



Introduction

*“At first, dreams seem impossible, then improbable,
and eventually.....inevitable.”*

Christopher Reeve

*“At every crossway on the road that leads to the future,
each progressive spirit is opposed
by a thousand men appointed to guard the past.”*

Maurice Maeterlinck
Belgian Nobel Laureate in Literature

*“Optimists enrich the present, enhance the future,
challenge the improbable, and attain the impossible.”*

William Arthur Ward



Introduction

Why the Title “Inevitable?”

The world is changing . . . no, excuse us, it’s not changing, it already *has* changed! We have left the Industrial Age and mass production and seen our way into, and maybe past, the Information Age and mass customization. Except for education, of course . . . which remains stuck in the assembly line approach to education which presupposes that all eight-year olds are ready to learn the same thing, the same way, in the same amount of time. Soooo 20th century!

The forces *demanding* that education change are many and powerful; and the forces *resisting* educational transformation are also many and powerful. But the *future* will win out because:

☑ Reality is that no one (other than those who have that lovely second grade teacher for their child) believes that public schools are doing a good job of preparing our students for the future. The US is near the bottom of almost all rankings of achievement when compared with other developed countries. (More about this in Chapter 1.)

☑ Technology is transforming nearly every sector of our lives. Music, books, retailing, communication, news, photography, medicine, architecture, etc. etc. etc. have changed drastically, have become more efficient, and we all expect that those changes, improvements, and progress will continue. Education cannot sit in this customized world as an island, embracing the Industrial Age, and expect to survive. The only question is: will “they” do it, or will “we” do it? Educational change, though difficult, is *inevitable*. (More about this in Chapter 2.)

Education cannot sit in this customized world as an island, embracing the Industrial Age, and expect to survive.

☑ Mass Customizing models are out there. They are everywhere. We are all using them...without ever once stopping to reflect on how this technology and these strategies could/should be applied to learning and learners. Think iTunes and music, think Amazon and book sales, think Verizon and your phone bill, think eBay and your garage sale . . . just start watching the mass customizing that you are experiencing each day and you will learn firsthand that the technology needed to transform, to personalize and customize learning, is already available. (More about this in Chapter 8.)

☑ Customizing and personalizing learning to the individual learner will allow educators to move from “workers” to professionals, and allow education to move from an “industry” to a profession. Clear and comprehensive definitions of “professionalism” and “professions” would not allow the inclusion of today’s Industrial Age schools. (More about this in Chapter 5.)

☑ Customizing and personalizing learning can be done without increasing the cost of education. This statement may make us sound like politicians, but songs are cheaper than ever, Kindle has made books cheaper than ever, long-distance calls are cheaper than ever . . . and we could go on and on. Transformational technologies have decreased costs nearly everywhere. We are not trying to sell **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING (MCL)** as a cost cutter, but neither do we want to lose the debate for educational reform over co\$ts.

Introduction



Why the Book?

Now that you know why we chose *Inevitable* as our title, let us be up-front about why we thought that this book needed to be written. We believe that making education more meaningful to learners, making learning more motivational for learners, and preparing young learners for their future rather than our past is **the** critical educational and moral (not to mention – economic) imperative of the day.

We have walked by too many open high school classroom doors at 11 am and 2 pm, looked at students sitting in rows, listening but not hearing what teachers were saying, telling us with their posture and their eyes how they felt. We have watched too many enthusiastic first graders turn into bored fourth graders. We are morally compelled to make things better for learners, for teachers, and for the system that we refer to as “having school.” But more specifically, we wrote *Inevitable*:

-  To enthusiastically and passionately promote a vision of education that is intrinsically motivating to young learners.
-  To create a concrete vision of an Information Age instructional delivery system to replace the present and severely outdated Industrial Age bureaucracy.
-  To begin a focused dialogue about the opportunity educators have to make education significantly more exciting and effective.
-  To help move public education from an industry to a profession.
-  In short, to bring education into the 21st century.

Note: Before we/you get too far into *Inevitable: Mass Customizing Learning*, we want to be clear that this **is not** a book about cyber schools. It is not about technology as teacher. It is about technology as enabler. About technology that “enables” professional educators to implement the most basic research we have regarding learners and learning, and teachers and teaching.

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Introduction

Our Intended Audience:

Public education is difficult to change. (That line will easily win the “understatement award” for this entire book.) Our experiences cause us to think that education IS the most difficult of all industries/professions to change in any significant and fundamental way. Given education’s resistance to meaningful change, it is critical that all stakeholder groups work together supporting a common vision if meaningful change is to occur. So, *Inevitable* is not a book for educators and educational leaders.

Oh, we want them too, of course; that is for sure. But we also want *Inevitable* to be read by parents, board members, community members, business people, taxpayers, and ALSO by students. No, please excuse us again, that should read “ESPECIALLY” by students.

If we can convince the “born digital” group (those born after 1990 by our definition) that we are serious about transforming schools, we might expect that the born digitals will tell us how to do it . . . oops again, we can expect the digital natives to “show” us digital immigrants how to do it. If you don’t understand this paragraph and you have a 12-year old in the house, just go ask. Digital natives live their lives where we will be asking schools to go . . . except for their school life, of course. As one insightful high schooler put it, “I have to “power down” when I go to school.” We fully expect that today’s middle schoolers will “get” the concept/vision of MCL before their digital immigrant parents and teachers do.

With the need for total cooperation and support in mind, we will attempt to write in a style that is inclusive, conversational, informal, and fun. But because our topic requires authenticity, openness, and candor, we will also be confrontational and challenging. We believe that the need to transform education is so critical that it cannot be political. We need everyone . . . we will attempt to be “equal opportunity” offenders when we confront and challenge.





Introduction

Our Perspective:

The reader should know our vantage point going in. We are lifelong educators (although we also frequently consult with businesses and other professions) and life-long learners who believe that education is the world's most important profession. Nothing is more meaningful than to play a critical role in the life and learning of a young girl or boy, or a young woman or young man. Nothing is more meaningful than *empowering all learners to succeed in a rapidly changing world*.

Together, we (Chuck and Bea) have about 90 years of experience as educators, have sat in almost every chair on the organizational chart, and have been successful in nearly everything to which we have committed (said Chuck and Bea boastfully). "Helping People Grow" is our personal and professional mission. We are perennial and resilient optimists who are passionate about our profession.

Our *core values* which guide our thoughts, decisions, and actions are:

*People and Relationships,
Honesty and Integrity,
Freedom and Responsibility,
and Continuous Learning.*

Our *principles of professionalism* which provide rules for decisions and performance include:

*Client Centeredness, Future-Focusing,
Inclusiveness, Inquiry, Contribution,
Accountability, and Win-Win Thinking.*

We do have biases . . . as does everyone, we have points of view, and we do take positions on most big issues of the day. Some of those biases may leak through as we discuss our vision for education in a clear and passionate manner. But, know that we will do our best to remain neutral on those things not pertinent to *Inevitable: Mass Customized Learning*.

Our experiences have taught us to take no prisoners. We know that we can't change the minds of some people, and so when we feel a hint of deep defensiveness, we move on. Our role, and the purpose of *Inevitable*, is not to change the heart and soul of anyone. Rather, our purpose and the purpose of *Inevitable* is to give those who know that we can do better, and who want to be part of the journey, **a place to go**.

If you are ready for a challenging and transformational **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING (MCL)** vision, hop in. And oh yes, it might be good if you fasten that seatbelt!



Chapter 1: Facing Reality

"The first critical job of a leader is to identify and to face reality."

"You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end (which you can never afford to lose) with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

Jim Collins in *Good to Great*



Facing Reality

Authors write with intent. We want something of you, the reader. We want to do something with your thinking. In our bold spirit of transparency, we have chosen to tell you what we are trying to do with your thinking at the beginning of each chapter. And just so you know, when you finish this book, our intent is that you become “Raving Fans” of **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING**.

Chapter 1 Intent:

To create dissatisfaction with today’s schools that opens the reader to consider meaningful, impactful, transformational educational change.

We, your friendly and supportive authors, do not want to begin our very positive, exciting, and hopeful vision for education by making you, the reader, defensive. Education and educators have taken some pretty tough shots from nearly all sides over the past 20 years and we don’t intend to “pile on.” But, real and significant change begins with the title of Chapter 1, “Facing Reality,” and we will not sugarcoat that reality.

We will do our very best to describe today’s educational realities in a manner that does not cause anyone to feel defensive. We will be as objective as possible with our descriptions, our analyses, and our judgments . . . as we believe that the facts pretty well speak for themselves. We will not place blame or knock anyone . . . because we don’t believe that anyone is to blame. On the other side of the coin, we expect that before finishing *Inevitable* you will want to accept today’s realities so that we (all partners in education) will enthusiastically embrace a modern approach to education that motivates and meets personal learner needs every hour of every day.

To aid our analysis of major changes, of paradigm shifts – in this case, major changes in education – let us revisit the 1969 classic book *On Death And Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Kubler-Ross wrote about real death and dying, just as the title of her work would indicate. But since that time, her five stages of death and dying have been found by leadership and change theorists to help us understand any major change an individual, a group, or a society goes through.

The following five stages of loss – whether it be life itself, or the loss of a traditional way of doing things – seem to be common to the experience. We will present a quick example of the stages of death and dying . . . like “real death,” and then we will present the stages providing examples related to being asked/forced to leave the security of the Industrial Age assembly line delivery of instruction for a delivery system personalized to each learner. (Much more about this shift throughout the remainder of the book.)



Stages of Death and Dying

(taking some liberties with Ms. Kubler-Ross' work)

Stages of the Change Process

Stage 1: DENIAL

"This can't be. That test isn't foolproof, and it might have gotten messed up in the lab. I will need a second opinion. Gee, I feel so good!"

Stage 1: DENIAL

"The parents of my students like me and like this school. We have always done it this way and the United States is still top dog. Those other countries don't test all of their kids so how can you compare test scores."

Stage 2: ANGER

"Why me!!! I don't deserve this. I'm down to six cigarettes a day and my friends who do a pack a day seem to be getting along well. Why hasn't the AMA found a cure for this . . . they get all the money they want for research."

Stage 2: ANGER

"Those people who do the loudest complaining have never been in a classroom with today's kids. Our student/teacher ratio continues to grow and we work long hours for low pay. Parents don't support us . . . when something goes wrong, they take the kid's side. Boy, it wasn't like that when I was a kid."

Stage 3: BARGAINING

"OK, I'll stop smoking and lose 20 pounds. Do some charity work and maybe get back to going to Mass regularly. Maybe a trip to Mayo would assure me that I am doing all that I can."

Stage 3: BARGAINING

"We need a computer lab so that we can take our classes down there a couple of times a week. And let's adopt the Differentiated Classroom program. That will help us meet the individual needs of young learners. Maybe we should try a block schedule."

Stage 4: DEPRESSION

"Hell, it's no use. I can't beat those statistics . . . who am I kidding. Time to put my affairs in order, shut off the world, and let this thing take its course."

Stage 4: DEPRESSION

"Nothing we do seems to make much difference and No Child Left Behind has us all focused on basic skills and testing. This is not why I got into education. Oh well, I only have four or five years left before I can take early retirement; maybe I can outlast this."

Stage 5: ACCEPTANCE

"You know, this whole thing has taught me what's important in my life. I have some months and I want to make the most of them. I need to listen to Tim McGraw sing that "Live Like You Were Dying" song. How did it go now . . . 'I went sky diving, I went Rocky Mountain climbing, I spent 2.7 seconds on a bull name Fu Manchu . . .'"

Stage 5: ACCEPTANCE

"I'm beginning to see where Mass Customized Learning makes sense. It would be a big change, but I think that it might be very rewarding . . . for students as well as us educators. It would be great if we had motivated learners and were able to use transformational technology to help us meet their learning needs on a daily basis. I'm ready to give MCL a serious look."

You may wish to stop for a time to reflect where you, your colleagues, and your friends are on this framework in regard to your acceptance of the need for education to change and your willingness to embrace that change. Kubler-Ross didn't suggest that we are in only one stage at a time. Like Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we most likely have one foot in one level/stage, and the other foot in the one above or the one below, and we sometimes move up the stages and sometimes down.



Facing Reality

Our Present "Big Picture" Educational Realities

Time to recognize the “elephant in the room;” you know, the large animal that everyone knows is there but doesn’t want to be the first to admit it or talk about it. Time to put “the moose on the table;” you know, that somewhat ugly thing that is not “politically correct” to discuss in sophisticated settings.

We begin defining today’s reality with four rather in-your-face statements. Statements that are intended to begin a dialogue but not an argument. Once we begin to face these truths . . . without placing blame, we begin positioning ourselves, and our organization, to create meaningful and productive change.

Should you find/feel yourself becoming defensive, stop and get in touch with that defensiveness. Know that we too (Chuck and Bea) are lifetime educators. We believe very much in the power of learning -- and “helping people to grow” is our personal and professional mission in life. More about this later, but one of the reasons that no one is to blame for what we have today is that the technology to customize education to each learner has only been available to us for a short period of time. On the other side of the coin, there will be reason to place blame if we continue to resist significant change now that transformational technology is available to make **MCL** a reality.

Harsh Reality #1

No one thinks that we are doing a good job in preparing our students for a successful future.

Everyone . . . other than educators . . . is critical of our performance. (But not critical of Catholic Schools . . . who just happen to do Industrial Age schools better than anyone else.) The US ranks near the bottom of almost all international rankings. Authors who used to devote a chapter to the needs of education now dismiss us in a paragraph.

Harsh Reality #2

We are Industrial Age organizations existing in an Information Age world.

Our Industrial Age delivery system is an assembly line where time for learning is the constant and the quality of the learning is the variable.

Harsh Reality #3

We are bureaucratic monopolies existing in a world of customization and service.

Our policies and practices are chosen for “administrative convenience” and are inconsistent with our most basic research regarding the learning rates of students. Concern for the personal learning needs of students does not begin until students are assigned to a teacher and then only if the teacher chooses to personalize learning within a classroom setting.



Facing Reality

Harsh Reality #4

We are an "industry" existing in a world that requires a profession.

We are union contract driven, controlled by outside forces, and seldom remove underperforming workers.

The above descriptions of today's public school realities may be a bit of an overgeneralization, but those able to be objective will agree that they are the norm of the day. But remember now, we are not blaming anyone. There is no one to blame. It simply is what is.

But then, you may not agree with our four reality statements. Let's check that out. How about applying the following scale to each of the four statements:

- 5 = *You are so right on*
- 4 = *I want to agree, but you're making me angry*
- 3 = *Well, yes and no*
- 2 = *A few good points, but too negative*
- 1 = *You guys are communists*

Your total score can range from 20 (you agree totally) to 5 (you agree very little). If your score for the four reality statements is:

- 18 to 20 *You will enjoy this book because it will tell you and show you how to transform education/public schools.*
- 15 to 17 *Just because you got a bit angry with us doesn't mean that we can't be supportive colleagues.*
- 12 to 14 *Keep reading. We think you will change your mind somewhere near the middle of the book.*
- 11 or below *You may wish to update your resume focusing on your high standards, classroom control, and lecturing skills. (Only kidding of course.) We think and believe that we will convince you of the validity of our statements as you learn about **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING***

We recommend that you come back to this section after you have read [*Inevitable: Mass Customized Learning*](#) and do the scoring again. We expect that scores will increase significantly after you have been introduced to the **MCL** vision and have had time to reflect on its potential for "leapfrogging" the Industrial Age educational paradigm.



Facing Reality

What We Do That Doesn't Make Sense Anymore

Quick Story (cjs): I just now wiki'd "Committee of Ten." Put three words in the box, my first try, and in seconds learned the why, how, and the by whom of the curriculum and instructional design of our high schools.

Today's transformational technology is unbelievable . . . well, almost unbelievable, especially to us digital immigrants. And we don't have to be told that "you ain't seen nothing yet." Which makes the point of the label for this section. The world has changed significantly since 1892, and some of the things we continue to do in schools no longer make sense.

The Committee of Ten, a group of educators mostly from colleges and universities, was asked by the National Education Association to make recommendations regarding the standardization of American high school curriculum. The year was 1892, somewhat before cars and long before computers and the internet. Their recommendations:

- ☑ Twelve years of education, eight years of elementary education, followed by four years of high school.
- ☑ Teach English, mathematics, and history or civics to every student every academic year in high school.
- ☑ Teach biology, chemistry, and physics respectively in ascending high school academic years.

1892 . . . no, that's not 1992, that's **1892!** Do those recommendations ring with today's school systems? Can you think of any other profession or industry that could have pulled off that record of changeless longevity?

Members of the "Committee of Ten" *were future-focused thinkers and planners!* They created an Industrial Age education system to ready America for the future . . . for the Industrial Revolution. They succeeded. Masterfully! The United States created an educational system that was the envy of the world and the "engine" that made America great.

Much/most of what we now do in public education made good sense when it was designed, implemented, and refined throughout the Industrial Age. But we are no longer living in the Industrial Age, and some things that made sense then don't make sense today. Technology and the Information Age have changed our world.



Facing Reality

Bell Curve Expectations: Grading on the curve, failing students, and accepting dropouts used to make sense. *They don't any more!*

We now know and believe that all students can learn. Some may take more time and some may have to learn in a different way, but all can learn. Further, during the Industrial Age, a student could do poorly in school or even drop out of school and still get a good paying job as a low skilled worker. Those jobs are no longer available. Learners leaving our schools today without competitive skills are not looking at a successful and meaningful future. To us (Chuck and Bea), this is a moral imperative. If THAT doesn't motivate you, then realize it is an economic imperative.

Assembly-Line Instruction: The graded, assembly-line organizational structure of schools used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

Students learn at different rates. (Wow, what an enlightened statement!) This fact is so universally agreed upon by everyone who has more than one child or who has taught children that it shouldn't have to be mentioned. But reality is that we continue to organize our schools as though every ten-year old is ready to learn the same thing and that every fourteen-year old is ready for Algebra. Our only debate seems to be "should we start school before or after Labor Day."

Quick Story (cjs): I once heard Madeline Hunter (one of our heroines), after making a passionate and effective presentation on the need to individualize learning for youngsters, be asked, "At what age do you think a student is ready to begin Kindergarten?" Dr. Hunter calmly and assuringly answered, "That's the wrong question. The question is: What is that child ready for?" What a learning that was for me. I was about 25 at the time and had never before questioned the assembly-line structure of schools.

Time the Constant, Learning the Variable: Student seat time as the constant (everyone has 45 minutes to learn how to subtract fractions) and learning outcomes as the variable (some kids get it, some kind of get it, and some just don't get it) used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

Allowing time rather than the quality of learning to be the gatekeeper has the immediate effect of sending some learners out the door who don't quite understand the concept that was taught, but it also has a more powerful negative impact on tomorrow's lesson and all lessons thereafter. "Not quite getting it" is cumulative. Tomorrow when "we all learn to divide fractions," the "didn't quite get it" learner doesn't have the prerequisite learnings required for clearly understanding the division of fractions. The further learners get behind in a group-paced, time-driven system, the quicker and further they will continue to fall behind.



Facing Reality

Limited Learning Opportunities: Teaching to the average learner or to the middle of the class, knowing that the fast learners will easily learn today's lesson and sit through the class spinning their intellectual wheels, used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

We are not letting our fast runners run. If not limited by group paced instruction, a large percentage of highly motivated achievers would be motivated to go far beyond what our top quartile learners now accomplish. The Industrial Age assembly line moves only so fast . . . too fast for some, too slow for others. We have created special costly programs for those who need extra time and additional coaching, but we leave our fast runners to be controlled by the master schedule and the curriculum.

Simultaneously Teaching 25 Unique Learners: Expecting teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of twenty-five children simultaneously used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

The policies and practices of public schools are bureaucratic. An objective analysis of the structure of public schools clearly shows that they are designed for administrative convenience. Personalizing learning begins only after a teacher is assigned a group of students . . . and a 1/25 teacher/student ratio does not make personalization and individualization of learning doable.

Averaging Grades: Averaging grades used to make sense. (But did it ever?) Well even if it did, *it doesn't any more!*

If we have to provide a rationale for why this outdated practice no longer makes sense, we are in trouble. But just to be safe, we will provide a brief explanation of our position. Grades are not a valid assessment of learning. Learning, to be validated, must be demonstrated. If you can demonstrate what you have learned, then you have learned. If you can't, you're not finished yet.

Quick Story (cjs): I went to a very small high school, one that didn't offer trigonometry. In college I wanted to major in math and signed up for trig. At the first class meeting, the instructor asked the forty students in attendance "How many of you have not had high school trig?" Five of us raised a hand. "Sorry guys" (and I think we were all guys,) but we are going to begin on Chapter 8." I got a "D" on my first test, an "A" on my second test, and for the final, a comprehensive test that covered the complete course, I had the highest score in the class. Mind you now, the teacher was a mathematician. One might expect logic. Want to guess my final grade?



Facing Reality

College Prep Curriculum: Justifying a curriculum based upon getting students “ready for more school” used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

Public schools are, or should be, about preparing learners for life. If life itself doesn't provide opportunities for “rigor,” what does? Education for life or for more school need not be an either/or decision. Life-role based learner outcomes quite naturally also prepare learners for additional learning. Curriculum needs to be relevant to motivate, and few of our high school students of today find their curriculum relevant to life . . . not the life they are living today or the life they expect after completing school.

Agrarian School Calendar: Expecting learning opportunities to coincide with an agrarian calendar used to make sense. *It doesn't any more!*

In fairness, we recognize that some school systems have designed school calendars that no longer assume that the older children will be expected to help with planting and harvesting, but the majority continues to have 180-185 day calendars with two to three months of summer vacation built in. The learning regression that occurs with this traditional schedule has been documented, and experienced teachers have long recognized the need to “catch them back up” come September.

Motivation and Professionalism, Then and Now

Student motivation and educator professionalism – terms that, on the surface, don't seem to be that closely related – are cause and effect when we envision **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING**. *Follow closely.*

PROFESSIONALISM is partially defined as “*acting on/applying the research base of the profession.*” Students are motivated and engaged when their personal learning needs are met. **MCL** makes it possible for educators to meet the personal needs of all learners. **MCL** is a big, critical, essential win-win for students and for teachers.

A phrase we frequently hear from nearly every educational stakeholder is: “Kids just aren't motivated to learn these days.” That statement shouldn't surprise anyone given the reality of today's world for children and young adults. Life for kids is much more exciting than school! In our day, teachers had to compete with Rock Hudson and Doris Day in the movie *Pillow Talk*. In our own children's time, they had to compete with the TV and *The Mod Squad*, *All In The Family*, and *Monday Night Football*. Tough competitions but teachers could somewhat hold their own. But today teachers compete, and get compared to, My Space, Twitter, Xbox, Gameboy, Madden Football, and any topic they may want to surf on their computer. Everything they encounter is interactive, interesting, challenging, and set at their own level of proficiency. This reality makes it easier to understand the learner quote from the intro, “When we come to school, we have to power down.”



Facing Reality

MOTIVATION: What motivates people to learn? What do we know about motivation and engagement – from our most basic professional research, from our personal experiences as learners, and from our experiences as parents and teachers? Our study of students and learning, and our experience as parents and teachers, make it rather clear that learner motivation and engagement are in large part the result of:

Meeting learners at their readiness level: Research strongly indicates that the number one determiner of learning success is the learner’s “prerequisite learnings.” That is, does the learner have the background knowledge and/or skills necessary to understand the new concept, process, or skill being taught? For example, if you are teaching a youngster to multiply 84 times 36, the chances of her learning it is very dependent upon her already being able to add and knowing her timetables.

Accommodating personal learning styles: There are many ways of being intelligent and many modes of learning. We all tend to be better at some learning modes than others. Some learn easily or best when reading, some when listening, some when watching, some when interacting with others, some learn best when doing it, when simply struggling through it. So, when a teacher uses one basic mode of teaching, it is working for some learners and not for others.

Learning through content that is personally interesting: To learn new concepts, ideas, opinions, etc. we typically interact with existing information and/or data. For example, we can learn about the concept of “racism” by studying the Civil War, the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, how Jackie Robinson broke the Major League Baseball color barrier, today’s life on a Native American reservation, or many other arenas of “content” that would be exciting to some and boring to others.

MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING, as described and explained in the remainder of *Inevitable*, makes it possible to consistently apply each of these three intrinsic motivators to student learning. Without intrinsic motivation engaging the learner, educators must apply extrinsic motivation, and frequently that motivation takes the form of manipulation, coercion, and grades as punishment and reward. Today’s predominant assembly line organizational structure makes it impossible to simultaneously apply these three basic motivators to 25 students.

So there you have it, the win-win, the cause and effect of professionalism – applying our best research to intrinsically motivate learners, which when done . . . intrinsically motivates learners. Our best teachers are attempting to do this now in a structure that is not designed to encourage or support it. What might these teachers accomplish if their beliefs about individualizing learning were openly and intentionally encouraged and supported by the organization’s structure? Well, we would have professionals helping intrinsically motivated, engaged learners to achieve faster and further than ever before.



Facing Reality

Individualizing Instruction, a Brief Historical Perspective

Reflective, learner-centered teachers who have ever taught in a public school have dreamt about being able to individualize and personalize learning for students. They knew intuitively that children learned on different days and in different ways. We (Chuck and Bea) go back a long way, and we have been dreaming for a long time.

In 1965, President Johnson signed a sweeping bill we came to refer to as “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,” and with that bill, the federal government became involved in public education.

The bill contained a number of programs, the most noted and most lasting was/is labeled Title I. Title I focused on the learning needs of children of low income families. Title III of the bill had to do with innovation and change. Even our legislators knew then that education needed to change significantly if it were to meet the needs of learners and the needs of our society. Title III, for future-focused educators, was the exciting part of that legislation. Most of the Title III efforts had to do with some form of “Individualizing Instruction.” But this was the Industrial Age, and the assembly line approach to instruction was accepted as a given. (Come to think about it, we have whipped right past the Information Age and the educational assembly line is still accepted as a given.)

Dr. Madeline Hunter, Principal of the UCLA lab school, was probably the most respected consultant of the day. She was deep in research, had an enviable track record, and was a great presenter . . . as well as a great person. She and Dr. John Goodlad, also of UCLA, and Dr. Dwight Allen, Professor at Stanford and later Dean of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, were the innovative thinkers of the day . . . and they all promoted “Individualized Instruction.” Their strategies took the form of team teaching, non-graded schools, multi-age grouping, flexible scheduling, etc. All these strategies were still basically within the assembly line structure.

The point here is that educational professionals have known what needs to be done for a long time, but we were stuck in a “group paced” paradigm that we couldn’t escape. In all fairness, we did not have the tools to escape that paradigm. But now we do. Madeline should be with us today. She would quickly recognize the opportunity. Chapter 2, “The Future IS Now: Transformational Technologies,” begins to frame **MASS CUSTOMIZED LEARNING**, our vision of how educators can use today’s tools to personalize and individualize learning for all students every day.

A closing note: To help you to recognize false prophets, even the moral, true believer, passionate type false prophets, you must apply this test. If the innovation/change they are promoting retains the bureaucratic assembly line delivery of instruction, they are not talking about transforming education. They are talking about “tinkering” with an old outdated paradigm in hopes of “catching up” with Singapore, South Korea, and Catholic Schools. **MCL** is about “leapfrogging,” not about catching up with those who are the most efficient at being obsolete.

Facing Reality



Chapter 1 Takeaways:

Educators, and especially educational leaders, must get in touch with, articulate, and accept today's harsh realities if we are to have a platform from which to create transformational change.

Much of what we now do made sense when we were living and learning in the Industrial Age. We are no longer living in the Industrial Age and much of what we continue to do no longer makes sense.

Intrinsically motivating today's learners and applying professional practices are closely related. You can't have one without the other. Professional practices, in the form of applying our most basic research, is the "cause;" high achieving, intrinsically motivated learners is the "effect." Win-Win is the outcome.

"Denial is not a river that runs through Egypt."

Pam Tillis, C&W Artist