

In a Wildly Changing World, A School Hits Reset

BY LEAH FABEL • PHOTOS BY ANDREW HENDERSON

What do you want to be when you grow up?" used to be a reasonable question. But as automation completely upends the workplace and forces like climate change promise massive upheaval, future careers are anything but predictable. Cathy Davidson, a leading thinker on the future of education, predicted in her book *Now You See It* that 65 percent of students will land jobs that have yet to be created—jobs responding to discoveries and challenges we have yet to imagine. Schools were not designed to prepare kids equitably for those unknowns. Can they be?

In New Haven, Connecticut, leaders of the Achievement First charter

classes and internships. Many of those opportunities disappeared after policies like No Child Left Behind ushered in an emphasis on high-stakes testing. But educators are bringing them back, heeding communities' calls for schools where students develop social capital and liberating mindsets.

mindset; that schools will not succeed unless families and communities shape them and drive their objectives.

The ideas aren't new so much as gaining a critical mass of school leaders

cy-based model, where grade levels are porous and each student progresses at a different pace. One of Minneapolis's highest-performing charter networks, Hiawatha Academies, is shelving its how-to guide and designing, with students and families, a brand-new take on school to open in 2018. A high school redesign competition put on by XQ: The Super School Project drew 700 applicants pursuing 10 awards worth \$10 million each. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his pediatrician wife, Priscilla Chan, promised \$45 billion over their lifetimes to four areas of need, one being personalized learning.

Thousands of schools and networks don't call their work "redesigns," but they have been driving innovation for two decades and running by iterating, piloting, and continuously adapting to optimize teaching and learning. KIPP, for example, added KIPP Through College in 2008 in an effort to improve college graduation rates. So why this wave, and why now?

The "big ideas" pursued by places like Achievement First are, in many ways, the progression of efforts to solve persistent problems, like opportunity gaps. But they also confront the fact that kids need a new kind of preparation to give them options in an uncertain future.

Take personalized learning. Proponents have long argued it's the best shot at leaving no student hopelessly off track. But for years, educators like

she and others say the technology is meeting its promise. Or take the idea of giving students rich experiences beyond core academics, like enrichment

Wilderness Explorers. Teachers from a local outdoor-education group led the 24 students each day on trips to area parks and forests, rain or shine. Richards, wide-eyed, described learning about forest edibles, like onion grass and a twig that tastes like a Tic Tac. "Just to be outside exploring the wilderness

mistake, because now I can grow my learning that much more." On his best days, students have rich discussions about why they fell into various traps. "When you get self-realization in the classroom, now you're humming," Yearwood says.

Beyond personalization, the school aims to help students become "self-directed." During the design phase, Toll says alumni shared that when they got

they studied plenty in high school. But she learned that in high school, the material they needed to study was all laid out. In college, students said they were asked to learn more than half of the material on their own.