KnowledgeWorks



Envisioning Educator Roles for Transformation

Responsive Education Systems Need Responsive Educator Roles

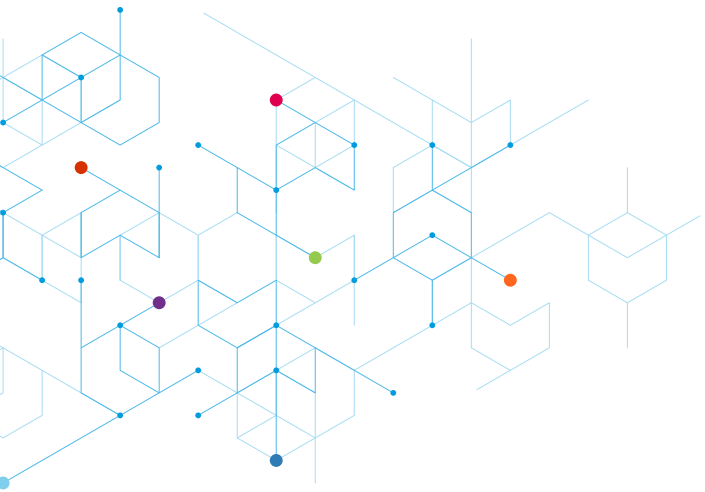
As educators and education constituents work to make education systems equitable and learner-centered, we must take a fresh look at what education systems are asking the people working in them to do. Without periodically revisiting the design of the education workforce, we risk continuing to do things as we have always done them, rather than how the people working and learning in these systems need things to be done.

This publication looks ahead ten years to imagine future educator roles that promise to help education systems support students of all races and ethnicities, incomes and identities in pursuing the kinds of learning experiences that enable them to uncover their passions and thrive in an evolving world. It presents eight potential educator roles that could help each learner have educational experiences that center their needs, interests and passions, feel like they belong and have the power to make choices about their futures – not just about what they will be, but who. Moreover, the purpose of this exploration is not to make traditional classroom teachers or administrators obsolete or to create a definitive, exhaustive list of possible future educator roles. Instead, it is to encourage creative thinking about what might be possible for the future of learning and the future education workforce.

Bold Efforts Amidst System Limitations

The education landscape is rife with educator burnout due to difficult working conditions and roles that are both out of sync with current needs and ill-adapted for the evolving world. People working within and alongside education systems are working under less-than-ideal circumstances, facing challenges as they seek to find cohesion and sustainability within their work. Too often, today's educators lack professional support and career development pathways, have insufficient resources and face ever-compounding responsibilities.

Demands continue to pile up on the people working in education systems, often leaving them without the space to take a comprehensive view of what an ideal system design might look like – much less to implement it. Many committed individuals are making bold efforts to find workarounds to system limitations such as insufficient compensation and challenges with engaging learners post-COVID.[1] In addition, many educators and pre-service teachers remain invested in learners' success and believe that they can be part of the change to make education systems more responsive and equitable in the future.



Present Examples for Future Change

Experimentation and innovation around educator roles are currently taking place. Among these efforts, Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College's Next Education Workforce Initiative is providing students with deeper and personalized learning by building teams of educators with distributed expertise.[2] It is also developing better ways for educators to enter the education profession, specialize and advance. Similarly, Teach for America's Reinvention Lab is working in community and reciprocal relationship with equity and innovation leaders, with the understanding that innovation thrives in partnership and co-learning, to develop new possibilities for the education field.[3] Harvard Kennedy School's Program on Education Policy and Governance has been exploring compensation, preparation, representation and evaluation for a modern teaching profession.[4] Learning Forward's Leadership Team Institute engages school and district leaders in a yearlong program focused on implementing evidence-based policies and practices that address key challenges, improve educator and team practices and increase student success.[5]

This paper builds from the current climate while taking a longer-term view informed by changes taking place around education.

Changes Around Education

Various drivers of change are impacting possibilities for the future of learning and the future educator workforce. As we imagine future educator roles, these drivers of change will create new opportunities and challenges.[6]

» **Accelerating Technologies:** Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly. ChatGPT and other generative AIs are now in people's hands, with increasingly powerful versions being released frequently. In addition, other emerging technologies such as augmented and virtual reality and blockchain have been gaining in capability and application. Together, these accelerating technologies are creating new opportunities for how educators design learning experiences and spend their time. They are also deepening concerns about digital equity, privacy and data security. A tension is emerging as to whether people will have the means to influence when and how they interact with AI in educational settings and how transparent its decision-making processes will be.

» **Intensifying Climate Crisis:** Climate change is placing intensifying demands on people across the planet. While eco-anxiety and physical health impacts have been increasing, so have efforts to mitigate the consequences of climate change through sustainable practices. Over the next decade, schools and school districts could struggle to maintain their operations amidst disruptions. In addition, they could find themselves serving more and more young people who have had to move or who are managing health conditions linked to climate change.

» **Civic Polarization:** More and more people living in the U.S. have been questioning the role of government and losing trust in public institutions. Political polarization and cultural wars have been intensifying even as a national reckoning around the rights of Black, Indigenous and other people of color has gained momentum. Education has increasingly been the focus of debates, as evidenced by increasing attention to school board elections; ever-increasing attempts to ban books; and the spread of bills giving parents, governments and citizens the ability to challenge and monitor what schools teach about race and gender. Over the next decade, education is likely to remain at the center of public debate, complicating efforts to pursue intentional system redesign.

» **Shifting Economy:** Generative AI is leading people increasingly to partner with smart machines. It is also exacerbating the potential for technological displacement of human workers, especially knowledge and creative workers. Other factors, such as the aging of the US population, heightened national security concerns and workers' increasing quests for better working conditions, are also shifting the economic landscape. Changes to work and economy could complicate what it means for schools to prepare young people for life after the K-12 years.

Some of the roles in this paper notice aspects of the changing environment to meet anticipated needs and make use of new tools and approaches.

Benefits of New Educator Roles

Making sure that educator roles are aligned with current needs and future aspirations can improve educator role definition, school cultures and working conditions. Doing so can enable educators to improve instruction and support for learners; advance equity; support peers in a climate of respect and reciprocity; enjoy better physical, emotional and mental health; and pursue their vocations and passions with pride and dignity without facing significant trade-offs or sacrifice.

Step into the future to consider how the educator roles imagined here might help education systems be more responsive to the needs of each learner and help learners and educators thrive in the context of a changing world.

About This Publication

This paper presents the eight future educator roles in order from those closest to the learner to those most oriented to the school district as a whole. It then surfaces strategic considerations that they raise. Each role description contains:

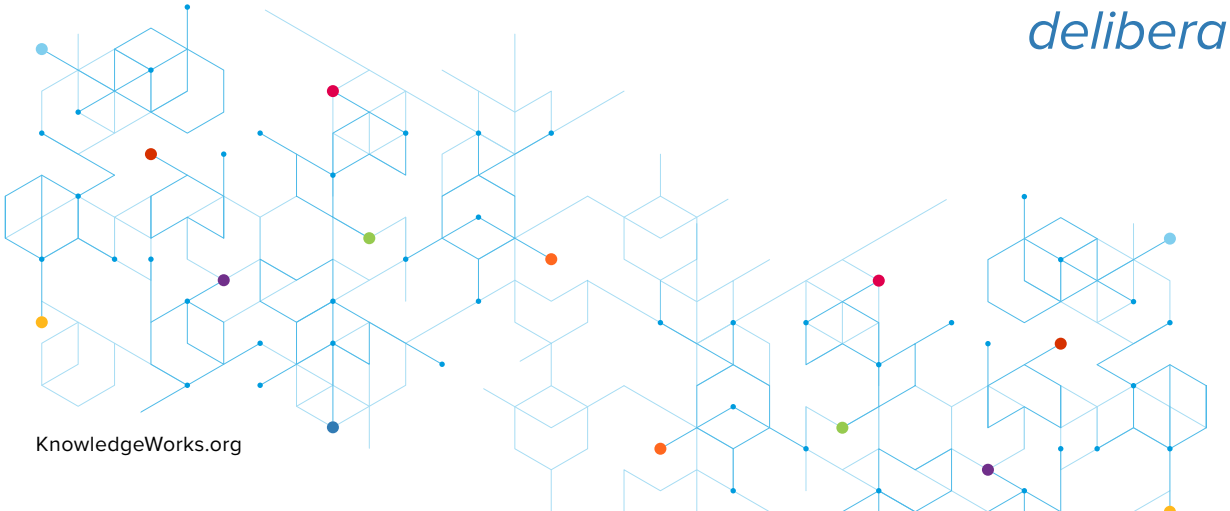
- An overview of the role
- The closest role(s) today
- The organizational level at which the future role would sit
- A description of its likely compensation and working conditions
- More on the responsibilities that the role would hold
- A description of the qualifications needed for the role
- Indicators of success

As you read through the educator roles, consider what might happen if we filled them and what might happen if we did not. Remember that these roles would ideally complement and collaborate with one another. Keep in mind that they could exist alongside some current teaching and administrative roles, at least in some places, or that other new roles could emerge. Also, note that this paper uses “learner” and “student” as synonyms to help stretch thinking about what education might look like in ten years.

Consider the future roles as a set that could contribute to whole-system redesign with a comprehensive staffing structure rather than simply as roles that would exist individually. But also imagine what some of these roles might bring to your learning environment or to the education systems that you influence even if it were not possible to carry out that degree of transformation. If helpful, extend your thinking beyond the roles presented here by crafting your own future educator roles using the template provided near the end of this publication.

The creation of these roles alone will not remedy all the issues within education, especially those that are systemic. There is a critical need for deeper structural changes to make education systems more responsive to the academic and social-emotional needs of learners. However, beginning to shift educator roles promises to help education systems move toward these deeper shifts, even as some dimensions of the roles might not be able to be fully realized until after those shifts have occurred.

By imagining possibilities for the future, we can take informed, deliberate action today.



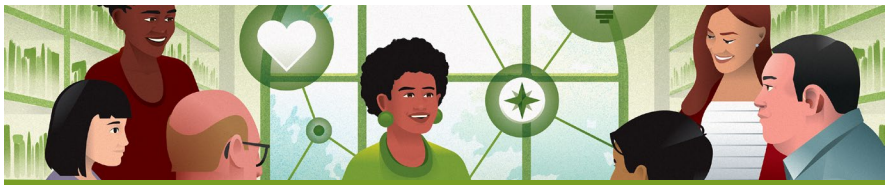
Future Educator Roles
for Responsive Education Systems



LEARNING SPARK FACILITATOR 7



LEARNER ADVOCATE-ADVISOR 9



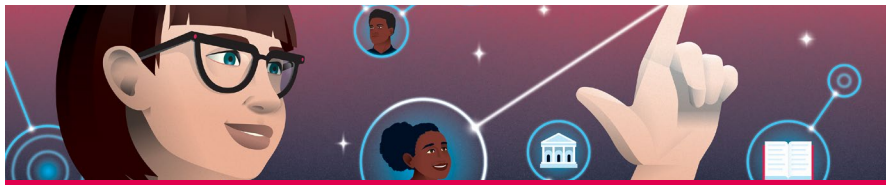
FAMILY CONNECTION COORDINATOR 11



EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT COACH 13



DIRECTOR/ADVISOR OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE 15



PARTNERSHIP NAVIGATOR 17



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CURATOR 19



CHIEF OPPORTUNITY OFFICER 21



Learning Spark Facilitator

A learning spark facilitator establishes physical and digital learning environments for learners of designated grade levels or age bands and links each learner to opportunities to master competencies and pursue their interests. They ignite each learner's unique spark and help keep their light ablaze by fostering their sense of belonging, nurturing their social-emotional well-being and helping them attain academic goals and pursue their interests.

Alongside learners and other educators, a learning spark facilitator co-designs equitable learning journeys for each young person with whom they work. They focus on increasing each learner's engagement by appealing to their individual passions, with the goal of helping them develop the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the evolving world.

Learning Spark Facilitator

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» Classroom teacher
» Learning facilitator

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Physically or digitally present in a classroom or other learning environment alongside learners

RESPONSIBILITIES

A learning spark facilitator is responsible for co-designing learning journeys alongside learners and other educators based on grade-level requirements or competencies and each learner's interests. They focus on wayfinding while cultivating a positive climate in their learning environments. Learning spark facilitators are expected to be avid learners and to serve as exemplars who spark learners' curiosity and love of learning.

In the districts where staffing structures still include classroom teachers, learning spark facilitators work closely with them. This role also collaborates with the continuous improvement curator, student advisor-advocate and family connection coordinator to inform learning journey development. It also uses artificial intelligence (AI) tools and agents – virtual entities that can plan and execute specific tasks on their own – to help carry out their work. Sometimes, a learning spark facilitator connects young people to learning opportunities outside school.

Learning spark facilitators are not required to be content experts.

QUALIFICATIONS

This role requires strong skills in managing relationships with learners using equitable practices and aligned tools. Deep knowledge of pedagogy and child development is essential. Candidates must pass a background check and have current first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certificates, plus emergency response training that includes environmental disasters. Advanced education or experience related to AI, coaching, learning science or communications is desirable.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

A compensation package for a learning spark facilitator allows them to participate comfortably in community life and live within the boundaries of the school district where they work if they wish to do so. Their salary reflects the highly valuable contributions that this position makes to the local learning community, along with their individual level of experience. A learning spark facilitator does not need to find additional work to make ends meet. They are able to find fulfillment in their work without sacrificing personal time.

A learning spark facilitator also receives a yearly stipend to use toward continuing professional development identified in conjunction with their educator development coach.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The learning spark facilitator aims to:

» Increase assigned young people's engagement in their own learning journeys
» Help each of those learners recognize themselves as a valuable member of their learning community
» Model a love of learning by sharing about their own learning and engaging alongside learners
» Help learners reflect on their practice by observing key moments in their learning journeys
» Seamlessly and efficiently integrate AI into daily tasks



Learner Advocate-Advisor

The learner advocate-advisor champions individual young people and provides whole-child support. Assigned to about sixty learners, this professional cultivates trusted relationships, bringing a holistic perspective to advising learners toward educational success.

The learner advocate-advisor helps kids surface current and long-term interests and goals and attend to well-being. When issues arise, the learner advocate-advisor helps get to their root causes, providing initial guidance and activating support to mental health partners outside school. This professional works closely with others in the learning community to provide personalized, caring support so that learners can thrive academically and social-emotionally. They also guide young people in advocating for themselves through formal and informal channels.

Learner Advocate-Advisor

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» School counselor

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Works in a school alongside teachers and learning spark facilitators

RESPONSIBILITIES

Learner advocate-advisors cultivate trusting relationships with learners to help them thrive in school and develop as whole people. Beginning in elementary school, these professionals help young people discover themselves as learners, reflect on their experiences and access supports. Each learner advocate-advisor stays with their advisees throughout their time in a school, getting to know them deeply.

The learner advocate-advisor nurtures every young person's sense of belonging and emphasizes their individual aspirations. This role attends carefully to transitions: from one grade to the next or one school to the next or through a change in family structure or a climate disruption. When issues such as disruptive behavior, chronic absenteeism or mental health concerns arise, the learner-advocate advisor helps build understanding, carry out repair and link to resources in and beyond school. They also coach young people on advocating for themselves.

The learner advocate-advisor does not focus on crafting personalized learning journeys or removing systemic barriers, but they liaise with the educators who do so.

QUALIFICATIONS

The person in this role must be able to cultivate trusted relationships with young people and support their development. A master's degree in social work, educational counseling or counseling psychology would normally provide the foundational knowledge and skills. Training or experience in cultural competency, transition management, restorative justice and the management of climate impacts is strongly preferred. Experience with similar ages and populations is a plus.[7]

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Like a learning spark facilitator, a learner advocate-advisor can participate comfortably in community life and live within the boundaries of the school district where they work if they wish to do so. Their salary reflects the crucial role that they play in supporting young people, as well as their specific expertise in relation to the school's priorities and the needs of the populations whom it serves. A learner advocate-advisor does not have to find additional work to make ends meet.

To help with processing what comes up on the job, a learner advocate-advisor receives extra mental health insurance or a stipend for accessing mental health care, along with a well-being allowance. They may have access to anonymous group therapy with peers. Even when that is not the case, learner advocate-advisors meet regularly for peer exchange across their district.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The learner advocate-advisor monitors success based on:

» Quarterly feedback from advisees

» Advisees' year-on-year educational progress

» The rate of effective issue resolution among advisees

» 360-degree feedback from teachers and learning spark facilitators

» Learners' perceptions of belonging at school and having agency over their learning



Family Connection Coordinator

The family connection coordinator engages learners' families and caregivers in the current life and future vision of their school. They link families and caregivers to supports that can make things better short-term. They also seed longer-term education systems transformation by involving educators, learners, families and other community members in shaping new approaches to education that meet their needs.

The family connection coordinator fosters authentic communication and engagement between the school, families and the surrounding community so that efforts to improve the school meet their needs. This role also works with colleagues to increase their capacity for effective learning and family support. Each learning community may have multiple individuals in this role, and they collaborate to ensure cohesion across the district.

Family Connection Coordinator

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY
» Family engagement specialist

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL
Based in one or two schools

RESPONSIBILITIES
The family connection coordinator champions the involvement of learners, their families and community members in shaping new approaches to teaching and learning to fit learners' needs, the complex realities of diverse families and the changing environment. While facilitating authentic communication and engagement across these groups and with educators, this person places special emphasis on learner and caregiver voice to ensure that current and future approaches and related services meet their needs and foster belonging.

With this focus on co-creation, the family connection coordinator networks with families and community members to bridge gaps between the school and its community. They foster strong relationships, facilitate two-way exchanges and build trust among people from differing cultures. The family connection coordinator also builds capacity among other members of the school's leadership team to foster cohesion and design new approaches in authentic ways that include learners, their families and community members.

The family connection coordinator does not monitor attendance or truancy.

QUALIFICATIONS
This role requires familiarity with how schools run, plus community engagement experience, cross-cultural competence, strong facilitation and organizational skills and leadership and coaching experience. Knowledge of the school's community is strongly preferred. An education credential is not required. A two-year degree or equivalent experience may provide a foundation in communication or youth development.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS
When employed in this role full-time, a family connection coordinator can afford to dedicate themselves to only one job and can afford housing for their family in the school district that they serve if they wish to do so. They may negotiate to carry out the role part-time or to job-share with another person to help it fit alongside their other life responsibilities and interests. When working at least 28 hours a week, they receive full health and retirement benefits.

Each family connection coordinator works with no more than two school buildings. This person has peers across the school district and support from members of the school(s) where they work. Each family connection coordinator also has a discretionary fund upon which they can draw to support families and host conversations across their community. Ongoing training is provided.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
The family connection coordinator aims for:

» Families, caregivers and other community members to feel engaged with the school

» Families, caregivers and other community members to be authentically involved in shaping the school's future

» The school and its community to have a shared sense of purpose and destination

There could even come a time when the role is no longer needed because the school has become aligned with, and supportive of, learners', families' and caregivers', and community members' needs.



Educator Development Coach

The educator development coach mentors teachers and learning spark facilitators to ensure that their professional development needs are being met. The coach meets with each educator to co-create personalized professional development pathways, facilitates team meetings to develop team culture and coordinate across individuals' strengths and uses AI tools and autonomous AI agents to find the most relevant and effective professional development opportunities.

This position also draws upon pedagogical expertise to motivate other educators to pursue continuous improvement and help them stay accountable as they are developing new skills. The educator development coach is expected to develop trusting and radically human relationships with the educators with whom they work while using AI to augment efficiency and advice.

Educator Development Coach

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY
» Instructional coach

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL
Part of school leadership team but with no evaluative relationship to other educators

RESPONSIBILITIES
Educator development coaches mentor teams of educators to ensure that each educator's professional development needs are being met. This role guides educators in building trusting relationships with their peers and fosters a culture of collaboration and alignment that draws upon their unique strengths. Informed by AI, educator development coaches co-create meaningful, relevant and evidence-based professional learning experiences with teachers and learning spark facilitators, helping them develop their pedagogical skills and attend to their social-emotional learning.

Every teacher or learning spark facilitator is assigned an educator development coach to help them grapple with issues, advocate for their needs and mediate difficult conversations. Educator development coaches aim to build trusting relationships with their mentees while aligning the needs of the school district, the school and individual educators.

This role does not supervise teachers or learning spark facilitators or assess their performance. It does not focus on specific content areas or support students directly.

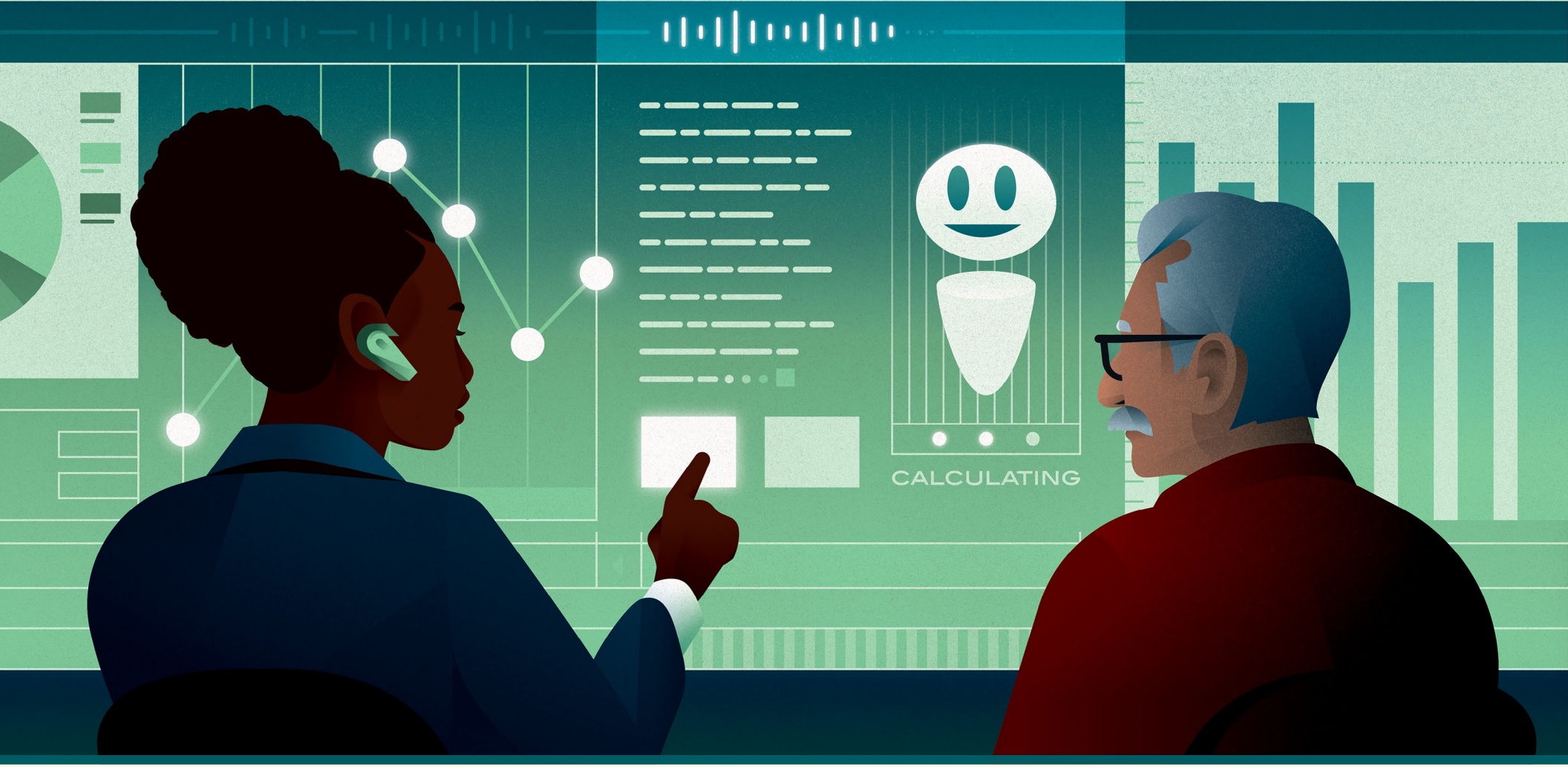
QUALIFICATIONS
The person in this role must be an experienced educator with the ability to inspire and guide others to improve their practice. They need demonstrated knowledge of and experience with pedagogy, coaching and motivational interviewing. They need to demonstrate the ability to use AI tools to find resources and support decision making. Knowledge of or experience with adult learning, personalized learning in any setting and learning science are preferred.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS
Like other educators, an educator development coach can participate comfortably in community life and live within the boundaries of the school district where they work if they wish to do so. Their salary reflects their years of experience in education and their specialized skills related to the preferred qualifications. The salary is typically higher than the median salary for their area.

Educator development coaches have more flexible schedules than student-facing educators do. They have considerable independence to structure their workdays while maintaining presence in their schools and being accessible to other educators. Each coach has an annual stipend for their own ongoing professional development via courses and/or conference attendance.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
The educator development coach monitors success based on:

» Steady engagement in ongoing professional development by teachers and learning spark facilitators
» Increased or strong and steady rates of satisfaction among those educators
» Strong performance of teachers and learning spark facilitators on agreed performance metrics
» Increased or strong and steady teacher and learning spark facilitator retention
» Decreased gaps between those educators' professional and system needs



Director/Advisor of Artificial Intelligence

The director/advisor of artificial intelligence offers the remarkable opportunity to inhabit a position in deep partnership with AI agents, which are digital entities powered by AI that can sense and process information, make decisions and act autonomously. This is a joint role held by a human and the AI. It reports to the chief technology officer and liaises with educators across the school district.

For example, AI agents help collect and analyze insights of the use of AI by others and then brief these insights to the human director/advisor, who participates in a dialogue with the AI about the root causes of challenges and next steps. Such conversations result in lists of digital tasks that AI agents can plan and perform on their own, along with tasks for the human director/advisor to execute. Both entities hold each other accountable.

Director/Advisor of Artificial Intelligence

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» Director of educational technology

» Instructional technology specialist

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Reports directly to the district's chief technology officer

RESPONSIBILITIES

The director/advisor of artificial intelligence provides educators across the district with the guidance and support that they need to incorporate AI agents and tools in their daily practices efficiently and ethically. This role's ultimate goal is to ensure that the district's use of AI is unbiased, enhances the meaningfulness and relevance of learning opportunities and makes an overall net positive impact on learning experiences and outcomes for educators and learners.

This role helps other educators learn how to partner with AI by modeling effective interactions with its own AI agents. It identifies and supports the deployment of guardrails and emphasizes the use of open-source AI agents to ensure privacy, security and transparency.

The director/advisor of AI does not interact with AI agents and tools on behalf of other educators on a regular basis, only to solve emergent and urgent issues. They do not create policy, guidelines or recommendations about the use of AI by themselves. This role does not set up the systems on which the district's AI operates.

QUALIFICATIONS

The director/advisor of AI must be able to partner with AI to achieve common tasks and guide others in using it in school settings. Five-plus years of experience with instructional design or technology management may signal readiness. Preferred experience includes advanced competency in technology management, artificial intelligence or machine learning; the application of AI in an educational or training setting; and coaching or adult instruction. The AI agents must meet ethical standards.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The compensation package for a director/advisor of artificial intelligence is at least on par with that of other directors who report to the chief technology officer, regardless of the sharing of the role's duties with AI agents. In fact, this role's market-based remuneration package competes with AI-related leadership positions in other industries.

This role comes with optional yearly upgrades of high-powered processing hardware to meet the processing requirements of some AI agents. A director/advisor of AI also has a small discretionary budget dedicated to accessing the latest AI tools and agents for testing purposes. Some director/advisors of AI liaise with technology companies to input into product development and stay abreast of the latest trends.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The director/advisor of AI monitors success based on:

» The degree to which there is culture of acceptance of, and iterative learning about, AI practices in the district

» Regular and frank discussions about the potential implications and ethical dilemmas around the use of AI

» Requests from other educators for guidance on how to use AI

» Regular bias audits of the AI agents

» Consistent checks of the AI agents for hallucinations and other blips



Partnership Navigator

The partnership navigator fosters partnerships to help educators carry out instructional plans and to bolster schools' resources and connections. This person liaises with community members, organizations, area businesses and funders to connect educators with relationships, resources and opportunities to realize their desired approaches and help learners gain perspective and experience. They also seek financial and technological support for defined initiatives.

By building these webs of connection, the partnership navigator opens the walls between schools and their communities. They collaborate with other educators to recognize the learning that occurs outside school and to maintain a holistic picture of learners' experiences. They also collaborate with other educators to align community cultivation with schools' needs.

Partnership Navigator

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» Community partnerships coordinator

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

District or school administrator

RESPONSIBILITIES

The partnership navigator brings resources and opportunities into schools so that educators can realize their plans. It also maintains the structures needed for learners to cultivate and apply their skills in real-world contexts and engage with community members, mentors and out-of-school time learning opportunities. This role develops and maintains strong community connections, building relationships with philanthropy and other funders and seeking technological support when needed.

In championing rich learning in and beyond school, this role works with educators to understand pedagogical needs and identify what resources and capacities the school needs to augment the support that it provides to learners. The partnership navigator helps surface opportunities in ways that are visible to all. The partnership navigator also supports reflection on the quality of experiences and connections and works with others to ensure that learning gets counted, no matter where and how it happens.

The partnership navigator does not design individual learning journeys or manage college access programs.

QUALIFICATIONS

The person in this role must be a connector with the ability to excite others about contributing to education. They need a strong understanding of how education in their area operates but might not hold a formal certification. They need strong listening, organizational, communication and advocacy skills. They also need a strong orientation toward collaboration and the ability to cultivate reciprocity. Experience with proposal writing and budgeting are preferred.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Like other educators, a full-time partnership navigator can participate comfortably in community life and live within the boundaries of the school district where they work if they wish to do so. While maintaining a strong presence at their school or district, they travel across the community making and reinforcing connections. The partnership navigator works nontraditional hours to meet with people when convenient and to connect with out-of-school and community-based organizations.

Funding for this position can be grant-dependent, making it less secure than many educator roles. It can be funded by multiple sources, leading to complex reporting lines. In some places, the role is part-time, with the person holding it occupying another educator role or working in some other capacity that provides a strong community base. In other places, the school or district commits to a full-time, long-term contract.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The partnership navigator monitors success based on:

» The number, consistency and longevity of partners

» The success rate in meeting learners' and educators' needs

» The density of connections between the school or district and its community

» The amount of revenue secured



Continuous Improvement Curator

The continuous improvement curator[8] infuses data into the district's ongoing practices, fostering a culture of learning and shared accountability such that educators, learners, families and caregivers, and other community members have a clear understanding of the learning happening in the district and people's experiences. This person leads the charge in using data to inform conversations about what happens next and how to address systemic inequities.

They employ inclusive continuous improvement processes to help people gain a holistic perspective and make adjustments to practice. The continuous improvement curator works with colleagues and the district's constituents to make sense of a broad range of data about students' progress toward mastering essential knowledge and transferable skills and the district's efforts to foster people's well-being and belonging.

Continuous Improvement Curator

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» Director of data and continuous improvement

» Education data analyst

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Mid-level school district administrator

RESPONSIBILITIES

The continuous improvement curator works with others to understand a broad range of student outcomes, including measures of deeper learning and experience indicators. This person guides the collection and analysis of real-time data and develops transparent and accessible ways of presenting them to ground instruction and support. To achieve the tasks above, this person must usually engage in change management, which includes helping others shift their mindsets from resistance to exploration and commitment.

The continuous improvement curator promotes a data-rich culture and the co-creation of improvement strategies. They promote data literacy among district employees and constituents. They use data visualization tools to help make big data accessible and comprehensible to a broad audience. They also identify and follow up on professional development and support needs while helping maintain privacy. The continuous improvement curator deploys AI-driven analytical tools to support focused inquiries into schools' performance and student outcomes and to help people find solutions.

This person does not manage the district's data systems or state accountability reporting.

QUALIFICATIONS

This role requires deep familiarity with continuous improvement approaches. The person holding it must have experience making sense of data-driven insights with diverse K-12 audiences. They must show mastery of improvement science, key data analytic tools and the use of generative AI to inform inquiries. Coaching experience is required, with applied knowledge of data equity practices strongly preferred. A research-oriented master's degree would normally provide the foundational knowledge and skills.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

A continuous improvement curator earns a premium for being able to mix the ability to work with data and with people inside and outside the education system. Being a school district administrator with specialized skills, they are paid relatively high. Some districts can compete with data-focused positions in other industries.

Working hours can vary as a continuous improvement curator strives to balance ongoing district demands with the need to meet families and caregivers and other community members when they are available. A continuous improvement curator has the flexibility to adjust their schedule to balance these needs. Some districts offer continuous improvement curators a bonus related to expanding data literacy among district staff.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The continuous improvement curator aims for:

» Data literacy among district staff to increase

» Continuous improvement practices to spread across the district

» Regular use of real-time data by district employees to inform decisions about instruction and supports

» The district to make significant progress toward addressing systemic inequities, such that all learners demonstrate mastery and report a strong sense of agency and belonging



Chief Opportunity Officer

The chief opportunity officer expands meaningful educational opportunities by addressing systemic and cultural oppression and discrimination. Recruited with involvement from learners and educators, this role was created because learners, educators, as well as families and caregivers, had identified the need to have a position with the authority to hold other leaders accountable when implementing systemic change.

With a focus on sharing power and putting the needs of historically marginalized yet resilient learners first, this position collaborates with learners and educators to maintain and improve a community-designed roadmap that outlines specific equity-related goals, values and assumptions that they have committed to pursuing, as well as the roadblocks that must be addressed to increase the system's responsiveness to every learner.

Chief Opportunity Officer

CLOSEST ROLES TODAY

» Chief equity officer

» Chief diversity and inclusion officer

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Sits on the superintendent's cabinet for a renewable four-year term

RESPONSIBILITIES

The chief opportunity officer co-owns and continuously works to make progress on the community-designed equity roadmap. The person holding it builds capacity among learners and educators to discuss and resolve longstanding issues related to discrimination and oppression. They also center learners and their caregivers in district decision-making processes.

The chief opportunity officer helps others work toward the progress indicators set when the equity roadmap was crafted. The role also manages periodic updates to the indicators as new information becomes available. The person holding this position sets more specific goals for themselves and is held accountable by a district-wide educator and learner council. The chief opportunity officer collaborates closely with the district's chief financial officer to conduct regular internal audits focused on resolving inequities related to how funds are spent.

This role is not expected to bring about immediate changes in student outcomes, solve systemic issues related to oppression and discrimination alone or assign blame for discriminatory incidents that happened in the past.

QUALIFICATIONS

This role requires significant experience working in education and knowledge of the area's education systems and cultures. It also requires outstanding communication skills, with an emphasis on accessibility and coordination with a wide range of people.

The successful candidate will be oriented to sharing power, with experience in diversity, equity and inclusion. Knowledge of using financial audits, data monitoring and other processes for equity purposes is preferred.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

A chief opportunity officer's remuneration package includes a strong base salary according to the district's market measures. The person in the position can earn bonuses for achieving specific targets related to progress along their district's equity roadmap. These targets are approved by the district-wide learner and educator council and are supported by evidence provided by the continuous improvement curator.

The position comes with a small discretionary fund that can be expanded with the help of additional funding, which the partnership navigator may help obtain. With approval from the district-wide learner and educator council, the chief opportunity officer also can create temporary transdisciplinary roles to support specific initiatives outlined in the community-designed roadmap.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The chief opportunity officer monitors success based on:

» Overall progress toward the agreed indicators on the district's equity roadmap

» Attainment of their individual goals related to the roadmap

» Timely completion of equity-related financial audits and the value of their recommendations

» Decreased or steady and low perception of othering among the district's learners and educators

» Timeliness and completeness of responses to requests made by the district-wide learner and educator council

Making Meaning of the Future

The eight future educator roles described in this paper invite consideration of what new systemic structures might help make education systems equitable, learner-centered and better places for adults to work. Together, they suggest several considerations for education changemakers to grapple with as they put in place strategies to shape the future of learning.

Challenging Core Assumptions about Education

Many of the educator roles described in this paper consider the blurring or breakdown of the current boundaries within schools and between schools and their communities. Focusing on what needs to happen to support learners and educators, increase equity and achieve desired outcomes can help education constituents challenge assumptions about where learning happens, what learning counts, what gets measured and how.

Keeping Technology in Its Place

Despite the current excitement over generative AI and the profound changes that it will likely bring to the ways in which we work and learn, experience with earlier technologies has shown that relying on such tools to fix problems in education or pasting them atop approaches that are less than optimal tends to alter the surface layer of daily activities without affecting more deeply rooted systemic issues. The roles explored in this paper may be supported by technology, especially AI, but they focus on fostering relationships and creating positive cultures in schools and other learning environments.

Unbundling and Realigning Roles

While the educator roles presented in this paper suggest new competencies and structures for education systems, they would not necessarily require adding more staff. It may be possible to shift some existing roles to align with new or refocused priorities. Additionally, because so many functions have been piled onto today's education jobs, unbundling some of them into new roles such as those presented here could help education systems reconfigure their staffing structures to meet emerging needs while making jobs more viable for the people holding them.

Examining Funding

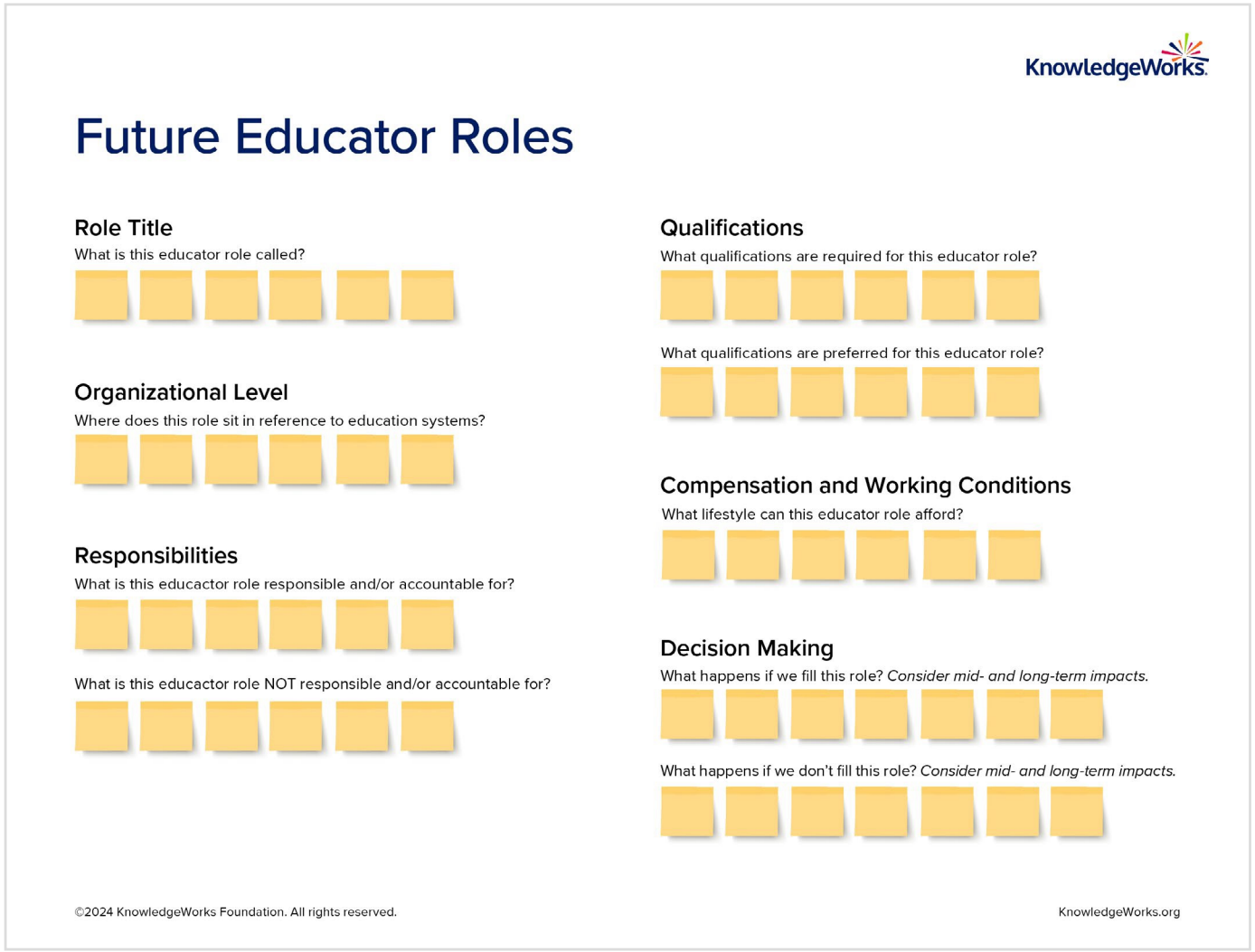
That said, it is critical not to downplay the cost of redesigning the education workforce. Creating and sustaining new educator roles will require creative thinking about how to pay for them. It will likely involve allocating more resources to education or re-allocating existing resources to align with current needs and long-term aspirations. Approaches and solutions could vary across places and learning environments.

Considering Incremental Change

Even though we as authors advocate for a comprehensive view of the future education system workforce, there could be elements of these or other new roles that could improve education when broader change is not yet possible. The possibilities presented in this paper could also encourage thinking about how to uplift and support the priorities of specific learning communities. As educators and education influencers consider how to address immediate needs and respond to local context and priorities, it will be important to avoid hindering the possibility of working toward longer-term solutions.

Creating Your Own Future Educator Roles

The roles presented in this paper represent just some of the ways in which education staffing structures could change to help make education systems equitable, learner-centered and better places for adults to work. Use the following template to generate your own ideas about what roles could be useful in your context or in education systems generally.[9]



IDEATION TIPS

- You can use paper and sticky notes to recreate this version of the template, or you can use the fillable version shown on the next page
- You can ideate on your own or with a group of people
- It can help to start by thinking about what work needs to be done and then develop a role that could carry it out
- You can complete the sections in any order
- Sometimes, moving back and forth among the sections can help ideas build to shape a provocative and inspiring role

Future Educator Roles

Role Title
What is this educator role called?

Organizational Level
Where does this role sit in reference to education systems?

Responsibilities
What is this educator role responsible and/or accountable for?

What is this educator role NOT responsible and/or accountable for?

Qualifications
What qualifications are required for this educator role?

What qualifications are preferred for this educator role?

Compensation and Working Conditions
What lifestyle can this educator role afford?

Decision Making
What happens if we fill this role? *Consider mid- and long-term impacts.*

What happens if we don't fill this role? *Consider mid- and long-term impacts.*

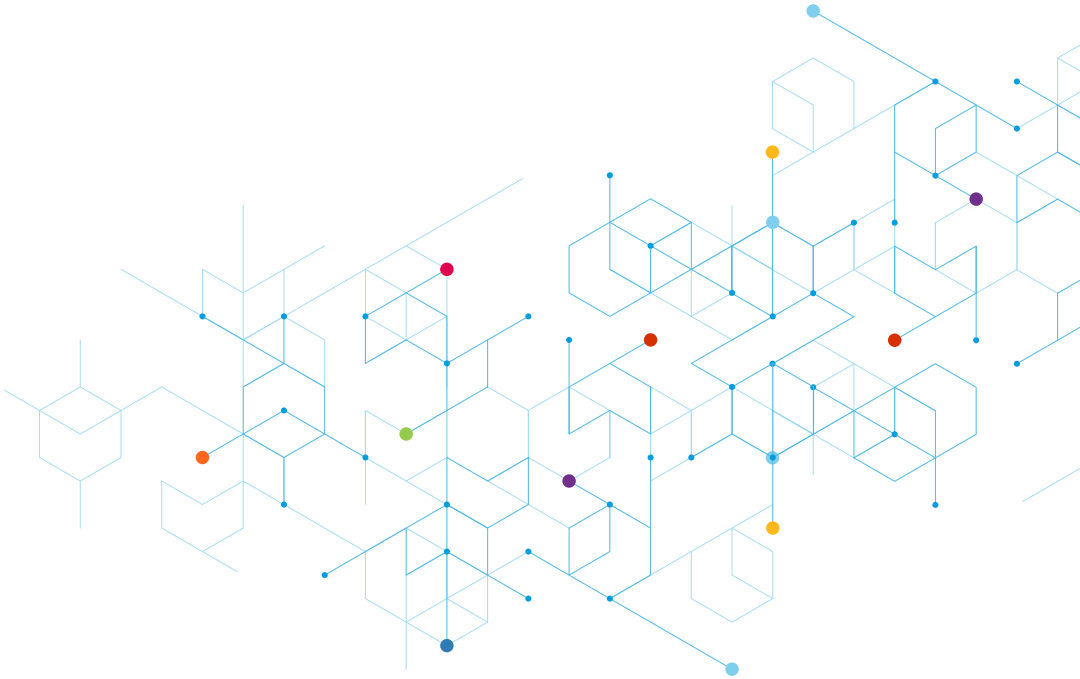
This template was inspired by: McAllister, I. [@Ian-McAllister]. (2014). Here's a set of information to gather and questions to ask to make sure that opening a new position is appropriate [Quora post]. Quora. https://www.quora.com/How-do-you-know-when-to-open-a-new-position-in-your-company.

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Realizing Future Aspirations

The roles presented in this paper illustrate ways in which the design of the education workforce might change to create new possibilities for the future of learning and to help education systems serve each learner well while adapting to the changing landscape. Intentionally redesigning the education workforce to align with aspirations for the future of learning – to make education systems more responsive to the needs of each learner and better places for adults to work – can help ensure that the people working in education are well positioned and supported to realize those aims.

To advance equity and make future education careers healthy and sustainable, we must first imagine new possibilities. Then begins the hard and necessary work of systems change. Consider the future educator roles presented here for yourself, involve others in grappling with how they or other roles might work and dig into the strategic considerations that they raise.



By doing this work of creation, we can start making new possibilities for education real.

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Additional Contributors

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