



The Innovator's Mindset: Empower Learning, Unleash Talent, and Lead a Culture of Creativity

George Couros

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Kids walk into schools full of wonder and questions. How you, as an educator, respond to students' natural curiosity can help further their own exploration and shape the way they learn today and in the future. The traditional system of education requires students to hold their questions and compliantly stick to the scheduled curriculum. But our job as educators is to provide new and better opportunities for our students. It's time to recognize that compliance doesn't foster innovation, encourage critical thinking, or inspire creativity--and those are the skills our students need to succeed. In *The Innovator's Mindset*, George Couros encourages teachers and administrators to empower their learners to wonder, to explore--and to become forward-thinking leaders. If we want innovative students, we need innovative educators. In other words, innovation begins with you. Ultimately, innovation is not about a skill set: it's about a mindset. The Innovator's Mindset is for you if: You are a superintendent, district administrator, or principal who wants to empower your staff to create a culture of innovation You are a school leader - at any level - and want to help students and educators become their personal best. You are a teacher who wants to create relevant learning experiences and help students develop the skills they need to be successful. You'll be inspired to: Connect with other innovative educators Support teachers and leaders as learners Tap into the strength of your learning community Create ongoing opportunities for innovation Seek more effective methods for measuring progress And, most importantly, embrace change and use it to do something amazing

The Innovator's Mindset: Empower Learning, Unleash Talent, and Lead a Culture of Creativity Details

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Gabrielle says

I felt empowered by the ideas and sharing in this book. I am so glad I stumbled on it (on line during a Google search). I am also now enjoying the blog posts from George Couros. What I wish, though, is that blogs and twitter weren't so heavily touted as the path to sharing, learning, or innovation. I have more than one reason for this, but not insignificant is the implication that teachers have time in their day — or that writing a blog about school (what about their personal passions?) would be how they would choose to spend their time out of the classroom. The only responsible approach, I think, is when teachers write while students write...and that isn't seen as good teaching often enough. Just a thought.

Connie Liu says

An interesting read about pushing progress in the static system of education with an "innovator's mindset". However, I found a lot of the suggestions in this book a bit mundane: blogging as a way to learn, reflect, and share, more teacher education and risk-taking, empowering employee strengths, etc.. These ideas, instead of being innovative, are actually quite derivative from the progress in every other field besides education. These are already common ideas in business, technology, and design, and it almost made me sad that these concepts aren't already implemented in the education space. Couros brings some good examples from his own work as an educator and principal which lend some life to the reading, but I found the value gained vs. time spent reading this book on the low side.

Kristin Ammerman says

This book speaks to me like only have a handful of the hundreds of education books I've read. While innovation in my school and classroom are not new, I found myself tweeting and emailing my colleagues with great ideas that would build on what we are already doing. Mr. Couros answered the questions often posed to those pushing for innovation for all of the learners in schools. I often don't read an education book from cover to cover, rather pick and choose the chapter as menu items. Not this one. Hope to meet the author one day!

Angie says

So many thoughts ... and frustrations. And plans and wishes ... and I admit, "buts."

Beth Honeycutt says

This book has many great ideas and things to think about for today's educators!

Justin Nelson says

Look, this is tough. This is one of those edu books meant to get you fired up about thinking a certain, new way about education. And, honestly, my district and I are already there in this process. (Couros would argue, and does in the final chapter, that you're never "there" and must seek continuous improvement. I would agree.) So, those aspects of this work are valuable to educational professionals still looking for the "why." I'll give that book that. The "how" of this I just...I don't know it was off. I felt that major parts of this were part of an extended commercial for Twitter and hashtags. I thought that there was a lot of "this so totally worked in my district therefore it will for yours" types of statements. I rarely buy in to an edu book that relies on larger blanket statements than more meaty research or explanations. If you want to get fired up about innovating your classrooms with both the "why" and "how" I highly encourage you to go read *Off the Clock*, which I previously reviewed this year.

TJ Wilson says

I saw Couros speak at Ohio State University, and he was super inspiring. I think I came away from that session with six or seven pages of notes, a lot of them ideas unrelated to the speech itself but ideas spurred from the speech.

Education seems to be always described as this slow moving machine. People often poke fun at all government institutions this way. This book is a testament to the learner/teacher model: the best teachers are the best learners. And if we model all classrooms this way, the best learner needs to show how they learn. And we can't learn by doing the same thing all the time. That's a powerful thing to think about and a powerful thing for education. It's needed for the betterment of teachers and the--obviously and most importantly--the betterment of students.

Society would be so wonderful if we all never stopped learning.

Chris Wejr says

Although I have been a huge fan of George's blog for the past 7-8 years, his book brings his thoughts on leadership and innovation in education to a whole new level. Many education books are either too philosophical (so you are left nodding your head and saying "yes... Now what?") or too much like a recipe (so you are left with little room for context or personalization)... This book is an effective balance between big picture, philosophical ideals and stories that share how it can be done. All of the ideas are shared in a way that make you think, "yup... We could do that" and also (more importantly) asking yourself "why aren't we doing that?".

The book truly challenges us to bring out the best in our colleagues and students by keying in on their strengths and challenging and supporting in a way that makes change happen.

This book should not only be on a must read list for any formal leader in education but also for any educator seeking to make change in his/her classroom and school.

Highly recommend!!!

Absam says

Highly recommended for the pioneers in education!

Toni Olivieri-barton says

I saw George speak in 2011 and he was amazing. Excited that he shared his views in this book. Must read for anyone in education.

Molly Dettmann says

This book makes me excited to get into the classroom and do the work. I appreciate the author's thoughts on new technology and how it isn't best practice to throw it in there and call it innovation. Technology should be incorporated in a purposeful way and tinkering and exploring is a must to discover that purpose, not just for learners, but educators as well. Trust students and what they are capable of and watch them reach their full potential.

Kris Patrick says

First half... Blah blah blah. 2nd half - good stuff. He extols the virtue of grit, but I thought grit is now out?

Alanna King says

I've just finished reading **George Couros** ' "The Innovator's Mindset" and I think it's time that we addressed the elephant in the room. The word "mindset" is so five minutes ago. There I said it. What I mean is that putting the words innovator and mindset together in the same phrase is oxymoronic...it's a contradiction in terms, like jumbo shrimp, military intelligence (ouch). Doesn't the very word mindset imply that the mind is formed and finished? George does acknowledge that the precursor to his book was influenced by Carol Dweck's book "Mindset" which anyone who is anyone knows has rocked the business and education worlds leading to great new conversations about grit and resilience. George leaps from here and says that (**spoiler alert**) the innovator's mindset relies on the iterative process of finding problems, networking ideas, observing, creating, being resilient when faced with challenges, and being reflective in order to deepen the process. But I can't help but think about Chris Hadfield, whose ideas I support when he says that we need to Prepare for Failure:

I like the idea of having a calm confidence and being ready to be flexible. The best time for my learning is

when I've created flow, and Hadfield acknowledges this in his book "An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth". But when the flow is really flowing, and a problem arises, I smile at the challenge...like a good question in a crossword puzzle...and my creativity kicks in and I work through it happily. That flow is the culture I aim to create in my library learning commons every day....the messy, random happiness of flow. The only time that I 'discipline' other students is when they interrupt another person's flow and I say out loud: "You're interrupting my learning" and ask them to stop. One of the keys to my daily success is being prepared for anything to happen and I think being ready to happily go with the flow is one of my strengths. It takes a lot of work though...often in the quiet moments outside of the school day, to be this ready for anything. More than optimism or innovation, I think the future of my son's success will be his ability to adapt to new situations. This adaptability may require optimism and innovation but those might not be on his path. It takes more than a mindset and more research is being written on this topic:

- a) Canadian author **Paul Tough** has written this article as precursor to his latest book: *Helping Children Succeed* <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/a...> in which he questions the teachability of resilience and instead suggests we aim to reduce the effect of socio-economic status on learning.
- b) #BIT15Reads author **Jose Vilson** lead me to see how systemic racism is a major factor in the outcome of students. An emerging voice of educators see this quest for teaching grit as an enormous example of cultural bias: <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Digital...>

The best part of Couros' book is when he nails the conditions for a culture of innovation in schools and these 5 points could sustain me for the rest of my teaching career:

Focusing on strengths-based leadership

I could do this every single day with anyone of my relationships...focus on peoples' strengths.

2. Allow learners' needs to drive our decisions

I need to acknowledge that learners are all of us, adults and students, that are working within their own process and my daily goal is to enable that process in any way that I can.

3. Narrowing our focus and engaging in deep learning

I need to reiterate the why and the how as much more than the what in my teaching. The what is often Google-able and I want to learn and teach more deeply than that. I've seen leadership try to make this what so vague and inconsequential that the why and how can be suited to any sort of learning target within this umbrella what that is called a learning target or big idea....I'm not convinced that this is the right answer. If we truly believe in the content of our curriculum, then we need to see the big goal as a continuum (as Chris Hadfield said) and see each one of our content concepts as a direct stepping stone to that idea.

4. Embracing an open culture

Who am I to dictate how someone else should learn? I think what George is getting at is the messiness of trying to implement and measure a truly inquiry-based project that is based on student voice and choice. We need to be open to and confident about capturing and measuring student learning in a variety of modes and mediums. This means that I also have to be really confident about what I want to measure in order to recognize it when I see it in a new form.

5. Create learning experiences for educators that we would love to see in the classroom

Would I like to take my own course? Would I like to be in this atmosphere? Every day the answer needs to be yes.

I added The Innovator's Mindset to the #BIT16Reads book club list as a way to add a leadership voice to the question: How do we create a culture in schools to best integrate technology? and I think this book does so very well. Moving education forward isn't an elephant that we can eat all at once. It's a very complex beast. Creating conditions for innovation, which may or may not include technology, is best for learning.

Sidenote: As a librarian, as a researcher, I would really like an index in George Couros' book. I'd like it to refer to every outside reference George uses all in 1 place, and every big idea that is mentioned. It's one of the first things on my list when I buy non-fiction for my library....if there aren't embedded tools for usability, it could be more useful.

Laurenschnaremahoney says

Love the approach the author promotes for innovation, leadership, and learning. I like that he offers a combination of big ideas to consider as well as concrete steps to implement.

Melissa says

A good reminder to think about how and why you are doing the things you do....and how to encourage those around you to improve as well.
