

A Personal Context

Welcome to *The Power to Transform: Leadership That Brings Learning and Schooling To Life*—the book I wanted to write for a very long time. Why did I write it during this time? Simply, I came to understand why the nature of schooling as we currently know and live it, has become the *unquestioned answer* to educating our children. Based on outdated and erroneous understandings of how we learn, create and innovate within human systems, decades of reform and school restructuring have not transformed our system of schooling or the nature and quality of our children's learning and thinking. And by design, it cannot. Knowing what we now know we can no longer do what we now do.

Despite the best of intentions, focusing on reforming and “fixing” the contents of schooling and not transforming and redesigning the contexts and conditions of learning, has created false proxies for learning and illusions of proficiency that eroded the potentially vibrant, intellectual and creative lives of our schools, our children, and our communities. Finishing a course and a textbook has come to mean achievement. Listening to a lecture has come to mean understanding. Getting a high score on a standardized test has come to mean proficiency. Credentialing has come to mean competence.

To educate our children wisely requires that we create generative and life-affirming learning communities, by design. These communities are grounded in the principles of life and learning and have their roots in: **purpose**, not prescription; **meaning**, not memory; **engagement**, not transmission; **inquiry**, not compliance; **questions**, not answers; exploration, not acquisition; **personalization**, not uniformity; **interdependence**, not individualism; **collaboration**, not competition; **challenge**, not threat; and **trust and joy**, not fear.



The New Conversation



We Get What We Design For

My purpose in creating this “guide” is to support your engagement with others in “deeper” and “slower” conversations about **the power we individually and collectively possess to fundamentally transform the current paradigm—story, map and landscape—of learning and schooling and create learning communities and experiences that, by design:**

- authentically ignite and nurture the goodness and genius of each of our children;
- enable children to become more autonomous, innovative, metacognitively aware and purposeful; and
- enable them to accept responsibility for shaping the nature and quality of their thinking and manifesting it in action.

My intent is to give you “tools” so you can
continue to act on what you know.

The Power To Transform is a call to leadership—not positional leadership, although that of course is important—but rather personal and collective leadership—your leadership, born out of your commitment to courageously name and engage in a new conversation about learning and schooling and do what it takes to bring it to life.

It is my belief that mind-shaping is world-shaping. It is the nature and quality of our children's thinking that will shape who they become and who they become will shape the world. Schooling must fundamentally transform minds.

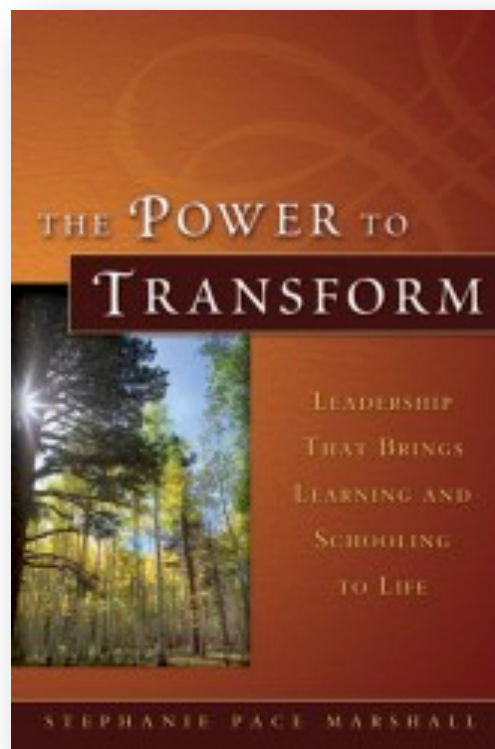
***This is not an easy conversation,
but it is the conversation that truly matters now.***

We can continue to tinker around the edges of reform and change the structures of schooling, but until we re-connect to the heart of the matter—how to deepen the nature and quality of our children's learning and thinking—

- we will not ignite their capacities to create new narratives and maps for the future,
- we will not transform learning and schooling, and
- we will not create conditions for every child and community to flourish.

A Guide to Navigating *The Power To Transform*

To help you navigate this book, I offer this "guide" to its contents. You can actually start anywhere, but I suggest you orient yourself to the book's key ideas by reading the Preface, the Prologue, and Chapter One first.



Sections

The Guide

Preface

A Call for a Radical New Story of Learning and Schooling – The “personal” story of why I wrote this book and why I felt I had to write it during this time. The book seeks to respond to a fundamental question: *What will it take to create a generative and life-affirming system of learning and schooling that liberates the goodness and genius of all children and invites and nurtures the power and creativity of the human spirit for the world?*

Prologue

Songlines—The prologue introduces an overarching metaphor of the book, Australian Aboriginal Songlines and names the essential contexts of story, map and landscape. These contexts frame my premise: *“Mind-shaping is world-shaping. When we change the story, we change the map. When we change the map, we change the landscape. When we change the landscape, we change our experiences and our choices. When we change our experiences and choices, we can change our mind. And when we change our mind, we can change the world.”* We now have the opportunity to fundamentally change the story and map of schooling and create a new generative landscape of learning grounded in wholeness, interdependence, stewardship and the development of integral, innovative and wise habits of mind.

Chapter 1

Firestorm or Gift?—The Power of Story—This chapter illuminates the concept of narrative and why it is so fundamental for understanding both the current story of learning and schooling and imagining and designing a new one.

Chapter 2

What Living Systems Teach Us—This chapter grounds us in two fundamental bodies of knowledge: Research on our mind/brain/body system and how we learn; and living systems theory—how natural living systems, like ecosystems, creatively organize for sustainability. This chapter provides scientific grounding for the premise that if we reimagined and redesigned learning to mirror how the human mind learns, and if we redesigned schooling to mirror how living systems creatively grow, change and organize, we would more likely create generative learning environments that were “naturally right, by design.”

Chapter 3

Nurturing Integral and Wise Habits of Mind -- This chapter describes the nature and quality of thinking essential for creatively and wisely understanding and solving the complex and interdependent global problems we now face. We need to develop integral, connected and wise minds, not siloed, shallow and fragmented ones.

Chapter 4

A New Learning Landscape: Aspen Grove, by design -- In this chapter I describe an imaginary “school” -- The Aspen Grove Center for Imagination and Inquiry. You will note that there is a photograph of an Aspen Grove on the front cover; this is because an Aspen Grove is a single organism, connected at the root. I use the six domains of living systems first outlined in Chapter 2 (Identity, Information, Relationships, Processes, Patterns and Structures) to describe what this new learning landscape could look like, if nature was our mentor.

Chapters
5 - 10

These chapters delve more deeply into each one of the six domains and illustrate them within the contexts of learning and schooling design. Each chapter begins with a story, offers some examples, and concludes with “Leadership Inquiries”—questions that invite deeper inquiry and slower, more mind-full conversations.

Chapter 11

A Generative Community for Integral Learning: Aspen Grove Revisited—This chapter returns to Aspen Grove and describes the characteristics of this new learning environment based on the principles of learning and living systems provided in chapters 5-10.

Chapters
12 & 13

The Right Moment: Answering the Call; and Chapter 13: *Elder Leadership: Changing the Current Story*. These chapters focus on our work as “elder leaders” and the conditions we need to create to change the conversation about learning and schooling within our communities.

Chapter
14

Creating the Radical New Story of Learning and Schooling—This chapter offers lessons learned and recommendations for engaging communities in conversations about the new learning and schooling story.

After-
word

A Letter to My Grandchildren—This is a letter I actually wrote and handed to each of my five grandchildren. It was my desire to name what I hoped they would remember to live. Some readers actually start the book here!