



Proposed Life Skills Initiative

- Developing Confident Life Ready Citizens
- Transforming Leaders into Stewards
- Creating Community in Every Neighborhood, Work Site, Classroom & Place of Worship

This paper is intended to spark conversations and get feedback from across our community. Our goal is a unified approach to achieving “an everyone culture.” This concept comes from *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization* which blends insights from the sciences and business. This initiative is offered as a through line across multiple efforts including the World Class Workforce Ecosystem Initiative and the Civic Learning Partnership.

We believe a great community—one that provides opportunities for prosperity and wellbeing to everyone—depends upon informed, engaged and effective citizens. It requires all of us to remember we are a citizen first, not our day job of single interest. We are all responsible for the quality of life in our community.

Imagine

Imagine living in a community where everyone is and feels valued. Where people work together to ensure that every child is safe and offered opportunities to learn and decide what kind of life they want to create. Where people who go off track are offered options to close developmental gaps and address underlying issues. Imagine Fresno as this community.

The Life Skills Initiative is designed to develop the most important resource we have—the people who live here. Together we can inspire the spirit of community in every neighborhood, classroom, work site and place of worship and create an extraordinary culture, one that delivers the outcomes everyone wants—inclusive prosperity and wellbeing.

Opportunity

From employers, educators, parents, government and community we are hearing the same thing—we need life skills. We need to learn how to master ourselves, work together effectively and restore the responsibility side of citizenship. We need to create a supportive culture through team work, respect, integrity and ethics.

This is a whole community challenge. The era of top down command and comply execution has given way to an empowering networked approach where everyone must initiate. This requires

personal development and acquisition of critical skills. Without confidence, perseverance and opportunity, too many fail to reach their potential or worse end up dependent, on drugs or incarcerated. We need to ensure everyone develops holistically and is equipped to meet the challenges of the 21 Century. Together we can accomplish this and co-create the community we want.

What do We Know Now We Didn't Know Before?

Neuroscientists and quantum physicists are proving what mystics have been telling us for centuries—we create our own reality. Our perceptions are colored by what we learn from others and experience before our brains have developed discernment. Most people don't fully develop the prefrontal cortex until age 25 meaning volition is often reactive until then. Those who experience trauma or grow-up in environments that are very controlling and prescriptive may never become free of these influences. Rather than live questions and develop a passion for learning, many of these people accept the world as it is and adapt as best they can. The good news is healers have developed the tools to intervene, practices to help people heal and grow and now understand what kind of culture and external environment are necessary for people to achieve their greatest potential. We can capitalize on this knowledge and become intentional about culture and environment if we work together.

"IQ is still recognized as an important element of success, particularly when it comes to academic achievement. People with high IQs typically do well in school, often earn more money, and tend to be healthier in general. But today experts recognize it is not the only determinate of life success. Instead, it is part of a complex array of influences. The concept of emotional intelligence has had a strong impact in a number of areas, including the business world. Many companies now mandate emotional intelligence training and utilize EQ tests as part of the hiring process. Research has found that individuals with strong leadership potential also tend to be more emotionally intelligent." (Kendra Cherry-educator/author)

Leadership Development

For many years Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley were isolated. With a low cost industry dominating the economy and a large poverty industrial complex built in reaction, a high EQ among leaders was not valued. In a low cost environment employees can be seen as interchangeable cogs. Creating an environment where personal growth was important to enterprise goals was not valued. Work was a job not a career. You were on or off.

In the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world of this century, top down, controlling leaders are largely ineffective. Those doing the hands on work are facing real time challenges and need to be able to respond quickly and effectively with confidence. Knowing that mistakes will be seen as opportunities is a cultural necessity. Learning to respect many perspectives affords wisdom no one person can have. Shifting from a leader who gives orders to a coach requires people to increase their EQ and that requires humility. It's one thing to work harder

and learn more, quite another to be willing to become different, especially when the old ways worked and you climbed to the top.

There are countless books, articles and workshops that are offered to assist in this transformation. The *Everyone* book noted at the outset has been endorsed by Peter Senge, Geoffrey Canada (Harlem Children's Zone) and a list of industry leaders. It could become a shared learning tool. The approach emphasizes the importance of radical transparency, a focus on personal growth and evaluations not just based upon performances goals but also one's contribution to the culture. In an everyone culture, those that focus exclusively on personal success and view fellow workers as competition would not rise into the executive ranks if they lasted at all.

The book offers specific examples and practices from three very different industries to validate that the approach works. The results are compelling. While some senior business folks may scoff, younger generations are looking for more balance and purpose in their lives. In the E 3 Network, the connector site under development in Fresno, students will be encouraged to evaluate potential employers for their commitment to triple bottom line outcomes where economic, equity and environmental impacts are considered in all decisions. The best employees have choices. They seek environments where personal growth is encouraged and quality of life is valued.

Searching for Balance between Seemingly Conflicting Values

In a life-long learning scenario knowledge has a short shelf life. Thus, mastering learning itself is the priority. Sustaining the passion for learning and growth—we are born with it—is a success requirement for educational institutions and workplaces. As social creatures most learn best in groups. Words don't teach, experience does. Project based learning, service learning, sharing what you have learned, learning how to challenge and coach others, self-knowledge and discipline—many skills have already been baked into the curriculum depending upon the school site and the quality of the teachers.

Education in large part determines our future. We must ask ourselves what forces, values and rewards will shape the human mind and create our culture going forward? Will we embrace what the neuroscientists have taught us and create deliberately developmental communities or will we resort to labels, judging, medicating and incarcerating those who behave in ways that signal lack of opportunity or trauma. In Fresno, with our concentrated poverty this decision is fundamental. Humility allows us to accept that for an entire lifetime we remain students and teachers. The issue is whether or not we are intentional about it.

The acquisition of knowledge and skill without a focus on character can pit the rugged individualist against the whole. In the 1890's, Frederick Turner advanced a Frontier Theory celebrating what he saw as the fierce, independent, anti-intellectual American character he felt was needed to tame the west. Now that there is no more "west" and most are living in interdependent communities, this thinking can create tension between the practical and theoretical, the doer and the thinker

ultimately undermining both. In other cultures—Sweden for example—many see the value of education as a way to increase one’s capacity to think, invent, increase the moral order and make a contribution to society. Tilting too far one way can lead to single bottom line, financial priorities at the expense of quality of life, justice and sustainability. Tilting too far the other and we could lose the rigor and passion of entrepreneurs who are always pushing the edges. Discovering approaches that honor both and are guided by core principles and values can lead to communities that are both inclusive and prosperous.

Center for Advanced Research & Technology (CART)

CART is an example of an experiment that worked. It generates a spirit of community and fosters excellence. It is the result of an educator and employer partnership at the level of design, execution and funding. Its success offers some important guidelines. The following description is an effort to capture the essence of CART recognizing replication of the form does not necessarily replicate the experience. It is deeply personal.

The Essence of the CART

While many have created similar forms--a high school focused on career and technical education--there is something different about the Center for Advanced Research & Technology (CART). It is intangible. Something you must experience to understand. Once you do you want more. You want to replicate the essence. What is it? How did it happen?

In 1999 a group of educators and business leaders realized too many students weren’t making it. They decided to do something. Based upon world-wide research they designed an approach that was project-based, career focused and team taught. In addition, they focused on the inner journey, the path to self-knowledge, confidence and a sense of belonging. They embedded Habits of the Mind (Initiate, investigate, collaborate, persist, communicate, connect, reflect) into the curriculum and treated students like adults. They transferred the responsibility for learning to the student.

The result—CART is an example of a healthy ecosystem where students feel valued for who they are, not just what they do. They recognize that everyone has a unique path and unique value. Learning to be responsible to a team and the broader community teaches the principles of active citizenship. A focus on real world problems and presentations with a commitment to high standards develops confidence and the ability to communicate effectively. CART develops the whole person and the entrepreneurial mindset students need for success.

While the form of the school focuses on career and college ready, the spirit of CART focuses on self-knowledge, shared learning and citizenship. CART develops confident career and

college ready citizens by offering psychological safety and a self-actualizing, community centric culture.

Goals

- Shared commitment to creating a self-actualizing culture through learning, practicing and measuring together. Commitment sought--endorsement of the action plan at the executive level of enterprises across sectors.
- A customized Toolkit for personal and professional growth to achieve a shared language that can be adapted for different audiences. Potential components:
 - 101—Overview of key concepts, personal growth plan
 - 102—Workplace module focusing on employer needs
 - 103—Customized for specific initiative or core team
 - 104—Module for helping professions—preservice and professional development
 - 105—Adaptive Leadership Training—Year Long Commitment
- A shared understanding of the impacts of trauma and a commitment to respond quickly and effectively when symptoms arise. Approach--workshops and a communications strategy working through existing organizations.
- Shared metrics for success, an iterating time and action plan and resources to execute.
- A shared language and approach that can be used to develop mentors, quality internships and apprenticeships and in the HR function across employers.

Phase I—Assessment (Underway)

1. Identify and collect the programs and tools currently used in all sectors.
2. Evaluate and distill the most promising approaches.
3. Do a global search to discover alternative methods.

Phase II—Develop Fresno Toolkit (Some Tools In Development)

1. Develop a prototype for Toolkit targeting various groups.
2. Ask all sectors to evaluate and offer feedback—focus groups, surveys, etc.
3. Finalize initial toolkit

Phase III—Pilot Phase--Ongoing

1. Select trainers to offer the curriculum
2. Test effectiveness with various groups using existing channels.
3. Refine materials.
4. Clarify metrics

Phase IV—Complete Time & Action Plan by December 2017, Secure execution resources

Phase V—Renewal Annually

Tool to Foster Understanding

As a shared understanding of human development and the impacts of trauma and neglect are vital to achieving a unified approach, the following graphic is offered as a way to capture many notions. Most agree we are all born with potential and the desire to grow. There are environments that encourage growth and those that challenge it. While everyone will face difficulties and must learn to overcome them, preventing avoidable trauma and providing restorative practices if it occurs are choices every community makes. The dominant culture—conscious or unconscious—decides between the low costs of prevention and early intervention and the huge costs of unresolved trauma and limited development.

This graphic is offered as a tool to make our decisions conscious.

