

# DEAR FRIENDS IN EDUCATION:

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In 2018 our two organizations, Center for Inspired Teaching and the Astra Center for Innovative Education, began an incredible journey together.

We've been excited to learn about schools and school systems across the United States that are moving beyond conventional, standardized, compliance-based teaching to create learning experiences that are student-centered and engagement-based. We wanted to talk to the people making this happen and see these places firsthand.

So we did—through interviews with educators at 28 public, private, and public charter schools across the country, and visits to a dozen of these schools.

Both of our organizations are committed to education that authentically engages students as active learners, citizens, and empathetic, critical thinkers. Based upon our own experiences and the homework we did beforehand, we expected we would see lots of student-directed and project-based learning, attention given to students' social and emotional learning, creative connections with the larger community, and schools thinking in a broader way about student assessment.

We did find all these things—but we also discovered something more fundamental. **We believe that at the center of it all, and abundantly evident in the schools that felt the most transformative, is a core commitment to radically reimagined relationships.** We say “radically reimagined” because we mean something much deeper and more powerful than the way “relationships” are typically framed in schools.

The other commitments these schools have made include safety for risk taking, authentic learning experiences, holistic and meaningful outcomes, and equity. These are important, and certainly contribute towards student engagement and school success—but *we believe they have limited power* when they don't grow out of radically reimagined relationships.

We hope each of you can undertake a journey like the one we've been on—a journey that continues, as we are still learning and answering new questions sparked by what we've seen. Until you can make your own road trip, however, we hope this report provides inspiration, a thoughtful articulation of what schools can be and do, and some practical ways to get started or continue in your growth.

Bernard Haan, Founder & President, Astra Foundation

Aleta Margolis, Founder & President, Center for Inspired Teaching

Project Team: Sara Bailey, Rebecca Bauer, Kristin Blais, Rashea Hamilton, Mary Kadera, Abigail Wacker, and David Yarmchuk



The Astra Center for  
Innovative Education

Center for **Inspired Teaching**

# RADICALLY REIMAGINED RELATIONSHIPS: THE FOUNDATION OF ENGAGEMENT



The National Alliance for Engagement-Based Education is an initiative of Center for Inspired Teaching and the Astra Center for Innovative Education.

Read the full report:  
[astra.education](http://astra.education)  
[inspiredteaching.org](http://inspiredteaching.org)

