

Transforming Our Schools And Our World: Urgency, Opportunity, Action

Innovative Schools Summit
Orlando
2023





Urgency: The Challenges for Our World

- We are facing
 - a climate and biodiversity crisis,
 - an ongoing health crisis,
 - a reckoning with racial justice,
 - cruelty in our treatment of animals,
 - intensifying political polarization, and
 - the atrocities of wars.
- And perhaps our greatest challenge is our struggle to come together respectfully, wisely, and ethically to solve our problems and create positive changes in our world.



Urgency: The Challenges for Our Schools

- Students are experiencing high degrees of anxiety, despondency, and disengagement as well as ongoing disparities in learning.
 - 44% of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row during the past year. (CDC survey; April 2022)
- Schools are caught in the middle of the culture wars as debate continues over how (or if) to teach about the complexities of America's past and present.
- Educators are exhausted and many are leaving the profession.

Opportunity: Prepare a Generation of Solutionaries

- Give students the skills to address problems, transform systems, and make the world more just, healthy, and humane.



And, in so doing...

Elevate	Elevate the mission of school
Provide	Provide students with agency and optimism
Deepen	Deepen learning across all literacies
Reconnect	Reconnect teachers to the reason they entered the profession
Unite	Unite people in a common focus on preparing all students to lead lives of joy and purpose

Opportunity: Prepare A Generation of Solutionaries



- What does it look like?
- Sound like?
- Feel like?



Opportunity: Elevate the Mission of School

- What is the current mission of school in America?
- What would you like it to be? (Turn and talk)

*“Many educators like to use the phrase, “Teach with the end in mind.” Is global competitiveness what we see as the highest end for our children and our planet? What if the end—the mission of education—were instead to build a future where all life can thrive? With that end in mind, we would focus on giving our students the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary to identify and transform unjust, unsustainable, and inhumane systems. We would **prepare them to be solutionaries.**”*

- Zoe Weil



Opportunity: Provide Students with Agency and Optimism

- Students who have the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to address the problems they are seeing in the world will be...
 - engaged in learning,
 - empowered in the face of crisis, and
 - feel a sense of hope as they look to their future.



Opportunity: Deepen Learning Across All Literacies

Implementation of the Solutionary Framework:

- Deepens engagement
 - *We learn best when both our hearts and minds are fully engaged and when what we are studying matters to us.*
– Zoe Weil
- Deepens transferrable thinking skills
 - Critical, Systems, Strategic, Creative, Ethical
- Can be applied across all disciplines
 - Science to Social Studies
 - Arts to Economics



Opportunity: Reconnect Teachers With the Reason They Entered the Profession

- Why did you become an educator?
- What would you and your teachers say is your primary focus right now? (Turn and talk)
- How would your faculty/colleagues react to a mission focused on preparing young people to be the next caretakers of our planet?



Opportunity:

Unite people in a common focus on preparing all students to lead lives of joy and purpose

- What do we hope the future will be for us and our children?
 - Do we want a world that is just, healthy, and humane?
 - Do we want to see conflicts resolved peacefully and all living beings treated with respect and compassion?
 - To have ecosystems restored?
 - To have systems of energy, food, healthcare, transportation, and production be sustainable?
- If we can find common ground in such a vision, let's redesign our educational system to provide students with the knowledge and skills to achieve it
- Note: *The Solutionary Framework guides students how to think not what to think.*



Action: Putting the Framework Into Practice

The bridge between theory and practice can be a long one.

- But we can cross it together.
- And it's already built.



The Solutionary Framework

A multi-step process that guides students through the following four phases:



Phase One

Cultivating Compassion
and Identifying a Problem
We Care About

- Cultivate our compassion for others
- Learn about issues in our community and in the world
- Identify a problem of personal concern



Phase Two

Researching Causes
and Their
Consequences

- Connect with stakeholders and those working to solve the problem
- Identify the causes of the problem from psychological factors, worldviews, and mindset to systemic structures



Phase Three

Devising Solutions
and Planning
for Implementation

- Devise solutions to the problem that address root and/or systemic causes, avoid unintended negative consequences, and do the most good and least harm for people, animals, and the environment



Phase Four

Implementing,
Assessing,
Celebrating

- Implement an actionable element of our solution
- Present our solution
- Assess our solution
- Celebrate our solutionary work

Action:
The Bridge Is
Already Built

Solutionary teaching is a deepening
of what schools are already doing
not a deviation from it.

- [Alignment with PBL](#)
- [Alignment with SEL](#)

Action: Notes From The Field

Andra Yeghoian
Coordinator of Environmental
Literacy
San Mateo County DOE

Content-Driven Solutionary PBL Overview

SOLUTIONARY UNIT OF STUDY ELEMENTS & FLOW



Find Resources at:

www.tinyurl.com/SolutionaryPBL-ContentDriven

Action: Implementing The Solutionary Framework

5 Curricular Approaches

1. Overlay the Framework over an existing unit
2. Use the Framework in combination with teaching research, writing, presentation skills in ELA for Social Studies
3. Add key elements from the Framework to the PBL already taking place in your curriculum.
4. Use the Framework as the structure for a stand-alone unit or course.
 - Setting: Classroom; grade level; whole school; elective; advisory
 - Timeframe: 2 weeks to full year
 - Content: Student choice; UN SDG's; Other
5. Use the Framework as the structure for an afterschool club or to deepen the impact of a community service requirement

Action:
Implementing
The
Solutionary
Framework

Your Turn...

1. How might you implement the Framework in your school or district?
2. What obstacles do you anticipate?
3. How might you address them?
4. What excites you about the possibilities of teaching students to be solutionaries?
5. What is one step you will take when you return to your school or district?

Resources to Support and Inspire

Steve
Cochrane,
Executive
Director

The
Institute
for
Humane
Education

- TWBWWT, by Zoe Weil on Amazon
- www.HumaneEducation.org
- [Free Solutionary Guidebook](#)
- [Implementing the Solutionary Framework: Ideas and Inspiration](#)
- [Solutionary Micro-credential Program](#)

