Human Restoration Project
Professional Development & Support Services

Partnering with K-12 schools & colleges to restore humanity to education.

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# what if we started by listening to kids?

That's the question that lives in the heart of our professional development. At the core of every school are the students. We're building a platform for educators, administrators, and families to connect with young people, breaking barriers toward learning and building engaging practices.

Our process begins by working with multiple groups of young people of all age levels to learn about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, connecting each to their school experience. We learn about what they love and wish could be improved.

Human Restoration Project analyzes these conversations, utilizing a high-quality transcription and collaborative discussion tool from our partner Cortico. This enables us to build a multi-day interactive, hands-on professional development model that not only provides the latest in research-driven practice, but is directly built on the aspirations of young people.

Empathy interviews are hosted through focus groups on-site.
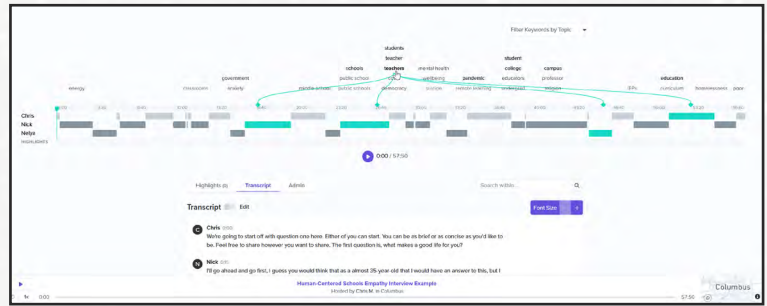
Conversations are transcribed, analyzed, and integrated into professional development.

reimagine professional development

We're former public school teachers and we understand that PD rarely feels worthwhile: only 29% of teachers say they are satisfied with their PD.* We believe that the research-driven interactive, discussion-based model we are passionate about in our classrooms should *also* be how we learn with adults.

Through a workshop model, educators co-design changes to their classroom. Utilizing a teacher action research process, we create lasting solutions that support and guide educators on their journey.

human-centered
Education is a deeply human endeavor, and we believe PD should reflect that.

teachers as creators
We help educators reimagine classrooms, rather than offering prescriptive ideas.

systems-based change
We focus on systems, not strategies. We advocate for foundational positive change.

watch the full overview!

humanrestorationproject.org

*Teachers Know Best.* Boston Consulting Group. (2014)

about

Human Restoration Project is a non-profit organization informing, guiding, and growing a movement toward a progressive, human-centered education system. We are bringing together a network of educators who are transforming classrooms across the world.

Founded and led by former public school teachers, we believe that young people, families, educators, administrators, and community members must take control of their schools to push for change.

HRP has identified twenty systems, summarized within 4 values statements, that must be changed for a human-centric, equitable system that creates a better future for all.

When one system changes, each other system changes in-turn. Change will occur when we change systems rather than attempting kind practices in inherently inhumane spaces.
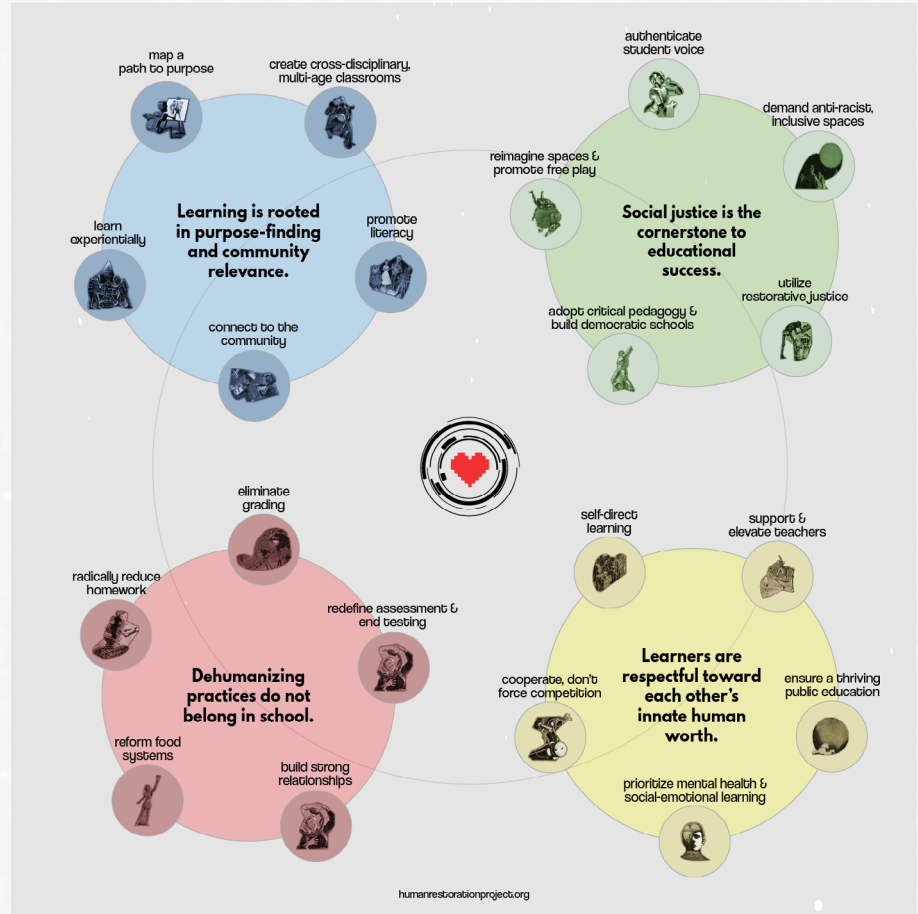
testimonials

My whole life I've felt alone, caring about children and providing education that is exciting for children. Even as a child I was disappointed that other children didn't love school, but as I got higher in grades I realized why, school work got more repetitive and less immersive.

HRP has shown me that there are many educators out there who also care about all children and want them to learn and grow, not just as "productive workers" but as critically thinking curious excited creators and caretakers.

HRP empowers me to fight for children's rights.

Your group has articulated these things that I instinctually know but have lost in all my PD/ College Board years of training. I'm 25 years into this gig. Glad I can reacquaint myself with what originally got my into teaching and finish my career ethically whole.

...HRP provides information that is easy to digest and understand. With every article, podcast, and video I read, listen to, and watch I always learn so much. I am proud to call myself a progressive educator that is constantly incorporating new humanizing and progressive practices and much of that thanks is owed to HRP.

HRP produces consistently high quality, though provoking, and often visually beautiful materials. I've learned so much from them about educational environments which trust and center students and genuinely prioritize learning. My work revolves around education data and I've especially appreciated the organization's nuanced critiques of the quantification of education and "evidence based practices" in education.

This organization has tapped into the original "why" of many educators that is often lost or overshadowed by unfair or unrealistic expectations placed on our public schools.

services

Human Restoration Project offers two forms of professional development: our **Human-Centered Schools Network** teacher action research process and **intensive workshops** on a variety of topics.

The **Human-Centered Schools Network** (p. 6-8) is a collaborative professional learning network rooted in progressive pedagogy. The process begins with an in-depth school analysis and consultation service that provides students, educators, and administration with the resources needed to embrace human-centered learning. Our process uses research-backed practices that increase motivation, engagement, academic achievement and prioritize social-emotional learning. This year-long program involves touchstones at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to create lasting change in individual classrooms, cohorts, and through the entire school.

Our **workshops** (p. 9) are in-person or virtual experiences aimed at building reimagined schools through pedagogical concepts, such as interdisciplinary experiential learning, as well as tackling growing technologies and tensions in classroom spaces, such as artificial intelligence. We design all of our professional development experiences to mirror what a great classroom should look like: emphasizing teachers as creators, providing space for workshopping and planning authentic ideas into classrooms, and minimizing top-down lecture-driven learning.

video overview: HCS network

human-centered schools network

Step I: Widespread Conversations

To learn from young people and the school community, educators and students have a series of conversations about learning in the school, positives and negatives, which are transcribed and analyzed by educators and administration. We shape our questions on multifaceted broad questions: such as how much purpose students find in their coursework, as well as specific district mandates (e.g. aligning school practices to the Portrait of a Graduate). Typically, we talk to ~50-100 students at each school.

We know that effective leadership and good policy-making in education require leaders to listen to - and act on - the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders: students, educators, and families. We know that empowering community-led change starts with stakeholders listening to one another. We know that conversations within communities about shared vision, values, and action are the practice of democratic discussion that sustains true democracy.

We've partnered with MIT-funded Cortico to provide tools to highlight, analyze, and share these conversations. All participants gain access to the analysis tool which allows participants to quickly understand major topics covered in conversations, provide access to students & educators to easily share out their major points, and analyze key themes in the school & local community.

These listening sessions are turned into a formal learning artifact for educators and building leaders to access and utilize within ongoing district/PLC discussions.
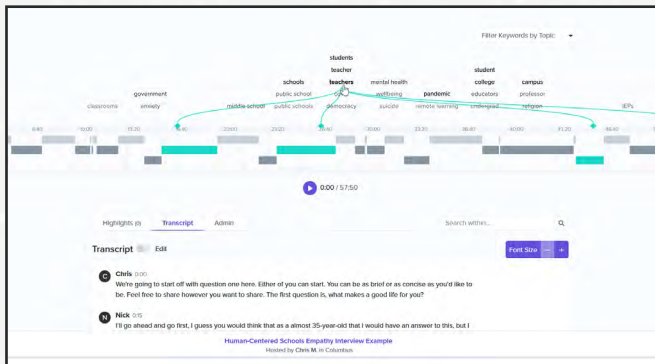
Example Conversation

This example listening session showcases how our partner tool, Cortico, allows groups to co-analyze a conversation and identify major themes. We utilize this technology in each of our focus group sessions.
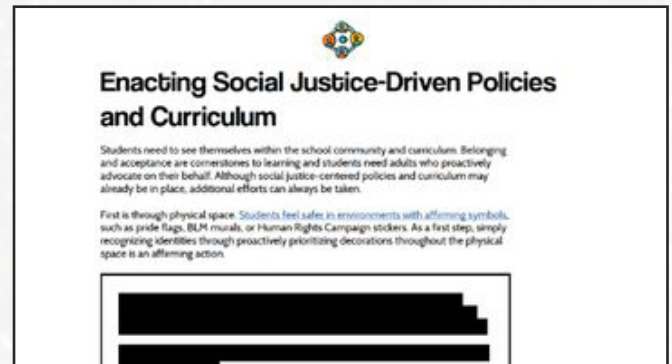
Example Analysis

This analysis (redacted to protect student identities) demonstrates how we draw upon young people's narratives to build a formal report for each school. This analysis builds into our workshops with educators.

Step II: Understanding a Human-Centered Education

In order to implement change, educators must understand an underlying human-centered pedagogy. Teachers are onboarded through a series of discussions, activities, videos, and readings to the philosophy of progressive education.

An individual teacher can have a lasting impact on their students, but this is marginal in comparison to the collective impact of tens of thousands of teachers in thousands of classrooms. And, to be honest, many of these individual teachers are burnt-out and tired of going against the fold to provide a purposeful education for their students. The conversation must switch from burning out caring, empathetic individuals, to changing systems and structures that will have an impact on all young people.

What if we changed the conversation from individual, great teachers to a system that was, in-it-of-itself, great for students? What would it look like?

We start all of our onboarding sessions with a simple question: What is your fondest hope for how our students turn out to be? This question outlines the entire premise of progressive pedagogy, as all respondents will state adjectives like: independent, thriving, motivated, proud, empowered, imaginative, or confident. Our current system doesn't prioritize any of these descriptions.

We center research-backed ideas in a workshop model, where educators explore concepts they care about, with support from us, to discover (or build on) human-centered pedagogy for themselves.
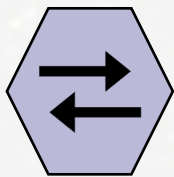
Step III: Teacher Action Research

To transform the school, educators utilize the process of teacher action research to implement human-centered systems based off their school and classroom context.

Teacher action research offers the unique opportunity to engage educators in the same, research-backed ways that engage students: self-directed pacing, purposeful work, and collaborative efforts. Educators choose a specific piece of our professional development (and analysis) to integrate within their classrooms. With the support of our team, educators will set up a plan for the year, either by themselves or in a cohort, to implement a new concept: whether that be portfolio-based grading, restorative practices, student voice committees, or anything else that comes up in our initial support meetings. Because these practices are user-driven, school administrators can tie specific initiatives to certain concepts.

This ensures that educators are guided toward implementable outcomes that keep everyone within the values structure of the school. This work is evaluated throughout the year, and educators will receive consistent feedback to specifically improve their implementation of each idea. To incentivize completion, HRP awards microcredentials (for LinkedIn and other professional learning networks) and graduate coursework offered through Antioch University.

This process may be used for meetings in a school's professional learning community. By basing staff meetings on the expertise of those in the room, educators can collaborate on what best serves their needs and what they are most interested in. Our goal is to shift professional development away from outside consultants that offer one-and-done training, and allow educators to work within a framework that they build off of and share with others, guiding their school's learning within their individual context.

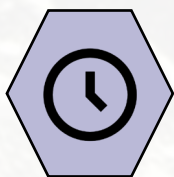|			
Introduce teacher action research process.	Align to district/school initiatives, and showcase options.	Set up mentors, groups, and individualized pathways.	Begin research around a certain systems-based change.
Meetings 1-2+		Meetings 3-6+	

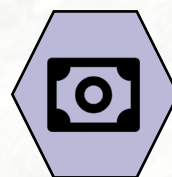|			
Provide time and space to complete teacher action research.	Meet as requested to provide structure and time for feedback.	Reward microcredentials & credits. Schools award stipends, leadership opportunities, and recognition.	Identify future mentors, mentees, workshop leaders, and more based on microcredential evidence.
	Meeting 7+		

workshops

We offer tailored workshops that can be designed exactly to your needs. Here's what we specialize in:

- Creating feedback-driven, purposeful classes through the process of ungrading, lessening the impact of grades and focusing on learning.
- Building classrooms which center a path to purpose, fostering engagement and meaning
- Understanding systems-based thinking, designing spaces to best engage and motivate students toward learning.
- Examining the "hidden curriculum" leading to a loss of democratic citizenship and student voice.
- Coaching principals, administrators, and support staff in progressive education.
- … and more! We provide services and partner with other awesome organizations to change systems centered on our values.

Example Sessions

Developing Human-Centered Assessment
By building portfolio and narrative systems of assessment, we can encourage learners to act on feedback and improve. By lessening the impact of letter grades, our systems can encourage growth, challenge, and achievement.

Proactively Utilizing Artificial Intelligence
As ChatGPT and other AI models rapidly advance, it is threatening to many typical assignments in the classroom. How can we rethink our classroom practices in the age of artificial intelligence?

Experiences Reimagined with Video Games
Designing projects that solve real world problems can be a daunting task. But interestingly enough - there's a massive connection with something almost all young people do every day: play video games.

Building a Path to Purpose
Less than a quarter of young people identify as being "purposeful" in their lives: having a goal that drives them day-to-day. What can we do within our curriculum and classrooms to encourage purposeful meaning-making?

Systems-Based Thinking for SEL
Anxiety and depression are at all time highs, for young people and educators alike - exacerbated by the pandemic. What changes can we start in assessment, discipline, and curriculum to ensure learners feel safe and heard?

Strengthening Democracy in the Classroom
Students need to practice having a voice and taking on responsibility from a young age to be able to act and change the world in their future. Designing a curriculum that listens to learners has powerful implications for a better tomorrow.

And propose your own!
HRP leads sessions on a variety of topics! Let us know what you're thinking. If we aren't a match, there's plenty of organizations in our network we can recommend.

quick facts

What is Human Restoration Project?
Human Restoration Project (HRP) is a 501(c)3 non-profit which aims to discuss and provide resources that illuminate, foster, and challenge traditional and progressive educational practices. We are bringing to light what we've all seemed to forget: our students, our educators - they are human beings. We intend to restore that lost humanity - having administrators, educators, and students remind themselves, and engage with, their purpose and dreams. We design learning experiences in school that center systems-based thinking: centering concepts such as experiential learning, portfolio-based assessment, restorative practices, social-emotional health, and self-directed learning. (See our film: 100 Seconds to Midnight: The Need for a Human-Centered Education)

What does Human Restoration Project do?
HRP focuses its attention on systems-based change in education through grassroots, teacher organized change. Despite decades of school reform (Race to the Top, No Child Left Behind, A Nation at Risk), only 40% of students are engaged in high school and less than half of students feel their learning is relevant.

Our priorities in education have moved away from the obvious answer: we're all human beings, we need to treat each other accordingly. Our work is based on three levels of change-making: 1) **informing** about the need for progressive education; 2) **guiding** educators through materials and PD on how to implement this practice in their classroom; and 3) **growing** the movement through coalition building, networking, and grassroots advocacy. (See our writing: How Teachers Can Start a Grassroots Revolution for Better Schools)

What makes your PD different?
We are former public school teachers and we know that the last thing teachers want to do is another PowerPoint lecture on a random buzzword or fad. Only 29% of teachers are satisfied with formal PD and less than half of teachers feel PD has value. All of our professional development services recognize that teachers are creators, they are experts, and they are under-resourced and under-served. We offer bold, yet tangible solutions that are steeped in each school's community context: we don't prepackage our work. We design changes in-tandem with young people and educators at every single school.

We believe, and have seen the results, that systems-based change is possible in typical public schools that not only lead to incredible learning opportunities for young people, but give educators sustainable ways of leading their classrooms. We believe that professional development should mirror the same human-centered practices we advocate for in the classroom, and therefore we deeply value teacher(student)-choice, experiential learning, purposeful activities, community-based projects, and a truly connective experience.

How are you funded?
We are here due to generous supporters, professional development, and grant partnerships. We're committed to transparency; you can find our full financial statements released yearly in our impact report. We are exclusively organized for charitable and educational purposes as a 501(c)3 under the United States Revenue Code. Because of our nonprofit status, our goal is to work with schools no matter the financial circumstance - we're willing to negotiate ways to work with any school working to reimagine education.

Reimagining education seems like a lot of work! How much is all this going to cost? How much time does it take?
The simple answer is that the greatest amount of work is simply being open that change is possible. The best practices and ideas aren't gatekept - and we do not propose any concepts that require expensive ed-tech tools or services. Instead, we want to take advantage of the experts in the classroom (both young people and educators) and communities/families. Our services are available entirely open source (free and not restricted) regardless of if we work directly with your school or not!

Further, although there is a greater amount of work upfront for educators and administrators taking on change, we firmly believe that new systems of education are *less* taxing than what's already in place. Educators work around the clock on traditional education practices that may not actually be that helpful. Rather than tacking new things on, we're actually subtracting and focusing on key, central elements of the classroom. We work around existing school structures to not overburden teachers or administrators with PD, observations, coaching, and scheduling.

What is "progressive education"? What does it mean to "restore humanity"?
Some strategies that are commonly marketed to educators do not fix the underlying problems in the school system. Progressive practices are differentiated because they're not about acronyms or buzzwords, but are based on research-backed educational ideas that have existed for centuries. Progressive education involves engaging each student in complex, rich experiences that go beyond simple tasks. It treats students and teachers as deep individuals with something to offer.

Progressive educators want school systems to change from standardized, rote-based systems to those that care about the innate worth of every individual and their connection and contribution to the community. This assumes that every individual is treated with dignity and respected. We maintain a database of over 700 research studies documenting why these practices are needed.

These aren't prescriptive changes. They're a *mindset*. There's not "one way" to do anything, and we believe HRP's approach to PD is *a* meaningful way to start catalyze change in classrooms.

We recognize the excellent work educators do throughout the world in helping young people realize their potential, while simultaneously recognizing the negative impact many standardized practices in school cause. We want to lessen and remove barriers that dehumanize the classroom, allowing young people (and educators!) to flourish. (See our writing: Fighting Back Against the Future)

Who runs HRP?
We are co-founded and run by two former public school educators: **Nick Covington** (left) is a former social studies educator from Iowa who shifted away from grades, coaching students through purposeful community action programs in his courses. **Chris McNutt** (right) is a former digital design and social studies educator from Ohio who developed portfolio systems, public exhibitions of learning, and student-driven activities.

What is "systems-based thinking"?

Schools become trapped in cyclical loops that reinforce traditional practices that often harm everyone involved. For example, the standardized testing market is driven by government data, which is driven by the market, which is also driven by college admissions and the whole host of issues going on there, and then there's the loan industry, and then teacher pedagogy and debates for decades about content and what's not content...it is a huge, massive, gigantic web of problems related to the system.

Ultimately, the majority of classroom professional development are on **binary solutions.** If we introduce a new platform, or new tech tool, or teach virtually for a year, or whatever – we'll "solve" the education system, or at least make it that much better. There are people making hundreds of thousands a year marketing themselves as education consultants who feed on quick solutions for districts to address whatever the mandate is that year: opportunity gap, learning loss gap, standardized test scores, the list goes on.

Systems-based change involves understanding the world, recognizing systemic problems, doing our due diligence, and fighting back. It's about looking at the roots - as educators Ira Socol and Pam Moran call "zero-based thinking" - and reimagining what's possible. We're not adding something *new* to what's already going on. We're transforming.
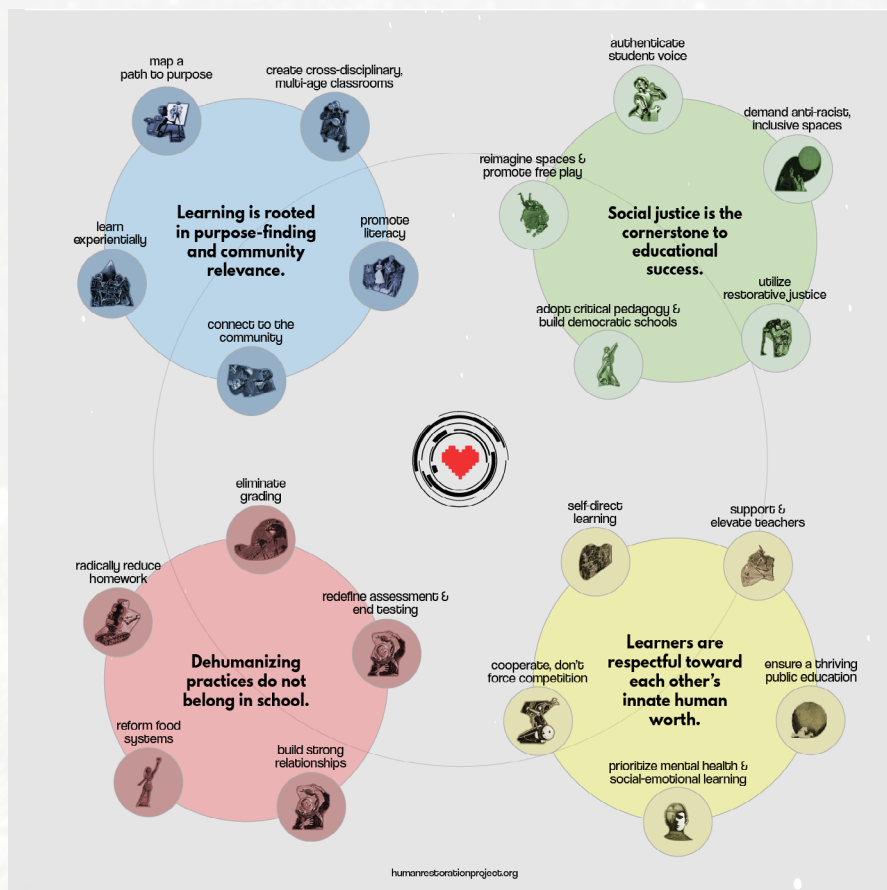
What "systems" are you talking about?

We've laid out 20 systemic actions toward change which outline a transformative process in education: from shifting to experiential projects to building restorative practices.

In order to make this happen, we propose changes in schools including but not limited to:

- Interdisciplinary, Project-Based Learning
- Portfolio Systems | Narrative Feedback
- Design Thinking and Community-Driven Learning
- Self-Directed Learning
- Universal Design for Learning
- Social Justice and Multi-Perspective Incorporation
- Advisories and Social Emotional Reflective Activities
- Purpose-Driven Lessons and Curriculum Planning
- STEM/STEAM

The way in which we determine recommendations is entirely dependent on what young people and educators tell us about the context of their learning environment (see page 6). There isn't a "one sized fits all" strategy in reimagining schools.

map a path to purpose · create cross-disciplinary, multi-age classrooms · authenticate student voice · demand anti-racist, inclusive spaces · reimagine spaces & promote free play · learn experientially · **Learning is rooted in purpose-finding and community relevance.** · promote literacy · **Social justice is the cornerstone to educational success.** · utilize restorative justice · adopt critical pedagogy & build democratic schools · connect to the community · eliminate grading · self-direct learning · support & elevate teachers · radically reduce homework · redefine assessment & end testing · **Dehumanizing practices do not belong in school.** · cooperate, don't force competition · **Learners are respectful toward each other's innate human worth.** · ensure a thriving public education · reform food systems · build strong relationships · prioritize mental health & social-emotional learning

humanrestorationproject.org

How do you typically support schools and districts?
We believe in personalizing all of our work to the specific school and community for all of our work. Initial conversations with cohorts and building leaders allow us to determine recommendations for either workshops or the Human-Centered Schools Network. We meet educators where they're at, whether it be stepping into the reimagination process or going "all in" and rapidly prototyping new ideas for the following school year. This is in alignment with ongoing district mandates such as Portrait of a Graduate or student engagement data.

From there, we formalize contracts and begin work on one of our two processes (see page 5). Our ultimate goal is for schools/districts to become beacons of change on their own - eventually eliminating the need for HRP to work directly with schools, instead featuring them for other districts to learn and grow.**Who is your audience?**
Our work is primarily aimed at K-college educators, including unschoolers/homeschoolers. We conduct focus groups with students in kindergarten. We offer options for college educators to rethink their pedagogical practice with university learners. Human Restoration Project firmly stands with and supports public schooling and our organization is founded and operated by public school educators. It is imperative we build an education system that provides free, well-funded, equitable, and quality classrooms for all. We do not disparage other forms of schooling, but are skeptical of organizations that seek to profit off of student outcomes.

What free resources do you offer?
As mentioned before, all of HRP's work is available for free beyond guided professional development. We want to equip teachers with the resources they need to be successful. All of our ongoing work can be found on our website, including:
- Interactive lessons, frameworks, and handbooks for professional development.
- A 400+ page interdisciplinary curriculum featuring lessons, projects, and assessment tools.
- A 130+ episode podcast featuring school leaders, authors, academics, and more.
- 200+ writings from 40+ authors on reimagining education.
- A curated 700+ research article database backing up our proposed changes.
- Multimedia documentaries and keynotes on systems-based thinking and rethinking what's possible.
- An ongoing "Edufuturism" webinar series on current topics in education, from AI to social media use.
- Backlogs of our yearly conference (keynotes and learning tracks posted for free after each event).
- A 100+ focus group session analysis featuring 500+ young people to back up our claims for reimagining education.
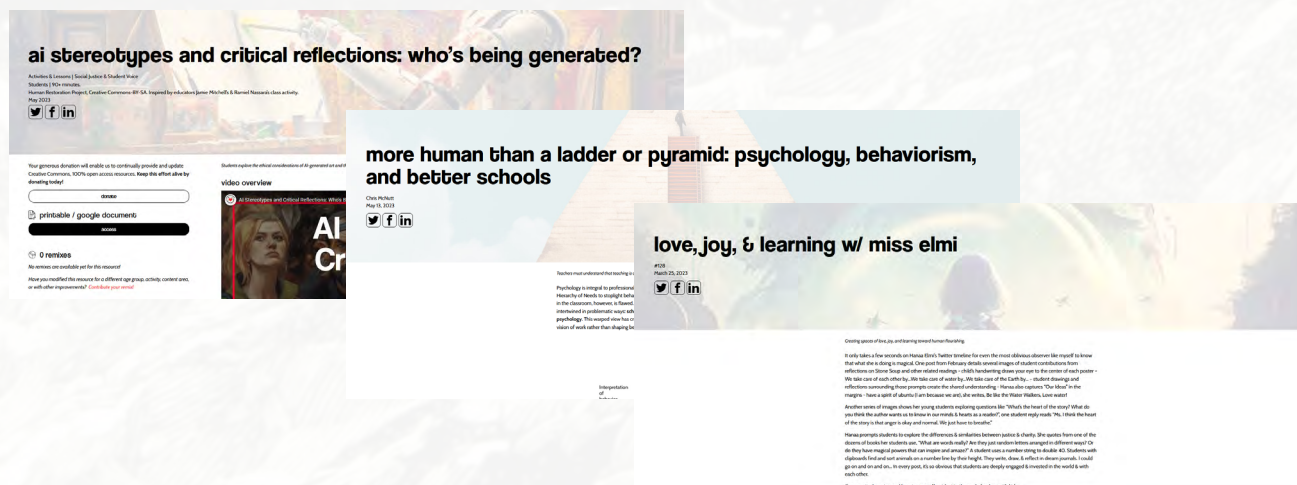
What other learning opportunities are available?

Each year, Human Restoration Project hosts *Conference to Restore Humanity!* in late July. This designed-for-virtual conference is an invitation for K-12 and college educators to engage in a human-centered system reboot: centering the needs of students and educators. We feature some of the most reputable scholars and teachers in the field.

The traditional conference format is costly to attend, environmentally unfriendly, and it doesn't allow everyone to engage or have a voice in the learning community. Our model is...

Collaborative: Using recorded keynotes followed by an hour-long Q&A and self-paced learning tracks, we lean on virtual best practices to value your time and to encourage meaningful collaboration.

Affordable: As a virtual space, we are able to offer a platform for change at a fraction of the cost of a traditional conference. Further discounts are available for groups and student organizations.

Accessible: All of our keynotes, events, and tracks utilize transcripts, text- and/or video-based communication, and are easily navigable, allowing all to participate.

Sustainable: Not having to fly everyone out to the same space means we're cutting back on emissions and making a minimal impact on our planet.

As with all HRP events, records of the event are available for free after the live sessions. However, joining the conference offers a ton of networking and collaborative benefits! For more information, visit our conference page.

contact & rates

Want to reimagine education? Partner with Human Restoration Project to humanize classrooms and build spaces toward care and engagement. Rates are highly dependent on the specific needs of each community. We are highly open to working on co-constructing grants with local foundations to secure funding and/or modifying our budget to ensure the partnership can be successful.

Virtual Workshops
$500+ / day

Specialized for each learning community

Utilizing workshop-driven, interactive virtual components

In-Person Workshops
$1,000+ / day

Specialized for each learning community

Utilizing workshop-driven, interactive components

Focus on student and community collaboration

Human-Centered Schools Network
$10,000+

Specialized for each learning community

Full school support service working through teacher action research

Focus group sessions with 100+ students

In-depth school analysis & reporting

5+ days of on-site professional development with virtual meet-ups

Extended School Partnerships
Contact Us

Human Restoration Project is seeking partners to reimagine education and support young people and educators in building better systems.

If you're looking to change things up, conduct an event, build a new school program, or just want our input on something - let us know!

The future depends on educators, in coalition with other movements to create an equitable society, to demand and make change here in the present.

Imagining a better future isn't naivety, it's essential for a thriving world. We must preserve in the face of everything a positive outlook toward organizing, surviving, and building anew – or risk becoming stagnant. Individual actions snowball and propagate through systems, and each act of service, each pushback, each classroom decision can fundamentally build a better future. It's up to us to make that tomorrow a reality. "...if we can't articulate more viable futures, and adapt," activist adrienne marie brown cautions, "our human future is pretty hopeless."

Feel free to contact us on our website, or shoot us an email at chris@humanrestorationproject.org and/or nick@humanrestorationproject.org.

Let's restore humanity, together,

Chris McNutt
Executive Director, Human Restoration Project