

# GOOD TO GREAT TO INNOVATE

RECALCULATING THE ROUTE TO CAREER  
READINESS, K-12+

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A Joint Publication With



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## PREFACE

“How can you get very far,  
If you don’t know who you are?  
How can you do what you ought,  
If you don’t know what you’ve got?  
And if you don’t know which to do  
Of all the things in front of you,  
Then what you’ll have when you are through  
Is just a mess without a clue  
Of all the best that can come true  
If you know What and Which and Who.”

—*The Tao of Pooh* (Hoff, 1983, p. 58)

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We have an opportunity to shape education for our students’ prosperity and our educators’ professional success in the future. In this book, we discuss the components of doing just that. We know it is time for education policy and programming to be linked to economic development at every level in order to close the gap between perceived student needs by educators and what employers actually expect and want. We address the importance of developing students who are critical thinkers, problem solvers, and innovators as well-prepared literate graduates of the 21st century and beyond. By

providing learners with feedback to understand their strengths and abilities, by offering a rigorous curriculum, and by giving learners the opportunity to apply their knowledge through Collaborative Inquiry and Experiential Learning, K–12+, we will Recalculate the Route to *Career Readiness*. Our aim is to develop students who are lifelong contributors (C. Bereiter, personal communication, December 2013) so that they have the requisite skills to meet future global demands.

In writing *Good to Great to Innovate*, “align—focus—feedback” has been our mantra. We know that in doing this hard work with high-performing systems, schools, and classrooms, leaders must move along the learning continuum from good to great to innovate, which demands attracting multiple community partners to work alongside them and collaboratively resolving their likely differences to produce powerful, sustainable relationships and lasting, continuously improving programs.

Innovation is defined as something new that can be applied in a useful way. Unlike inventions that refer more directly to the creation of an idea or method, innovation refers to the use of the better idea or method. It builds on the notion of doing something different rather than just doing the same things better as we might consider in improvement planning.

We examined three research questions in reaching out to participants in four countries: Canada, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Over 40 jurisdictions responded to our questions: (1) Describe a program or strategy that has worked well within your school or district to improve student achievement; (2) How do you know it is making a difference; and (3) Under what conditions does this work? We took many of the stories that we heard in collecting our data and inserted them throughout the text as examples of best practices to engage all students and teachers in this work. They responded with valuable insights into how they offer students multiple *Pathways* to reach the top of their game to become contributing members of society.

This book examines **What Matters Most** for all students in realizing their potential and having personal choice and a voice in their

*Pathway* to becoming *The Literate Graduates* that they have a right to become. Using the analogy of a journey, we look at “Charting the Course” in Chapter 1. Chapter 2, “Leadership Matters,” examines the leadership needed to move from good to great to innovate. In Chapter 3, we invest in the fact that “All FACES Matter”—all of our students must be “on route.” In Chapter 4, we take a serious look at “Closing the Gap to Raise the Bar” in all districts with all students. Chapter 5, “Choice Matters,” considers the choices that students must be offered. We close in Chapter 6 with our already-known route masters to success: “Skilled Teachers Matter!”

Our journey would not be complete if we didn’t have external reflectors who considered and added to our thinking and writing through their effective descriptive feedback. These giants in the educational research world—our colleagues, mentors, and friends—complete our thoughts and play a large role in finalizing this book: Michael Fullan writes our Foreword to set the tone; Avis Glaze reflects on Chapter 1, Ken Leithwood on Chapter 2, Alma Harris on Chapter 3, Louise Stoll on Chapter 4, Yong Zhao on Chapter 5, and Suzie Boss on Chapter 6; and Andy Hargreaves brings our book to a close by writing the Epilogue. How fortunate we are to hear and read their thinking on the state of K–12+ education (the + indicates “and beyond”) and what it takes to be great.

Ensuring that all students know “What and Which and Who” as Pooh began is our focus, as students must be able to reflect independently and collectively on their multiple *Pathways* to opportunity and success. Please join us on the journey—what is your *TrueNorth*?