

FORECAST  
**5.0**

# NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Navigating the Future of Learning*, KnowledgeWorks' fifth comprehensive forecast on the future of learning, aims to further conversations about ways education institutions and influencers can shape a future where all students can thrive.

## AN ERA SHIFT

A new era is unfolding, one in which people, smart machines and the code that powers them are interacting in new and deepening ways. Over the next decade, exponential advances in digital technologies will require us to redefine our relationships with one another, with our institutions and even with ourselves. Every facet of our lives, including how we teach and learn, will be touched by this new era of partners in code.

During this period of transition, education's role in supporting the healthy development of young people, effective lifelong learning and community vitality will be increasingly crucial. Many of the organizations, institutions and systems that structure our daily lives and support learning are increasingly out of sync with both existing and emerging needs. The new era could exacerbate the current misalignment or inspire new frameworks for how we live, work and learn.

*Exploring the future of learning today is an act of stewardship to our future communities and to the young people who will live in them.*

## FIVE DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The exponential advances in digital technologies described above are contributing to a variety of shifts in our daily lives, either directly in the form of disruptive innovations or indirectly in the form of reactions to, or the effects of, rapid advances in technology. Five drivers of change describe key shifts that will shape education over the next decade.



### AUTOMATING CHOICES

Artificial intelligence and algorithms are automating many aspects of our lives.



### CIVIC SUPERPOWERS

Engaged citizens and civic organizations are seeking to rebalance power.



### ACCELERATING BRAINS

People have increasing access to tools and insights that are reshaping our brains in intended and unintended ways.



### TOXIC NARRATIVES

Outdated and misaligned systems and metrics of success are contributing to chronic health issues, including rising rates of mental illness among children.



### REMAKING GEOGRAPHIES

Communities are working to remake themselves in the face of deep transitions.

## PROVOCATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

As these drivers of change unfold and combine over the next decade, they will present opportunities to imagine new kinds of educational practices, programs, structures and roles. If education institutions and influencers took concerted action to respond to the changing landscape, the following zones of future possibility could support the healthy development of young people, enable effective lifelong learning and contribute to community vitality.



### SIGNATURE LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS

Situate learning in place in ways that integrate technology, culture and learner and community identity to enhance and extend opportunities for learning.



### HUMAN-CENTERED LEARNING

Reorient teaching and learning systems, expectations and experiences to put a holistic view of human development at the center.



### SAFEGUARDS FOR EFFICACY

Provide vision and stewardship for implementing effective data strategies and for embracing emerging technologies for intentional learner support.



### AMPLIFIED VOICE AND IMPACT

Reconfigure engagement and outcome frameworks and communications channels to bolster individual capacity and to increase community impact.

Within each of these provocation zones, *Navigating the Future of Learning* identifies more specific future possibilities illustrating ways the drivers of change might be harnessed. It also identifies signals of change showing how the future possibilities that it describes are beginning to play out today.

## RESPONDING TO THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE TODAY

As the emerging era ushers in ever-greater complexity, education institutions and influencers will need to take action to pursue their preferred futures and to address new or deepening challenges. The areas below represent critical starting points for responding to the changing landscape today.

- » **Design for Equity** – Equity must be an explicit aim and a core design principle of all efforts and reforms. It will often require strategies that focus on specific populations and on individual students' needs, along with frank and inclusive conversations about how and why inequities in learning persist.
- » **Prioritize Human Development** – As emerging technologies and workforce needs continue to influence many conversations about the future of learning, stakeholders will need to keep learners' fundamental human needs at the center of their decisions.
- » **Distinguish between Efficiency and Transformation** – Pressure to adjust rapidly and the temptation to mislabel increased efficiency as system transformation are likely to intensify. There will be a role for guides who understand that using new tools to make tasks easier does not necessarily improve student learning and that pursuing major changes often leads to unintended consequences.

- » **Lead with Inclusive Governance** – Education stakeholders will have powerful opportunities to promote student and community agency, to make decision-making processes more transparent and inclusive, to foster more meaningful and relevant learning and to recognize and form connections among the many people and places that support learning.
- » **Protect Student Dignity and Community Well-Being** – As educational authority becomes more distributed and as more avenues for influence open, education stakeholders will need to collaborate to ensure that appropriate safeguards protect the dignity and well-being of all students and community members.
- » **Develop New Terms and Conditions for Technology Use** – As technology continues to evolve, education stakeholders can take a leadership role in establishing new ethical frameworks and in shaping the design of new education technology tools.
- » **Identify Your Organization’s Role in Social Regeneration** – With their many existing assets and relationships, education organizations can serve as critical leaders in efforts to define new narratives of success and to improve individual development, social cohesion and community well-being.

## EXPLORE FURTHER

[Download or order hard copies](#) of *Navigating the Future of Learning* and access audience-specific discussion guides. Contact us at [foresight@knowledgeworks.org](mailto:foresight@knowledgeworks.org) if you are interested in applying the forecast in your context or in using it to inform a publication on your platform.

*The future is not a fixed point;  
it is ours to create.*

