, thus the popular idea of readiness such as college and career readiness and future readiness is as absurd as it is popular. Our children cannot be ready to walk into the future premade for them. They have to create this future. Whether they can make their future (and our retirement) peaceful and prosperous depends on what we do in schools today. And what we do in schools should begin with seeing the children. Keep in mind the questions that guided the journey of Pam, Ira, and Chad:

What do you see when you look at your school?
What do you see when you look in a classroom?
What do you see when you watch children in the playground, or on a street, or in a park?
What does learning look like?
What does growing up look like?

Yong Zhao
University of Kansas
East China Normal University

Introduction
How We Came to See Learning and School

What do you see when you look at your school? What do you see when you look in a classroom? What do you see when you watch children playing in the playground, or on a street, or in a park? What do you see when you watch teenagers gathered on a corner? What do you see when you see two boys wrestling? Or three teenage boys pushing each other? What do you see when you watch two 14-year-olds trying to escape your gaze so they can pay attention to each other?

What does learning look like? What does growing up look like?

In the end it all comes down to knowing how to see. To understanding what we are seeing. And, to putting what we learn from our effective vision into action for our children.

Though this book will cover many topics, the primary lesson design we've created is one that we hope will continue to push us and our readers to become much better at seeing children. Once we are able to see clearly what is happening with children in our schools and outside of our schools, we will then be on the path to learn how to take rapid, yet deeply considered actions to change the educational system we have inherited.

We begin by describing what compelled us to each come to our work to change education. Although we are different leaders and we represent different background experiences, we share a

passion for changing the vision of schooling as it existed yesterday and even as it exists today.

Ira's Story

Ira's realization of why he is here, doing the work he is doing now after a lifetime of trying out careers designed to be of help to others from victims of crime to victims of homelessness, began with his realization that all of victimhood starts in childhood, sometimes under the guise of parenting or teaching or both. This is one small part of his story from another book that represents a bit of who he once was and who he still is in some ways. It's what keeps him coming back to work day after day when it would be far easier to do something else, stay home, or hike a mile on the Appalachian Trail. He comes back because he believes if he can make one kid have better days than he had as a kid with dyslexia, it's all worth it. He knows this because his own early life experiences took him down paths that were catastrophic for him. This was his life before a high school teacher saw the potential within him rather than his deficits:

> My days were changing. Falling back into the Special Education pattern of elementary school. Resource rooms and the tower. Tests and analysis. Broken only by avoided classes and sports practices. Football in the fall. Basketball in the winter. Baseball in the spring. I didn't make much of an impact on the football team, though I got to alternate at halfback bringing in the plays. But I mattered to basketball and baseball, as a point guard and a catcher, and those coaches – I suspect – were the adults who fought to keep me more or less in school. I probably went to a few classes. Though if I did I sat in the back and avoided contact with education whenever possible. And it was easy to do this because an uneasy truce was settling in between me and the teachers. They didn't bother me and I didn't bother them. Even when good, wonderful, nice teachers thought they might "get through" to me, thought they could help, I couldn't allow it. My image was all I had left and my image demanded, if not full-time insolence, at least total nonparticipation.

> Drift set in, as it has often tended to do, at least since the structures of the school day were introduced. Not all the time – of course not. There are weeks, months, seasons, once in a while whole years of lucidity and tremendous accomplishment. At least by the scale with which people like me are measured. But those winning streaks alternate with two other time signatures, the crash and the drift. The crash is both self-explanatory and at least has a definite ending of sorts. I'll admit it is not an ending you look forward to; even the most suicidal person, having leaped from a rooftop, must fear the moment when he strikes the pavement no matter how much he seeks what is on the other side. Also, I have always been clearly aware of the crash when I'm in that stage, which makes it different from the drift. In the drift I am disconnected from most things, though not from assault and pain. In fact, in the consciousness vacuum that defines the drift, touches both physical and emotional become assaults, and pain is magnified to remarkable proportions. In this drifting time, I wandered the floors of the school chased by everything: The hum of fluorescents attacked, the noise of feet in the corridors struck like hammers to the skull, the smell of old chalk dust choked. The voices of teachers cut into me. The slam of lockers punched me. No amount of ingested alcohol, THC, or nicotine could quell enough of the hurts to allow me any comfort. (Socol 2007)

Chad's Story

Born and raised in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, Chad wasn't exactly a teacher-pleaser in school. In fact, he worked harder at avoiding schoolwork than at doing it. He figured out how to game the system, maximizing time out of class and minimizing the effort needed to get by and graduate. This effort trajectory (or negative effort trajectory) continued into college, where he spent far more than four years clumsily collecting undergraduate credits.

Fortunately, while on this roundabout tour of colleges and universities, he ran into beloved former teacher and coach, Tom Fitzgibbons. Tom, now principal of the high school in the urban

center of Chad's hometown, offered him a teaching assistant job in the alternative education program. The class was housed in a church basement. The neighborhood was one of the city's toughest; the students, some of the area's most traumatized. There, Chad became a protege to legendary wrestling coach Spencer Chang. Something changed. This work wasn't about chasing a grade, chasing a paycheck, gaming a system. Chad wanted to do more than skate by. He wanted to change the world – through education.

What had been a sleepy but economically vibrant city was now a tough place to find a job. The middle-class life of Chad's childhood had become scarce. As once-bustling textile and furniture companies shuttered at the whim of capitalism, unemployment rates soared to among the highest in the nation. The crime rate followed, and Chad began to lose students to both sides of the gun.

Today, Chad is a father. His children attend great public schools where educators care about them first as children. He knows they can receive quality learning experiences inside and outside of school. But every day, he asks, "How might we create a lasting commitment in public schools so that *all* children thrive?"

Chad has seen the results of a school's focus on passing tests rather than on supporting young people's full range of needs. He has seen the results of students consigned to a dominant teaching wall rather than engaged in agency-building work. However, he has also seen what happens when kids are provided multiple pathways to learning, when they are given room to design, create, make, engineer, and build, and to have ownership in their own learning.

For some, schoolwork that values creativity, teamwork, logical reasoning, and entrepreneurial thinking is an enhancement. Even worthy of tuition. For kids who feel little hope, this can be a lifeline.

For nearly a decade, Chad continued teaching and coaching, struggling against the culture of a depressed city. The local paper featured his students for their accomplishments both in and out

of the gym. It also spoke of those who lost their lives or were incarcerated. Hopes and dreams fled on the heels of factories and jobs. Community and entrepreneurial spirit were relegated to the streets in the form of gangs and drug deals.

Years later, following a screening of Davis Guggenheim's documentary film *Waiting for Superman*, Chad penned a letter. He has since returned to working in a school, but he holds this experience close. Still learning, always using today's work to inform tomorrow's, he plans to stay the course.

> To Delvin, Tyre, Nick, Josh, Lynwood and Anthony, Chad, Anthony E., Cornett, Jason and Tasha, Steven and Dominique, Shavon, and those whose names are unreleased:
>
> I think of you guys often. You were in one of my classes, on my teams, and in my programs at some point during the near-decade I worked in your high school.
>
> But I failed you.
>
> You weren't one for whom I advocated much beyond my scheduled time. I didn't go to your home to tell your mom or grandma I believed in you. I didn't ask you to come to my room during my planning block so you could do your homework in peace. I didn't ask you to eat lunch in my office to talk about college, the world, your potential, or to simply stay out of trouble.
>
> And I didn't collaborate with your other teachers to unearth your hidden talents and discover common challenges. I didn't teach you how to navigate the system of schooling. I didn't connect you to key community members to be there when I couldn't. I didn't tell the staff to let me know each and every time you slipped. I didn't introduce you to my wife down in the English department so you'd have another place to go. I didn't accompany you to the police station when you got in trouble.
>
> I simply didn't do the things for you that I did for others who faced the same challenges.
>
> It wasn't a deliberate choice – I just ran out of time. And, ultimately, I ran out of physical energy and emotional stamina. Knowing I had the ability to make a larger impact on your lives, which

perhaps could've altered the path of self-destruction upon which you traveled, also made it hard to sleep at night. I finally had to take a break from education.

I've since returned and am working in another district. I'm not in a classroom anymore, or even in a school building, but I often think about getting back "in the trenches." I happened to spend some time as a substitute principal for one of our elementary schools. There, I met a young fellow that reminded me of you. He was troubled and angry.

I made a few calls to get him some support both inside and outside of school, but, as with you, I felt largely powerless. When I walked out of that school one afternoon, I cried.

I cried because I know.

I know that regardless of how hard we try, or how much we care, or how high we get his test scores, this child's future is vulnerable. Maybe it's naive to think that we, as your educators for a short time, can help navigate the perils of poverty. But I believe, with all my heart, that we must try. As the old adage goes, "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

I promise that I'll never forget you and what you taught me. And I'll always fight like hell to provide the best educational opportunities for every student. You'll never know the madness of educational policy propaganda and political ideologues throwing garbage in the path. You remind me that it's worth pushing through. Lives depend on it.

Pam's Story

Pam was a good student. She nailed down good grades and finished at the top of her class. She read not just proficiently, but extraordinarily. Unlike Chad, she played the school game well. Unlike Ira, she never struggled because of a disability that became a weapon used by teachers against him. Like both of them, she questioned even as an elementary student why school was a home for some and a war zone for others.

Pam has spent more than four decades in public education observing and learning from some of the best educators who

have ever taught. Along the way as she navigated her own professional journey from teacher to administrator she came to believe the burning question of her career is "Why do some educators continue to evolve and change over time and others do not?" As a superintendent, she now knows that the question she began to ask as a relatively young administrator is not one just for individuals but also for schools and districts. She has also learned that change doesn't start with wholesale mandates from the superintendent's office but rather by gathering educators together to explore what Simon Sinek calls the Golden Circle of Inspirational Leadership. As Sinek says the journey of deep change "starts with why" (Sinek 2009).

In a decades-past dissertation, Pam attempted to answer the question of "Why do some change?" by asking teachers why they made changes in practice. She found some simple, and some complex, answers. Highly successful teachers identified as changing instructional practices over time appear to have some characteristics in common. First, they believe they make a difference in the lives of learners they serve. They engage in critical inquiry to make sense of learners' needs – what we once referred to as *kidwatching*. To continue to realize their efficacy over time, they seek out critical friends with whom they can reflect upon the challenges of reaching every learner and from whom they can gain insight into what to do when they aren't connecting a learner and learning. They are willing to try new approaches to support individual children. They exhibit an internal sense of control and an inherent belief that they can impact student success by making changes in how they work with young people. And even in 1997, these highly efficacious educators believed that engaging young people in authentic, real-world learning would support them to construct relevance and meaning in their lives.

In many ways, the characteristics of the teachers profiled in Pam's dissertation represent what she has come to see as the timeless wisdom of educators who have created pathways for all young people to find their way on a journey of lifelong learning. She realizes that the best teachers educate young people for life, not

school. Such teachers are far more interested in children taking joy in learning with them as they navigate through life than they are in whether their children pass other people's standardized tests. They know that motivated learners will continue to pursue their interests and passions across the vast wastelands of rote content learning that becomes increasingly irrelevant across time as we move farther from it. Such teachers understand the power of dialogue and debate about the big ideas found in science and history and the literature of authors who challenge the status quo. They know that children's curiosity and questions will propel them into deep inquiry about the world in which they live. They believe in the power of children who design, create, build, and make by drawing upon the expertise of adults and peers around them as they explore and sample the vast curricula of life.

Pam has watched over decades as individual teachers, school staff, and district leaders worked hard to build a variety of plans to improve learning consistent with what the best educators have always done to create environments where young people actively thrive as learners. She also has seen such efforts fail across time despite the thickness of once-common three-ring binders of goals and strategies, ubiquitous and exhaustive required professional training, and pages of evaluation procedures designed to improve and make standard effective teaching and administrative practices. She's come to the conclusion that there is no recipe for the secret sauce of change that will result in less random and more consistent superb learning opportunities for children in our schools. In fact, every time she hears "scale up" or "standardize anything" as it relates to learners and learning, she cringes. Such efforts are the antithesis of what educators must do to create healthy, vibrant systemic learning experiences for the children we serve, a perspective gained listening to educators over the years and which Pam believes is illustrated in the timeless voices of three teachers she interviewed and observed for her dissertation (Moran 1997).

Conboy, an elementary teacher, found that encouraging children to see themselves as helpful members of a learning

community created a culture in which children learned to support each other as learners, and when connected in a multiage community, intentionally supported children to develop deep agency for their own learning and to communicate their thoughts to others. In other words, she purposely created situations in which children's voices mattered:

> I expect them (the first graders) to be actively engaged in whatever it is that's going on and I expect them to be helpful to each other. Helpful in a way that is not giving the other child the answer, but being there to guide them. I have third graders come in and work with my first graders and that's been working beautifully. In my first grade classroom now, the biggest thing I want to have people see is that these kids are figuring it out; they are figuring out how to read, how to write, do math. Those are the most important things to me. I am really proud of these kids because they have worked hard and come a long way. Some of them did not even know the sounds that letters make, and now they can put down any thought that they want on paper in a way that somebody could read. (Moran 1997, p. 93)

Like Conboy but from a different perspective, David, a middle school teacher, reflected on the importance of children learning much more from him than simply passing tests. In his work is reflected his belief that schooling is about children developing confidence in themselves, and becoming people who will find success not just in school but, most importantly, in life:

> To relate an incident, the day I decided I wasn't going to use a textbook anymore – first I started the day as if it was going to be normal, read out of the book. I was even doing the round robin crap, where each kid would take turns reading. So we started that, and of course they were all kind of sinking in their chairs, and then I had them stand up and drop their books on the floor. Then I told them to jump up on top of their books for ten minutes . . . Then we put them on the shelf and that was literally the last time I ever

> used a textbook. It was sort of a cold turkey thing when I made the decision that I was going to turn the corner and do something different . . . I feel like I've gotten to the point where I feel like content is secondary to enthusiasm and interest . . . so what I've evolved into, I'm purely project oriented now. We just go from one project to another. My students pick a topic of interest, research it, plan activities, and teach a lesson to elementary children. Before that we did Rube Goldberg mouse traps to illustrate energy changes and energy transfers . . . that room was a mess. I had my band saw in there and my drills, it looked like a shop.
>
> I feel like there's this contradictory thing with testing. On one hand you want everyone to be successful and yet you'll only define success with one measure. Now maybe that state test is going to be such a low basic test. I think a student I'm talking about (who will struggle with the test) will be a successful human being and if I'm really successful I'll get him to a point where he will read out loud to his class . . . So that he will also read to his children when he has children . . . I'm on them a lot. You have got to read to your children. And that is not in the curriculum. Part of what I think is incredibly important is to teach them how to be parents. They're going to be parents . . . How do I assess that? (Moran 1997, p. 186)

Finally, Diane, a high school math teacher, identified reflective practice as essential to her growth and development, even including her students in the feedback loop so that she could learn what worked or did not work for them as learners. Engaging learners in the instructional design to assess user experiences supported learners, with Diane, to find connections between math teaching and math learning, and learners were provided opportunities to develop critical analysis skills well beyond honing their capability to solve math problems.

> Every time I do something with the kids that's new, I'll make notes about it. Did this work? Did it not work? If something doesn't work real well, you sit back and think was it for the right