Introduction
What is the purpose of education? A review of education purpose statements from governments and international thought leaders reveals they support an education system focused on preparing youth and adults to build strong, connected, committed societies – individuals who are skilled and ready to participate in a global future. Figure 1 represents the key words that dominate these purpose statements.

As we move through the 21st century, how can we begin to create the education systems we need to ensure that individuals are prepared to participate in and lead our communities into an uncertain future?

This article provides the foundation for redesigning education services using Art of Hosting – Participatory Learning methodologies (AOH-PL) to:

- Align instruction with how brains learn
• Redesign classrooms as learning communities by shifting from teacher-centered to learner-driven spaces for achieving greater academic and social learning outcomes
• Support shifting mindsets by changing our vocabulary to match our intentions
• Shift instruction to incorporate more questioning for students to explore responses by discussions with peers leading to deep learning
• Use AOH-PL methodologies to help shift to learner-driven, collaborative learning opportunities designed to engage students while building on their strengths and multiple intelligences
• Build the social/emotional and social capital skills required today and critical for future economies and societies

The four core Art of Hosting - Participatory Learning methodologies are discussed with two of the methodologies, Circle and World Café, detailed for educators. This article explains how to rapidly incorporate these innovative practices into classrooms (at all levels) to engage learners and build the holistic skills needed for their future success. Stories from field-based practitioners are offered to share the many ways educators are successfully using the methodologies at all levels of education.

Learning – Underlying Reasons for the Shift to Learner-Driven Instruction

When it comes to the process of learning, we can gain a lot of information from both brain research and our own personal experiences. One of the assumptions held by most educators is that “the teacher is in charge of learning.” Most educator training focuses classroom learning as the responsibility of the teacher. As we learn more about ‘learning,’ we now know that it is personal and each person is in charge of their own learning.

When students were asked, “Who is in charge of your learning?” most pointed to the teacher. Others said things like “parents, governor, or the government.” After a conversation about who really is in charge of your learning, most students had reconsidered the question and pointed to themselves. Learning happens in our brain. The main purpose of our brain is to figure things out and to make sense from what is going on externally and internally. Trying to make sense of what we see, hear, read, sense, feel, and do is just being human. Making sense is learning. It happens in our brain. Who is in charge of our brain? Each of us is in charge of our own brain and our own learning.

Fred Ende begins his article “Learner-Driven Learning” by stating, “When it comes to learning, we all instinctively know who should be in the driver’s seat. The learner.” (Ende, F., 2016)

How Our Brains Work to Learn

Our brains are always on and active. All regions of the brain are turned on and tuned into discerning what the information that is being received (from all five senses) really means. Included in this process, which happens within seconds, is everything that is being received along with everything we’ve already been thinking about or have experienced. In this normal neural processing, the individual giving the information is as important as the information being offered. Any feelings that we might have about that person or our wondering why the
individual is so excited or looking so sad is part of what we are processing. In addition, we are trying to process noises we are hearing in the background that we need to tune out, unresolved concerns like why were my parents angry or pressuring me this morning, as well as trying to understand what the teacher is saying so that we can make the needed connections to what you already know about the topic.

What we have figured out, AKA learned, is stored in our brain as memories. We learn new ‘things’ when we connect them to what we already know. New information makes sense if there are previous learnings to which new learning can be connected. When there is nothing for the brain to connect the new information to, the new learning will be forgotten.

Learning is not a clean simple process and yet we are learning all the time. It is impossible, for us as humans, not to learn. Our brains are continually scanning what’s going on around us and trying to figure out if the information is safe, important, or irrelevant, and if any action is required.

Information that we have acquired/learned is stored as ‘memories’ in our brains. We create memories automatically from what we experience (using all five senses).

Memories are connected to similar memories. When we have many related pieces of information, they group together in hubs. For example, we may have a lot of memories about cars. These memories have accumulated over time into one large memory hub on cars. Our ‘car hub’ can store lots of information on styles, models, colors, etc. If you have a lot of memories about any one of these topics, they could spin off into a connected, but separate hub, on styles, colors, or cars that you’ve owned, etc. If you have a sub-hub on car styles and you remember that your uncle had a car with a specific style, your brain will create a connection between the car/style hub to a family hub that includes your uncle. In Figure 2, you can see hubs, sub-hubs, and connections to other hubs and sub-hubs. These connections are called a neural network.

![Figure 2: Connection of Memory Hubs (Arntz, 2005)](image)

Each hub has an electrical field around it. This electrical field is the memory of your emotional state when the hub or sub-hub was created. Using the example of a car hub, if you had an accident while driving your blue Volvo and you broke your leg, every time you saw a blue Volvo
(yours or others) you would automatically remember your blue Volvo and your accident and your pain from your broken leg. The memory of the accident and the way your broken leg felt will feel as real today as it did when you had the accident. For the moment that you remember all that ‘stuff,’ you might actually ‘feel’ the pain in your leg and ‘feel’ a rush of anxiety. You cannot experience a memory of the blue Volvo without experiencing the emotions you had when that memory was formed.

How would you create a similar memory path for learning basic math functions? What connections to basic math facts might occur when you are learning about fractions? What if you kept forgetting how to change an improper fraction into a proper fraction? What might you feel if you kept making the same mistakes when trying to change improper fractions? What might happen if you saw a question on a test about improper fractions? And why might you be continually struggling to figure out how to change improper fractions?

How, as a teacher, could you work to find out what students know about math facts and operations so that you could build their previously learned math information to build new math skills? (One answer to this is in an actual scenario from an educator at the end of this article.)

Since learning happens in the brain, what does the process of learning look like and feel like in us? When questions are used to find out what students already know about a topic, and that knowledge is shared with the whole class, new information that builds on previous knowledge can also be introduced by questions. The joy of learning is encouraged by questions, not answers. Brains love to figure things out. Learning is active and exciting when questions are used to promote thinking.

In 2014, a neurological study showed that curiosity makes brains more receptive to learning and that, as we learn, the energy given off by making neural connections is very pleasant. Humans enjoy the sensations of learning. (Stenger, 2014)

Learning looks like joy. It looks like discovery. It looks like creativity and problem-solving, collaboration and failure and revision and reflection. I came to see that for me, one purpose of learning, in all of its joy and magic, is connection. We learn so that we can connect with... (not only with what we are thinking)...but with one another’s humanity and with one another’s ideas. We learn so that we can grow together and become smarter as a collective. We learn so we can make the world smaller.

But too often these purposes of learning get lost in an outdated vision of the purpose of education. No surprise that, while education looks different throughout the world, learning looks remarkably similar. With all humans, learning is a natural process – informally and formally - it just happens. (Chaffe, 2018)
Multiple Intelligences

As a basis for rethinking how education services are provided, we need to understand that we all learn, but we each have our own unique ways that we use to learn. Hence, we do not all learn exactly alike. Just as we don’t look alike, write alike, sleep alike, put together a new bike alike, we do not think alike.

Though we are all humans, we are not wired to think in the same way as our friends or classmates. Based on genetics and early learning experiences, Howard Gardner posed the theory of multiple intelligences that differentiate human intelligence (how we think and learn) into specific 'modalities' instead of seeing intelligence as dominated by a single general ability. In his 1983 book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Gardner cited eight different intelligences. (Figure 3) As educators, we have seen these variations in all of our students.

What are the attributes of each of the intelligences? Details and a quiz to determine your types of intelligences are at: [https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-2795161](https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-2795161)

![Gardner's Multiple Intelligences](image)

**Figure 3: Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences**

The eight different categories of Gardner’s multiple intelligences are:
- Musical-Rhythmic
- Visual-Spatial
- Verbal-Linguistic
- Logical-Mathematical
- Bodily-Kinesthetic
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalistic (Cherry, 2019)
There is no value in saying one way of learning is better than another. Albert Einstein is said to have stated, “Everyone is a genius. But, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” This understanding of intelligences does not mean that educators need to share information in eight different formats, but it does mean that one format alone misses a lot of students who need other options for learning and demonstration of mastery. Most brains need and use more than one way. No matter how students are taught, by the time they gain some independence, students will begin to include what they need to master their educational content.

Combining intelligences by encouraging individuals to collaborate can be powerful. Most brains need and use more than one way. No matter how students are taught, by the time they gain some independence, students will (if not totally deflated by negative school experiences) begin to include what they need to master their educational content. Don’t you do this, too?

Many students will meet with friends after school to do homework together. Others, if a computer is available, will go online for additional information and resources. Some will talk with friends online or on phones about their schoolwork. If family members are available, they will ask older siblings and parents for their perspectives. Most of today’s teachers also remember doing these same things. In learning, the more brains that can work together, the greater and deeper the understanding and learning will be.

Who is in charge of learning? Yes, the individuals are in charge of their own learning. If the teacher is not ‘in charge of learning,’ then what is their role? Based on cognitive research, the teacher’s contribution is to create the most conducive learning environment for all students to learn (Mayer, R., 2010). We call this ‘hosting learning.’ The teacher’s control is in becoming the ‘host of learning’ -- creating the most conducive learning environment and processes for all students and using the most conducive methodologies to support students to engage with content and peers.

In reviewing relevant references about the importance of rethinking who is in charge of learning, authors David Boud and Ruth Cohen stated:

Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers. They develop skills in organizing and planning learning activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning.

(Boud & Cohen, 2013)

Similar ideas were cited in an ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) book by Robyn Jackson in which she shared that teachers should never work harder than the students they serve. (Jackson, R., 2018) With these ideas in mind, maybe it’s time, as educators, to rethink our role and function.
Shifting Mindsets – Shifting Vocabulary

Mindsets have received a lot of attention. A mindset is a set of assumptions, beliefs, or opinions that are held by one or more individuals or groups of individuals. A mindset usually arises out of an individual’s world view or philosophy of life. Carol Dweck’s research into mindsets found there are two basic types of mindset: the ‘growth’ mindset and the ‘fixed’ mindset. People with a fixed mindset believe you are born with specific qualities. They believe that individuals are fixed and unchangeable. On the other hand, individuals with a growth mindset believe that these abilities can be developed and strengthened by way of commitment and hard work. (Dweck, 2007)

Shifting mindsets will be different for individuals depending on whether they have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. Certainly, thinking and working with mindsets is important when we work with students. Mindsets are even more important when we think about the importance of educators shifting our own mindsets as we put together the education leaders and educational systems we need in this century!

How can educators become more aware of their own mindsets? Maybe by asking, “As an educator, am I ‘doing the job right’ or ‘doing the right job?” This question implies that we could be a great teachers applying an outdated model of education. Is an outdated model the right model of education needed for our students in today’s rapidly changing world where careers are changing so quickly and the problems students face are so different from 25, 50 or 100 years ago?

This massive change in our world includes our knowledge of learning. The new research and evidence-based practices demand rethinking how we educate. What we have learned about the brain and how it learns must shift our mindset. What have we learned on how emotions affect learning, how multiple intelligences impact learning, and how our own education experiences affect not just who we are today but also how we learn in the future.

A review of international teaching methods found that the most frequent methodology is teacher-centered, teacher-driven instruction. The ‘industrial model’ of education, created in Prussia, was copied nearly worldwide as the model that could move societies from an agrarian to an industrial society. In an industrial society, workers were needed that could read, write and do basic math skills while, most importantly being able to listen to supervisors and consistently perform repetitive tasks. Based on the assumption that students are empty vessels waiting to be filled and that students would be placed into roles where following orders is more important than thinking for themselves. (Rose, 2012)

Students listen, work alone, following along in a textbook or workbook. Working with computers is a solo activity as is homework. Being a student who can work on their own is prized. Working with others is not supported except an occasional small group or a project where lead students take the leadership role and encumber most of the work. Individually it is still important for individuals to know how to work and learn on their own and, in today’s global
society, there is a prized need. That is, being about to work with, learn with and to co-create with others.

Our K–12 system largely still adheres to the century-old, industrial-age factory model of education. A century ago, maybe it made sense to adopt seat-time requirements for graduation and pay teachers based on their educational credentials and seniority. Educators were right to fear the large class sizes that prevailed in many schools. But the factory model of education is the wrong model for the 21st century. (Duncan, 2010)

...perhaps it is (the wrong model) because educational tools that have come into our classrooms over the last couple of decades, whether technology or otherwise, continue to be used within a school structure that is virtually unchanged since the mid-nineteenth century. (Rose, 2012)

The industrial model of education is continued by new and current teachers because it is known. It’s the most model prevalent in early education through higher education. It is comfortable for most individuals who found success under this model.

Yet, there have always been educators who created their own variations on instruction. When we experienced these unique learning situations, they were a breath of fresh air. For most educators, even when these different approaches were enjoyed and memorable, it has been difficult to add new strategies to their own skill set. Although many people who love change, it is time consuming and must be thought through.

With a growth mindset, trying new ways of working with students might be exciting. A person with a growth mindset knows that learning new skills takes time, practice, and experimenting. However, a person with a fixed mindset would fear trying something new because it might not work and they could totally lose all control in the classroom. It’s a fear of failure. But failure is about learning. In failing, in making mistakes, we are presented with our greatest opportunities to learn.

What are some of the ways educators have already begun to change the way they work with students and rethink education? In Effective Learning in Classrooms (Watkins, et al. 2016), the authors used an ‘appreciative inquiry’ (Cooperrider, 2008) approach to identify what is working in education and building on those features to create an improved, innovative model for education.

Watkins and his colleagues found that when “learners drove the agenda, there was real help going on between pupils, students were active, people (both students and instructors) were taking thoughtful risks and weren’t afraid of making mistakes.” (Watkins, 2007) Teachers stood back and the students ran with it. Through the process of using appreciative inquiry, they found that “individuals learned best...

1. When they take responsibility for their own learning
2. When they are actively engaged in their learning
3. When learning is interactive (as opposed to passive seat work)
4. When they see themselves as successful learners”

Change is the most difficult of actions because it means we need to break old patterns and establish new patterns of behavior and thinking. When change is strategic, it is strategic to start shifting by using different words for what we need to change. A new language frames the new role and shifts the mindset of educators. Our shifting from previous mindsets and behaviors to new mindsets, taking into account all that we know about learning, can be made easier by new words, such as shifting...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Host of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Hosting Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating</td>
<td>Supporting Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-centered</td>
<td>Student-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-driven</td>
<td>Student-driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telling</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual success</td>
<td>Collaborative success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>Learning Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Success for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students working alone</td>
<td>Learners working together in conversations with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group processes</td>
<td>Structured and purposeful group processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on the product</td>
<td>Focusing on the process of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching academic subjects</td>
<td>Building individuals by also focusing on developing personal and social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring competency</td>
<td>Ensuring competency AND developing confident, capable individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being afraid of failure</td>
<td>Being excited about failure – because it is the real opportunity to learn and grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding reading and math competency</td>
<td>Understanding that some individuals have valid challenges to being able to read and compute math. Yet, these skills are needed to move forward with learning and life.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In this century, there are electronic and simple tools to do these complex tasks (reading and math) simply. Don’t hold learners back. Don’t keep trying to ‘teach’ these subjects if there are other ways for students to get the information they need and move on with peers! Being left behind is not an option.

In this case, when the process keeps an individual from getting to the product, it is the product, NOT the process, that counts.

A critical element in creating a learner-driven classroom begins with shifting the word ‘teacher,’ a person who teaches or instructs, to something that better describes the role needed to support learner-driven learning. The best word is ‘host’ - holding the space for an experience to happen, a master of ceremonies, moderator, provider of services and resources.’

A term that has often been used to replace teacher is ‘facilitator,’ one who makes less difficult or easier, helps with forward action, manages, assists with the progress of a person. Facilitator has been a good transition term, but it doesn’t emphasize a total shift in how the role of the educator needs to think and plan for learner-driven learning, differently engaging and holistically building successful learners ready to manage a career, a family, and responsible membership in their community.

Alvin Toffler, a futurist, said that, “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” (Toffler, 1971. pp 414) How is Toffler’s work perceived in the 2000s? Educators supporting a teacher-centered, teacher-driven model of education are not adequately preparing students for a successful future in society. How can teachers meet the need to be consciously aware of how they learn, unlearn, and relearn. Is it important for educators to be able to learn, unlearn, and relearn, too? With so many caring and committed educators in the field today, is this a call for educators to unlearn and relearn how to move beyond their comfort zone? A comfort zone is a cerebral state in which individuals feel familiar and are at ease or comfortable and believe they are in control of their environment, feeling low levels of anxiety and stress.

Paul Taylor (2017) noted Toffler’s prediction in Forbes, a leading business magazine,

The message (Toffler’s quote) is a powerful reminder that the nature of work has changed, and that enterprises in all sectors need to rethink their training (education and retraining) activities if they are to prepare their employees for the future and avoid the negative economic and societal impact of layoffs and workforce alienation.
Rethinking means change. Change is not merely necessary to life - it is life. In times of change, it can be helpful to implement the new vocabulary, learn new information, and try innovative methodologies. In researching and co-creating (with in-the-field educators, learners, and families) new ways of delivering educational services, talking a new talk has been a key to walking a new walk. This means a person should support what they say, not just with words, but also through action.

Learning has never stopped at formal education. How can more educators embrace new knowledge on which to rethink what they know and what they can do? Where can this happen? Perhaps learner-driven is appropriate for educators, thus educators learn best in conversational groups with other educators.

Collaboration and The Art of Hosting - Participatory Learning Methodologies

Here are a few quotes that resonate with shifting to collaborative, participatory learning:

In an old Chinese proverb, Confucius said, “I hear I forget, I see I remember, I do I understand.” In many educational institutions, study groups are now mandatory. Why? Because brains learn best in conversations with their peers. Companies know that many minds build better products, so they have staff work in teams.

Bertrand Russell (a British philosopher, logician, and social reformer of the 20th century) said, “Change is one thing, progress is another!” He also shared, “Any philosophy worth taking seriously would have to be built upon a firm foundation of unyielding despair.” (Russell, Slater & Kollner, 1997)

Buckminster Fuller (an American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor, and futurist) stated, “You can never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

Over the past two decades, an evolving set of participatory, collaborative practices called the ‘Art of Hosting’ and ‘Harvesting Conversations that Matter’ (www.artofhosting.org) has been trained and implemented throughout the world. These practices are being used in governments, leading international corporations, for-profit organizations, and nonprofit organizations to engage individuals to work together on social and organizational issues.

As previously discussed in The Substructures of The Art of Hosting’s Participatory Learning Methodologies That Support the Development of Social Capital Skills and Social Emotional Skills in Educational Settings (Weisel, L., 2020), the original participatory practices that came together under the ‘Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter’ have their own authors. These authors published books or manuals describing their approaches to engaging individuals
to work collaboratively with peers and constituent groups. The four core participatory practices of AOH that are also the core practices for AOH – Participatory Learning include:

- **Circle** is a modern methodology that creates a safe space for educators and learners to gather in conversations that engage, excite, and create a place where learners can contribute by responding to questions about their studies. Circle is a place where learners can build specific social skills such as speaking in front of a group, speaking with intention and listening with attention, and taking turns.

- **World Café** is a method for creating a collaborative learning conversation around questions that matter. Café is ideal for learners to develop collaboration skills like sharing learning, offering ideas, asking questions, and co-creating a graphic picture of the conversation by connecting ideas together. In café, learners build leadership skills, time management, and skills in self advocacy.

- **Open Space** is process for learners to engage, ask questions, and/or share knowledge around issues of concern or of interest to them. Learners pose questions or ideas for conversations with peers. Open Space can be used for reviewing information prior to an exam, managing a project-based learning experience, or planning ways to improve the classroom or school issues. In Open Space, learners take responsibility to host the conversations that matter to them.

- **Appreciative Inquiry** is adopting a practice of focusing positives, on strengths, what is known, what is right, and what is working. Seeking the positive leads to a positive and productive future. In adopting Appreciative Inquiry in education, This is useful in working with all learners in all situations. Building learners by constantly reframing errors as learning opportunities, and remembering that human brains can only build on what is known, helps an educator to remember that our real purpose is building the citizens and workers of the future. Research has shown that this approach is the only successful way to bring about long-term change and deep learning.

In 2005, the Art of Hosting practices were first brought into the field of education. Initially the practices were used in teacher education and training. By 2009, the practices were tested in classrooms from early learning through higher education in both Europe and the United States.

When first implementing these practices, lead trainers realized they needed to shift from thinking of themselves as the ‘instructor’ and shift to ‘hosting learning.’ Planning time began to change from ‘what content am I going to share with teachers’ to focusing on creating the most conducive learning environment and classroom flow for students/teachers to be engaged in learning with their peers.

Educators in the trainings were eager to take the methodologies and implement them in their classes. Feedback from early adopters was exuberant and they couldn’t stop talking about how their fears were so easily dispelled by watching students jump into and fully participate in
conversations. Student feedback was positive, with students stating they didn’t want to stop their conversations and leave at the end of the class.

As the practices were growing among educators, new additions to the processes were made to the methodologies to develop critical new skills and practice new ways of working with peers. These included:

- **Social Capital Skills.** With our rapidly changing world, the way people live and work together has also changed. When education was only about academics, the focus was academic competence. With the need for a universal broadening purpose for education, academics alone won’t do. Schools have begun to shift to academics plus social capital skills.

When participating in AOH-PL methodologies, students learn and practice social capital skills with peers. As social capital skill development was consciously added to each of the methodologies, educators found that, without saying “pay attention” or “don’t go off track” that students enjoyed their roles and stayed focused on the tasks at hand.

In adding a ‘role’ component to the original practices, social capital skills are practiced and learned in the context of working with others. Each methodology lists the social capital skills that are being trained.

In the graph below (Figure 4), each of the Participatory Learning methodologies has been viewed from the social skills that are embedded in their process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory Learning Methodologies</th>
<th>Social Capital Skills Practiced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Speaking &amp; Setting Intention, Speaking in a Group, Active Listening, Taking Turns, Getting/Giving Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café</td>
<td>Collaboration, Working in a team, Listening to and discussing diverse ideas &amp; opinions, Building a collective model, Managing time, Taking a leadership role, Self advocacy, Putting abstract ideas into a visual model, Active listening, Peer learning and coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>Leadership, Asking questions, Offering something of interest to others, Active listening, Asking for help and offering help, Diagramming / summarizing a conversation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciative Inquiry</td>
<td>Looking for the positive, Managing negative situations from a strengths-based, positive view, Viewing life, people, &amp; daily situations from a positive vantage point</td>
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</table>

Figure 4. Matching AOH Participatory Learning Methodologies with Social Capital Skills Practiced in Using the Methodologies (Weisel, 2017)
• **Social Emotional Learning.** Social Emotional Learning is the process “through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” (Kickboard, 2020)

The skills of social emotional learning include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These are not skills that can be ‘taught’ in the traditional sense. We’ve added to the AOH-PL methodologies specific ways in which students can reflect on their behaviors and the behaviors of their peers, ask for what they need, and learn to host their peers.

They are skills that are best practiced in working with others and reflected upon with peers. Key components of social emotional learning are kindness, support of others, focusing on the positive, and ‘try another way.’

These skills are not listed or designated to a specific methodology but they are visible in the tasks of each methodology.

Learn more about Social Capital Skills and Social Emotional Learning as they relate to participatory learning in *The Substructures of The Art of Hosting’s Participatory Learning Methodologies That Support the Development of Social Capital Skills and Social Emotional Skills in Educational Settings.* (Weisel, 2020)

**Two AOH-Participatory Methodologies for Collaborative Learning**

Below are two of the four major methodologies that have been adapted for use in all levels of education. The two methodologies, Circle and World Café, are easy to review and implement. By initiating Circle and World Café, educators can practice a simple participatory process that will quickly engage learners.

The processes of the methodology can have different ways to implement based on the age of the learners, setting, and academic content. Different scenarios of how the methodologies are being implemented, from practitioners in the field, will be offered after both methodologies are reviewed.

The following two methodologies rely on the teacher/host to provide a question or questions to engage learners in Circle and Cafes. There are always questions that a host can ask. But, the information we receive back (the answer) will depend very much on the type of question we ask. In their simplest form, questions can be open, closed or loaded.
• Open questions are intended to be thought provoking and to allow for much longer responses that are potentially more creative and filled with information. Open questions use words like: How? Why? If this...then...? What? Tell about?

• Closed questions force a brief, one word response. Closed questions use words like: How many, Did you? When? Who? Would/Could you, and questions about making choice. These questions only require a yes, no, maybe, or an I don’t know type of answer.

• Loaded questions are leading questions pointing the learner’s responses in a certain direction. Here is a question that requires a judgement: How was your day yesterday? Now, here is the same question that is more loaded – Did you have a good day yesterday?

Question created for Circle should be open ended: What were the three things about writing paragraphs that you want to remember? They can also be loaded: What worked for you in our class yesterday? We rarely ask closed ended questions in Circle and when we do ask closed questions they are followed by an open ended question. For example: Did you do the homework on pages 67 – 75 and what was one question you have about the work?

For Cafes, we always ask open ended or loaded questions to engage learners in a conversation. For example, turn in your books to the section on ...... What do you already know about the information in that section and what questions do you have about what you don’t know? Or “What do you think the best ways that we could use our time tomorrow to be better prepared for our test on Friday?

Think about the questions you could ask learners. Talk about these with your colleagues. Come up with some good samples of the types of questions you can ask learners to make them think and learn from each other. There are a variety of good websites about questions that could help you as you design your questions. Be patient with yourself, developing great questions will come with experience.
AOH – Participatory Learning Methodologies

Circle

What Materials are Needed for Circle?
- Chairs arranged in a circle
- Learners should be able to view each other without impediments such as tables or desks
- A talking piece – a stone, a ball, any item that can be passed around the circle – when a person holds the talking piece it is their turn to talk. No one else speaks.
- A chime, bell, or gentle noisemaker

What is Circle useful for?
Adaptability – Circle can be easily used anywhere--at any time--to bring learners together, work with any curriculum topic and within various time frames
Circle is useful for:
- Use as a ‘check-in’ and ‘check-out’ at the beginning and end of a class period or day
- Focus on the positive, build on what is good
- Learn through reflection and developing insight
- Set intention and a growth mindset, “I can do it!”
- Build community

Four Agreements of Circle
- Listen without judgment (slow down)
- Offer what you can; ask for what you need
- Whatever is said in Circle stays in Circle
- Silence is part of the conversation
Practices of Circle

Speak with *intention*
- Noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment

Listen with *attention*
- Respecting the learning process of all learners in the group

Tend to the wellbeing of the group
- Remaining aware of the impact of everyone’s contributions

Principles

Rotate leadership
Take responsibility
Have a higher purpose
Listen with attention
Talk from the heart
Withhold judgment
Offer support to peers

Social Capital Skills Practiced in Circle

Speaking with and setting intention
Speaking in front of a group
Taking turns
Knowing when to stop talking and pass

The Flow

Welcome and overview / reflection
Review the 4 Agreements & 3 Practices
Offer a talking piece
Be the guardian of the process

Check-in or Check-out starts with the Host providing an overview (check-in) or review (check-out) of the day, week, or time together. A talking piece is placed in the center of the circle and taken by the first person who wants to answer the question and speak. The talking piece is then passed around as participants respond to the question. For the check-in, the group passes the talking piece around the circle clockwise (for check-in, i.e., winding up to get started); for the check-out, it goes counterclockwise (winding down to end the class/day).

- If a learner is not ready to speak, they can say, “Pass.” The talking piece is passed to the next person in the circle who will respond to the question.
- When the talking piece completes one round of the circle, another opportunity is offered to those learners that said “Pass.” There is no passing twice.
Checking In: The Host offers two questions:

- First Question – a check-in question about the overview of the class or day or week, such as:
  - What about our work today excites you?
  - Knowing what we are going to be doing today/this week, what is one question you have about our work? (to build curiosity)
  - What is one thing you think we need to add (or... not forget about) in doing our work today/this week? Or, What is one thing that would make our work better for you today? (to build ownership)
  - What do you need to do as we move through the day to make you sure you understand the materials we are covering?
  - How is the weather between your ears (i.e., the condition of your brain) as we begin our work together today?

Check-in questions direct each learner to react to what they heard in the overview of the class/day/week along with a personal reaction to what will be happening in the day/class. Checking-in personalizes the learning... hence, engages learners by asking about the learners’ questions – guiding the learner to become curious.*

Other questions can focus on positive additions as to how the class/day could be improved. Asking learners to improve on the day’s agenda will lead to personal ownership of the class/day. Finally, ask a question on what they can do to stay focused (such as taking notes, sitting in the front of the class, using a fidget to relieve extra energy or distractibility, or what they can do when the condition of their brain is tired, worried, anxious, slow, frustrated, etc.).

* Curiosity is the basis of learning. “A neurological study has shown that curiosity makes our brains more receptive for learning and that as we learn, we enjoy the sensation of learning. It's no secret that curiosity makes learning more effective and enjoyable. Curious students not only ask questions but also actively seek out the answers.” (Edutopia, 2014)

- Second Question – a check-in question about something the learner wants to remember about ‘yesterday’s work or a question they still need answered from yesterday’s work:
  - Yesterday we worked on spelling words with silent letters. What do you want to remember about....? Or, What don’t you understand about.....?
  - Our homework from yesterday was about ........ What is one question you still have about .... or one key point to remember about .....?

The second question is always a reflection of what was previously learned (or not). Often learners don’t remember what they learned from one day to the next. Using the second check-in question targeting the previous day’s work will better ensure that what was learned is remembered and it can be used as a building block for the next step in
the sequence of learning. Any questions can be identified early for the host to know how the day may need to be modified to ensure competency.

Checking Out: Closing the class by checking-out provides a formal end to the session and a chance for learners to reflect on what they learned – both in content and process. Check-out can be a formal circle or it can be an activity such as tossing a soft ball around and whoever it is tossed to answers the questions. Another way would be to have a learner offer to answer the check-out questions first, then name the next person to answer, etc. The check-out questions most often can be similar to:

✓ Looking back over today, what is one thing that you want to remember and one thing you still have a question about?
✓ Looking back over today, what worked for you and how could we have made learning about ______ better for you?

The check-out questions improve memory, and memory is learning. Listening to class peers offer what they want to remember or what they have additional questions about helps all learners with learning the content. Always asking learners for ways to improve the process of learning builds buy-in, is key to ‘co-creating learning’ with learners, and maintains the student as the most important part of the learning process.
World Café

What Materials are Needed for World Café?
World Café uses the following to host this methodology:

- Tables and chairs
- Tablecloths or something to make the room feel hospitable, comfortable, nonthreatening, and engaging
- Easel-size paper to cover tables for a graphic organizer denoting the interaction and for harvesting
- Markers in multiple colors

What is World Café Useful For?
World Café is an effective way of fostering structured interaction and collaboration, sharing learning and knowledge, generating ideas, and constructing dialogues with both large and small groups. Cafés surface the ‘collective wisdom’ of groups of diverse learners. The café format is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes – learning new information, relationship building, finding solutions to classroom issues, deep reflection, skill building, project planning, etc.

When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for moving through a second round of questions and harvesting the conversations.

Operating Principles
1. Create a hospitable space
2. Explore questions
3. Connect learners with diverse ideas
4. Encourage each learner’s participation
5. Connect ideas in a graphic organizer (web or mindmap)
6. Have learners listen for patterns, insight, and deeper questions
7. Make collective knowledge (from web or mindmap) visible for sharing

Assumptions
1. The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible
2. Collective insight comes from honoring unique contributions, connecting ideas, listening into the middle (what is really being said or what ideas are trying to come through)
3. Noticing deeper themes and questions
4. Intelligence emerges as learners connect in diverse and creative ways

Social Capital Skills Practiced in World Café
- Collaborating
- Working in a team
- Listening and discussing diverse ideas and opinions
- Co-creating a collective graphic (web or mindmap) of the conversation
- Managing time
- Taking a leadership role
- Self-advocacy – learning to have a voice
- Active listening
- Framing and collectively responding to powerful learning questions
- Peer learning and peer coaching

Specific Roles for Each World Café Table
1. Leader / Café Host
2. Timekeeper
3. Scribe: Co-creates the graphic organizer
4. Sensor: Ensures all voices are heard at the café table; noting when the conversation is getting off target; sensing when a break is needed

Flow
- Seat 4-5 learners at café-style tables
- The teacher/host offers an overview of the purpose of the café (academic, problem solving, strategic planning, review, etc.) and the question(s) to be answered. The question(s) is written on an easel, chalkboard, or smartboard.
- Each café-table selects a Café Host (this role must be rotated if café participants are consistent). The Host selects a Timekeeper, a Scribe for documenting the conversation in a graphic organizer (web or mindmap), and a Sensor for bringing the conversation back to the target question.
- The teacher/host can move through the room, listening to conversations, being mostly just an observer. When needed, the host can offer an idea to a conversation or a processing comment. Most importantly, offer positive comments to the café groups focused on their working together.
• Time is given for the learners to come to their designated café table and for the café host to give out roles to the café members.

• The teacher/host sets the time span for the café conversation, beginning and ending times, and writes the time span on the board. Most cafes last between 10 – 30 minutes per conversation. The Timekeeper makes a note about the time allotted for the conversation, keeps announcing the remaining time for the café, and ends the conversation when time is up.

• At each café table, the Scribe writes the question(s) at the top of the easel paper in the center of the table.

• The conversation at each café table is documented by the Scribe using a graphic organizer, mind map, or web.

• Depending on the time available for the café, it is a good idea to have a second round of café on the same question or on another related question.
  ✓ For a second round, the Café Host stays at the original café table. All other café members spread out to different café tables – if possible, no two members from a previous café sit at the same table for the second café experience.
  ✓ In the second round, time is given for the Cafe Host to delegate roles.
  ✓ The teacher gives a new time allotted for the second café and the Timekeeper notes the time, monitors the time, gives updates on time left, and then closes the café when time is up.

• In the second round, the Café Host briefly shares with new cafe members the key insights and ideas discussed in the first café.
  ✓ Using the graphic organizer of the first café conversation, the Café Host briefly shares the key insights and ideas discussed; then, new members continue the conversation as a continuation of the first question and/or about the second question.
  ✓ The new Scribe builds on the previous graphic organizer with key comments from peers’ insights or wisdom from their first café conversation. The new conversation continues to respond to the initial question or to the new question. This is also the time to add depth and breadth responses to the question(s).
  ✓ At the end of the time given for round two, each Café Host reviews the graphic organizer from their conversation(s). Using a different colored marker, the Café Host circles (or checks) the key points of the conversation that answer the question(s). The Café Hosts posts on a wall their graphic of the conversation with the key points highlighted.
  ✓ The ‘harvest’ begins. One of the Café Hosts starts the harvest by restating the question(s) and giving a response or two from their café(s). Each Café Host has time to share their café responses. One by one, each of the Café Hosts reviews their café’s responses without repeating responses that have already been spoken by other café hosts. The harvest is intended to move quickly, so it is important that topics are not dwelled on or over-elaborate. And remember: no repeats!
Stories: Taking AOH-PL into Education

Small groups of AOH practitioners in the field of education have been successful in working with educators to train and implement the AOH-PL methodologies. These international practitioners have taken these methods beyond their home countries for worldwide dissemination. AOH-PL are being used in all levels of education, from systems level work with education administrators in the planning and development innovative education services to direct training of classroom teachers for everyday instruction in varied education settings.

Here are some of the ways educators that have found to work with these methodologies:

- In a primary school, teachers selected a toy stuffed turtle as a talking piece. The teachers called the talking piece ‘Talking Turtle.’ Learners in each of the primary school levels would sit in a circle on the floor. As the toy turtle was passed around the circle, the child whose turn it was to speak would stand up, hold Talking Turtle, and answer the question. When used in the same way – with minor variations based upon the age of the learners – Circle became a comfortable and welcoming process throughout their years in primary school. The reinforcement of process, social capital skills, and social emotional learning was a firm confirmation that all students were well prepared to move on to their next level of education. (Texas, USA)

- When working with 9 - 12-year-old students, the teacher would do a daily café for math. The teacher began by offering an overview of the math function the class would be working on for the week. Then, he/she would have the class get into Café tables. (Learners were randomly placed at café tables.) Next, the students were to turn in their books to the section on the math function for the week. The teacher, following the format for Café and in which roles were already assigned in each café, asked learners to answer two questions: What do you already know about this function and What questions do you need to have answered to master the math content that you don’t know. A mindmap was made at each café of their conversation. This conversation allowed time for learners to refresh their memories of what they already knew and to be coached by their peers. After the cafés were completed, each Café Host harvested what their cafe knew and what they didn’t know. By implementing café and hearing the harvests, the teacher had a quick assessment of what needed to be focused on for the week. (Texas, USA)

- “After your workshop in our school, I was very doubtful about using your methods since I’m not a person who would trust that it would come to the right outcome and I don’t really like group work. But, since the trainers put in extra effort and sent me possible ways to use World Cafe in my mathematics class, I did try it. In a third grade of our Gymnasium programme we are supposed to work on exponential functions. I divided students into groups of five and asked them what they already knew about exponential functions. In the next round, after they changed tables they were given the same question and we defined the exponential function together. In the third round, I gave them worksheets with some theory and some exercises. I was surprised that they really
talked to each other about the topic. At first they were a bit reserved, but after some time they got into it and really talked about exponential functions! I just walked around, observed, and helped them if they asked me something. After the third round, I added a question that I thought was challenging, and I didn’t really believe that they would show any interest in: “What else would you like to know about exponential functions?” But they did! At first their answers were predictable, but later they started to debate and they came up with some good ideas. The bell rang, the students left, and I was standing there happily surprised.” (Slovenia)

• After attending AOH-PL training, a participant went immediately back to her evening class working with young immigrants on speaking a new language. She implemented her first Café process. She followed the Café format and flow. She found the immigrant learners loved the process so much that they didn’t want to leave the class and asked if they could do cafés every day! (Michigan, USA)
  ✓ At another school that was devoted to immigrants learning English in academic classes, all staff and administration had just completed an AOH-PL training. They all decided to implement a check-in circle at the beginning of the week and a check-out circle at the end of the week. They also implemented cafés as part of every class. Learner participation in the classes increased in addition to their grasp of academics in their new language. (New Mexico, USA)

• The Ministry of Education funded a grant focused on initiating societal projects in gymnasiums. One of the recipients was steeped in using AOH-Participatory Learning to support developing the projects with learners. The leader used Circle, Café, along with a new process called ‘Conscious Politics' to engage learners. Some learners had ideas for projects and others became co-designers of new projects ideas with the project leader. Through the Participatory Learning process and use of five levels of consciousness (including meditation and yoga), the teenagers reflected on theory and were able to apply their own ideas to project design. These group processes enabled them to activate their projects in the real world. As a learning community, the teenagers were able to think creatively in designing projects and welcomed receiving feedback from peers. The projects were wide ranging from improving situations at their own school to very specific topics like rethinking bus schedules and projects addressing the climate crisis. (Austria)

• A group of teachers who work with early leavers began a Circle check-in at the beginning of each week to preview the week and at the end of each week did a check-out to summarize the academic content learned, questions that still existed, and feedback on the classroom process. They also added World Café. Learners who were coming back to school would often ‘early leave’ the program that was designed for them. After implementing AOH-PL, the early leavers stopped leaving the program. They exceeded in their academics, learned the social skills for keeping a job, and several went on to University. (Wyoming, USA)
In a university three-hour sociology class that met two evenings a week, the instructor used Circle check-in and check-out both evenings and Cafés in every class. The learners said, “I thought you were going to teach us! This is making us do all the work...and we’re having to really learn!”(Ohio, USA)

“In our youth center, we have a participatory group of youth between 14-18. We have been using AOH a lot for the youth who become ‘youth workers’ in our community. To deepen the lessons learned about being a youth worker and to encourage the students to self-organize we use Open Spaces and World Café. The students learn a lot from each other; they feel free to choose the topics they want to learn more about. It has been very important to hold space and establish a safe space for all.

The youth help the staff organize and develop projects. Each year we work on team-building. We use storytelling from the elder groups or other interesting people to get ideas for topics they the youth can work together in our Center. The young people are always surprised how easily they can build trust and have fun working together.

We have designed a lot of projects together with our students and politicians. For that we used the Circle. In the circle nobody could dominate the conversation. The communication and understanding was incredibly good. To design the projects from our conversations with politicians, we used the Pro Action Café. The results were remarkable and some projects in the region are still working. The youth were the callers for their projects and the politicians became part of our team by contributing and helping to develop the projects. The youth, especially those from difficult social backgrounds, developed self-esteem and felt accepted. The politicians listened to the youth’s ideas and contributed to the success of the projects.” (Austria)

Conclusion

Reflecting on the critical shifts needed in our education systems, it is time to think about how to shift to a model of education that develops learner-driven learning communities. As we move farther into the 21st century, the learners of today will need new skills to manage careers and being a citizen of both their countries and the world.

To summarize, educators need to:

- Build on and understand the brain’s natural learning processes
- Use a new vocabulary to support transitioning to learner-centered education
- Shift to growth mindsets, experience the methodologies
- Experiment with implementing Circle and Café

With some simple and strategic ways, educators and schools can redesign their services to meet the needs of today’s learners as the future of their communities and countries. A good way to begin is by implementing participatory learning practices into both formal and informal education settings.
Learners need more than academics. As more schools and universities move to learning communities, educators are using and can begin to use the Art of Hosting – Participatory Learning methodologies, Circle and World Café, to energize learning and increase overall outcomes. By working together to build an education system in which all learners can succeed, educators can become prepared to meet the unknown demands of the future.
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Author of PowerPath to Education and Employment, numerous articles, chapters, and monographs, Dr. Weisel partnered with Kentucky Adult Education and Kentucky Education Television to produce a video series based on the five steps in the PowerPath Process. This series was chosen by Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) to share online as part of their National Resource Collection. This work led Weisel’s to innovate professional learning by creating an online, ten-month hybrid course, Transforming Learning and Innovating Instruction, leading to PowerPath Certification with university credit options.

In the early 2000’s, Dr. Weisel created a model leadership academy for emerging leaders in behavioral healthcare at the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy at The Ohio State University. Viewed as a national prototype for creating future leaders that are ready to move community-based services into the 21st. century, Weisel co-authored a chapter, A Social Systems Perspective on Leadership in Systems of Care, in the textbook Modern Community Mental Health.

Dr. Weisel works with both national and international initiatives to implement innovative research-driven practices that lead to long-term education and workforce development outcomes. Trained in the Art of Hosting (AOH) and Theory U, Weisel collaborated with the Wyoming Community College Commission to implement a five-year initiative focused on developing a new prototype for adult education and family literacy services. The project, Align & Redesign, used Theory U to bring together research-based components that, when used together, would dramatically increase student participation, learning outcomes, and readiness for further studies or employment. This innovative initiative is described In the Handbook of Research on Training Evaluation in the Modern Workforce, as a chapter titled: Align & Redesign: An Evaluative Case Study in Transformation.

Becoming an AOH steward, Weisel field tested AOH methodologies in professional learning and in classroom settings from primary school to universities focusing on increasing engagement, development of social capital and social/emotional learning, and academic achievement. Finding success everywhere, Weisel recently wrote two articles: The Substructures of The Art of Hosting’s Participatory Learning Methodologies That Support the Development of Social Capital Skills and Social Emotional Skills in Educational Settings and The Art of Hosting in Education – Shifting Mindsets using Participatory Learning Methodologies and Practices. These articles will be published by the National Education Institute of Slovenia, Magazine Education and schooling, no. 4-5, volume 51 (2020). Both articles are currently available at The Art of Hosting website and Facebook page.