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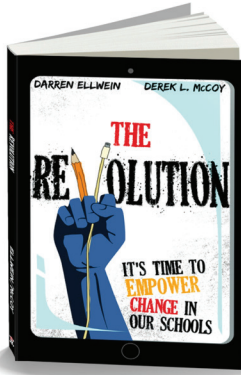
# THE POWER OF EMPATHY- DRIVEN INSTRUCTION

BY MARY CANTWELL IN  
*THE REVOLUTION*

BY DARREN ELLWEIN  
AND DEREK MCCOY



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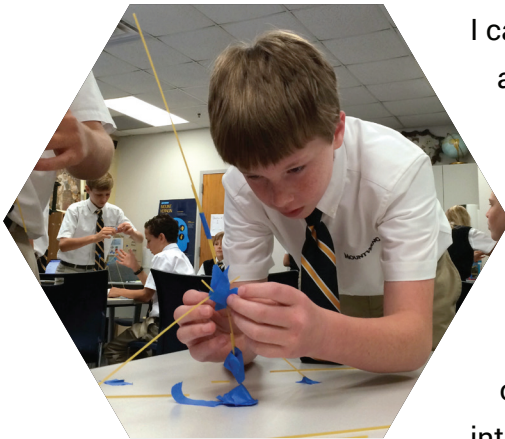


*Special thanks to Darren Ellwein and Derek McCoy, as well as to Mary Cantwell, who contributed this excerpt to both the book and this whitepaper.*

*Full text available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble.*

Design thinking is a human-centered approach to learning, creating, and being through empathy. It is a way to solve wicked and simplistic problems, design new ways of doing things, and to view the world around you with an empathetic lens.

I am a firm believer the term “Teacher” can also mean “Design Thinker”. As a teacher, we are called to share, expose, empathize, collaborate, connect, relate, create, problem-solve, instruct, and design for our students on a daily basis. A design thinker is called to share, expose, empathize, collaborate, relate, connect, create, problem-solve, instruct, and design for their End-User. The real difference between these two sentences is the framed noun, student & end-user. They are one in the same yet in context, they are different to simply serve a specific demographic.



I can see how awareness, intentionality, and action can play a huge role in the infusion of design thinking and its daily practice in an educational environment.

As teachers become more aware of the common language, the power of the mindsets, and how design thinking is more than just a framework to follow, their view of their students, their learning spaces, and every other aspect of “school” change. It is then that their intentions will create a shift and a stronger pivot towards designing for their End-Users (students) on a minute by minute basis. Now awareness and intention can easily be shoved in the corner as papers pile up, pressure mounts for say, grades & results, and the daily grind of teaching takes ownership of your actions. It’s great to be mindful. Yet, it is better to demonstrate mindful action that puts the end-user at the forefront to drive the learning, creating, and being in the classroom.

On February 26, 2010 I learned about this thing called design thinking. I learned of an outstanding educator named, Kim Saxe, who was using design

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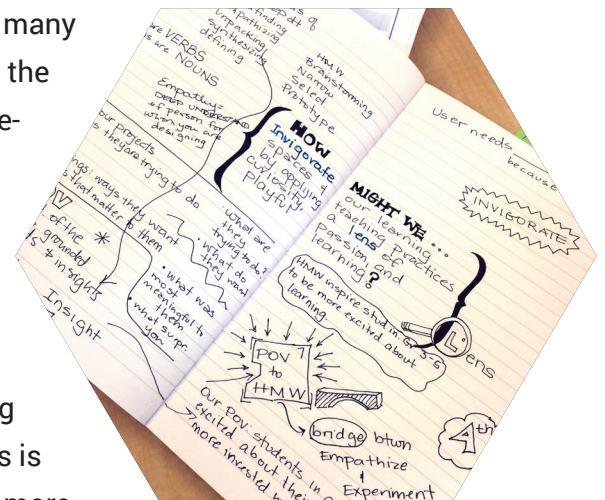
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thinking as an approach to teaching and learning with her students at The Nueva School. I also learned that Stanford University had a learning space dedicated to all things design thinking called the d.School. It was on this day of learning about DT that a huge portion of my instructional practices and beliefs found a home where I could gain a better understanding and confidence in my pedagogy and learning. For the next year and a half, I devoured, explored, researched, and stalked Kim’s work, the d.Schools’ multiple online resource offerings, and googled constantly seeking more knowledge around design thinking.

I created and designed a process I coined DEEP in May of 2010. Discover. Empathize. Experiment. Produce. The common language, ease of use, and the obvious emphasis on Empathy was the cornerstone of my design. And from the beginning after experiencing the six-week pilot design thinking challenge, I have always intentionally strived to “infuse” DEEP design thinking throughout the learning environment.

I am confronted with things all over the place, things that stand solo and disconnected from all the other things we encounter in life. With DEEPdt, I don’t want it to be a thing and I especially do not want it to be a solo, disconnected thing. My approach (yet, I understand there are countless others) is to infuse design thinking into the daily life of students and teachers. If we lead with empathy in our Users, how can we go wrong? People-centered is where I want us to start...and stay. This is an easy answer and even easier to understand why others don’t see how this is possible, yet.

DEEPdt is just one way of many to solve a problem, yet the clear difference - it’s people-centered. It is the User who defines the real problem and leads us to the solution. The true gift of having our students utilizing and practicing design thinking approaches in our classrooms is they will have a stronger and more



impactful empathetic posture when they walk out of your classroom as they encounter life as it is—messy, sad, joyful, difficult, challenging, cruel, beautiful, and most of all full of diverse and amazing people.

There are little bits of every day that could be redesigned and then there are bigger, meatier and messier chunks in life that are full of problems/needs to tackle. And as always, this infusion of DEEPdt into the school environment can come in bits or chunks. What's most important is our awareness, intentionality, and actions as educators towards our students.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR: MARY CANTWELL

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Mary Cantwell is a longtime Atlanta educator who specializes in human-centered design education for students and institutions seeking cultural transformation and empathy-driven design. Her background in design thinking (HCD) is rooted in her learning and coaching at the d.School at Stanford University.

Mary is the creator and designer of DEEP design thinking, a human-centered approach to learning, creating, and being through empathy. All things #DEEPdt can be found at [www.DEEPdesignthinking.com](http://www.DEEPdesignthinking.com). Currently, Mary travels around the world facilitating, teaching, and collaborating with schools, organizations, and learners to challenge status quo, strengthen pedagogical instruction, and create growth and change within the culture. Mary also works as a UX Instructor at General Assembly, where experiential learning, innovative instructional practices, and diverse skills and backgrounds are celebrated.

*Educational Collaborators helps schools nurture innovative mindsets and build capacity to creatively solve problems through Design Thinking.*

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