



# *A View from Philanthropy: Designing Systems of Education and Child Wellbeing with Learning Differences in Mind*

## **Speakers:**

*Lynne Sacks, Associate Director of Programs and Research, Education Redesign Lab*

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**LEARNING  
DIFFERENCES  
PROGRAMME**



We are a family-led, staff- managed foundation.

# OUR MISSION

Oak commits its resources to address issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged.

## HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

We seek to prevent homelessness by: improving the economic and social wellbeing of marginalised people; promoting economic self sufficiency; and increasing the availability of affordable housing.



## ENVIRONMENT

We hope for more socially and environmentally sustainable societies, for the protection of endangered species and for the transformation of how oceans are perceived and exploited.



## CHILD ABUSE

We envision a world where all children are protected from sexual abuse and sexual exploitation and we support initiatives that engage men and boys in combating this abuse.



## ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN

We envision a world where women are safe from violence and free to exercise their full and equal rights, by helping them build strong, vibrant movements that tackle the root causes of inequality.



## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

We aim to: end impunity for the gross violations of human rights; uphold prohibitions on arbitrary detention and torture; and protect human rights defenders at risk.



## LEARNING DIFFERENCES

We envision a world where students with learning differences are agents of their own learning success and are supported by educators and environments that expect, embrace and respond to diverse learner profiles.



## JOINT INDIA PROGRAMME

We help build strong grassroots organisations in West Bengal and West Bengal that address poverty and social injustice through access to resources.



## ZIMBABWE

We fund local organisations that care and provide for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in Zimbabwean society including women, children and the elderly.



## BRAZIL

We aim to: promote citizen security and civic participation; protect urban spaces; and improve mobility among disadvantaged communities in the Recife Metropolitan area in Brazil.



## DENMARK

We seek innovative solutions that improve the lives of socially vulnerable and marginalised groups, particularly ethnic minority women, homeless people, children, immigrants and refugees.



# Where we are

Oak has its main administrative office in Geneva, Switzerland and a presence in Brazil, Europe, Africa, India and North America.





The Oak Foundation's Learning Differences Programme envisions a world where students with learning differences are

***agents of their own learning success***

and are supported by educators who—and educational environments that—***expect, embrace and respond*** to diverse learner profiles.



**Strengthen**  
teacher capacity



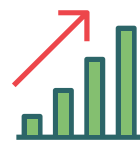
**Engage**  
students



**Enhance**  
parent knowledge  
& support



**Personalize**  
learning  
environments



**Build**  
demand

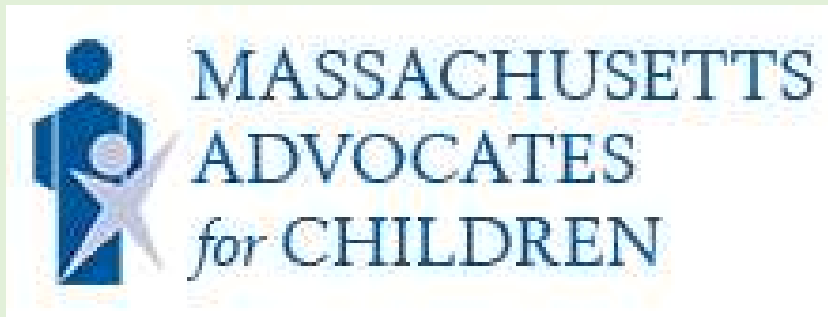


**Explore**  
learner profile

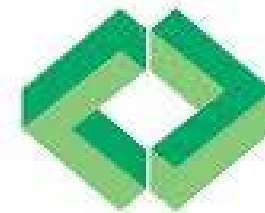
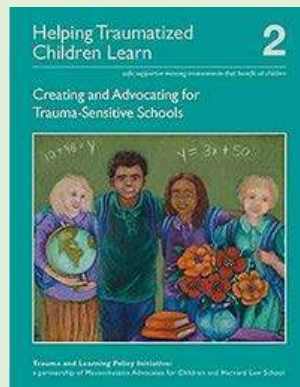
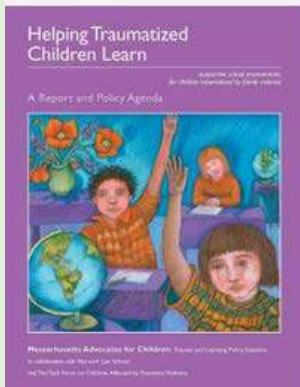


We have nearly 50 partners across the world.





Massachusetts Advocates for Children is an advocacy organisation for children who face significant barriers to equal educational and life opportunities, particularly those who have disabilities, are low income and/or are racially, culturally, or linguistically diverse. Its Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) is refining its Inquiry-Based Process to provide the necessary materials, resources and guidance to create safe and supportive, trauma sensitive-schools.



**Lesley**  
UNIVERSITY

Lesley University's Center for Special Education provides resources to schools, families, and policy-makers; conducts research; and disseminates information about instructional approaches and technologies. Its Institute for Trauma Sensitivity (LIFTS) helps teachers, staff, schools, and districts understand the prevalence of trauma and its effect on learning.



We suggest that you complete this checklist with a school team as a tool to begin collaborative planning around creating trauma sensitive environments. Print the form once you complete it and come back in a few months to see if you have made progress.

Date:

What are your roles in the school?



THE WILLIAM & IDA  
**FRIDAY INSTITUTE**  
FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

With funding from Oak, the Friday Institute has created a Massive Open Online Course for Educators (MOOC-Ed) to help educators understand and support students' learning differences.

North Carolina State University's Friday Institute provides professional learning opportunities for state and district-level leaders, principals, instructional coaches, and educators.

The screenshot shows the Friday Institute website interface. At the top, there is a red navigation bar with 'Support', 'Create Account', and 'Log in' links. Below this is the Friday Institute logo and the tagline 'The PLACE: Professional Learning and Collaboration Environment'. A breadcrumb trail indicates the path: 'Course Catalog / MOOC-Ed / Learning Differences'. The main heading is 'Learning Differences'. To the right, there are social media icons and a 'Sign Up for Course Updates' button. The course details are as follows:

Future Start Date(s)	TBD
Cost	Free
Primary Audience	Elementary School Teachers Middle School Teachers High School Teachers Instructional Coaches Instructional Support Teams Administrators
Certificate Available	Yes
Certificate Hours	25-30

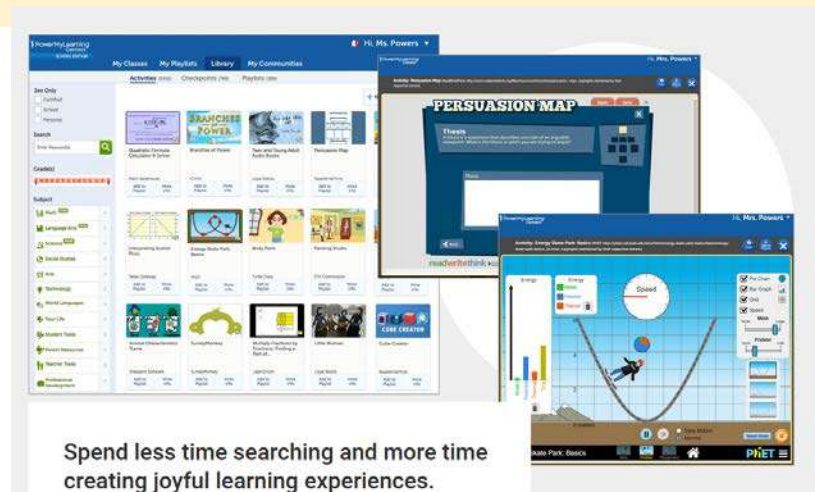
Below the heading is a video player with a teal background. The video title is 'To gain INS into your students' Learning Differences?' and it features a play button icon. The video content shows a hand holding a string that is being pulled through a hole in a board, with a cartoon character in the background. The text 'That ends now.' is visible at the bottom of the video player.



The Center for Game Science at the University of Washington (CGS) is a multi-disciplinary centre focused on solving hard problems facing humanity today in a game-based environment. CGS emphasizes scientific discovery games, games that discover optimal learning pathways for STEM education, cognitive skill training games, games that promote human creativity, and games that explore collective over individual intelligence.



PowerMyLearning (PML) is a national non-profit organization committed to ensuring that all children are able to power their learning through a combination of technology and the people who matter most to their success – parents and teachers. PML launched PowerMyLearning Connect, its free K-12 online learning platform that provides a constantly growing, well-curated collection of thousands of free educational programs, apps and games, organized by grade level, content area, and Common Core State Standard.



Spend less time searching and more time creating joyful learning experiences.

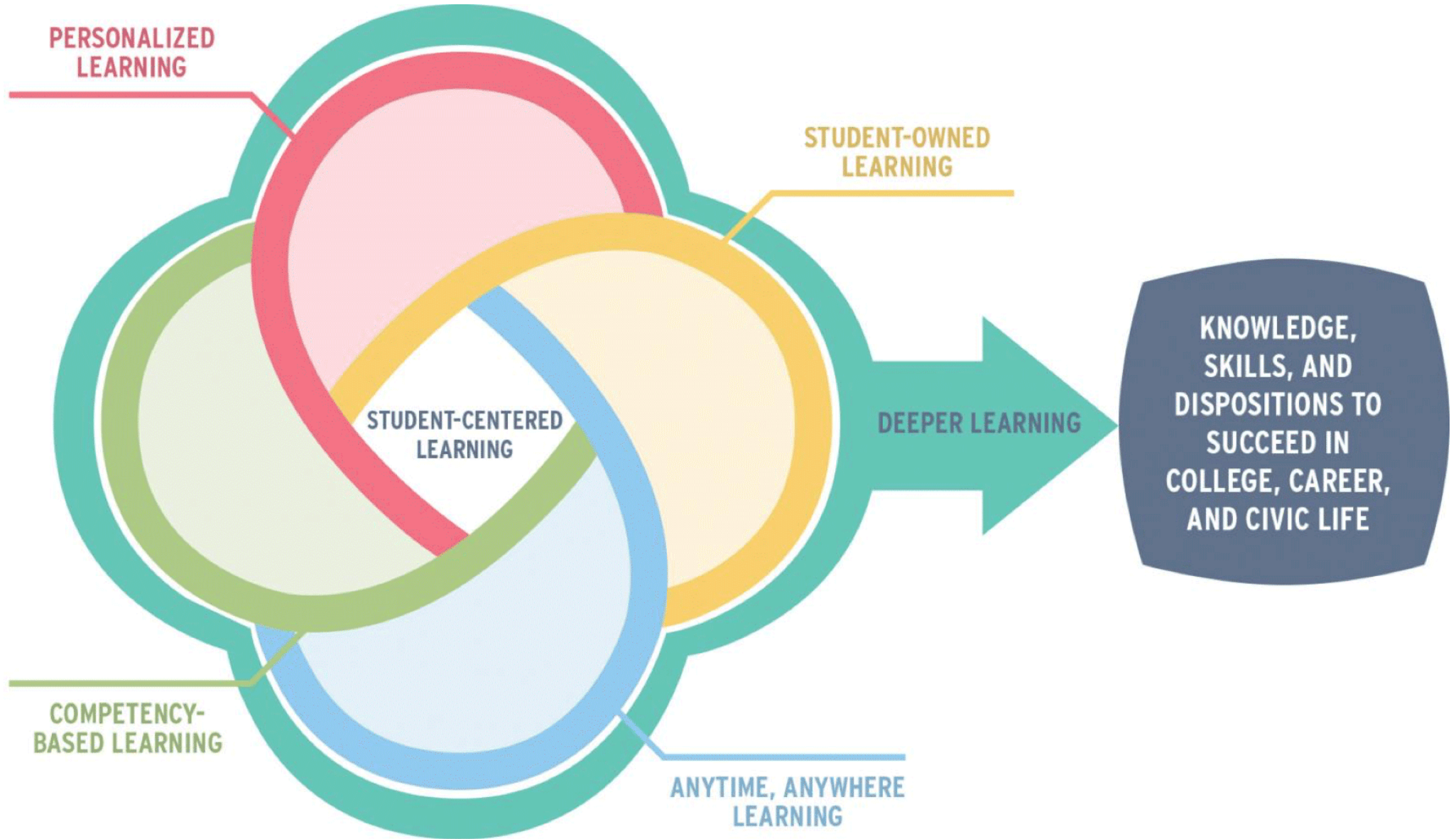




# The Role of Research in Broadening the Concept of Equity

Nellie Mae Education Foundation

May 15, 2018







“Fewer than 3% of English language learners are in gifted programs, though they make up 11% of schools that offer those programs.” (NPR citing [U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights data collection](#))

Black females are at equal or greater risk of suspension than White and Latino males. (Losen, 2015)

Students with disabilities are suspended at more than twice the rate of their non-disabled peers (Losen, 2015).

Growing evidence suggests gender non-conforming youth are also increasingly receiving exclusionary discipline and criminal sanctions (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011).

# Need for more research

- **Does SCL serve those students who are historically underserved?**
  - Equitably?
  - Do all students have access to this type of learning?



*Rethinking  
Research*





# Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality – Richard Milner (2007)

- **Researching the self**
- **Researching the self in relation to others**
- **Engaged reflection and representation**
- **Shifting from self to system**

# Framework in Action

**In detailing your capacity to undertake an investigation focused on equity and to make meaning of diverse participants' experiences of student-centered learning, please characterize the extent to which your team possesses the necessary critical sophistication with various forms of marginalization and inequity in education, and the techniques used to overcome them. Among other attributes, relevant publications, evidence of leadership, and life experiences are all important here.**

**In addition, please answer the following questions about researcher positionality in your proposal (adapted from Milner 2007):**

- i. In what ways do your team members' backgrounds influence your research approach and design? For instance, how do your racial/ethnic/cultural/ linguistic/disability backgrounds influence the research questions you pose, the data collection tools you employ, and the way you interpret research findings?**
- ii. In what ways do you expect to encounter race, racism, ableism, discrimination, marginalization, and other forms of systemic oppression in your study, and what specific staffing and research design features prepare you to capture and interpret such phenomena with rigor and responsiveness?**

# Moving equity to a “moment for action”











# Redesigning Systems of Child Development and Education to Ensure Success for Students with Learning Differences: *Planning for Cities and Programs*



**Lynne Sacks**  
Associate Director of  
Programs and Research



**Chelsea Myers**  
Graduate Student &  
Research Assistant

# Learning differences by the numbers:



**1 in 5** children have learning and attention differences

Statistics courtesy of National Center for Learning Disabilities: [The State of LD \(2017\)](#)



Students with SLD are **31% more likely** to experience high levels of bullying



Students with SLD are **2x more likely** to be suspended



**1/3 or more** of incarcerated youth have learning disabilities



Dropout rate for students with SLD is nearly **3x the rate** for all students

# Students with LD can thrive with the proper planning through...



...intentional Children's Cabinet structuring and initiative planning.



Out-of-School Learning Opportunities





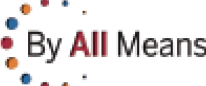
Social and Emotional Health Services Integration



Personalized Learning Supports



# A resource for you and your teams:



## Redesigning Systems of Child Development and Education to Ensure Success for Students with Learning Differences: *A Guide for Cities and Programs*

Harvard's Education Redesign Lab created the By All Means consortium to rethink education and child development systems in order to overcome widespread inequity in children's outcomes, opportunities and supports. This initiative revealed a need for specific guidance for cities on how to best incorporate the needs of students with learning and attention challenges in the design of system-wide reform and inspired the creation of this guide.

According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), one in five children have learning and attention issues<sup>1</sup> with only a small portion of these children receiving formal diagnoses. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the unique needs of these individuals if we are to truly meet the needs of all students. The following serves as a guide for stakeholders involved in designing and implementing programs and services for children. The guide highlights four key areas of focus: constructing children's cabinets or working groups, expanding learning opportunities, and integrating social and emotional health services, and personalizing learning.

### Children's Cabinets

**Ensure representation** from the special education community – such as researchers, special education directors, practitioners, or advocacy group members – on Children's Cabinets and working groups.

**Build the needs of students with learning differences into design.** Identify how the needs of students with learning differences will be addressed by new systems from the outset and throughout the design process.

**Engage the community.** Build community engagement into the plan, and ensure that students with learning and attention issues, their families, and advocates are included.

**Incorporate students with learning differences explicitly into the accountability plan** by disaggregating outcomes and opportunity data and using a range of measures.

### Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

**Coordinate care between in-school and out-of-school learning environments.** Sharing student data and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) enables out-of-school learning programs to provide support students with learning differences. Having a school psychologist or special educator work in collaboration with out-of-school personnel to translate the needs of students into actionable steps is a key component of this process.

Can be found in your folder  
and on the Education Redesign  
Website:  
<http://edredesign.org/>

## Cabinet structure and functioning:



- ❖ Ensure representation
- ❖ Build the needs of students with LD into your design process
- ❖ Engage the community
- ❖ Incorporate students with LD explicitly into your accountability plan

## Planning for out-of-school learning opportunity initiatives...



**A potential challenge:** Student accommodations are not passed on to out-of-school learning staff creating barriers to success for participants with LD,

- ❖ Coordinate care between in-school and out-of-school learning environments
- ❖ Provide out-of-school programming staff professional development opportunities for serving students with learning differences

## Planning for social and emotional health services integration initiatives...



**A potential challenge:** With an estimated one of three incarcerated youth having a learning disability, students who face disciplinary action face missing school, inefficient or delayed accommodations, and often unsupported and difficult transitions.

- ❖ Increase data sharing and communication with juvenile correctional centers
- ❖ Partner with local youth diversion programs



# Planning for personalized learning initiatives...



**A potential challenge:** As schools and programs move towards self-paced, student-driven curriculum, students with LD may struggle with planning, organizing, and attention.

- ❖ Design for students with special needs -- consider Universal Design for Learning
- ❖ Offer training opportunities for educators on fostering executive functioning skills
- ❖ Leverage special educators as coaches during implementation

## Your turn...

**Prompt:** In groups, think of a challenge that has arisen or may arise during the structuring of your cabinets or the implementation of your initiatives in regards to serving students with learning differences. Once you identify the challenge, brainstorm ways in which your city can address some of these challenges. The resource guide in your packet may be used to guide your brainstorm.