



Abstract

We are in the predicament we are with public education because those in charge have failed to apply one of history's greatest lessons provided to us by Thomas Kuhn. Paradigms compete and failing paradigms do what they can to keep contenders at bay. There are two education paradigms competing, the dominant autocratic model versus the emerging democratic one. The more the dominant one is permitted to suppress the emerging one, the more the agony of change will be prolonged and intensified, and the less the change will be steered in the most positive direction.

The second great Education Revolution is now well underway. The first occurred as part of the transformation from the agrarian to the industrial age. The second is being fuelled by the shift from the industrial to the digital age, also referred to as the Age of Autonomy. Technologies have profoundly impacted our way of life and digital technology is having as transformative an effect on civilization as did those that led to the Industrial Age. It is only a matter of time before autocratic schooling gives way to democratic learning.

The way to manage opposing paradigms to most effectively accommodate new and old mindsets is to take the competition out of the equation. This is done by putting the paradigms on level playing fields where both are equally visible and accessible, and people can choose without coercion the one that works best for them.

Persistent problems of old paradigms can simply not exist or have easy solutions with a different paradigm, problems such as equity, inclusion, lack of diversity and mental health, and once a new paradigm has been adopted, a period of relative calm can ensue. By applying Kuhn's lesson, we can move quickly into the period of relative calm, a period that offers the world a more stable, just, and sustainable future.

The shift to democratic learning is inevitable and it is accelerating as shown below. Masses of people around the world know this, but they are still working too much in their silos and preaching to the converted. By answering the call to unite, they can become too visible to the general public to be ignored, which will establish the legitimacy of their causes. Youth are regarded as the most important change agents. The Youth Rights Day has been conceived as a rallying point for youth and their supporters to display their solidarity.

Part 2: The Paradigm Shift

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Forward

People who define themselves as having progressive views on education will be well aware of the debate presented here. This does not mean that they subscribe to all that is being advocated. They will, however, have an open mind and see an urgent need to investigate the possibilities.

For too long, education authorities have suppressed or wrongfully discredited information about a different approach to education. The transformation to a new way for children and youth to get an education is inevitable, and the more the public knows about the possibilities, the more the transformation can be made constructive by maximizing the good and minimizing the bad that comes with it. What follows is provided as a study guide for bringing oneself up to date on the struggle happening in education and the speed with which change is occurring despite the resistance it is facing from the old school mindset. A scan of the article to get an overview of its content is recommended, after which readers can go more in-depth starting with the links and references that seem most pertinent to them.

Introduction

The shift away from coercive schooling is well underway and accelerating. What remains to be seen is whether or not we can proactively remake public education for the new age or if the idea of a government-funded, community building education system offering equal opportunity for all will be forsaken because we are too much a me-first as opposed to a we-first society.

Rebooting public education is not a matter of making it better; it is about making it different. It is about bringing out the best in what we imagine when we say that it takes a village to raise a child. The village must of course be healthy. It needs to be grounded in social and environmental justice, and it requires that the village be [striving for sustainability](#).¹

There are those who have given up hope that public education can be transformed. Their advice is to, “Blow it up and start over.” The position taken here is that it is not too late to reboot it and that it would be unwise not to build upon what we already have. When schools were closed because of the pandemic, we saw that students missed being with their friends, missed being with teachers they liked, missed the security and sense of belonging it provides, particularly for those who come from dysfunctional homes. These are the elements to foster, not in partnership with the village, but as one with the village. The imposed curriculum of autocratic schools is problematic. It is impossible to prescribe one that does not discriminate against one group or another, even one person or another, and that does not impede efforts to provide equity and inclusion for everybody. It’s best to let students decide what they need to know, and evidence shows, that if let be, they will competently learn of their own volition what they need to know to survive in the culture into which they are born.²

Educators tell us that we study history to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, but we are in the predicament we are with public education because they themselves have failed to apply one of history’s greatest lessons. For decades stretching into more than a century, they have been told the error of their ways, yet they stumble on trying to convince us that they know best. The lesson they are ignoring is the one about paradigm shifts presented by [Thomas Kuhn](#).³ Paradigms compete and dominant ones do what they can to keep contenders out of sight or discredited. We cannot keep ignoring that the education paradigm we need is being suppressed by those with a vested interest in status quo.

One of Kuhn’s observations is that some people are quick to adopt a new paradigm, others take more time, and some never adopt it. Generally, it is those who have the most invested in an old paradigm who are late adopting a new one, or who never adopt it. Kuhn also observed that it is often the young and the new to a field who are its change agents and this, as noted below, is

¹ The United Nations has 17 sustainability development goals that provide “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.” Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

² Peter Gray is recognized as a foremost authority on the need to let children be. He has expressed his views in his book *Free to Learn*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from (<https://www.self-directed.org/resource/free-to-learn-book/>) and he continuously adds to them with his *Psychology Today* blog titled Freedom to Learn. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/freedom-to-learn>).

³ Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996) is one of the most, perhaps the most, influential philosophers of science of the twentieth century. “His 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is one of the most cited academic books of all time.” Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/thomas-kuhn>

occurring in education. The participation of the young as equals is essential to remaking public education.

Time is running out for educators to undertake the meticulous studies and pilot programs needed to save, and most constructively transform, public education. The key is to remove the competition from the battle of the education paradigms by putting them on an equal footing. It is about offering real choice in education, not the kind of school choice and voucher systems people are being fooled into thinking is free market choice. It is about people being fully informed of their learning options and free to choose without coercion, right within their neighbourhood schools, the option that works best for them. Two conditions must be met. The choices must be equally visible and accessible. A way to accomplish this is the topic of Part 3 of this essay, which will be coming soon. A preview of what it will contain is available on the [Ottawa Public Education Remake Initiative \(OPERI\) website](#).⁴

Lessons From History

The following presents lessons about the power of technology to reshape civilization and the nature of paradigm shifts. It also presents a history of the democratic learning model that is at its tipping point and about to become too visible to too many to be ignored.

The Power of Technologies to Reshape Civilization

Kuhn spoke of how a new technology can speed the adoption of an emerging paradigm with Galileo's telescope serving as an example. The telescope permitted people to better see what was happening in the heavens and to conclude that the earth is not the centre of the universe. Today, digital technology is helping us to see the benefits to adopting the democratic learning paradigm and by looking at the developments of telephones, automobiles and planes, which have had a far more transformative impact on us than has the telescope, we can better imagine what the digital age has in store for us.

The telephone, initially perceived to be of little consequence, changed our lives. It led to the kinds of cities we now inhabit. The bosses of industries no longer had to be in offices at the front of their facilities. The telephone made it possible for them to move from their front offices to head offices in centers where they could do business with investors and customers. They no longer had to be physically present at their plants. If a problem arose, they could be consulted by phone. The phone is also credited with the city skylines we see today. The number of messages going in and out of downtown high rises is more than messenger boys and elevators could possibly handle.

The automobile reveals the speed with which a technology can transform society. The first mile of paved road was laid in Detroit in 1908 and just over 60 years later Joni Mitchell was singing, "They paved paradise and they put up a parking lot." The car culture now dominates us. What we drive has become a status symbol distracting us from the real joys of life - the more expensive our cars, the more special we must be. We work outside our neighbourhoods and our

⁴ The Proposed Pilot: A Systematic Research Approach to Change. *Ottawa Public Education Remake Initiative (OPERI)*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from http://operi.ca/?page_id=2089

social circles are often in places other than where we live. Red light districts moved to backseats and parents worry for the safety of their young drivers.

The aeroplane is a technology worthy of consideration for the sophistication of its development from the Kitty Hawk to the supersonic transcontinental passenger jet. It demonstrates what we can accomplish when the conditions are ripe for the pursuit of an idea. If over the past 50 years the same scientific effort had been applied to creating engaging and caring public learning environments, we would not be in the unfortunate educational jam of still trying to fly the equivalent of the Kitty Hawk.

A reason given for the quick adoption of phones, cars and planes is that we are social animals and they all permit us to better connect with others. The World Wide Web wasn't invented until 1989, the same year the cellphone in the form of the flip phone was made small enough to fit in a pocket.⁵ Just over 30 years later cellphones have become so ubiquitous that now when people talk about cells they are most likely talking about their phones and not the cells they learned about in biology class. With the technology packed into our phones we can now meet virtually with others almost anywhere in the world. Our social lives have moved to cyberspace to the point that people sitting next to others on a bus are communicating with someone elsewhere, parents are often seen on their phones when out with their children, and laws discouraging people from texting while driving had to be adopted. Nowhere is our social side more evident than on social media. Signs are everywhere that digital technology is reshaping our existence and that we are only in the beginning stages of the change underway.

Common with the advent of new technologies is people's inability to imagine the impact they will have. It was said that the British wouldn't need telephones because they had enough messenger boys.⁶ A president of the United States is reported to have said after trying out a telephone for the first time, "It's an interesting device, but who would ever want to use one."⁷ Few people, if any, imagined the congested, busy city centres we now inhabit where children are largely detached from nature and "active and safe routes to school" have become an issue.⁸ Originally, the automobile was seen as a godsend because towns would be far cleaner without the horse droppings. Now we see cars as polluters, major contributors to climate change, and an example of how our stuff owns us rather than us owning our stuff. As for the aeroplane, who could have foreseen in its early stages of development the importance of a country being able to protect its airspace as is so evident with Russia's attack on Ukraine. Clearly, technologies come with their downsides making it necessary for all sorts of regulations. Speed control alone amounts to a large industry resulting from the automobile, but controlling it is a simple matter compared to addressing cyberbullying, the preying on the vulnerable, the spread of hate, and the attacks on democracies perpetrated through social media, not to mention the anxiety that screen

⁵ Dyroff, C. (2018). Here's how much cellphones have actually changed over the years. *Insider*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://www.insider.com/the-history-of-the-cellphone-2018-7#in-1983-motorola-released-a-4000-phone-2>

⁶ Bruton, E. (2017). William Preece on messenger boys versus telephones: worst technological prediction of all time. *The Geek in 9F*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://geekin9f.wordpress.com/2017/02/15/william-preece-on-messenger-boys-vs-telephones-worst-technological-prediction-of-all-time/>

⁷ Quote Investigator. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/03/16/telephone-who-want/>

⁸ Ontario Active School Travel. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca>

time creates for parents. As people come to better understand the play of the educational paradigms, they will realize that their public schools exacerbate these problems and that the democratic learning model offers to alleviate them.

The message in this brief look at the history of technologies is that technologies have lives of their own. Once they have made their debut, there can be no stopping them, but we can to some degree bring out the best in them and minimize their drawbacks. In addition to other forces, digital technology is changing how children and youth get their education. By proactively remaking public education in ways that take full advantage of its benefits, we can create communities of learners that are the supersonic jets of public education.

The Advent of Computers in the Classroom

Around the start of the 1980s, Apple Macintosh and Commodore Pet personal computers were finding their way into schools. Recognizing the power of the technology to impact education, the Ontario Ministry of Education instituted the additional teacher qualification courses called Computers in the Classroom. It was a series of three courses. The first was about basic computer literacy, the second about educational uses of the computer, and the third, which gave teachers the qualification of “Specialist” in the use of computers in education, involved futuristic thinking about the impact the technology could have on education. By 1986, computers were making such inroads in education that the administrators of the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board,⁹ from the principals up to the director, asked the University of Ottawa Faculty of Education to provide them with a single semester-long course that would be a condensed version of the Computers in the Classroom series. The class would meet once a week for three hours. The first half of each session was to be theoretical and presented in a lecture room; the second part was to be hands-on activities in a computer lab. The following draws from the lesson about paradigm shifts given to the administrators in this course and includes developments that have taken place during the more than thirty years since the course was conducted.

There was no shortage of material for the theoretical part of the course. The idea that “the future is not what it used to be”¹⁰ was in the air. Alvin Toffler’s book *Future Shock*¹¹ was published in 1970 followed by *The Third Wave*¹² in 1980. John Nesbitt’s *Megatrends*¹³ was published in 1982. There were also the works of Marshall McLuhan (*The Medium is the Message*)¹⁴ and [Buckminster Fuller](#),¹⁵ which were much discussed at the time. Specific to education was all of the free school literature produced in the 1960s and 70s such as *Education and Ecstasy*,¹⁶

⁹ In 1998, the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board was amalgamated with the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board to become the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB).

¹⁰ Quote Investigator. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/12/06/future-not-used/>

¹¹ Toffler, A. (1970). *Future Shock*. Random House.

¹² Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. William Morrow.

¹³ Nesbitt, J. (1982). *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*. Warner Books.

¹⁴ McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. The New American Library. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf>. See also: retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_medium_is_the_message

¹⁵ Buckminster Fuller’s life and contributions. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckminster_Fuller

¹⁶ Leonard, G. (1968). *Education and Ecstasy*. Delacorte Press.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed,¹⁷ *Deschooling Society*,¹⁸ *Death at an Early Age*,¹⁹ *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*,²⁰ and the list goes on. Michael Fullan's book, "*The Meaning of Educational Change*"²¹ published in 1985, provided insights for discussions about the roles of school administrators as change agents. It was all discussed with the class in lead up to the lesson on paradigm shifts which emphasized that the world was changing and that we needed for public education to change along with it.

The Nature of Paradigm Shifts

A paradigm was defined for the class as a set of ideas that produce a particular mindset and it includes all of the people, institutions, activities, language and behaviours that support and uphold it. Kuhn popularized the term "paradigm shift" and it became so used and trivialized that an editor of a social policy publication declared she would no longer consider articles that used the term. A high school principal provided an example of what the editor was facing when he referred to a change in how teachers were to record students' grades as a "complete paradigm shift". As a result, the term became almost taboo, but used as it is here, it represents a powerful concept that helps people to understand the scope and nature of the educational change we are undergoing. A knowledge of it can minimize the anxiety and destruction that can occur when a failing dominant paradigm is left to power over a promising contender. By understanding Kuhn's history lesson, emotion can be removed from the change process leaving people to rationally attack the problems involved in ushering public education into a new age of learning.

The following list of observations about paradigm shifts summarizes the lesson learned from Thomas Kuhn. It formed the basis for the session with the administrators, each point being relevant to the transformation of public education. Some of the points have already been considered above.

Characteristics of Paradigm Shifts

1. Paradigms compete.
2. Failing paradigms do what they can to keep competitors out of site.
3. Paradigms can be known long before they are adopted.
4. Fundamentally flawed paradigms can be supported by some of the brightest and most capable people of their day.
5. Flawed paradigms can be supported by a wealth of research.
6. In the absence of a strong contender, a flawed paradigm can remain useful and dominant for a long period of time.
7. Without a strong contender, critics of a paradigm are unlikely to gain much attention for their views.
8. A new technology can speed the adoption of a paradigm.
9. Social conditions essentially unrelated to a paradigm may obstruct its development.

¹⁷ Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Bloomsbury Academic.

¹⁸ Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling Society*. ([1st ed.]). Harper & Row.

¹⁹ Kozol, J. (1967). *Death at an Early Age: The destruction of the hearts and minds of Negro children in the Boston public schools*. Houghton Mifflin.

²⁰ Postman, N., & Weingartner, C. (1969). *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. Delta Publishing

²¹ Fullan, M. (1982). *The Meaning of Educational Change*. OISE Press.

10. New paradigms are at first fuzzy.
11. A new paradigm may emerge from more than one initial contender.
12. New paradigms come with their own problems. “Normal science” is the term Kuhn gave to the work of a paradigm directed at solving its problems.
13. Problems that a paradigm seems incapable of solving are called anomalies.
14. More than the promise of an alternative paradigm, frustration with the failings of an old one may result in its rejection.
15. Nagging problems of old paradigms can simply disappear with the adoption of new paradigms.
16. New paradigms may include aspects of old ones.
17. A minimum number of followers, a critical mass, is needed for a paradigm to become a contender.
18. A period of stability follows the adoption of a new paradigm.
19. Some people are early adopters of a new paradigm, others take longer and some never adopt it.
20. It is often the young and the new who usher in a new paradigm.

The Copernican Revolution

The Copernican Revolution was about the shift in thinking from the geocentric to the heliocentric view of the universe. The Education Revolution is also about a shift of thinking about the centres, from teacher-centered to child-centered, and many parallels can be drawn between the two revolutions. Having a knowledge of the shift to heliocentricity can therefore be useful to people transforming education. It was for this purpose that the course participants were presented with Table 1: “Thinkers of the Theories” and asked to derive from it some of Kuhn’s observations that stood out.

Thinkers of the Theories	
<u>Geocentric</u>	<u>Heliocentric</u>
- Plato.....(429-347 B.C.)	- Pythagoras..... (569-475 B.C.)
- Aristotle(384-322 B.C.)	- Aristarchus of Samos ... (310-230 B.C.)
- Cleanthes(331-232 B.C.)	- Archimedes (287-212 B.C.)
- Apollonius of Perga.(262-190 B.C.)	- Cicero..... (106-43 B.C.)
- Hipparchus.....(190-120 B.C.)	- Vitruvius (90-20 B.C.)
- Ptolemy..... (87-150 A.D.)	- Martianus Capella... (5 th Century A.D.)
<i>Almagest</i> - 137 A.D.	- Roger Bacon(1214-1294 A.D.)
	- Copernicus(1473-1543 A.D.)
	<i>De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium</i> – 1543 A.D.
	- Brahe.....(1546-1601 A.D.)
	- Bruno(1548-1600 A.D.)
	- Kepler.....(1571-1630 A.D.)
	- Galileo.....(1564-1642 A.D.)
	- Newton.....(1643-1727 A.D.)
	- <i>Index Librorum Prohibitorum</i> – 1837 A.D.

Table 1: Timelines for the geocentric and heliocentric theories.

Fairly quickly the following six items were identified.

1. Paradigms compete.
2. A theory can be known long before it is adopted.
3. Even the greatest of thinkers can draw wrong conclusions.
4. An overwhelming case can be made supporting an incorrect paradigm.
5. An incorrect paradigm can serve a purpose for a long time in the absence of a well-developed alternative.
6. Dissenting voices can amount to little in the absence of a good alternative.

The *Almagest*²² by Ptolemy was discussed as presenting an overwhelming case supporting geocentricity. It was a massive collection of scientific writings that were beyond what the average citizen could comprehend, and so most people took it on faith. If so much could be said about it by such a brilliant thinker, then it must be right. It consisted of thirteen books dealing with different aspects of the geocentric model making it a challenge for even the best of scholars to thoroughly absorb. Giving some measure to how long a replacement paradigm can be suppressed by a dominant one, is the fact that it was almost 300 years after Copernicus published *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*²³ that writings supporting his theories were removed from the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, the Catholic Church's list of prohibited literature.²⁴

Noted too is that the heliocentric model Copernicus presented in 1543 was still fuzzy. It was Kepler who established that the orbits of planets are elliptical as opposed to circular, and it was Newton who added the gravitational laws of motion to the model. Galileo's telescope was recognized as a technology that supported the adoption of the new paradigm. Also, no example of how dominant paradigms suppress contenders could be more concrete than how the Catholic Church treated proponents of heliocentricity. They were ostracized as heretics. Some were put under house arrest. Giordano Bruno was even burned at the stake for bringing the dominant view into question. His final unrelenting words speak volumes of people who see their paradigms crumbling. "Perchance you who pronounce my sentence are in greater fear than I who receive it."²⁵ From the discussion the following observations about the Copernican Revolution were added to the above list of six.

7. Flawed paradigms can be supported by a wealth of research.
8. Theories that appear fuzzy may only be lacking some refinements.
9. Technology can play a significant role in the adoption of a new theory.
10. Social circumstances can affect the adoption of a new paradigm.

It doesn't take much of a look at what is happening in education to conclude that all ten of these points come into play with the adoption of the democratic learning paradigm.

The Autocratic Education Paradigm

Referring to the dominant school system as "conventional" gives it a ring of legitimacy which is best avoided. It suggests conservative, but not necessarily wrong. Not discounting the best of intentions by many of its disciples, it perpetrates crimes against humanity. To stress the need to leave it behind as quickly as possible, it would help to name it what it is. A term that constantly reminds people of how it works against human rights and democratic principles is needed. It will consequently be referred to in other ways throughout the rest of this essay. To contrast it with the democratic learning model, it will most often be named the autocratic education model.

²² Ptolemy, C. (1984). *Ptolemy's Almagest*. London: Duckworth.

²³ Copernicus, N. (1566). "De revolutionibus orbium coelestium, title page." (1566) Rice University.

²⁴ The general prohibition of books advocating [heliocentrism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heliocentrism) was removed from the *Index* in 1758. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_Librorum_Prohibitorum.

²⁵ Giordano Bruno. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Giordano_Bruno

The paradigm shift underway is the second major education revolution. The first was the shift from what Peter Gray²⁶ terms “[Mother Nature’s Pedagogy](#)”²⁷ to the factory schools that people today take for granted. The second is essentially the undoing of the first, a return to children and their families having far greater control over their learning and their lives. In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink, referring to the years we are entering as the Age of Autonomy, says, “This era doesn’t call for better management. It calls for a renaissance of self-direction.”²⁸

The autocratic schools prevalent today are a human experiment in scientific management. They are the application of [Taylorism](#)²⁹ which ties in with “The Standardization Covenant” described by Todd and Ogas in *Dark Horse*.³⁰ It’s about the standardization of people for production efficiency. Uniformity and conformity are its characteristics. David Blacker³¹ in *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame*³² describes it as turning people into commodities to serve capitalism. It amounts to the alienation of people from their humanity. It’s oppressive; it’s exploitative, both of which find negative outlets, but there is a more troubling concern that Blacker raises. Some people do not even have the advantage of being exploitable. What is to happen to these people if they become looked upon as “useless mouths to feed”?³³ It implies having created people dependent on the state to look after them. There is no stronger indictment of the autocratic school system than that it produces people who need to be told what to do.

The tweet in Figure 1 shared by Geoff Graham tells the story of this manufactured dependency and we saw it play out with the pandemic. Suddenly, students and families were put in charge of their own learning, and having become dependent on schools they had little idea of what to do. This robbing people of their



²⁶ Gray, P. (2013). *Free to Learn: Why unleashing the instinct to play will make our children happier, more self-reliant, and better students for life*. Basic Books. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://www.self-directed.org/resource/free-to-learn-book/>

²⁷ Gray, P. (2014). Mother Nature’s Pedagogy: Insights from Evolutionary Psychology [Video]. *Chicago Ideas* Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://www.chicagoideas.com/videos/mother-nature-s-pedagogy-insights-from-evolutionary-psychology>

²⁸ Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York: Harper & Brothers. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://books.google.ca/books?id=HoJMAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA3&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false See also, retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_management

³⁰ Rose, T., & Ogas, O. (2018). *Dark Horse: Achieving success through the pursuit of fulfillment*. HarperOne. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <http://www.toddrose.com/books/#/darkhorse/>

³¹ David Blacker bio information. University of Delaware. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://www.cehd.udel.edu/faculty-bio/david-blacker/>

³² Blacker, D. (2013). *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame*. Zero Books. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://books.google.ca/books?id=XL5YAgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

³³ This was a term used in association with the Nazi euthanasia program. See Life unworthy of life. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_unworthy_of_life

independence is part of the concern Carol Black expresses with [Schooling the World](#)³⁴ when she says:

*Generations from now, we'll look back and say,
"How could we have done this kind of thing to people?"*

[Wayne Jennings](#)³⁵ also does not mix words. He is a long-time educator who has pursued democratic approaches to learning throughout his career. He recently published *School Transformation*, a compendium of divergent views on education covering decades. This is how he sums up the current situation in education.

*"Educators have gained about as much mileage as can be had from the current system. It's not working. The system hurts too many children and youth. Most graduates are woefully unprepared for citizenship, productive work, lifelong learning, and attaining their potential."*³⁶

How it happened that public education got to such an unfortunate state is partially explained with Kuhn's observation that a new paradigm can incorporate aspects of the paradigm it is replacing. People are only just beginning to realize that lectures and formal courses where teachers are front and centre are part of the democratic learning model. A story from the Sudbury Valley School gives some insight into how it works. A dozen of its students ages nine to twelve requested a course in arithmetic.³⁷ Daniel Greenberg, a founder of the school, agreed to teach it on condition that they show up on time and not skip classes. We learn that in just twenty hours of teacher contact time the children covered all of the arithmetic taught to students in coercive schools from grades one to six. The students were comfortable with Daniel and they appreciated that he had agreed to share his knowledge with them. He didn't pander them; he didn't need to discipline or motivate them. The fact that the course was something the students wanted made all the difference.

Relevant sidenotes are that the story conveys teachers who are subject experts and who can deliver a course will still be needed, preferably in greater, not fewer numbers, and it also raises a moral concern that speaks to the highly inflammatory charge above that autocratic schools perpetrate crimes against humanity. Time is life. Time is all we really have. A triter way of putting it is, "time is money". Squandering endless hours of student time to teach them things they can acquire in a fraction of the time, or that may never be useful to them, amounts to robbery of the highest order, not to mention the brain numbing boredom and poor attitudes towards learning that it creates.

³⁴ Black, C.; Marlens, N.; Hurst, J.; Grossan, M; Davis, W.; Norberg-Hodge, H; Shiva, V.; Jain, M; Dolma, T.; (2010). *Schooling The World*. Lost People Films. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <http://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world>

³⁵ Wayne Jennings' blog. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://waynejennings.net>

³⁶ Jennings, W. B. (2018). *School Transformation*. CreateSpace, Amazon. p. xxi

³⁷ Greenberg, D. (1987). *Free At Last*. Sudbury Valley School Press, pp. 15-18.

Recognized ancient teachers such as Confucius, Socrates, and other learned Greeks and scribes of earlier times³⁸ could be included as proponents of both education paradigms depending on whether or not students were coerced to study under them. The historical timelines for educational paradigms presented in Table 2 below leaves it open as to which paradigm these ancient teachers fall under, and it begins the history of coercive learning with the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic Church took charge of teaching the sons of nobility. This led to institutions of learning such as St. Peter's College of Cambridge University established in 1284. The State of Massachusetts can be listed next on the timeline with Horace Mann, known by some as the father of American education, becoming the Secretary of the newly created Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837.³⁹ His message, "which he preached at every opportunity, was that universal public education was the only means to transform America's disorderly masses into a disciplined, judicious republican citizenry."⁴⁰ Although he is criticized for his role in creating coercive mass schooling, he pursued the humanitarian ideal that every child should receive an education funded by local taxes, and he believed in the power of public education to build a democratic society. "The Development of Education in Massachusetts, 1630-1930" provides a chronology of events leading to state control of education.⁴¹

In 1911, Frederick Taylor⁴² published *The Principles of Scientific Management*,⁴³ which led to Taylorism and students being managed for efficiency in learning prescribed curriculum in much the way workers were managed in factories. It might be thought that we have grown beyond such disrespectful treatment of students, but as Wayne Au points out in his article [Teaching under the new Taylorism: high-stakes testing and the standardization of the 21st century curriculum management of schools](#),⁴⁴ students are still being subjected to management practices made popular by Taylor. Age-segregation and streaming are used to make classes as homogeneous as possible in order to impart compulsory learning as efficiently as possible in environments where obedience is the law.

Autocratic schools today are offering students a broader range of courses than was the case, some of which are electives allowing students a small degree of choice over what they study. Teachers are also less dictatorial and more inclined to emphasize relationship building with students. The authorities point to these changes saying, "Be patient. Things are changing. Change takes time." The fact is that in over 100 years the basic structure of school has not changed and Peter Gray, speaking at the 2022 AERO conference, convincingly pointed out that

³⁸ A short history of teaching. *Teacher Appreciation*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from http://www.teacher-appreciation.info/Famous_Teachers/A_short_history.asp

³⁹ Horace Mann. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Mann

⁴⁰ Taylor, B.P. (2010) Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy: The Education of Democratic Citizens. *University Press of Kansas*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <https://kansaspress.ku.edu/978-0-7006-1745-6.html>

⁴¹ Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1930). The Development of Education in Massachusetts, 1630-1930. In Selections from Archives and Special Collections, Bridgewater State University. Item 5. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from <http://vc.bridgew.edu/selections/5>

⁴² Frederick Winslow Taylor. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 7, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Winslow_Taylor

⁴³ Taylor, F. (1911). *The Principles of Scientific Management*. New York and London, Harper & Brothers.

⁴⁴ Au, W. (2011). Teaching Under the New Taylorism: High-stakes Testing and the Standardization of the 21st Century Curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 43(1). 25-45. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254225399_Teaching_Under_the_New_Taylorism_High-stakes_Testing_and_the_Standardization_of_the_21st_Century_Curriculum

children today are less free than ever to pursue what intrinsically motivates them.⁴⁵ John Gatto's book *The Underground History of American Education: An intimate investigation into the prison of modern schooling*⁴⁶ offers an in-depth critical view of how we have arrived at the schools we have today.

The Democratic Learning Paradigm

In his small book *Experience and Education* published in 1938, John Dewey provides the following list of principles he saw as common amid the variety of progressive schools operating during his time.

“To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means to attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world.”⁴⁷

It well expresses the nature of the competing education paradigms and it establishes that the current Education Revolution is not about accommodating a new technology. It is about human rights and human flourishing. The shift underway can be equated to providing the nourishment a flower needs to blossom, and as it blossoms it becomes a beauty to behold. The ugliness of hate, discrimination and self-loathing do not exist in a person in full bloom. Digital technology is just nourishment that is accelerating the realization of Dewey's vision, which, if embraced properly, could put us on course to a healthy global community.

The history of the democratic learning paradigm is about the battle it has waged against autocratic schooling. The following outlines the struggle it has faced and comparing it to the emergence of the heliocentric view of the universe, we see similarities supporting the view that the democratic learning model has reached its tipping point. It is now just a matter of its disciples uniting to demand their rightful access to the public coffers.

In *Dumbing Us Down*, John Gatto⁴⁸ sets the tone for how to approach the study of the democratic learning paradigm.

⁴⁵ Gray, P. (2022). Signs The Revolution Is Accelerating [Video]. AERO 2022 conference. https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/iZyBGL2KiTk9QZ6FLhBNTs7Odjbdn4sOeCBBgfZCfqNMLxvKU_vCbrTeSwl1DV_3MdG7cDyGO-EtOu-C.ztyew2lubLct-Xiq?startTime=1656284626000&_xzm_rtaid=J1uGJfGgRNKyMglvZINeQw.1659008840269.133e0106df0407370b750ed49428150f&_xzm_rhtaid=455

⁴⁶ Gatto, J. T. (2017). *The underground history of American education: An intimate investigation into the prison of modern schooling, Volume I* (Rev. ed.). Oxford Scholars Press. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Underground_History_of_American_Education

⁴⁷ Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Collier Books. pp. 19-20

⁴⁸ John Gatto. *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Taylor_Gatto

"It is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass-schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers, and among even the best of my students' parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things."⁴⁹

The following excerpt from *Touch the Earth*⁵⁰ provides a good starting point for a timeline depicting the emergence of the democratic learning paradigm. It shows concern long before governments established compulsory, autocratic schooling for everyone that the kinds of institutions stemming from St. Peter's College are not a suitable way for the young to get an education. The Wayne Jennings quote above remarkably echoes what the leaders of the Six Nations said.

"On June 17, 1744, the commissioners from Maryland and Virginia negotiated a treaty with the Indians of the Six Nations at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Indians were invited to send boys to William and Mary college. The next day they declined the offer as follows,

"We thank you heartily, but you who are wise must know that different nations have different conceptions of things, and you, therefore, should not take it amiss if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same as yours.

...Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all of your sciences, but when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods.... neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors, they were totally good for nothing.

We are, however, none the less obligated by your kind offer. To show our grateful sense of it, if you gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of your sons, we will take care of their education, instruct them in all we know and make men of them." - Chiefs of the Six Nations

The quote as displayed here was a slide used by [Je'anna Clements when she was speaking at the 2022 Learning Planet Festival](#).⁵¹ Her topic was the pros and cons of the newly released UNESCO

⁴⁹ Gatto, J. T. (1992). *Dumbing us down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*. New Society Publishers. p.12.

⁵⁰ McLuhan, T.C. (1971). *Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence*. Promontory Press. p. 57.

⁵¹ Je'anna Clements was a panelist with people who co-authored a response to an early draft of the UNESCO report published in November 2021. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W-zZhJa9gC7E1_SNm92VlKAc3-TwF8Ht/view?usp=sharing.

report titled: [Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education](#).⁵² On the initiative of Gabriel Goiss, vice-chair of EUDEC⁵³ and founder/director of Playa Escuela,⁵⁴ an international group of five provided [a response to the request by UNESCO for feedback](#) on a preliminary draft of the report.⁵⁵ Je'anna shares the thinking of this group.

Not long after compulsory government education started to take hold in the 1830s, Tolstoy wrote,

*“What is meant by non-interference of the school in learning? . . . [It means] granting students the full freedom to avail themselves of teaching that answers their needs, and that they want, only to the extent that they need and want it; and it means not forcing them to learn what they do not need or want.”*⁵⁶

John Dewey expressed his opposition to formal schooling in the late 1800s and beyond with [his views on experiential learning](#).⁵⁷ In the early 1900s [Maria Montessori](#) was receiving recognition for her understanding on how children gain independence.⁵⁸ [Rudolf Steiner](#)⁵⁹ opened the first Waldorf school in 1919 challenging the basic assumptions of the factory model of education. [Summerhill](#)⁶⁰ was established in 1921 and still serves as an example of a school based on democratic principles. During the 1930 – 1940s the [Progressive Education Association](#)⁶¹ conducted its [Eight Year Study](#) of schools that fostered “a democratic ideal that participants would work together for a greater good”.⁶² The [Free School Movement](#) of the 1960 – 1970s presented an intense challenge to coercive schooling.⁶³ [Jonathan Kozol](#)⁶⁴ wrote about them in

⁵² International Commission on the Futures of Education. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*. UNESCO. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

⁵³ EUDEC is one of the regional DECs of IDEC mentioned here on p.15. Retrieved on August 12, 2022 from <https://eudec.org>

⁵⁴ Playa Escuela is a democratic “beach school” operating in the Canary Islands of Spain. Retrieved on August 12, 2022 from <https://www.playaescuela.org/english>

⁵⁵ Zago, K.; Fransham, R.; Groiss, G.; Hannam, D.; Hecht, Y. (2021). Response to UNESCO's International Commission on Futures of Education [Progress Update](#). Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FTRsIwAx1OPptyeztMgmu7HqNSx_-8xv/view

⁵⁶ Ibid 37. (1862) Quoted from opening page.

⁵⁷ John Dewey’s Pedagogy: A Summary. *Teach Thought University*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/pedagogy-john-dewey-summary/>

⁵⁸ Maria Montessori. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Montessori

⁵⁹ Rudolf Steiner & the History of Waldorf Education. *Association of Waldorf Schools of North America*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.waldorfeducation.org/waldorf-education/rudolf-steiner-the-history-of-waldorf-education>

⁶⁰ A.S.Neill’s Summerhill School. *Summerhill*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk>

⁶¹ Progressive Education Association. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Education_Association

⁶² Kridel, C. (2020). The Eight-Year Study and Progressive Education Cooperative Studies. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-1146>

⁶³ Free School Movement. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_school_movement

⁶⁴ Kozol, J. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.jonathankozol.com>

Free Schools.⁶⁵ Numerous other books were published at this time condemning public education. One of the first was *How Children Fail*⁶⁶ by John Holt⁶⁷ who coined the term “unschooling”⁶⁸ and who is known as the father of the modern unschooling movement.”⁶⁹ *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education*,⁷⁰ published in 1991 by Grace Llewellyn, is said to have been inspired by John Holt. In 1968, the non-coercive Sudbury Valley School⁷¹ was founded with A.S. Neill’s book *Summerhill*, published in 1960, serving as inspiration.⁷² It has had an enormous influence on the democratic learning movement and has spawned an array of Sudbury Schools⁷³ providing similar learning environments in their communities. Daniel Greenberg has written extensively about the school. *Free At Last*⁷⁴ is an easy read he produced that answers many questions people have about the school. That same year the extraordinary *Living and Learning*⁷⁵ report on education commissioned by the Government of Ontario was published. It presented a humanistic view of education that honoured young people and respected their individual differences. Giving measure to the discontent with public education at the time, it states:

*“Today, on every side, however, there is heard a growing demand for a fresh look at education in Ontario. The Committee was told of inflexible programs, outdated curricula, unrealistic regulations, regimented organization, and mistaken aims of education. We heard from alienated students, frustrated teachers, irate parents, and concerned educators. Many public organizations and private individuals have told us of their growing discontent and lack of confidence in a school system which, in their opinion, has become outmoded and is failing those it exists to serve.”*⁷⁶

On the positive side, it says:

*“The Truth Shall Make You Free: The underlying aim of education is to further man's unending search for truth. Once he possesses the means to truth, all else is within his grasp. Wisdom and understanding, sensitivity, compassion, and responsibility, as well as intellectual honesty and personal integrity, will be his guides in adolescence and his companions in maturity.”*⁷⁷

⁶⁵ Kozol, J. (1972). *Free Schools*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

⁶⁶ Holt, J. (1964). *How Children Fail*, Pitman Publishing Company. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_Children_Fail

⁶⁷ John Holt (Educator). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Holt_\(educator\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Holt_(educator))

⁶⁸ Unschooling. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unschooling>

⁶⁹ A Brief History of Homeschooling. *Coalition for Responsible Home Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/research/summaries/a-brief-history-of-homeschooling/>

⁷⁰ Llewellyn, G. (1991). *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education*. Lowry House Publishers.

⁷¹ Sudbury Valley School. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://sudburyvalley.org>

⁷² Neill, A. S. (1960). *Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing*. Hart PubCo. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._S._Neill

⁷³ Sudbury School. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudbury_school

⁷⁴ Ibid 37. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://bookstore.sudburyvalley.org/product/free-last>

⁷⁵ Hall, E. M., & Dennis, L. A. (1968). *Living and learning: The report*. Queen’s Printer. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.connexions.org/CxLibrary/Docs/CX5636-HallDennis.htm>

⁷⁶ Ibid 73, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid 73, p. 9.

People express wonder at how over 50 years after *Living and Learning* was published public education has remained so much the same. A big part of the answer which will be addressed in Part 3 of this essay lies in the utter failure of the Ministry of Education to understand how to manage change. It results in conservative forces discrediting even the best of ideas and people scurrying back to their old ways for shelter from criticism.

Michael Fullan who is perceived to be a star within the educational establishment has remained active since publishing *The Meaning of Educational Change*⁷⁸ in 1982. In a recent publication, *Deep Learning*,⁷⁹ he states, “Perhaps the greatest internal push factor in traditional schooling is that it is not engaging to say the least.”⁸⁰ He advocates for greater student ownership of their education and for connecting them to the “real world”. He refers to a 2017 Ontario government policy that replaced “character” as one of the 6Cs of education with “self-directed learning”.⁸¹ Speaking directly of children and youth he says they “have a natural affinity to improving humanity” and that they “are the best change agents”.⁸² Interestingly, Tom D’Amico,⁸³ the current director of the OCSB, is the Canadian co-lead of New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL),⁸⁴ a global partnership of over 1,500 schools across 14 countries focused on practices to develop deep learning.

Ken Robinson has also been a major voice in public education encouraging people to unlearn their old mindsets about schooling. His talk “[Do schools kill creativity?](#)”⁸⁵ has had the distinction of being the most watched Ted Talk of all time⁸⁶ and his animated video *Changing Education Paradigms*⁸⁷ spells out the need for change. His daughter Kate is keeping his legacy alive through the organization called [Nevergrey](#)⁸⁸ and the newly published book *Imagine If . . . : Creating a future for us all*.⁸⁹ Of particular note is the success of [Yaacov Hecht](#)⁹⁰ who has been involved in the creation of about 30 publicly funded democratic schools in Israel. His first, which was the first school in the world to be called a democratic school, was the [Democratic School in](#)

⁷⁸ Ibid 21

⁷⁹ Fullan, M., McEachen, J., & Quinn, J. (2018). *Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World*. Corwin Press. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://michaelfullan.ca/books/deep-learning-engage-the-world-change-the-world/>

⁸⁰ Ibid 77, p.3

⁸¹ Ibid 77, p.161

⁸² Ibid 77, p.164

⁸³ Tom D’Amico. EdCan Network. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.edcan.ca/experts/tom-damico/>

⁸⁴ New Pedagogies for Deep Learning. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://deep-learning.global>

⁸⁵ Robinson, K. (2006). Do schools kill creativity? [Video]. *TED*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity?language=en

⁸⁶ The most popular talks of all time. *TED*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.ted.com/playlists/171/the_most_popular_talks_of_all

⁸⁷ Robinson, K. (2010). Changing Education Paradigms [Video]. *RSA Animate*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U>

⁸⁸ Nevergrey. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.nevergrey.org>

⁸⁹ Robinson, K.; Robinson, K. (2022). *Image If . . . : Creating a future for us all*. Nevergrey. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.sirkenrobinson.com>

⁹⁰ Yaacov Hecht bio submitted to the conference organizers. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.ucyottawa.com/saturday-session-1-bios/>

[Hadera](#)⁹¹ founded in 1987. He has written about his experience in *Democratic Education: A Beginning of a Story*.⁹² In 1993, Yaacov convened the first [International Democratic Education Conference \(IDEC\)](#)⁹³ at his school in Hadera. The website of [the 2005 IDEC held in Berlin](#)⁹⁴ is still available giving an idea of what was being discussed at the time. IDEC has since grown to include regional DEC's that hold annual conferences. In early August 2022, members of these DEC's came together in person at Summerhill to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the school, a celebration that was postponed a year because of COVID. Yaacov was a keynote speaker at the November 2020 Ottawa Child Friendly Community Conference.⁹⁵ The [recording of his talk](#) outlines his views on democratic education.

The late 1980s and early 1990s was another period of note in the development of the democratic school movement. In addition to Yaacov's work, [Ron Miller](#),⁹⁶ founded the journal *Holistic Education Review*⁹⁷ in 1988. His book *Creating Learning Communities* makes a valuable contribution to thinking about communities of learners.⁹⁸ Another visionary, Jerry Mintz, founded the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO)⁹⁹ in 1989. Its purpose is to promote child-centered learning. The latest of a number of books he has published is *School's Over*¹⁰⁰ with a forward by Ken Robinson. He was also one of the founders of IDEC.¹⁰¹ In 1990 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi published *Flow* which stresses the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning.¹⁰² He is not as well known as he deserves to be and a reason given for this is that people have trouble pronouncing his name. One educator who has picked up on his ideas is Carmen Gamper who published *Flow to Learn*¹⁰³ in 2020. It is a 52-week parent's guide to

⁹¹ Rachmiel, X.; Elfaks, S. (2018). Democratic School of Hadera [Video]. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-faEA4Dv3Gg>

⁹² Hecht, Y. (2012). *Democratic Education: A Beginning of a Story*. Innovation Culture.

⁹³ International Democratic Education Conference. *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Democratic_Education_Conference

⁹⁴ IDEC 2005 Berlin. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://en.idec2005.org>

⁹⁵ Hecht, Y. (2022). Yaacov Hecht on Democratic Education [Video]. *Child Friendly Community Conference - 2020*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnN-js2uvwc>. The conference was organized by Uniting for Children and Youth, retrieved on August 8, 2022 from (<https://www.ucyottawa.com>) and Unschooling School , retrieved on August 8, 2022 from (<https://www.unschoolingschool.com/index.html>) in November 2020.

⁹⁶ Episode 11: Ron Miller (2018). *Meetings With Remarkable Educators*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.remarkable-educators.com/podcast/2018/5/15/episode-11-ron-miller>

⁹⁷ *Holistic Education Review*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://her.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/her/about>

⁹⁸ Miller, R. (2000). *Creating Learning Communities*. Alternative Education Resource Organization. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.amazon.ca/Creating-Learning-Communities-Resources-Thinking/dp/1885580045>

⁹⁹ Alternative Education Resource Organization. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://www.educationrevolution.org/store/>

¹⁰⁰ Mintz, J. (2016). *School's Over: How to Have Freedom and Democracy in Education*. Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO). Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.educationrevolution.org/store/?s=School%27s+Over>

¹⁰¹ Jerry Mintz. *AERO*. <https://www.educationrevolution.org/store/jerrymintz/>

¹⁰² Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihaly_Csikszentmihalyi

¹⁰³ Gramper, C. (2020). *Flow to Learn*. NewLearningCulture Publishing.

supporting children's flow state. It was 1991 that [John Gatto](#)¹⁰⁴ published *Dumbing Us Down*,¹⁰⁵ followed by *Weapons of Mass Instruction*¹⁰⁶ and *The Underground History of American Education*.¹⁰⁷ *The Universal Schoolhouse*¹⁰⁸ by James Moffat, published in 1994, has gone relatively unnoticed, but it presents some of the deepest thinking on education. Mentioned in Part 1 of this essay is Mike Weimann¹⁰⁹ with his involvement with [K.R.Ä.T.Z.Ä.](#),¹¹⁰ the German child activists who formed in 1992 after the Berlin Wall came down. One of its main interests was voting rights without age limits, which John Wall is now pursuing with the [Children's Voting Colloquium](#) founded in 2019¹¹¹ and his recently published book *Give Children the Vote: On Democratizing Democracy*.¹¹² Also mentioned in Part 1 of this essay is David Purpel who published *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education*¹¹³ in 1988. The quote from his work provided by Ailsa Watkinson in *Education, Student Rights and the Charter* (1999)¹¹⁴ is worth repeating here:

*Purpel has suggested that the need to control student behaviour reflects an obsession within the traditional authoritarian model of education. The need to control has placed a higher priority on productivity, efficiency, and uniformity than on flexibility, diversity, rights, and freedoms. Disciplinary rules are promulgated to reinforce control over students. School rules make it implicit, or if necessary, explicit that "it is the school that decides, the school that allows, let's, gives permission, waives, makes exceptions. It is the students who petition, request, and plead."*¹¹⁵

As people come to understand the potential of democratic schools, they start to develop visions of community learning hubs, or ecosystems of community learners. [Education Reimagined](#)¹¹⁶ is

¹⁰⁴ John Gatto Taylor > Quotes. *Goodreads*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/41319.John_Taylor_Gatto

¹⁰⁵ Gatto, J. T. (1992). *Dumbing us down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*. New Society Publishers. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.amazon.ca/Dumbing-Down-Anniversary-Curriculum-Compulsory/dp/0865718547/ref=sr_1_1?crid=J0O4BXAP55RE&keywords=dumbing+us+down&qid=1655551444&s=books&sprefix=dumbing%2Cstripbooks%2C165&sr=1-1

¹⁰⁶ Gatto, J. T. (2009). *Weapons of mass instruction: A schoolteacher's journey through the dark world of compulsory schooling*. New Society Publishers.

¹⁰⁷ Gatto, J. T. (2017). *The underground history of American education: An intimate investigation into the prison of modern schooling, Volume I* (Rev. ed.). Oxford Scholars Press.

¹⁰⁸ Moffat, J. (1994) - *The Universal Schoolhouse: Spiritual awakening through education*. Jossey-Bass Inc.

¹⁰⁹ Weimann, M. speaking at IDEC 2020 [Video]. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-OrSSdm9mc>. Mike helped to produced the video Democratic Schools (2006). Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfMk-cpXAP8>

¹¹⁰ K.R.Ä.T.Z.Ä. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://en.kraetzae.de>

¹¹¹ *Children's Voting Colloquium*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.childrenvoting.org>.

¹¹² Wall, J. (2022). *Give Children the Vote: On Democratizing Democracy*. Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, NY. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://johnwall.camden.rutgers.edu/books/give-children-the-vote/>.

¹¹³ Purpel, D. (1988). *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education*. Bergin & Garvey.

¹¹⁴ Watkinson, A. (1999). *Education, Student Rights and the Charter*. Purich Publishing.

¹¹⁵ Ibid 112, p. 39

¹¹⁶ *Education Reimagined* uses the term community-based ecosystem of learning. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://education-reimagined.org>

one of the groups promoting this vision. [Class Dismissed](#)¹¹⁷ shows how it happens that young learners free to explore will naturally reach out into their communities. Yaacov is breaking ground in this area with [a community development project](#) he is working on for a neighbourhood in Tel Aviv.¹¹⁸ It is inspired by *Happy City*¹¹⁹ written by Canadian author Charles Montgomery who founded [Happy Cities](#)¹²⁰ to encourage the development of places that work better for everybody. Yaacov's vision of the project and the kind of research and development that could refine it to include the supersonic jet of education looks doable to those well-versed in self-directed learning. [Evidence base for Self-Directed Learning](#),¹²¹ compiled by the [Suitable Education team](#),¹²² gives a taste of the kind of research that has yet to be undertaken in earnest by ministries of educations, school boards, faculties of education and foundations funding educational research if we are to build the rich and engaging learning environments children and youth need.

Around the start of COVID a number of international initiatives have been adding momentum to the emergence of the democratic learning model. [Unschooling School](#)¹²³ was created by pro public education members of AERO led by Heather MacTaggart, co-author of *Overschooled But Undereducated: How the Crisis in Education is Jeopardizing Our Adolescents*.¹²⁴ The pandemic has resulted in more people thinking about how public education can be different and Unschooling School is helping to create visions of a new normal. Carl Rust, one of its founding members and author of *Get Out of the Way and Let Kids Learn*,¹²⁵ gives a compelling [introduction to Heather's talk](#) at the November 2020 Ottawa Child Friendly Community Conference.¹²⁶ Derry Hannam, author of [the Hannam Report](#),¹²⁷ is another founding member and at the start of the pandemic he published [Another Way Is Possible: Becoming a Democratic Teacher in a State School](#).¹²⁸ Derry was also a contributor to the above mentioned response answering the call by UNESCO for feedback on an early draft of its report titled [Reimagining](#)

¹¹⁷ Stuart, J. (2015). *Class Dismissed: A film about learning outside of the classroom*. [Movie]. 3StoryFilms LLC. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://classdismissedmovie.com>. See also *Self-Taught: Life stories from self-directed learners* (2019) by the same producer. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.selftaughtmovie.com>

¹¹⁸ A description of the project that Yaacov Hecht provided at the 2021 online Summerhill Festival. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D9DuO2OE6UTNn6BZkZhMwWPQ8G67qFFk/view?usp=sharing>

¹¹⁹ Montgomery, C. (2013). *Happy City: Transforming our lives through urban design*. Penguin Books.

¹²⁰ *Happy Cities*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://happycities.com>

¹²¹ Evidence base for Self-Directed Education. *Suitable Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://suitable-education.uk/evidence-base-for-self-directed-education/>. Facebook: retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/suitable.education/>

¹²² Who We Are. *Suitable Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://suitable-education.uk/who-are-we-in-brief/>

¹²³ *Unschooling School*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.unschoolingschool.com>

¹²⁴ Abbott, J., & MacTaggart, H. (2010). *Overschooled but Undereducated*. Continuum International.

¹²⁵ Rust, C. (2019). *Get Out of the Way and Let Kids Learn*. Amazon.

¹²⁶ Carl Rust introduction to Heather MacTaggart at the November 2020 Ottawa Child Friendly Community Conference. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDHkFfRdb3M>

¹²⁷ Hannam, D. (2001). *A Pilot Study to Evaluate the Impact of the Student Participation Aspects of the Citizenship Order On Standards of Education in Secondary Schools*. London: CSV. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.progressiveeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Hannam-Report-1.pdf>

¹²⁸ Hannam, D. (2020). *Another Way is Possible - Becoming a Democratic Teacher in a State School*. Smashwords. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/DerryH>

[our futures together: a new social contract for education](#).¹²⁹ The principal author of [the response](#)¹³⁰ was Katy Zago, a founder of [Full Human Rights-Experience Education \(FHREE\)](#).¹³¹ With its report, UNESCO “aims to catalyze a global debate on how education needs to be rethought in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and fragility.” The FHREE website provides a link to [159 quotes](#) from the report that Katy has identified as supporting the need for a fundamental transformation of education.¹³²

The wave of change is increasingly being fueled by parents like [Jo Symes](#),¹³³ a British mother who sent her children to school with little more thought than because “that is what parents do”. She soon discovered that it was not a good place for them and began to look for options. It was not long before she found a whole other world of education and decided to share what she learned through [Progressive Education](#).¹³⁴ [Her Facebook group](#)¹³⁵ has quickly grown to over 7000 members.

[Fabienne Vailes](#)¹³⁶ and [Naomi Fisher](#)¹³⁷ are two other British mothers who are gaining attention. Like Jo, they found autocratic schools to be inappropriate for their children and decided to speak out. Fabienne is the author of [several books on student flourishing](#)¹³⁸ and the founder of [Flourishing Education](#),¹³⁹ an online resource including podcasts of her in conversation with a wide range of adult and youth education changemakers. Naomi, a clinical psychologist and author of *Changing Our Minds: How children can take control of their own learning*,¹⁴⁰ was one of Fabienne’s podcast guests. [Their conversation is well worth a listen](#).¹⁴¹ Another mother already mentioned is Je’anna Clements who resides in South Africa. She is a founder of the [Riverstone Village](#) community of learners¹⁴² and author of *What If School Creates DYSlexia?*¹⁴³

¹²⁹ Ibid 52

¹³⁰ Ibid 53

¹³¹ FHREE - Full Human Rights-Experience Education. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://www.fhree.org>

¹³² 159 quotes from *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education* supporting the need for a fundamental transformation of education. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <http://www.fhree.org/2021/12/02/diy-159-memes/>

¹³³ Symes, J. (2021). Introducing the Progressive Education Website [Video]. *AEROx* mini talk. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://youtu.be/xpkIqQH4_Jc

¹³⁴ Creating a world where education has the best interests of the child at heart. *Progressive Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.progressiveeducation.org>

¹³⁵ Progressive Education Facebook Group. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/399926787494647>

¹³⁶ Fabienne Vailes – UK expert on well-being in education. *Flourishing Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://flourishingeducation.co.uk/meet-fabienne/>

¹³⁷ Let’s change our minds about lockdown learning, and give kids a break. *Progressive Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.progressiveeducation.org/lets-change-our-minds-about-lockdown-learning-and-give-kids-a-break-by-naomi-fisher/>

¹³⁸ Vailes, F. (2022). *The Flourishing Student*, 2nd edition. *Flourishing Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://flourishingeducation.co.uk/book/>

¹³⁹ *Flourishing Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://flourishingeducation.co.uk>

¹⁴⁰ Fisher, N. (2021). *Changing Our Minds: How children can take control of their own learning*. Little, Brown Book Group. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.naomifisher.co.uk/writing>

¹⁴¹ Vailes, F. (2021). Episode 67 - Changing our minds with Naomi Fisher [Podcast]. *Flourishing Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5kIZ84eZ3yUg98JhknsaJt>

¹⁴² Riverstone Village. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://riverstonevillage.org.za>

¹⁴³ Clements, J. (2020). *What If School Creates DYSlexia?*. Fhree in Association with Alliasbl. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/LifeLearningMedia>

among other books. At the AERO 2022 conference, Je'anna gave an insightful presentation titled [*When Challenging Behaviour Isn't What It Seems*](#).¹⁴⁴

The most significant accelerator of the change taking place is youth. They are becoming organized and confirming Kuhn's observation that it is often the young and the new to a field who bring about change. We are seeing the youth movement growing with global efforts such as [*#LearningPlanet*](#)¹⁴⁵ created in 2020 by the [*Learning Planet Institute*](#)¹⁴⁶ and [*UNESCO*](#).¹⁴⁷ It is a growing community of diverse game changers and institutions learning to take care of oneself, others and the planet. Its website carries the slogan "Uniting to Transform Education". In May 2021, it launched [*The Youth Empowerment Circle*](#) to support "inspirational youth changemakers and initiatives".¹⁴⁸ [*YouthxYouth*](#)¹⁴⁹ is one of over 300 member organizations of [*#LearningPlanet*](#). Zineb Mouhyi, one of its founders, gave a talk at the February 2021 AEROx titled [*Why Young People Should Design the Future of Education*](#).¹⁵⁰ At the June 2021 annual AERO conference she moderated a [*Youth Rights Day Panel*](#)¹⁵¹ described by one long standing AERO member as "the deepest, most powerful AERO session I've ever experienced," to which Jerry Mintz responded, "One of the best ever." It was 2019 when [*John Wall*](#)¹⁵² and [*Robin Chen*](#)¹⁵³ founded the [*Children's Voting Colloquium*](#).¹⁵⁴ The message is that if we want to live in a true democracy, we need to treat young people as equals. [*Akilah Richards*](#)¹⁵⁵ in [*Raising Free People*](#)¹⁵⁶ shares her experience with how this is done. She played a big role in the [*Alliance for Self-Directed Learning*](#).¹⁵⁷ and she and her daughter Marley were [*speakers at the 2020 Ottawa Child Friendly Community Conference*](#).¹⁵⁸ Mentioned in Part 1 of this essay is the short video produced by [*Wondering School*](#)¹⁵⁹ titled [*Youth Perspectives on Sociocracy*](#).¹⁶⁰ It exemplifies how youth from

¹⁴⁴ Clements, J. (2022). When Challenging Behaviour Isn't What It Seems [Video]. AERO Conference. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/7WFtzI93ar9oZimSGUwzH8W_abrEIOBwM17r1VWxIJ3jdK9hj8e6EupFt4mA_zgsvxtuqfJmxX132sLF.fYkRO88ewbNzxkxa?autoplay=true&startTime=1656255212000

¹⁴⁵ Uniting to Transform Education. [*#LearningPlanet*](#). Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.learning-planet.org>

¹⁴⁶ *Learning Planet Institute*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://learningplanetinstitute.org/en>

¹⁴⁷ UNESCO in brief. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief>

¹⁴⁸ *The Youth Empowerment Circle*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.learning-planet.org/youth/>

¹⁴⁹ YouthxYouth (YxY). Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youthxyouth.com>

¹⁵⁰ Mouhyi, Z. (2021). Why Young People Should Design the Future of Education [Video]. AEROx conference. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://youtu.be/irHE6DvOKsk>

¹⁵¹ Youth Rights Day Panel [Video]. (2021). AERO conference. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyE_n0Z5k6A

¹⁵² About John Wall. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://johnwall.camden.rutgers.edu/>

¹⁵³ About Robin Chen. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.kidscantvote.org/?fbclid=IwAR3I061mzv3T3O3PLgjsJepTgS5jKYS4Wju4Ii8Ui9dG3IshCP4qViGCfbw>

¹⁵⁴ *Children's Voting Colloquium*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.childrenvoting.org>

¹⁵⁵ *Raising Free People*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://raisingfreepeople.com>

¹⁵⁶ Richards, A. S. (2020). *Raising Free People: Unschooling as Liberation and Healing Work*. PM Press. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://www.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=1145

¹⁵⁷ *The Alliance for Self-Directed Education*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.self-directed.org>

¹⁵⁸ The Child Friendly Home [Video]. (2020). The Child Friendly Community Conference. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9uIc2RWskA>

¹⁵⁹ Wondering School. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.wonderingschool.org>

¹⁶⁰ Youth Perspectives on Sociocracy. (2021). *Wondering School*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3EXpBWAzk0>

different parts of the world are speaking out about the importance of their voices being heard. *Wondering School* produced the documentary [School Circles](#)¹⁶¹ featuring democratic schools in the Netherlands. It not only challenges mainstream education, it “connects the theory of sociocracy to its practice within schools, taking us to new possibilities of organising ourselves and our communities.”

There are numerous other youth organizations such as the [National Youth Rights Association](#)¹⁶², the [Rideau Students Union](#),¹⁶³ [Vote 16](#),¹⁶⁴ [Pupil Power](#),¹⁶⁵ [Youth Infusion Strategies](#)¹⁶⁶ and [Up For Learning](#)¹⁶⁷ reaching out locally and beyond that demonstrate the desire of young people to make a difference and the kinds of contributions they have to make. [Fridays for Future](#)¹⁶⁸ is perhaps the most known student action. It encourages students to skip classes on Fridays to protest the lack of action on climate change. It is not direct action for educational change, but it challenges the authority of schools to keep students in class, and it is only a matter of time before students realize that achieving their environmental objectives is dependent upon changing education paradigms. It can be expected that students will grow ever more intolerant of irrelevant school curriculum and needless tests preventing them from spending time learning about and doing the things that most matter to them. [Teach the Future](#)¹⁶⁹ is a notable active UK youth organization also advocating for climate action.

[The Youth Rights Day](#)¹⁷⁰ was initiated in 2021 to coincide with the [United Nations World Children’s Day](#),¹⁷¹ which defines children as under the age of 18. To bring attention to the day, youth activists Addie Lentzner and Mahi Thakur, working with [Peter Berg](#)¹⁷² created the first Youth AEROx held in early November of 2021. Addie is well-known in Vermont for the work she has done for homeless people, [racial justice](#) and youth empowerment.¹⁷³ Mahi was a member of the Youth Rights Day Panel moderated by Zineb Mouhyi at the 2021 AERO conference and she is a volunteer with [Ecoversities](#).¹⁷⁴ Peter is the author of *The Tao of Teenagers: A guide to*

¹⁶¹ Osório, M. & Shread, C. (2020). *School Circles* [Movie]. *Wondering School*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://schoolcirclesfilm.com>

¹⁶² *National Youth Rights Association*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youthrights.org>

¹⁶³ *Rideau Students’ Union*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.rideaustudentsunion.ca>

¹⁶⁴ *Vote 16*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://vote16.substack.com>. Aleksi Toiviainen provides a July 28, 2022 update on the Vote 16 movement in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and Germany. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://vote16.substack.com/p/vote-16-policies-advance-around-the>

¹⁶⁵ *Pupil Power*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://pupilpower.org>

¹⁶⁶ *Youth Infusion Strategies*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://youthinfusion.org/about-2/>

¹⁶⁷ *Up For Learning*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.upforlearning.org>

¹⁶⁸ *Fridays For Future*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://fridaysforfuture.org>

¹⁶⁹ *Teach the Future*. Retrieved on August 9, 2022 from <https://www.teachthefuture.uk>

¹⁷⁰ *Youth Rights Day*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://youthrightsday.org>

¹⁷¹ *United Nations World Children’s Day*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-childrens-day/background>

¹⁷² Peter Berg. *Summerhill Festival of Childhood*. Retrieved on August 9, 2022 from

<https://summerhillfestival.com/speakers/dr-peter-berg/>

¹⁷³ Addie Lentzner is the founder and facilitator of the *Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network (VSARN)*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://vsarn.org>. She also works with *Vermont Learning For the Future*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.vtfff.org>

¹⁷⁴ *Ecoversities*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://ecoversities.org>

*Teen Health, Happiness & Empowerment*¹⁷⁵ and he along with Jerry Mintz are the mainstays of AERO. Peter works closely with youth and is bringing strong youth voices to the fore. In a short [Youth Rights Day promo video](#) produced by Ottawa student Ferdous Sediqi, Addie and fellow activist Praja Tickoo stress the importance of youth involvement with transforming schools in ways that permit students to make their game changing contributions to addressing real problems.¹⁷⁶ The purpose of the Youth Rights Day is to have all people, young and old, who are advocating for youth rights to stand together on November 20th in a grand show of solidarity that establishes the respect of youth rights as essential to a healthy democracy. Earth Day was designed to raise awareness of environmental concerns by having everyone turn off their lights for awhile that day. Similarly, the Youth Rights Day is to raise awareness of youth rights and how to establish democratic relations with young people. Ailsa Watkinson pointed out that “children have been considered chattel and as such have been and continue to be subjected to an authoritarian and paternalistic relationship with their parents and other adults.”¹⁷⁷

In addition to all of the above that are accelerating the adoption of the democratic learning model are the slew of talks, webinars, conferences, videos, documentaries and social media exchanges that are spreading the word like never before. We have reached the critical mass where pleading ignorance of the rights of children and youth is no longer a defense. The world is going to hold to account those who do not put in the time required to “see” that the common view of young people as chattel is an injustice that perpetuates the mentality that some people are entitled to own slaves. As Arundhati Roy says:

*“The trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable.”*¹⁷⁸

[The exodus from public education](#) is happening, not only because people are seeking democratic options, but because the system is failing even those who want more of the same only better.¹⁷⁹ It is widening the gap between the haves and have-nots as people with means are more likely to seek options other than public education. Ghetto schools for the poor are more than looming. They can be found in places where governments support privatization, school choice, charter schools and voucher systems. The longer it takes public educators to create a system of community learning hubs for all, the more they will become irrelevant and responsible for the disintegration of our society into classes and cults. The choice for the fortunate ones who have it is a difficult one – to leave or not to leave public education. It's a troublesome choice to force on people. Most parents understand that taking their children out of public education is anti-democratic, and to a considerable extent it excommunicates their families from their local

¹⁷⁵ Berg, P. (2016). *The Tao of Teenagers: A Guide To Teen Health and Happiness*. Youth Transformations Publishing.

¹⁷⁶ Lentzner, A. & Tickoo, P. Producer Sediqi, F. (2021). Calling All Youth and Their Supporters - Video 1. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMCZEiYLUto>

¹⁷⁷ Ibid at 84, pp. 27-28.

¹⁷⁸ Arundhati Roy Quotes. *GoodReads*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/590518-the-trouble-is-that-once-you-see-it-you-can-t>. Roy wrote *The God of Small Things*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_God_of_Small_Things

¹⁷⁹ Hubler, S. (2022). With Plunging Enrollment, a ‘Seismic Hit’ to Public Schools. *New York Times*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/us/public-schools-falling-enrollment.html>

community. It comes down to choosing the lesser of the evils and many are deciding that public education as we know it is the greater evil. Parents have to choose what is best for their children. As people become more sensitized to the harm coercive schooling is doing to children, they will come to see it as crimes against humanity with Carol Black's question, "*How could we have done this kind of thing to people?*" stuck in their minds.

Timelines for the Education Revolutions

Table 2 presents summary timelines for the two Education Revolutions. It makes for some easy comparison with the Copernican Revolution. Once Ptolemy's theories were adopted, they stayed in place for years with no big new developments. The same is true for the autocratic education paradigm. It has not changed fundamentally since its inception. The table also shows that while a contender can be beaten back, if the problems of the dominant paradigm persist, it can keep coming back with stronger arguments and evidence than before. With the growing wealth of knowledge supporting the democratic learning model, the development of digital technology, and COVID, the tipping point for fundamental change is upon us. What remains to be seen is if we take the route to privatization or the one focused on building a just society.

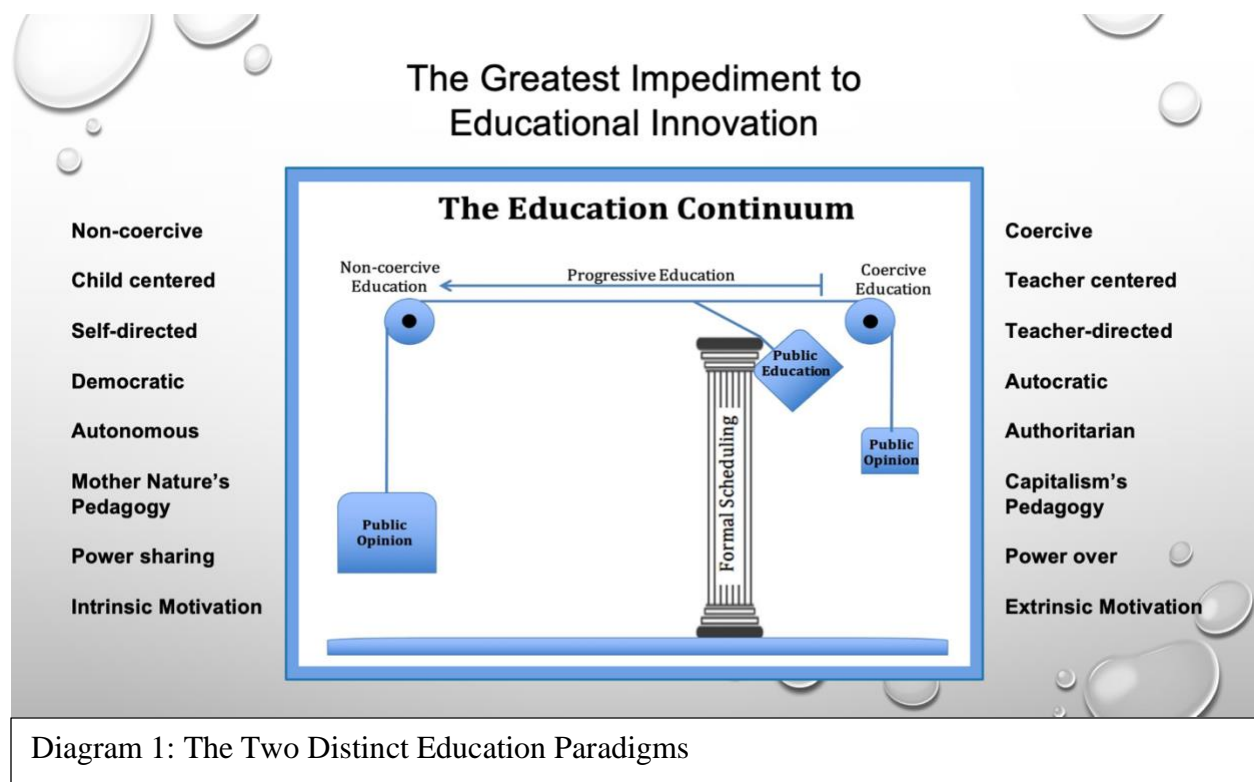
Table 2: The Education Revolution Timelines	
Adult Centered	Child Centered
- Catholic Church (500-1500 A.D.)	- Indians of Six Nations (1744 A.D.)
- St. Peter’s College..... (1284 A.D.)	- Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910 A.D.)
- 1 st public school in America..... (1635 A.D.)	- John Dewey (1859-1952 A.D.)
- Horace Mann..... (1796-1859 A.D.)	- Maria Montessori (1870-1952 A.D.)
- Frederick Taylor..... (1856-1915 A.D.)	- Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925 A.D.)
- <i>The Principles of Scientific Management (1911 A.D.)</i>	- A.S. Neill..... (1883-1973 A.D.)
	- <i>Summerhill (1921 A.D.)</i>
	- Eight-Year Study (1930–1942 A.D.)
	- John Holt..... (1923-1985 A.D.)
	- The Free School Movement..... (1960-1975 A.D.)
	- Daniel Greenberg..... (1883-1973 A.D.)
	- <i>Sudbury Valley School (1968 A.D.)</i>
	- <i>Living and Learning</i> (1968 A.D.)
	- Paulo Freire..... (1921-1997 A.D.)
	- Ivan Illich (1926-2002 A.D.)
	- Yaacov Hecht (1958- A.D.)
	- <i>Democratic School in Hadera (1987 A.D.)</i>
	- Ron Miller (??- A.D.)
	- <i>Holistic Education Review (1988 A.D.)</i>
	- Jerry Mintz..... (??- A.D.)
	- <i>AERO (1989 A.D.)</i>
	- John Gatto (1935-2018 A.D.)
	- WWW and flip phone (1989 A.D.)
	- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1934-2021 A.D.)
	- IDEC (1993 A.D.)
	- Ken Robinson..... (1950-2020 A.D.)
	- Peter Gray..... (1946- A.D.)
	- Fridays For Future..... (2018- A.D.)
	- COVID (2020- A.D.)
	- The Tipping Point..... (2020-2030 A.D.)

The Continuum

Diagram 1¹⁸⁰ presents an approximation of where public education stands today. It depicts a continuum from coercive to non-coercive learning environments and acknowledges that autocratic schools have advanced in some ways along the continuum towards non-coercion. This advance is more than not a bit of wishful thinking. It is true that teachers are generally less authoritarian than they were in the early days of coercive schooling, but increasing pressure on

¹⁸⁰ Slide produced by Fransham, R. (2021). Used for the 2022 Learning Planet Festival presentation on the pros and cons of the UNESCO report.

students to perform in a competitive environment, irrelevant curriculum, and the commandeering of students' time without their consent have things going very much in the wrong direction. A measure that this is so is the declining state of their mental health. *The Self-Driven Child* by William Stixrud and Ned Johnson emphasizes the importance of children being self-directed.¹⁸¹ [Gareth Cook's review of the book](#) in *Scientific American*¹⁸² reinforces the need to involve the young in decisions that affect them. There is an expanding wealth of literature on the connection between mental health and self-determination that can be tapped with a search of Google using the term "self determination mental health".



The diagram also suggests that the general public's opinion of what kind of education young people need has progressed further along the continuum than what public schools are delivering, and that those pushing for greater adult control over children's learning are a minority. Some evidence of this is that employers are finding school graduates are lacking skills they need to be successful in today's workplace. The 4Cs presented in Part 1, creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration have been identified as among the essential skills, but they are not developed in controlled environments where students are expected to follow a narrowly defined path and to do as they are told. This call by employers is in reality a call for students to have greater self-direction. It signals the coming together of training for work and training for

¹⁸¹ Stixrud, W., & Johnson, N. (2018). *The self-driven child: The science and sense of giving your kids more control over their lives*. Viking Press.

¹⁸² Cook G. (2018). The Case for the Self-Driven Child. *Scientific American*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-case-for-the-ldquo-self-driven-child-rdquo/>

life, the 4Cs being as essential for living good independent lives as they are to being valued employees.

The barrier holding everything back is formal scheduling, the practice of dividing the school day into fixed chunks of time to teach isolated subjects. Larry Rosenstock,¹⁸³ as noted in Part 1 of this essay, describes it as the single greatest impediment to educational innovation.¹⁸⁴ Formal scheduling is not a characteristic of democratic schools. Meeting times for courses like the one offered by Daniel Greenberg, or for any other purpose are determined in the ways people in the workplace arrange most convenient times for their meetings. Doodle¹⁸⁵ offers one of the tools developed to facilitate the task and learning to use it effectively in schools helps to prepare the young for adult life. Mixed-aging, described by Daniel Greenberg as Sudbury Valley School's secret weapon¹⁸⁶ is easy to implement when formal scheduling is eliminated. The children who requested his arithmetic course were ages 9 to 12. With age mixing, younger children are not held back from learning what they are ready to learn, and older children are not forced to learn something before they are ready to learn it. Only by eliminating formal scheduling can we dismantle the one-size-fits-all form of schooling prevalent today.

A significant distinction between the Copernican and Education Revolutions is that in education it is not an all or none proposition. With the former, there is no in-between. The earth is either the centre of the universe or it is not. In contrast, changing one's mindset in education can be a small steps process. Adults can become a little less controlling, and students can become a little more self-directed. The goal is to complete the shift to non-coercive learning, the shift back to being intrinsically motivated, but it can be timed to people's readiness to take their next step. Appreciating Kuhn's observation that some people are early adopters of a new paradigm, others take longer, and some never adopt it is critical to how large-scale social change is managed. Coercing people to change is not effective. Fully informing them of the possibilities and giving them the opportunity to try what they think is their best option is the action to take, assuming their options are equally visible and accessible. It is clear that this requires an end to the suppression by the dominant paradigm of information parents and students need.

Daniel Pink in *Drive*¹⁸⁷ points out that highly controlled people will suffer if they are suddenly plunked into autonomous environments, that they need some kind of scaffolding. A beauty of the Education Revolution is that scaffolding is easily provided and easily removed. Coercive practices can be gently removed allowing students, teachers and parents to avoid getting too far outside their comfort zones. How school boards can manage this change process is also covered in Part 3 of this essay coming soon.

Paradigm shifts can involve more than two contenders as is the case with the Education Revolution. Among the perceived contenders to replace coercive schooling, are Waldorf,

¹⁸³ Larry Rosenstock is a founder of the *High Tech High* network of California charter schools. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.hightechhigh.org>.

¹⁸⁴ Abeles, V. (2015). *Beyond Measure: Rescuing an overscheduled, overtested, underestimated generation*. Simon & Schuster. p. 56. See Beyond Measure {Movie}. *Reel Link Films*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://beyondtheracetowhere.org/beyond-measure/>

¹⁸⁵ Doodle: Professional scheduling made easy. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://doodle.com/en/>

¹⁸⁶ Ibid 37, pp.75-80

¹⁸⁷ Pink, D. H. (2009). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. Riverhead Books. p.107

Montessori, Agile, Acton and Sudbury. The Sudbury Valley School is considered to be the most non-coercive of them all. Determining how far each is along the continuum varies depending on the degree of controls being imposed on students, and the controls are not always well defined. Schools using the Montessori name for instance are known to vary considerably with some accused of being Montessori in name only. Schools grouped under the heading of democratic schools also vary considerably. It is said that no two are the same because no community of learners is the same. It tells us that we should not be looking for a new “one-size-fits-all”, but rather to allow for people to find the size that fits their community and to celebrate diversity. A school may also be a blend of contenders. Erin Anderson, the Ottawa mother who founded [Revel Academy](#)¹⁸⁸ is providing students with a mix of Montessori and Acton approaches. Her school is accredited by the [International Association of Learner-Driven Schools](#)¹⁸⁹ which supports schools serving the whole child and that are committed to continuous growth. Other than a lack of imagination and being too fixed in their old mindset, there is no reason for school boards to not offer students these kinds of learning environment as schools within community schools. Trust in the ability of young people to be the architects of their own learning increases with greater exposure to student-led learning environments, and the benefits of this trust are far from trivial. A look at brain research gives some dimension to what is involved.

[A study of London taxi drivers' brains](#) found they had enlarged hippocampi.¹⁹⁰ The hippocampus is associated with learning and memory and it was concluded that the enlargements resulted from the high use made of it by taxi drivers who had to navigate their way around the complex streets of London. Adding to this the idea of synaptic pruning, the “use it or lose it” phenomenon, we have good reason to question the view held by so many that the executive function of the frontal lobe of the brain does not begin to develop until later childhood. This could very well be because children are prevented from developing it. It might also explain why so many adults appear to lack a high level of executive function. Related unused synapses may be getting pruned during younger years. The belief that the frontal lobe does not develop until later in life may be a self-perpetuating phenomenon. Young people are denied decision making responsibility because their frontal lobes are not developed, but their frontal lobes may be undeveloped because they are excluded from meaningful decision making. [Brain research](#) has begun to consider this possibility,¹⁹¹ but there is little indication that the educational establishment is taking it seriously.

Among the possibilities for research that tells us more about the development of the brain is comparative studies of the frontal lobes of children raised in authoritarian environments versus those raised in democratic ones. This kind of research also falls into the realm of the normal science of the democratic learning paradigm and it cannot be answered without first having the

¹⁸⁸ *Revel Academy*, Ottawa. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.revelacademy.ca>

¹⁸⁹ *The International Association of Learner Driven Schools (IALDS)*. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://ialds.org>

¹⁹⁰ Maguire, E. A., Gadian, D. G., Johnsrude, I. S., Good, C. D., Ashburner, J., Frackowiak, R. S. J., & Frith, C. D. (2000). Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers. *PNAS*, 97(8), 4398-4403. Retrieved on August 8, 2022 from <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.070039597>

¹⁹¹ Laursen, E. (2009). *Positive Youth Cultures and the Developing Brain*, reclaiming children and youth, 18(2), 8-11. Reclaiming Journal. Retrieved on August 5, 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Erik-Laursen-3/publication/238741031_Positive_Youth_Cultures_and_the_Developing_Brain/links/5c69cdb892851c1c9de70726/Positive-Youth-Cultures-and-the-Developing-Brain.pdf

model in place. Currently we have to turn to the private sector to adequately explore this question, which should be seen as a dereliction of duty by public educators. It is time for ministries of education to support the people developing the democratic learning model for the mainstream. As already stated, many old school people will defend themselves saying they are already investigating the new paradigm, but rarely, if true at all, is it more than tokenism. Their continued unwillingness to undertake a fundamental transformation of public education is abysmal. Following are other questions that need answers and public money needs to flow to those wanting to conduct the related studies.

- Do all children learn to read well of their own volition?¹⁹²
- Is dyslexia primarily a result of forcing people to learn something before they are ready?¹⁹³
- Is it true that children who have been free to learn what they wish, can around the age of 12 learn in 20 hours all the math that schools teach up to the end of grade 6?¹⁹⁴
- Is some level of coercion beneficial for at least some students?
- What are the skills required for people to be competent, self-directed, lifelong learners, and how can they best acquire them?
- How do rigor, persistence, self-discipline etc. play out with difficult learning tasks in democratic learning environments?
- Are people who attend democratic schools more likely to be good democratic citizens than those who attend autocratic schools?
- Is the mental health of students better among those raised in democratic learning environments as opposed to autocratic ones?
- Is the self-esteem of children who learn in mixed-age environments less affected by feelings of inferiority and superiority?
- Can the democratic model be provided at substantially less cost than the traditional model without any threat to teacher job security?
- Is teacher job satisfaction greater in one of the paradigms?

The most pressing question arises from Larry Rosenstock's observation. "Is the formally scheduled school day the single greatest impediment to educational innovation?" It has significant ramifications when it comes to students having more control over their learning, age-mixing, students being able to move at their own pace and study what most interests them, the quality of relationships, tapping into community resources, and so on. A good way to assess whether or not a school board is serious about overcoming the host of one-size-fits-all problems, the problems of student disengagement, and even the problems of bullying, is to determine how proactively it is exploring what happens when students are not constrained by formal scheduling.

One question that has been getting answered is, "Can children who do not get a standard school transcript get admitted to college or university?" The answer is "yes" thanks to people like Judy Arnall who has been advocating for unschoolers. She is the founder of the [Unschooling Canada](#)

¹⁹² Ibid 37 pp. 31-36.

¹⁹³ Ibid 190 and Je'anna Clement's book *What If Schools Create DSYlexia*, Ibid 141.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid 37 pp. 15-18.

[Association](#),¹⁹⁵ and author of [Unschooling to University](#),¹⁹⁶ which addresses this question. Universities and colleges are increasingly providing admission requirement options. Jen Sugar is the Director of Admissions Services at the midsize Carleton University in Ottawa. Speaking to parents and students of the local Compass Centre for Self-Directed Learning, she spelled out how unschooled students could get accepted to Carleton.¹⁹⁷ The bottom line is that they can get accepted based on grades from only a few courses and these grades can even be from university courses taken as a special student. Jen had brought with her two unschooled young people who had been accepted to Carleton. One was a graduate of its journalism program who had obtained her qualifying credits as a special university student; the other was a first-year engineering student who had obtained his required grades from courses he took on-line through the [Virtual Learning Centre](#).¹⁹⁸ Both were doing well, which helped to dispel parental fears that unschooled children would not be able to adjust to the rigors of university programs. Peter Gray and Gina Riley have studied what happens to people who have experienced unschooling and the evidence suggests that they do just fine.¹⁹⁹

The Compass Centre for Self-Directed Learning, a member of [Liberated Learners](#),²⁰⁰ has since had to close its doors for lack of funding. Liberated Learners stems from the work of [Ken Danford](#),²⁰¹ a teacher who left public education to start [North Star](#)²⁰² in order to better serve young learners. In his book [Learning is natural, school is optional](#),²⁰³ he explains his approach to giving teens a head start on life.

Another indication of how universities are recognizing the legitimacy of unschooling is the [Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning](#)²⁰⁴ edited by Carlo Ricci. Carlo is a professor of graduate studies with the Nipissing University Faculty of Education. He has produced a number of books related to unschooling, one being *Turning Points*²⁰⁵ which he edited along with Jerry Mintz, another is *The willed curriculum, unschooling, and self-direction: What do love, trust, respect, care, and compassion have to do with learning?*.²⁰⁶

The changing college and university entrance requirements raise the prospect of students going to school to participate in only the things that interest them and still getting accepted to

¹⁹⁵ [Unschooling Canada Association](#). Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <http://unschoolingcanada.ca/index.html>

¹⁹⁶ Arnall, J. (2018). *Unschooling To University* (First edition). Professional Parenting. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://unschoolingtouniversity.com/unschooling-to-university-by-judy-arnall/>

¹⁹⁷ Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsFG2j3aVMc>

¹⁹⁸ [Virtual Learning Centre](#). Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://virtualllearning.ca>

¹⁹⁹ Gray, P., Riley, G. (2014). *A Survey of Grown Unschoolers I: Overview of Findings*. Psychology Today blog: Freedom to Learn. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/freedom-learn/201406/survey-grown-unschoolers-i-overview-findings>

²⁰⁰ [Liberated Learners](#). Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://liberatedlearners.net>

²⁰¹ Kenneth Danford. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://kennethdanford.com>

²⁰² North Star. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.northstarteens.org>

²⁰³ Danford, K. (2019). *Learning is natural, school is optional: The North Star approach to offering teens a head start on life*. Golden Door Press. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://kennethdanford.com/the-book/>

²⁰⁴ [Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning](#). Retrieved on August 9, 2022 from <https://juaal.nipissingu.ca>

²⁰⁵ Ricci, C. & Mintz, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Turning points: 35 Educational visionaries in education tell their own stories*. USA: AERO.

²⁰⁶ Ricci, C. (2012). *The willed curriculum, unschooling, and self-direction: What do love, trust, respect, care, and compassion have to do with learning?* Toronto, Ontario: Ricci Publishing.

university. This non-compliance is essentially what Unschooling School advocates with its [Free Learner IEP designation](#).²⁰⁷ It is the establishing of a partnership between students and their schools in order for students to access the resources they need to accomplish their goals. If their school does not want to cooperate with them and insists that they follow the timetable assigned to them, then they can become responsibly subversive students sitting quietly at the back of the class doing something other than what the teacher requires. They can tell the teacher that they mean no disrespect, but that they have decided to take an “F” in the course in order to have time to work on something more relevant to them, such as a design thinking project like those promoted by student Praja Tickoo on his website [Impact the Future](#) created to empower students.²⁰⁸ Praja gave a talk titled [How We Can Empower Students To Impact The Future \(Design Thinking\)](#)²⁰⁹ at the AERO 2022 conference.

Social Conditions

As Kuhn observed can happen, social conditions unrelated to the democratic learning model have been obstructing its development much as the Catholic Church obstructed the development of heliocentricity. The ruling elite resist change that threatens their grip on power and capitalists wish to maintain their control over the production of workers and consumers. Both Catholicism and capitalism indoctrinate people to obediently conduct themselves according to their preaching to the point, as John Gatto says, few people can imagine how things can be different.

The Education Revolution, however, is far more complex than was the Copernican Revolution. [Zak Stein](#)²¹⁰ sheds light on this in [Education in a Time Between Worlds: Essays on the Future of Schools, Technology, and Society](#).²¹¹ Whether or not people believe that the earth is the center of the universe has little impact on their daily lives, but public education today is running people’s lives. It determines what time families get up in the morning, how they will spend their days, when they will take their vacations, what they will learn, and it perpetuates the authoritarian treatment of the young. It consequently makes the Education Revolution an all-encompassing personal event that involves [deschooling our lives](#).²¹²

The change occurring in education today is also not a standalone paradigm shift like that to heliocentricity. It is one aspect of the civilizational change underway from the industrial to the

²⁰⁷ Becoming a Free Learner. *Unschooling School*. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from

<https://www.unschoolingschool.com/youth.html>

²⁰⁸ Tickoo, P. *Impact The Future*. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.impactthefuture.net>

²⁰⁹ Tickoo, P. (2022). *How We Can Empower Students To Impact The Future (Design Thinking)* [Video]. AERO Conference. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/zr4FEjZvn10VxAv0PAILqKwUFudXI7kXhqKMIzUz5ENNHUeFUDmJVouw4Dy->

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²¹⁰ Stein, Z. (2021). Zak Stein Ecoverstities - Condensed Version [Video]. *Ecoverstities* Re-imagining Education Conference March 2021. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://youtu.be/wqh5w6lkP2c>

²¹¹ Stein, Z. (2019). *Education in a Time Between Worlds: Essays on the Future of Schools, Technology, and Society*. Bright Alliance. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <http://www.zakstein.org>

²¹² Hern, M. (Editor). (1996). *Deschooling Our Lives* with a forward by Ivan Illich author of *Deschooling Society*. New Society Publishers, 1996. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.matthern.ca/deschooling-our-lives>. “Class Dismissed” gives insight into the deschooling of a family.

digital age. The first education revolution occurred as part of the transformation from the agrarian to the industrial age. Dynamics of both civilizational changes have created social conditions that have accelerated as opposed to obstructed the adoption of the new education paradigms. As employers today call for graduates versed in the 4Cs indicates, the need for obedient factory workers is on the wane. The growing need is for creative, critical thinkers who do not have to be told what to do, and as already stated, these kinds of adults result from young people who have significantly greater control over their lives than is currently the case. The social impact of the cellphone is also having an enormous impact on the rate of change. With the device destined to be in the hands of everyone who wants one, school boards are pressed like never before to change their ways.

The pandemic is another social condition accelerating the shift to democratic leaning. It has suddenly put working from home on the table. The debate is still on as to whether or not workers are more productive when under the watchful eyes of their managers, but with some research showing that they can actually be more productive at home,²¹³ and with the prospect of employers substantially cutting costs by reducing office space, the idea is taking hold. It has people rethinking their lives with dreams of living out in the countryside and catching the train to town for in-person meetings only once in awhile, if at all. COVID has consequently made an exodus from cities and a return to rural life much more imaginable with visions of social circles being re-established with those living close by, and children's education cannot be separated from this.

Possibilities include more than working from home. Technology is making working and learning from anywhere in the world an option for many. The dream of seeing the world without losing income is doable like never before. Webinars such as "[The Evolution Of International Remote Work And Kids Education](#)"²¹⁴ will have people researching [worldschooling](#)²¹⁵ with thoughts of going globe trotting with the family for a year or two. The experiential learning this produces will make traditional schools look more sterile than ever and leave more parents wanting to get their kids out of public education. The democratic learning paradigm has the flexibility to combine worldschooling with local learning communities for the benefit of all. The Progressive Education webinar on how to set up learning communities provides related insights.²¹⁶

It has not begun to sink in yet for most people, but COVID has exposed things about school that will be increasingly difficult to ignore. One is the extent to which it is the babysitting service. School is very much about having a safe place for working parents to stick the kids during the day, and a place to get them out of their hair for awhile. We also saw that students wanted to get back to school to be with friends, not to learn the curriculum. It is about relationships yet the

²¹³ *ApolloTechnical*. (April 12, 2022). Surprising Working From Home Productivity Statistics (2022).

Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.apollotechnical.com/working-from-home-productivity-statistics/>

²¹⁴ *Work From Anywhere* - WFA Series 2, Episode 2: The Evolution Of International Remote Work And Kids Education. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.wfa.team/work-from-anywhere-series-2-episode-2-the-evolution-of-international-remote-work-and-kids-education/>

²¹⁵ *Worldschool*. Progressive Schooling. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://progressiveschooling.com/category/worldschool/>

²¹⁶ Symes, J., Sutherland, J. & Jovy-Ford, L. (2022). How to set up a learning community [Webinar]. *Progressive Education Group*. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/504444201/videos/798389094478987>

obsession schools have with covering the curriculum is being exposed as obstructing the development of solid relationships. Virtual schooling has also reminded parents of the tedium of their own school days and how much of what students are forced to study is more about keeping them busy than actually learning. Parents are also seeing firsthand how poorly schools are addressing individual differences. Ignoring children's suffering is harder to do in the home than it is in out-of-sight classrooms.

COVID has also revealed a general lack of resourcefulness among people of all ages, and public education is the culprit, as Geoff Graham's tweet above so aptly conveys how it has made people dependent on it to run their learning agendas. The extent to which it kills imagination and creativity was on full display. One short anecdote shows how ludicrous the situation became and it played out similarly in homes throughout the industrialized world where public schools shut their doors.

The story is of a family of five, two working parents and children ages 5, 8 and 10 all of whom left the home daily to go to school or to work. Suddenly COVID required that they all work from home. Each day all five went off to different rooms to connect virtually with the people they would normally have connected with at work and school. The family needed five computers and a strong enough internet connection to support all of them being on different video conferencing calls at the same time. It was a situation that caused new concerns over the gap between the haves and have-nots, although in this case one might regard those without sufficient computer capability as the lucky ones for having an excuse to not do school at home. It happened that the children in this story had different lunch times and so they could go the whole school day in the same house not even seeing each other.

If you are thinking that a 5-year-old is incapable of staying in his room all day with no one to talk to except through a screen when given permission, or that it is disturbingly unhealthy for him to be doing so, you would be right. The parents had to juggle their work times and get help from the grandmother to keep the lid on. The older two children had been trained to take this kind of treatment and were able to manage it on their own. They sat in their rooms doing as instructed and for most people, this was OK, but of course it wasn't. One little exchange between the father and the oldest child tells why. One day the father had a full agenda of meetings and he told the kids that they couldn't disturb him that day because he "was going to be talking with people all day." To this his oldest instantly responded, "You're lucky! People only talk at me all day."

Educators who had thought seriously about the benefits of age-mixing and ecosystems of community learners would not have been party to such nonsense. This family could have been treated as a learning unit with the older children assuming a good measure of responsibility for the younger one. Instead of staring at their screens all day, they could have been introduced to all sorts of activities appropriate for all ages that could be conducted in basements, kitchens, garages and backyards. A single computer connection might have been used to include by video friends from their neighbourhood. There will be those who say this wouldn't work, but they are not the people we need in this day and age. We need the people who say, "Let's see what we can do." The paid professionals with university degrees who are running our schools are perfectly capable of adjusting to the new realities, but like alcoholics, they must first admit that they have a

problem. Currently they are more apt to stoke fears of how much the poor children have gotten behind in reading and math as they advocate for students to be given even more of what doesn't really matter in order "to get caught up".

It needs to be appreciated that what happened in the pandemic when schools closed was not unschooling. It was schooling forced into homes. Unschooling is what we see happening in *Class Dismissed*.²¹⁷ It portrays the beginning stages of ecosystems of community learning that have the potential to become incorporated into daily living where everyone is a learner and a teacher, where equity and inclusion are far more easily realized, and where the sense of community and the caring for others is the stuff of democratic nation building.

Conclusion

Change will not be easy. School boards have fortified themselves with all sorts of policies and regulations that make it next to impossible to get them to abandon even minor practices that are inhuman. [Evolving Education](#)²¹⁸ recently interviewed Peter Rawitsch about the extremes he and his supporters had to go just to get their school board to stop the harmful practice of suspending children who were only 4 to 7 years old.²¹⁹ A system that is so resistant to change is a system doomed to fail. The remake of public education will not happen if school authorities continue to make change so difficult.

As strongly stated, change is up against those who have little interest in changing. The director of the OCSB who took the *Computers in the Classroom* course provides a vivid example of the closed mindset that cannot be tolerated if we are to save public education. At the end of the lesson on paradigm shifts the administrators were invited to share their thoughts on the shift taking place in education. The board was very hierarchical with the director being in firm control. No one spoke before he spoke and with these words he made it clear that no one was to question what his board was doing. "It is all very fine what you say about paradigm shifts except for one thing," he said to the instructor. "Ptolemy was wrong, but WE ARE NOT WRONG." The last four words are in uppercase because the director spoke them slowly and emphatically. The instructor was stunned and no other administrators dared to offer their opinion after such a comment and so the class ended without discussion. Such arrogance can no longer be accepted. It represents a miscarriage of justice and the perpetrators need to be held accountable.

UNESCO has given change agents a boost with its report *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*,²²⁰ that "aims to catalyze a global debate on how education needs to be rethought in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and fragility." Ultimately though, we don't need more talk, we need action. Watch for Part 3 of this essay about change that can begin immediately. Again, for a preview of Part 3 visit the [Ottawa Public Education Remake Initiative \(OPERI\)](#) website to learn about a proposed pilot program that begins a systematic research approach to change.

²¹⁷ Ibid 115

²¹⁸ *Evolving Education*. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://evolvingeducation.org/en/home/>

²¹⁹ How to change Educational Policies? (2022). *Evolving Education*. Retrieved on August 6, 2022 from <https://youtu.be/5Lncmjoki98>

²²⁰ Ibid 52

Two encouraging features of paradigm shifts are that:

1. Persistent problems of old paradigms can simply disappear or have easy solutions with different paradigms.
2. Once a new paradigm has been adopted, a period of relative calm ensues.

The faster we can adopt the democratic learning model, the sooner we will be able to effectively address problems of equity, inclusion, mental health, and disengagement from learning, . . . and the sooner we will enter the period of calm.