

ESSENTIAL READING FOR EDUCATION SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION WITH DR. KAREN GARZA

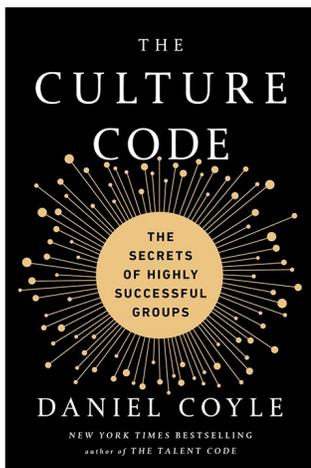
My father was an English professor, so my life, beginning at a very early age, has been significantly influenced by reading. It has centered my work and expanded my thinking, and I enjoy reading every day!

I read all kinds of books from all different genres. Some are directly related to my work as an education leader, while others are less so, but they all have helped me be a better leader and, hopefully, a better human being.

I love sharing noteworthy books with other education leaders—both non-fiction and even some fiction along the way. Our relationship with reading is personal and individual. I realize that not all of the titles I suggest may interest everyone, but my hope in sharing what I'm reading is that you will discover a new book to inspire, challenge, and even uplift you.



Karen K. Garza, PhD
President & CEO | Battelle for Kids



The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups

Daniel Coyle

Cultures are created by specific skills, which tap into the power of our social brains to develop interactions. Skill 1: Build Safety; Skill 2: Share Vulnerability; Skill 3: Establish Purpose.

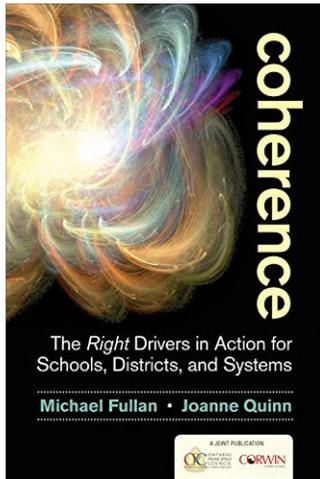
Belonging needs to be continually refreshed and reinforced. If our brains processed safety logically, we would not need this steady reminder. But our brains did not emerge from millions of years of natural selection because they process safety logically. They emerged because they were obsessively on the lookout for danger. Belonging feels like it happens from the inside out, but it happens from the outside in. Our social brains light up when they receive a steady accumulation of almost-invisible cues: We are close, safe, and share a future.

Avoid sandwich feedback. In many organizations, leaders tend to deliver feedback using the traditional sandwich method: You talk about a positive, address an area that needs improvement, then finish with a positive. This makes sense in theory but often needs to be clarified in practice. In high-performing organizations, they separate the two into different processes. They handle negatives through dialogue with two-way conversations about needed growth. They handled the positives through clear bursts of recognition and praise.

Researchers discovered that one form of feedback boosted student effort and performance so immensely that they deemed it “magical feedback.” Students who received it chose to revise their papers far more often than students who did not, and their performance improved significantly. Moreover, the feedback was simple. It consisted of one simple phrase – “I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations, and I know that you can reach them.” These words are powerful because they deliver a burst of belonging cues.

Dr. Garza’s Thoughts:

As leaders strategize about leading education transformation, it is essential to consider how to establish the culture – the conditions for enduring transformation and innovation to thrive. Daniel Coyle presents the reader with research, compelling stories, and tips for building strong cultures and high-functioning teams. This wonderful book will equip leaders with new tools and strategies for building a culture of success and meaning. Doyle states, “Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It’s not something you are. It’s something you do.”



Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems

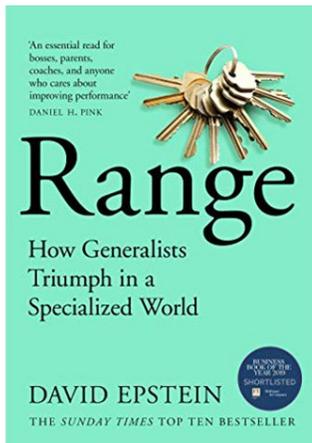
Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn

Public Education is humankind's future – for better or worse. The solution requires the individual and collective ability to build shared meaning, capacity, and commitment to action.

“When large numbers of people have a deeply understood sense of what needs to be done – and they see their part in achieving that purpose – coherence emerges, and powerful things happen.”

Dr. Garza's Thoughts:

I am happy to share some resources we developed for this excellent book in our work with one school system's SOAR Network Design Team. You can access these book study notes and additional resources [here](#).



Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World

David Epstein

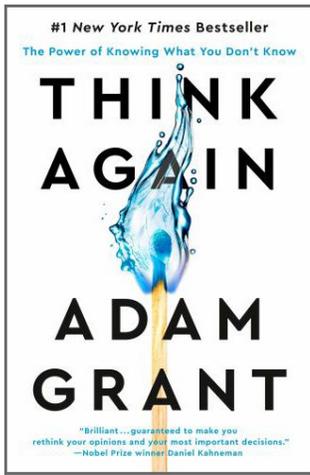
In kind learning domains, patterns repeat repeatedly, and feedback is highly accurate and usually very rapid. On the other hand, in wicked, unkind learning domains, game rules often need to be clarified or completed, there may or may not be repetitive patterns, and they may need to be more prominent. As a result, feedback is often delayed, inaccurate, or both.

When narrow specialization is combined with an unkind domain, the human tendency to rely on the experience of familiar patterns can backfire horribly – like the expert firefighter who suddenly makes a poor choice when faced with a fire in an unfamiliar structure. (p. 30)

Successful adapters are excellent at taking knowledge from one pursuit, applying it creatively to another, and avoiding cognitive entrenchment.

Dr. Garza's Thoughts:

This is an excellent book – one of my favorites! This author debunks a lot of the traditional thinking about learning and the value of broad exposure and experience for our young people. This well-researched book is a valuable read for leaders. It will make you think differently about the experiences our students need today to equip them to be well-prepared to navigate a complex, often wicked world!



Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know

Adam Grant

Rethinking is a skill set, but it's also a mindset. We already have many of the mental tools we need. We just have to remember to get them out of the shed and remove the rust.

Rethinking is not just an individual skill. It's a collective capability that depends heavily on an organization's culture.

With a complex problem, the students who struggled the most were the straight-A students – the perfectionists. It turns out that although perfectionists are more likely than their peers to ace school, they don't perform any better than their colleagues at work. This tracks with evidence that grades are not a strong predictor of job performance across a wide range of industries.

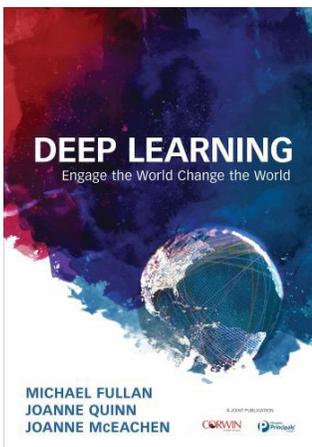
Kids might be better off learning about careers as actions to take rather than as identities to claim. They become more open to exploring different possibilities when they see work as what they do rather than who they are.

Rethinking is more likely to happen in a learning culture, where growth is the core value and rethinking cycles are routine. In learning cultures, the norm is for people to know what they don't know, doubt their existing practices, and stay curious about new routines to try out. I've learned that learning cultures thrive under a particular combination of psychological safety and accountability.

Most of us are accustomed to defining ourselves regarding our beliefs, ideas, and ideologies. However, this can become a problem when it prevents us from changing our minds as the world changes and knowledge evolves.

Dr. Garza's Thoughts:

In this complex and rapidly changing world, success can often rely upon our ability to rethink and even unlearn – something we are often unfamiliar with and ill-equipped to do. The author provides rich research and examples of a new way of approaching the world through new thinking and rethinking. Leaders leading a new vision for education and learning will find this book a valuable tool for themselves and cultivate systemwide conditions to advance mental flexibility, humility, and curiosity. Grant states, "Rethinking liberates us to do more than update our knowledge and opinions – it's a tool for leading a more fulfilling life."



Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World

Michael Fullan, Joanne Quinn, Joanne McEachen

The days of set knowledge and accomplishment based on content are over. This creates a new dynamic for graduates who will not be paid for what they know but rather for what they can do. This movement away from set knowledge to entrepreneurship, creativity, and problem-solving skills suggests a new set of competencies necessary to thrive in this accelerating world.

We don't have to create the learning process but rather find ways to redefine it, so we unleash this natural potential for learning. We need to create places that foster persistence and passion, where a mistake is only if you don't learn from it.

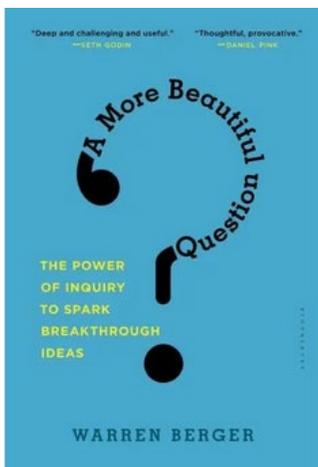
Where deep learning accelerates, we see the system playing a vital role. However, while classrooms and schools can innovate and create havens of deep understanding on their own, they are fragile. People come and go, the inspired leadership leaves and the status quo creeps back in. In contrast, where we see the most significant acceleration, the system plays a strategic role, which may be a municipality, a district, a cluster, or a network.

Research suggests that students in schools pursuing a deep learning agenda fare better. For example, they were more likely to finish high school, go to college, get higher scores on achievement tests, do better on problem-solving assessments, and rate themselves higher on engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy.

Coherence, by our definition, is the shared depth of understanding about the nature of the work. Coherence-making is cumulative and ongoing because people come and go, context shifts, and new ideas emerge. Coherence has three essential features: it focuses on whole system change – 100% of schools or districts; it zeroes in on pedagogy or the process of learning; and it always considers the causal pathways that result in measurable impact for all students.

Dr. Garza’s Thoughts:

This book is a primer for leaders prioritizing the advancement of deeper learning. Michael Fullan and his colleagues address all the necessary conditions for enduring systems change with deeper learning for all students as the driving force. The authors define what deeper learning means and then delve into successful approaches for systemically advancing enduring educational change. Leaders will find this book a valuable tool in their transformation journey.



A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas

Warren Berger

Book Excerpt:

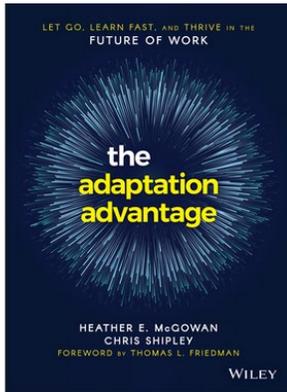
“Research shows that a child asks about forty thousand questions between the ages of two and five. By age four, the lion’s share of the questions are seeking explanations, not just facts. When we start teaching too much, too soon, we’re inadvertently cutting off paths of inquiry and exploration that kids might otherwise pursue on their own.

Having this sense of knowing can make us less curious and less open to new ideas and possibilities. To make matters worse, we don’t “know” as much as we might think we do... What does it mean to be convinced?

For a questioner, it’s important to spend time with challenging questions instead of trying to answer them right away. By “living with” a question, thinking about it and then stepping away from it, allowing it to marinate, you give your brain a chance to come up with the kinds of fresh insights and What If possibilities that can lead to breakthroughs.”

Dr. Garza’s Thoughts:

“A More Beautiful Question” was published in 2014 and remains one of my favorite books. I mention it frequently with education leaders because it is as relevant today as ever! It is a fascinating read with many implications for the design of education systems and education experiences.



The Adaptation Advantage: Let Go, Learn Fast, and Thrive in the Future of Work

Heather E. McGowan and Chris Shipley

Change is coming to us at the most significant velocity in human history.

In this world, our relationship with work is no longer a monolithic career based on a single dose of early learning and compiled experiences. Instead, our careers will be defined by constant learning and adaptation as new technologies, applications, and data alter the current state. In fact, by all estimations, the slowest rate of change you will experience for the rest of your life is...right now.

A single dose of 'education' – a process that infers an end state of being 'educated' – isn't sufficient for a career arc that looks more like a spiral. Instead, we need to swap education for learning, a continuous state of discovery and reinvention. Work then leverages that knowledge, and the work itself becomes another form of learning.

The future of work, both for individuals and organizations, relies on rapid learning, unlearning, and adaptation.

Navigating a world of rapid learning, unlearning, and adaptation requires that we become comfortable with ambiguity and vulnerability, allowing us to become champions of human potential in learning tours filled with unknowns.

PricewaterhouseCoopers annually surveys CEOs worldwide. In 2019, for their 20th annual survey, they polled 1,300 CEOs in over 75 countries to ascertain their most significant priorities looking ahead. The report found that human capital is the number two concern, with 77% of CEOs reporting that not finding workers with the skills they need threatens their business. Specifically, the skills CEOs found most important to their business and the most difficult to find were problem-solving, leadership, creativity, innovation, and, very notably, adaptability.

Dr. Garza's Thoughts:

This book is a valuable tool for system leaders. The authors provide a wealth of research (with great charts and graphs) that leaders can use to help craft their theory of change for education transformation and to establish an organizational "why" to drive the work. This book includes a broad array of information and research about how the world is changing and strategies for creating a modern culture of engagement, focus, and meaning. This book is a must-read for education leaders advancing 21st century, deeper learning!

Battelle for Kids is a national, not-for-profit organization with the mission of realizing the power and promise of 21st century learning for every student.

Learn more at bfk.org.