

U.S.A.

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools was founded over 30 years ago by a group including Ted Sizer, former headmaster of the independent schools Phillips Andover, and later Dean of the Harvard Graduate Schools of Education. It began as a group of small schools in New England and New York, and is now a network of schools that is spread across the United States. The network is made up of predominantly small schools, which subscribe to a vision of *helping all students use their minds well through standards-aligned interdisciplinary studies, community-based 'real-world' learning, and performance-based assessment.*

CES uses a combination of methods for spreading practices between schools, including clear principles and practical benchmarks to help schools see what it means and looks like to live up to those principles. They host a Principal's Network; and an annual forum that brings all schools who share the principles together. CES now also operates through 'affiliate centers' in different states, which co-ordinate gatherings and professional learning.

The network makes its practice intelligible to outsiders – and therefore draws in new partners and supporters – by making teacher and student work visible. From 1989-2009 the coalition published the journal *Horace*, which documented the work of CES schools. It supported the journalist Kathleen Cushman to visit and write about the schools over a period of decades, much of which fed into her popular books *The Schools We Need* and *Fires in the Mind*. CES has also catalogued approaches to performance assessment, which have become increasingly popular beyond the network.



A compelling purpose that unites participants



Shared norms and collaborative work



Local governance arrangements



Breadth of Engagement



Transfer of learning and practice



Shared accountability



System-wide influence



Mombasa Tech and HIVE

Mombasa Tech is a designated community-based organization aimed at maximizing the potential of technology investment in the area, with a particular focus on supporting the development of women coders. It brings together a core team of developers and program managers with community members and individuals from local universities who have expertise in specific areas. Together they develop tools for Health, Education and Justice and Security, such as 'MyTutor', a mobile learning app. It is an independent body supported by technology companies like Google, Intel and Mozilla, and partnered with local universities. It draws on the support of groups like CoderDojo (programming clubs), Nailab (a Kenyan startup accelerator), iHub (a technology innovation hub in Nairobi) and Women Techmakers.

Mombasa Tech is also home to HIVE Mombasa. 'Hives' are local clusters of organizations and individuals who are working together to provide learning opportunities for students beyond the classroom. Hives work with educators and designers to develop new practices and ways of working with digital technologies. HIVE opportunities are typically pitched at secondary-age students, but are open to anyone. They have the goal of developing web literacy and digital citizenship. HIVE is sponsored by Mozilla, and practitioners and students are exploring the use of digital badges as a means to validate the learning they engage in through the network.

HIVE Learning Networks is a community of these clusters that share tools and approaches. The network started in Chicago and now stretches around the world; there are Hives in Canada, India and three due to open in the UK. Hives host events and more informal meet-ups to bring in new participants. Hives can serve as hubs that connect students to adult mentors; HIVEs in New York and Chicago are currently working with professionals in the fashion industry to create HIVE Fashion, connecting interested students to real-world learning opportunities in design and production.



EXPLORE + CREATE + SHARE

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PEMLE, Community Learning Model

PEMLE (Program for the Improvement of Education Achievement in Mexico) grew out of an initiative that began in 1996, called *Aprendizaje por Cuarta Propia*, or the Methodology for Independent Learning (MAPCP). MAPCP was developed in small rural schools which did not have access to qualified teachers, and the primary source of the formal education was televised lessons and national curriculum materials distributed by the government. Local communities developed methods for teaching each other to supplement the poor quality of the materials. More competent students and community members would adopt roles as ‘tutors’, whom students could go to for support in whatever they were struggling to learn. The practice grew into a network where tutors became network leaders, who in turn trained new tutors to work in their own community. The methodology became known as the Learning Community model.

By 2013, the Learning Community model was being used in around 400 schools, with 70 network leaders. It had caught the attention of the Mexican government, who recognize its potential, even though it contravenes many of the central institutional features of schools – students make individual choices about what to learn from the range of resources available to them, and tutors are in an unregulated and informal role.

The goal now is to spread the approach across 7,000 of Mexico’s lowest performing schools across 31 states – and then eventually to spread it to all 30,000 low performing schools in the country, about a quarter of all of Mexico’s schools. The network leaders are trying to work out how to be true to the learner-led spirit of the model in managing this scale-up.



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Tulsa Community Schools

The Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TACSI) was created by school and community leaders in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 2007. It is a partnership between two school districts, city and community agencies, the local university OU-Tulsa, and a range of smaller community partners. The initiative instituted a joint leadership structure to share responsibility for outcomes; the steering committee consists of representatives of 21 key stakeholders, including from the city's churches, universities and health and social services. Together, TACSI now operate 31 community schools, and there are currently 150 community partners in the initiative. Each of the schools has been through a process of redesigning itself according to a common framework, which details seven core components, including early childhood care, family engagement, after-school youth development, and mental health services. TACSI describes community schools as 'both a place and a network of supportive partnerships between the school and the community'.

TACSI balances this central guidance with community-based decision making. Each of the community schools engages in stakeholder engagement and deliberation for its own site. As the evaluation of the TACSI initiative wrote: *strong external control would be antithetical to the core propositions of local control, partnerships, community empowerment, and social democracy upon which community schools are built.*



Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative

A 2010 evaluation showed that students in the high-implementing community schools outperformed non-community schools in math by 32 points and reading by 19 points. TACSI is now leading the development of community schools across the U.S. It has produced resources and guides that can be used by others schools, and is part of the Coalition for Community Schools, a national network.

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Mt. Meron, Israel

Beit Jann School and Yuvalim

Beit Jann is a village in a remote area of Israel, where most of the population follow the Druse faith, an Arab sect. Druse people typically have very low educational outcomes in comparison with the Jewish population of Israel, with many not getting a school certificate; in Beit Jann in 2000, only 12% passed the 'Bagrut' exams. In the mid 2000s, the school's Principal set out to change it in partnership with [Yuvalim](#), a non profit organization focused on rural communities. Yuvalim was founded in 2003 by Eilon Tirosh, an Israeli hi-tech entrepreneur, and works in 7 locations.

On the one hand, Beit Jann is an example of a new leader transforming a school through creating a new collaborative culture within the school: the Principal Ali Salalha says: *"I didn't make changes to the teaching staff...I said, 'We'll work together as a team.'"* ([AL Monitor](#)). Salalha knew, however, that the greatest challenge would be changing attitudes outside the school of low expectations for Arab students. They began by calling parent's to tell them about student's achievements instead of only about misbehavior – a simple change that has proved powerful in many schools. They also did basic things like painting of the school, signaling to the community the intention of change. Funding for this was provided by Yuvalim, and overseen by their local coordinator.



More substantively, Yuvalim worked with Beit Jann to fulfil the promise of higher expectations. They drew on the practices of Yehelot, an association that has devised methods of 'accelerated learning' to help students prepare. They offered tutoring for struggling students, and offered those who excelled opportunities to work in the lab at a local college. By 2014, 100% of students passed the Bagrut and were eligible for the school certificate, and the school had the third highest graduation rate in the country, behind only the two major cities. Yuvalim and Yehelot continue to support other schools to make similar strides.

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Ark Schools

Ark Schools is a network of academies in England, now with 31 schools, of which 14 are primary schools and the rest secondary. 8 new schools are currently in development, to be opened in the next 3-4 years. Ark is an education charity founded in 2002, with commitments around the world. It was founded by hedge fund financiers, originally with the name 'Absolute Return for Kids' (known as ARK) with a goal to use principles of investing to create philanthropic 'returns' from their investment.

Ark focuses on providing an academic education that prepares students for university. Ark schools share the goal to *'create outstanding schools that give every Ark pupil the opportunity to go to university or pursue the career of their choice.'* Schools are shaped by 'six key principles' sometimes described as pillars: *High expectations; Exemplary behavior; Excellent teaching; Depth before breadth; More time for learning; Knowing every child.* The schools share pedagogical practice by developing their own programs and then moving teachers between schools to train them; Mathematics Mastery, a primary math program, is their signature creation.

The schools share a data management tool that teachers across the network are trained in, to track pupil progress. Ark runs the education leadership programs Teaching Leaders (for 'middle leaders' – department heads etc.) and Future Leaders (preparing future principals). These serve as a pipeline of well-prepared leaders for their schools, and others.

More than half of pupils at Ark are eligible for the pupil premium, compared to a national average of 26%; in 2014 58% of Ark students achieved the national benchmark of 5 GCSEs at A*-C, including English and Math, compared to 52% nationally. Ark is noted for achieving 'turnarounds'; one of its schools, Charter Academy, is the most improved school in England over the past three years.



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System-wide influence



U.S.A.

Expeditionary Learning

Expeditionary Learning (EL) is an organization that supports schools to become 'EL schools'. There are now 160 EL schools in 31 states across the U.S. Over half of students in EL schools are low income. EL schools are organized around a set of 10 '[design principles](#)', which include 'the primacy of self-discovery' and 'the having of wonderful ideas'. (NB difference between this kind of DP and e.g. a Big Picture key identifier). EL also focuses heavily on getting students to do work of [high quality](#) – they describe this under the headings of 'complexity', 'craftsmanship' and 'authenticity'.

As well as supporting practitioners like Ron Berger to work directly with schools and codifying its core practices, EL also showcases student work in the [Center for Student Work](#) (CSW), which collects completed student project, writing and resources used to create them. The collection of student work represents knowledge of what students are capable of, and exemplars to be used as embodiments of standards.

The network also produces publications, and more recently, has produced its first comprehensive set of curriculum tools for use by schools outside the network: in 2013, EL produced a Common Core-aligned [ELA curriculum](#) for grades 3-8. The New York City Department of Education selected the curriculum as one of the two options for public schools to use for grades 3-5, and 6-8. [EL conducted PD](#) with 200+ teachers in NYC and has returned to work with the district on looking at student work.

EL seeks to maintain consistency of quality across the network by carrying out annual 'implementation reviews' of new schools that have joined. They use a tool that looks for 26 indicators of practice. Of schools that meet the indicators within 4 years, 80-90% are outperforming other schools in their district on English and Math scores.



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System-wide influence



Senza Zaino

Senza Zaino ('No Backpack') is a network that began as a local initiative in 1998, when one primary school in Tuscany organized a project that culminated in a 'day of responsibility', where students had to organize all the functioning of the school. The school began to develop materials to support other schools to structure themselves around student management. Their network has now grown to 46 schools. The decision that students should not have to carry heavy backpacks represents the core principles of the network:

- Practical Design: classrooms were re-organized and equipped with tactile objects.
- Pedagogical design: students are not learning primarily from textbooks, but through social experiences, artefacts, and digital materials. Learning is oriented towards developing *responsibility, community and hospitality*.
- Education philosophy: as the network writes: *we removed this item, backpack, but at the same time we have added those things that many of us dreamed of and that we know make a difference to a quality education: skills and autonomy, openness to the critical spirit, creativity and freedom.*

In order to realize their pedagogical goals, the network draws on practices of Montessori Education, as well as mid-20th century Italian educators such as Mario Lodi (a 1970s teacher who wrote a diary of teaching in the countryside and all the projects he used) and Bruno Ciari (a champion of democratic education).



By finding a symbol and vision for schools to gather around, Senza Zaino have managed to draw these practices into a coherent pedagogical model that more schools can join. Importantly, it is a symbol that is easy for parents to understand and which aligns with many parents' desire for schools to promote social and emotional wellbeing over excessive amounts of homework.

In 2006, teachers at Senza Zaino schools together wrote the 'Global curriculum handbook', which included a set of tools for the planning of timetables and activities, classroom management, and management of resources. It was published and serves as a guide for other schools.

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System-wide influence



California, U.S.A.

Long Beach Unified School District

In the late 2000s, the Long Beach Unified School District initiated a new long-term strategic plan to focus on providing all high school students with 'academic and career pathways'. The district was inspired by changes that had begun to occur elsewhere in the United States to integrate academic and vocational learning, by providing academic courses with a 'flavor' of real-world industries and careers, as well as opportunities for work-based learning. Now, students in all Long Beach High Schools can enroll in one of 16 'college and career pathways', such as 'Energy & Utilities', 'Arts, Media, Entertainment', and 'Finance and Business'. There are also pathways in the district dedicated to preparation for more specific routes, including the International Baccalaureate exams and the armed services. Pathways are provided through dedicated '[Smaller Learning Communities](#)' within high schools. The district is providing district-wide professional development for teachers to redesign curricula around the pathways.

To create the necessary partnerships between schools, business and community institutions to enable this kind of learning, in 2009, the district founded the Education Business Advisory (EBA). It was created jointly with two higher education institutions: Long Beach City College and California State University Long Beach. The EBA encourages local business and industry representatives support the work of schools through: providing professional learning by educating teachers about their sector, such as covering the latest trends and educational needs; being a Guest Speaker in a class, hosting field trips or providing job shadowing; and posting ideas for "Real World" challenges that form the basis of student project. The district encourages members to serve as a mentor or judge for a challenge, providing 'professional insight' and helping to motivate students by providing real world feedback.

Long Beach is a proponent of Linked Learning, an initiative supported by the California Department of Education, the James Irvine Foundation, and the California Communities Colleges.



LINKED
LEARNING

The [Linked Learning Alliance](#) was founded in 2008 to advocate for enabling policies, and share learning about connecting high school learning with real world work.

A compelling purpose that unites participants



Shared norms and collaborative work



Local governance arrangements



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System-wide influence



Learning Locally

Lernen vor Ort (LvO) or 'Learning Locally' was initiated by the German federal government as a way to strengthen local governance of education. Freiburg was one of 40 participating local governments chosen to participate in the program, which was funded between 2009 and 2014. The goals of the project were to create new and sustainable structures for public consultation and education monitoring, while promoting cooperation between local government and other stakeholders and to improve local capacity for knowledge generation and management.

Teams in each locality engaged in the development of procedures and tools for educational monitoring and creating networks between local stakeholders. Local governments had to commit some of their own financial resources to support a temporary larger project team to establish these new processes. The initiative was set up as a 'learning programme' in that participants were developing and redeveloping new processes rather than implementing a pre-determined set of processes. The commitment and leadership of political leaders at the local level was identified as 'one, if not the crucial factor determining the success of the implementation'.

The project produced a range of outputs in relation to educational monitoring. Currently, the federal government is funding 'transfer agencies' which will aggregate and disseminate the new local education management processes that were developed in LvO.

The project offers some learning for attempts to instigate stronger local learning systems. The time frame of the project was both a benefit and a hindrance. As a benefit, it allowed local governments to agree to a temporary commitment of resource to put new structures in place. As a hindrance, it appears to have de-motivated some stakeholders who did not co-operate with something they saw as temporary, even though the goal was to create longer lasting processes and structures.



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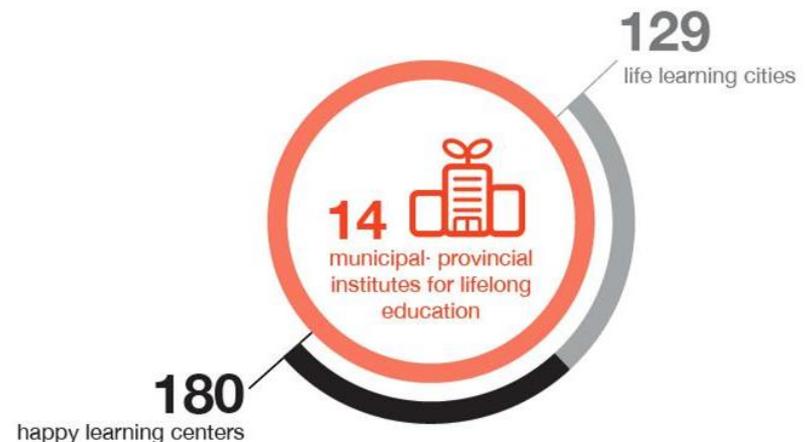


Gwanymyeong City and the NILE

Learning ecosystems are not always primarily directed at school-age students. Gwanymyeong, a city in the Gyeonggi Province to the south of Seoul, is a pioneer of Korea's work to create cities of lifelong learning. The city has created a network of lifelong learning institutions, which together help inform and engage citizens about opportunities to participate in learning opportunities in their community. With such close proximity to Seoul, the city does not have its own college or university, and so has had to be creative in finding other sources of local learning for its residents.

In the Republic of Korea, Gwanymyeong is just one example of a city that is making these efforts. In 1999, the Government created the first Lifelong Education Act, which was followed by a series of National Lifelong Education Promotion Plans. Now, the long-standing commitment to promote lifelong learning has evolved into a strategy for growing 'learning cities' from the ground up. Thus the approach has transitioned from creating top-down policy to a more community-centered approach. Policy-makers are seeking to work on how to foster a learning culture in local communities, how to develop close connections between education and job creation in specific localities, and to consider senior citizens as active learners.

The [National Institute for Lifelong Education \(NILE\)](#), established in 2008, has instituted a wide range of initiatives that make it easier for local providers to emerge, such as creating a system for transferable academic credits, and for individual learning accounts, that is described as 'an open higher education system'. The institute supports a network of cities and municipalities that are working to become lifelong learning communities, and collects examples of practice to share between them.



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System-wide influence



Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial

Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial ('system of tutorial learning', SAT) is a learning program created as an alternative to secondary schooling, by [FUNDAEC](#), a foundation based in Colombia. 100,000 students are currently engaged in SAT, in Colombia and also in Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, predominantly in rural communities that have limited access to secondary schools. The central component of the program is a collection of 60 textbooks that are organized around *capacidades* – capabilities – that integrate disciplinary knowledge into context. The units cover math, science, language, technology and service, with an emphasis on agriculture and community well-being. Students work with the textbooks and the help of a tutor, who is a paid employee of the program, hired from the same or a similar community to the students. Tutors have all completed secondary schools and some have been through university; they are then trained by the program to serve as tutors. Tutors stay with their group of 15-25 students for the duration of the program – typically the six years that cover lower and upper secondary school. The work of the tutorial group is supported by the local community, who provide an area of land for use in the projects and 'agricultural experiments' that students conduct as part of their learning. Community members are also often brought in to support particular projects.



The program is increasingly seen as an alternative to formal schools. Studies have found it leads to higher reported learning outcomes and lower rates of dropout than other rural secondary programs, as well as an impact on social responsibility and women's empowerment. In Colombia and Honduras, the Ministries of Education are supporting the program by covering the costs of tutor salaries, the primary cost of delivery. Elsewhere, the program has spread through local NGOs, who partner with FUNDAEC to introduce it, and then oversee day-to-day operations.

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New York,
U.S.A.

Syracuse Innovation Zone

The [Syracuse Innovation Zone](#) (iZone) is an initiative of the Office of School Transformation and Innovation in the Syracuse City School District in upstate New York. It is a partnership between the district and the Syracuse Teachers' Association, with support from the American Federation of Teachers. The iZone is an intentional strategy to create the conditions to pursue 'radical solutions' in a small numbers of schools, with the aim of developing strategies that could be 'expanded throughout the district' to all 21,000 students in Syracuse.

In the 2013-14 school year, 7 elementary and middle schools were designated as iZone schools, and received a range of new freedoms and supports that had been negotiated by the district with the teachers' association. This included a longer school day, additional teacher professional development during the preceding summer, as well as school-based professional learning time throughout the year, the support of a new dedicated district office, and streamlined channels through the district and teachers' association to rethink working conditions in a rapid way. In relation to curriculum, schools were partnered with one of two organizations – the Achievement Network and the Association for Middle Level Education – to support the implementation of new common core curriculum. Additional math and Science coaches were also hired, and the schools joined [Project Lead the Way](#), a collaboration to develop new STEM curricula.

Governance for the iZone is two-fold. At the school level, each school has elected five teachers to serve as a 'Turnaround School Team', who received training from the American Federation of Teachers' to implement a teacher-led school governance model. At the level of the zone, a new 'Innovation Zone Advisory Council' was created, consisting of the superintendent of the district and two chief-level officers, four representatives of the teachers' association, one representative from the Syracuse Association of Administrators and Supervisors, two family members of current iZone students and three community representatives.



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Unschooling.com

As the examples of national networks illustrate, learning ecosystems do not have to be locally-embedded – and nor do they have to be rooted in formal institutions. Unschooling.com is a U.S.-based website that developed from the popular published magazine, *Home Education Magazine*, founded in 1984. The website was formed in 2012, when ‘unschooling’ became a popular term for home-schoolers who were choosing to educate their children at home for pedagogical rather than religious reasons. The group behind the magazine extended its work to offering consultancy, legal advice, support groups, and videos of practice. Their Resource Guide includes a wide range of supports for teaching at home, as well as links to institutions that provide learning opportunities for home-schooled students. Among these links are a range of other websites that similarly act as platforms for parents and students engaging in unschooling to share ideas and experiences, and provide mutual support.

The website is an example of how supporting home-schooling has become its own business in the U.S. The number of homeschoolers in the country has doubled since the millennium, and there are now over 1.75 million homeschoolers, more students than in even the largest of the nation’s districts. This is a very large number of individual parents or carers who are figuring out how to educate their children, and finding advice and support to do that. Informal providers are therefore beginning to replicate existing institutional structures by offering things like an ‘[Unschooling Curriculum](#)’. Curated supports are mainly free resources, but some recommendations are for commercial packages that can be bought directly by parents where they might otherwise be marketed to schools. Most of the websites are supported by advertising for relevant books or experiences.



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