About IDE Corp. and EdQuiddity Inc: Transformational Professional Learning

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About IDE Corp. and EdQuiddity Inc

IDE Corp. — Innovative Designs for Education — is a New Jersey–based, MWBE-certified educational consulting firm partnering with educational organizations to increase student achievement and position students to thrive in their future college and career paths. IDE Corp. is internationally known for creating the *Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom™* framework of instruction (see Appendix A). These student-driven classrooms are characterized by increased student engagement, high academic rigor, and increased student responsibility for learning, including an emphasis on executive function (see Appendix B), resulting in higher academic achievement. The intent is to move beyond student engagement to empowerment and, ultimately, to efficacy — where students can identify a problem and develop a plan for solving it that produces successful solutions. In all of our work, equity is a given. We prioritize designing equitable learning environments in all aspects of our work (see Appendix C). IDE Corp. president, Dr. Nancy Sulla, has [authored six books](#) related to this work, published by Routledge:

- *Reinventing the Classroom Experience: Learning Anywhere, Anytime*
- *Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement*
- *Students Taking Charge in Grades K–5: Inside the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*
- *Students Taking Charge in Grades 6–12: Inside the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*
- *Students Taking Charge Implementation Guide for Leaders: Inside the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*
- *It's Not What You Teach, But How: 7 Insights to Making the CCSS Work for You*

Dr. Sulla is also the host of the weekly internet TV talk show, *Learning Unwrapped* on PODTV.tv.

Unlike most professional development that provides teachers with strategies to incorporate into their existing instructional repertoire, IDE Corp. provides customized professional learning experiences that cause teachers to rethink all aspects of their classrooms, building classroom environments that maximize academic rigor and the differentiation needed to achieve success. Through carefully structured workshops, IDE Corp. consultants inspire teachers to rethink the roles of both teacher and student in whatever environment learning takes place; in person, remote, or hybrid format. IDE Corp. consultants provide teachers with just-in-time support as they take steps to reinvent their approach to teaching. Existing initiatives and adopted instructional resources are melded into our professional learning experiences so that teachers see their current experience with IDE Corp. as unifying and complementary to their experiences thus far. IDE Corp. consultants design workshops to be differentiated, including modeling the power of executive function in raising student achievement and, to the extent technology is available in the district's classrooms, to model technology infusion (see Appendix D). Our focus is on moving beyond what Ron Heifetz refers to as technical change to adaptive change (see Appendix E).

IDE Corp. consultants must pass through a rigorous interview process to be named as a member of Team IDE. All of our consultants possess a master's degree or higher and have an average of 14 years of experience in the field of education. Our consultants possess a breadth of knowledge about instruction and the field of education; they engage in continual professional learning through monthly "think tank" meetings, monthly book discussions and analyses, and participation in a reflective learning community.

IDE Corp. consultants have been providing consulting and professional learning to schools since 1997. The company is headquartered in Ramsey, New Jersey, with offices in Florida and California

In 2019, Dr. Sulla launched EdQuiddity Inc (www.edquiddity.com) to provide virtual products and services. The word *quiddity* means "your essence or your whatness;" so we provide *education for your whatness!* The consultants of IDE Corp. have teamed up with the EdQuiddity ThinkTank to provide both in-person and remote consulting services to schools and organizations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, EdQuiddity and IDE consultants provided personalized support to teachers in reinventing themselves as curators and facilitators of remote learning environments, guided by their "11 Aspects of Remote Learning." They partnered with schools to design Differentiated Digital Activity Lists to ensure that students had access to meaningful, rigorous learning activities. They provided webinars for parents on their "8 Elements of Home-Based Learning." They designed free websites to serve the educational community:
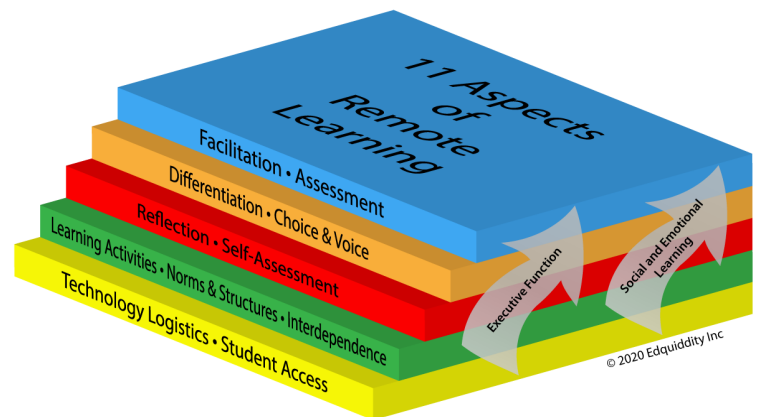
- ddal.idecorp.com — resources for designing Differentiated Digital Activity Lists
- 4thekids.idecorp.com — printable, digital resources for students, focusing on executive function and higher-order thinking
- 4theparents.idecorp.com — resources for parents on the 8 Elements of Home-Based Learning

These partner companies are dedicated to continually expanding the conversation on the future of schooling in the world and serving as leaders in visioning, designing, and implementing instructional and organizational models that empower all learners to high levels of efficacy.
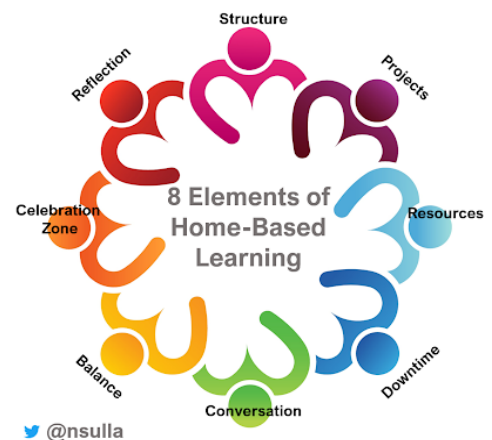
APPENDIX A

IDE Corp.'s *Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*

Detailed in the book *Students Taking Charge: Inside the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*, this comprehensive instructional framework is the ultimate hybrid instructional framework, allowing teachers to curate and facilitate academically rigorous learning whether in a physical classroom or a remote environment. This model melds research-based, best practices into one, cohesive, student-focused, problem-based learning environment, including: equity, executive function, social and emotional learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, student responsibility for learning, higher-order thinking, knowledge-based instruction, literacy across the content areas, technology infusion, 21st century skills, Response to Intervention, Understanding by Design, Universal Design for Learning, and more.

A Look into *The Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*

> *Imagine a learning environment in which students pose questions and actively seek answers. They decide how they will use their time; take charge of setting and achieving goals; and work individually to build skills and collaboratively develop solutions to real-world problems. Computer technology is used throughout the day, seamlessly, as students and teachers need it. Teachers move around the room, or in the case of a remote learning situation, use video conferencing, to connect with students to hear about their accomplishments, ask probing questions, and gather assessment data that will shape instructional plans. You hear students talking about content; their vocabulary is sophisticated for their grade level; their thinking processes are evident through their discussions and reflections. They are intent on the task at hand, yet not everyone is working on the same thing at the same time. No one is off task; no one is misbehaving. Every now and then you hear a cheer or a student exclaim, "I got it!" as they excitedly dive into the next phase of a project. They pack up certain activities and move on to others without the prompting of the teacher. No one watches the clock; no one wants to leave. This is a snapshot of the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom.*
> — modified excerpt from *Students Taking Charge: Inside the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom* by Dr. Nancy Sulla

At the core of the *Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom* are 10 principles:

1. Students learn best from a **"felt need."** This occurs when students are presented with meaningful, open-ended, real-world problems that create a motivating context for learning and build a "felt need" to learn curricular skills.
2. Students should be challenged to achieve at **high academic standards,** utilizing the teacher, peers, and other resources to meet with success.
3. Students should be presented with **higher-order, open-ended problem-solving** activities as a way to build lower-order skills and not vice versa.

4. Students should take **responsibility for learning**, including setting goals, scheduling time, utilizing resources, and making other important decisions.
5. Learning should be **connected** across disciplines and to students' lives through transdisciplinary units (sharing a transcending, life-related theme, such as "Being Part of a Greater Whole" or "Taking a Stand") and interdisciplinary instruction.
6. Students should engage in **collaborative** problem solving on open-ended problems with peers, working independently on subtasks to achieve individual content mastery.
7. Students should follow an **individual learning path** so that they can reach their full potential.
8. Students should learn in an environment of **high social capital,** engaging meaningfully with adults in and out of the school community.
9. Students should **infuse technology** into their learning — using it as a resource to support learning; it should not be seen as a goal unto itself.
10. Students should understand their role as **global citizens** and make strides to contribute to the betterment of their world.

Components of the Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom

The foundation for this learning environment is a motivating, authentic, problem-based task that drives students to the curriculum standards. Teachers begin by "unpacking" the standards to clarify the content and work toward the task statement. The intent is to develop a problem situation that will provide students with a "felt need" for learning and provide students with a foundation for creating a student-focused learning environment. Consultants work with teachers to consider their curriculum and the standards, and develop a related open-ended, authentic, problem statement.

Next, teachers design an analytic rubric to lay out clearly articulated expectations for the students. A four-column rubric will provide students with grade-level, standards-based expectations; a "roadmap" for achieving at this level; and a "reach" to achieve beyond expectations. This allows students to self-assess, set goals, and take action to achieve those goals. It also provides the teacher with a communication tool when speaking with a student about goals and progress.

Once the academic expectations are in place, the teacher designs instructional activities to provide students with differentiated opportunities to learn through learning activities, practice activities, and application activities. These may include:

- **Benchmark Lessons** — 2- to 3-minute, whole-class videotaped lessons on concepts at key points throughout a unit
- **Whole-Group Live Discussions** — 20-minute in-person or video-conference discussions to synthesize learning from independent activities and generate ideas, questions, and next steps
- **Small-Group Mini-Lessons** — 10- to 15-minute skill lessons (in person or through video conferencing), with up to six students, who either opt in or are required to attend
- **How-To Sheets** — text-based, step-by-step, direct instruction in a skill

- **How-To Podcasts/Screencasts/Videocasts** — audio and/or video, step-by-step, direct instruction in a skill
- **Learning Centers** — concept- or skill-focused activities that require a particular room or virtual location or limited set of materials
- **Interactive Websites** — websites that allow the student to interact and explore concepts and skills
- **Peer Tutoring** — rotating class experts in a particular skill

This collection of activities translates into daily or weekly (depending on the grade level) activity lists that offer students required activities, choice activities (offering more than one way to build a concept or skill), and optional activities (offering extension opportunities to those who are advanced). From this, students schedule how they will use their time across the day (self-contained grades) or a class period for the week (departmentalized grades).

The teacher must then utilize ongoing formative assessments to ensure that students are on an instructional trajectory to achieve the curricular goals. If not, the teacher must revise instruction accordingly. Teachers design facilitation grids, laying out skills and concepts to assess as they facilitate instruction. They design facilitation questions to move students to higher-order thinking. Additionally, they utilize various protocols for looking at student work to analyze student needs.

A classroom management plan must include structures to support a more student-focused environment, including digital folders to manage a student's schedule and work, sign-up sheets for small-group mini-lessons and limited resources (such as computers), help boards, a resource area, and more.

APPENDIX B

The Power of Executive Function

In her book *Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement*, Dr. Nancy Sulla defines 6 key life skills that are supported by the common 40 executive function skills. These are the foundational skills that also support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies.

| Conscious Control	Engagement
Storing and manipulating visual and verbal information Remembering details Holding on to information while considering other information Shifting focus from one event to another Attending to a person or activity Focusing Concentrating Thinking before acting Managing conflicting thoughts	Identifying same and different Following multiple steps Identifying cause-and-effect relationships Categorizing information Changing perspective Thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously Initiating a task Persisting in a task
Collaboration	**Empowerment**
Seeing multiple sides to a situation Being open to others' points of view Maintaining social appropriateness Overcoming temptation	Catching and correcting errors Setting goals Managing time Self-assessing Monitoring performance Reflecting on goals
Efficacy	**Leadership**
Being creative Working toward a goal Organizing actions and thoughts Considering future consequences in light of current action Making hypotheses, deductions, and inferences Applying former approaches to new situations Defining a problem Analyzing Creating mental images Generating possible solutions Anticipating Predicting outcomes Evaluating	All of the executive function skills

When schools look to improve academic achievement, they tend to focus on ways to present a better lesson or provide better instructional materials. However, if a student lacks the ability to focus, shift from one event to another, follow multi-step directions, and catch and correct errors, for example, even the best lesson and materials will fall short of producing results. The missing link to student achievement is executive function.

While the prefrontal cortex is not completely developed until people are in their twenties, recent research shows that its growth can be impeded by life situations. Children who grow up under stressful conditions, such as those presented by poverty, may have high levels of cortisol — the stress-response hormone — in their bodies, which inhibits the growth of the prefrontal cortex. This may result in students experiencing less success in the area of executive function, which in turn affects academic performance. Placing an emphasis on building executive function can be a pathway to improving academic performance. The *Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom* builds both academic skills and executive function through structures that put students in charge of their own learning.

APPENDIX C

Instructional Equity

We view instructional equity through seven lenses (opportunity, access, representation, empowerment, relationships, authenticity, and cultural responsiveness). We consider how these lenses are reflected across six instructional areas (physical/virtual setting, instructional activities, participatory structures, assessments, instructional resources, and language).
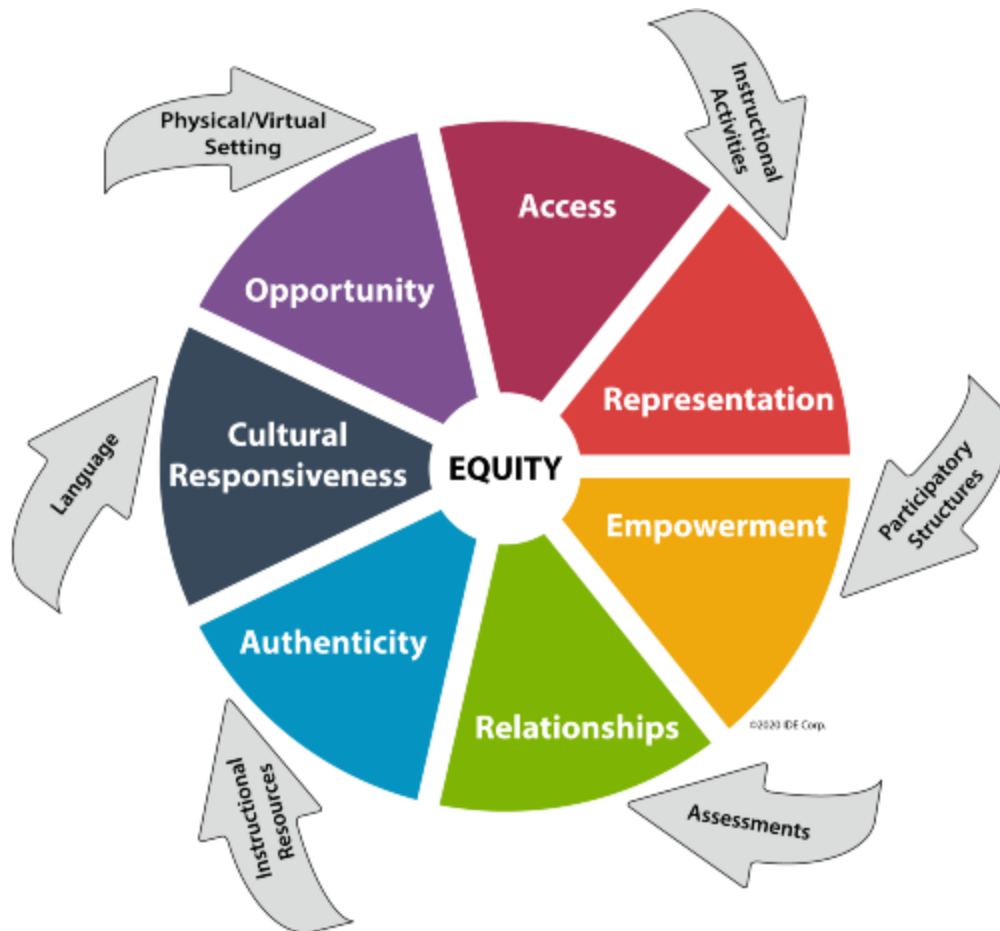
We believe in an asset approach (rather than a deficit approach) to instructional equity. All students have assets that must be celebrated and leveraged for further success. At the school or district level, an asset approach means considering the representative percentages of students by race and cultural background who are enrolled in honors and AP classes, participate in STEM programs, engage in extracurricular activities, etc. While a review of representation in areas of special education or remediation will reveal bias and equity issues, we fear that if these areas become the goal indicators, students of color who need services may be overlooked in the interest of a "numbers game," and students of color may still end up not having access to higher-level opportunities.

Equity is perhaps the most critical issue of remote and hybrid teaching times. Schools struggle to provide equity when all students are in school; addressing equity issues among remote learners is even more challenging. Add to that the fact that students can become invisible in a numbers game — most of the students are doing just fine. What about the others? As most would define it, equal means everyone receives the same instruction; equity means everyone receives instruction that meets their needs.

Developers of eteachny.org - Culturally Responsive Education
IDE Corp. is proud to have been selected by Eastern Suffolk BOCES as their partner in designing the online remote learning toolkit for Culturally Responsive Education for the New York State Education Department. You can access the available modules (when completed, there will be 5) at eteachny.org (click on Culturally Responsive Education.)
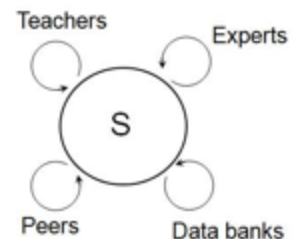
APPENDIX D

Technology Infusion

Clayton Christensen, in his book *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, talks about how technology can be a disruptive force that will challenge teachers to think differently about teaching and learning. However, oftentimes, teachers will take this disruptive force and fit it into the dominant paradigm for teaching and learning so that it becomes a sustaining force. This is the biggest challenge to schools embarking on a technology infusion initiative. It's critical to inspire teachers to think differently about what schooling looks like. Technology allows students to work in new ways in the classroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic became the coeval disruptor to technology in 2020 when schools scrambled to provide 1:1 devices to students working from home. Now, schools can leverage that technology to reinvent the classroom experience to be more student-driven.

Today's digital generation of students thrives in digital learning experiences, as they are: interactive, student-centered, authentic, collaborative, and on-demand.
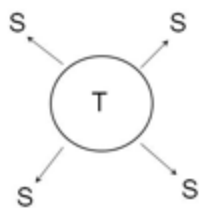
Leveraging technology to design more student-driven, differentiated learning environments requires a shift in paradigms, that is, getting teachers to change their fundamental beliefs about the teaching-learning process, their roles, students' roles, etc. Conventional approaches to teaching include a belief that the teacher is all-knowing and at the center of disseminating information. This may be accomplished through a more engaging "I do, we do, you do" approach; however, even with this approach, the teacher is at the center of all activity, actively driving student action. With the advent of the internet, the teacher no longer needs to be the central resource for knowledge in the classroom. Teachers need to take on the roles of curator and facilitator of learning: designing meaningful, authentic, problem-based learning units; providing a wealth of differentiated learning opportunities; and helping students learn to manage the learning process. Technology has the power to support a shift in paradigms for what classroom instruction looks like. In fact, during the pandemic, with schools purchasing greater numbers of devices, it has become the lever for significant instructional change.

APPENDIX E

Technical and Adaptive Change

Educational change falls into two categories, as defined by Ron Heifetz: technical and adaptive. Technical change seeks to solve problems for which there are known solutions. The required changes are relatively easy; can be approached, for example, through workshops; and can be the substance of turnkey training situations. Examples of technical change include using rubrics, writing high-quality test questions, designing tiered lessons for differentiation, and utilizing varied questioning techniques.

Adaptive change, on the other hand, seeks to solve problems for which the known solution is not as clear. Such change requires people to think differently about how they go about doing their work, to shift their belief systems to develop new models. Designing classrooms that continue to promote a high level of achievement for all learners while preparing them for their lives as global citizens requires adaptive change.

Two-Tiered Approach

Effecting purposeful change is best addressed through two levels of professional development, which we refer to as "the laser and the light bulb." A light bulb sheds diffused light over a large area, thus illuminating the area, while a laser is concentrated light that has the power to cut and shape objects.

It is important to ensure that all faculty members begin to embrace technical changes regarding teaching for understanding and application, building student engagement, improving executive function skills, and other strategies for addressing the standards. However, technical change is not enough to bring about a significant paradigm shift in teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning process in today's classrooms. Thus, it is equally, if not more, important to engage a small cohort of teachers in concentrated, ongoing, and sustained professional development that will enable them to redesign their classrooms.