



KEVIN J FLEMING

TEDX GUIDE

# (RE)DEFINING THE GOAL OF EDUCATION

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"How you define the end goal  
always defines the way we  
play the game."

TEDX MSJC  
x = independently organized TED event

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TEDX SPEAKER

# DR. KEVIN J FLEMING



Catapulting education to transform lives and society. Educator, Keynote Speaker, 4x Author, Video Producer, Founder and CEO, Catapult

TEDx

# SUMMARY

This TEDx talk presents that the current metrics of success in education, such as completion rates and degrees, do not accurately measure learning gains and potential but often lead to underemployment and declining enrollment in higher education. Instead, Dr. Kevin Fleming advocates for a shift in metrics and mindset towards holistic career development and essential skill mastery that aims to align each student's personality, passions, professions, and purpose. This includes recognizing all learning as valuable, blurring the classroom walls, getting rid of the Carnegie unit, and evolving teachers into facilitators of work-based learning. The new goal of education is customized learning to become the best version of oneself. This talk is an invitation extended to like-minded individuals dissatisfied with the status quo to join in the change.

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### REFLECTION

"There is often a gap between the anticipated payoff for reaching a goal and what we actually receive."

## PART 2

### INCOME RAKING

"For generations, higher education has been widely regarded as an on-ramp to higher wages and social mobility."

## PART 3

### METRICS

"The goal defined how I played the game, both as a student and as an educator."

## PART 4


### MINDSET

"It is time to redefine the goal of education."

## PART 5

### RESOURCES

"I invite you to speak with others about how we can change our metrics and our mindset."

A photograph of graduates in black gowns and caps, with many caps thrown into the air against a clear blue sky. The graduates are looking up and cheering. A large red semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing white text.

“There is often a  
gap between the  
anticipated payoff  
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—  
Kevin J Fleming

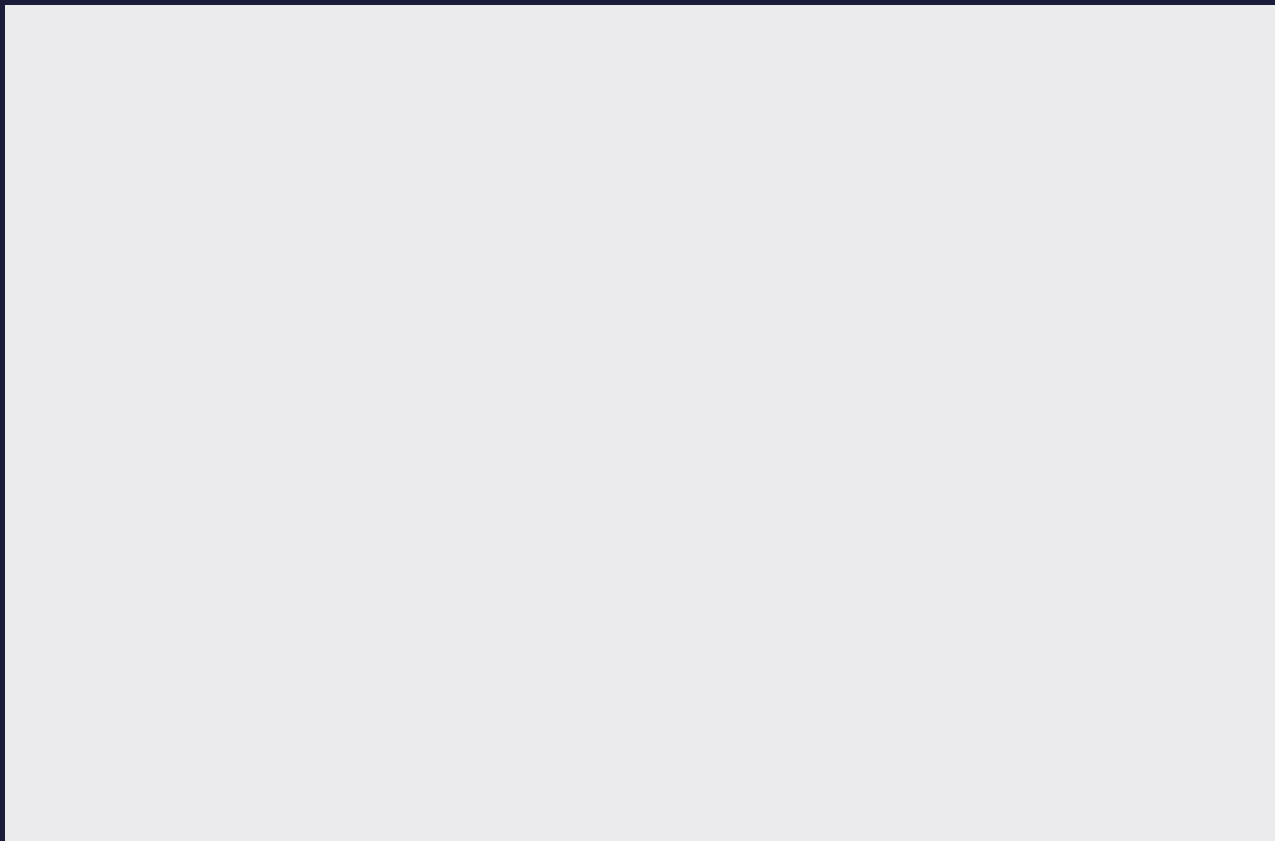
PART 1


# REFLECTION

Think of a time when you did everything by the book. You practiced. You sacrificed. You worked hard. You made it happen and even accomplished your goal. And then, you still “failed.” Perhaps you still found yourself unemployed or underemployed. Maybe you still lost the season, a relationship, or your dream job, drowned in debt, lost the relationship, or declared bankruptcy. You did what you were supposed to do. And the anticipated payoff wasn’t there.

I remember looking up at the wall at my beautifully framed degrees while holding the bills I could not afford to pay in my hands. With crushing Sallie Mae payments, I found myself among the working poor. Underemployed, I was overwhelmed by over \$250,000 in student loan debt. Plus interest. That's not the way it was supposed to be.

**Describe a time when you experienced cognitive dissonance:**





“For generations,  
higher education  
has been widely  
regarded as an on-  
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—  
Kevin J Fleming

GAME

# INCOME RANKING

Let's play a little game. Below is an income-ranking questionnaire. It is based on national data but is similar within individual states. Look over the 10 career titles below. In the column on the left, rank the careers in order of their wage/earning, with number one being the highest income earner and 10 being the lowest.

Rank		Education level
<input type="text"/>	Air Traffic Controllers	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Elevator & Escalator Installers & Repairers	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Dental Hygienists	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Geographer	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Writers and Authors	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Marriage and Family Therapists	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	Counselors, Social Workers, and other Community and Social Service Specialists	<input type="text"/>

Next, go back up and write next to each occupational title what you think is the required education level for each job. Use your best guesstimate. Potential options include Less than high school, high school, some college/no degree, certification, associates degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, or professional degree.



**NO REALLY, GO BACK AND DO IT. RANK THEM ONE THROUGH TEN IN THE FIRST COLUMN.**

How do you feel about your choices? Could you quickly rank them according to how much you think each occupation earns?

## **DON'T READ FURTHER UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED THIS PRACTICE.**

Most people struggle with this exercise because we never really learn about the real wages of different occupations in our local region. We may have preconceived notions about what jobs pay better than others, but our personal experiences often shape our beliefs and not necessarily labor market data.

Thousands of educators and parents have performed this activity over the years. When I ask them to rank the titles, most intelligent folks can't rank these 10 occupations in the correct order. So, don't feel bad if you don't get them right.




# THE CORRECT ANSWERS?

Want to know the correct answers? In reality, these occupations are already listed in the correctly ranked order based on their average annual wage in the United States. If you look closely at these rankings, you will see that the first five careers listed require an associate's degree or less, yet they pay more than the next five careers which require a bachelor's degree or more.

We can no longer show a diagram based on averages while stating that the more education you get the better off you will be financially. This is simply no longer the truth for a majority of learners. At this point, you may be experiencing what researchers call cognitive dissonance. The facts and your perceived reality may be out of alignment. It may be hard to initially accept, but many occupations requiring hands-on skills and industry certifications do in fact command a higher wage than many other jobs which require a 4-year degree. In tomorrow's economy, education counts, but skills count more.

Note: The complete exercise and data answers are available in the book "(Re)Defining the Goal: The True Path to Career Readiness in the 21st Century." Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. May 2020 OEWS Estimates for the United States. Annual median wage (the 50th percentile) indicated. <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.html>.





“The goal defined  
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game, both as a  
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-  
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# METRICS

Over 100 years ago, American education began to calculate learning based upon seat time and the Carnegie unit. Still today, we too often assess learning using predetermined units of time, units, credits, classes, grades, certificates, diplomas, and degrees. We now have over 100-years of old thinking, outdated policies, antiquated agreements, nonsensical funding formulas, and archaic laws in place.

Progressive institutions and innovative systems are already evolving and adapting. Rank where your institution is on each of these continuums:

	Not occurring			Planning to adopt			Scaling in Progress			Crushing it!	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Competency-Based Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hybrid-Flexible Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Based Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registered Apprenticeships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performance Based Funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flipped Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personalized Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gamification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Experiential Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place-Based Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microlearning/Micro-Internships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maker Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credit for Prior Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

An individual's aptitude, ability, prior experience, existing knowledge base, learning style(s), and speed to the task must return to the forefront of educational models. We must move away from the Carnegie Unit and toward a new currency of education based on meaningful skills and accomplishment.

**What matters is what we measure.**

**What we measure is what matters.**

Our primary metrics of concern should no longer be enrollments, retention, and completion rates all organized by time and the Carnegie unit. We should really be far more concerned about tracking more holistic metrics centered on aligning all student's personality, passions, profession and purpose.

**Imagine,** how education would be different if we focused on truly understanding each student's untapped potential and quantified their learning gains in becoming their best self. What would it look like locally, for you and your institution, to prepare all learners for life after graduation, and not just focused on a checklist to graduation.



# MINDSET

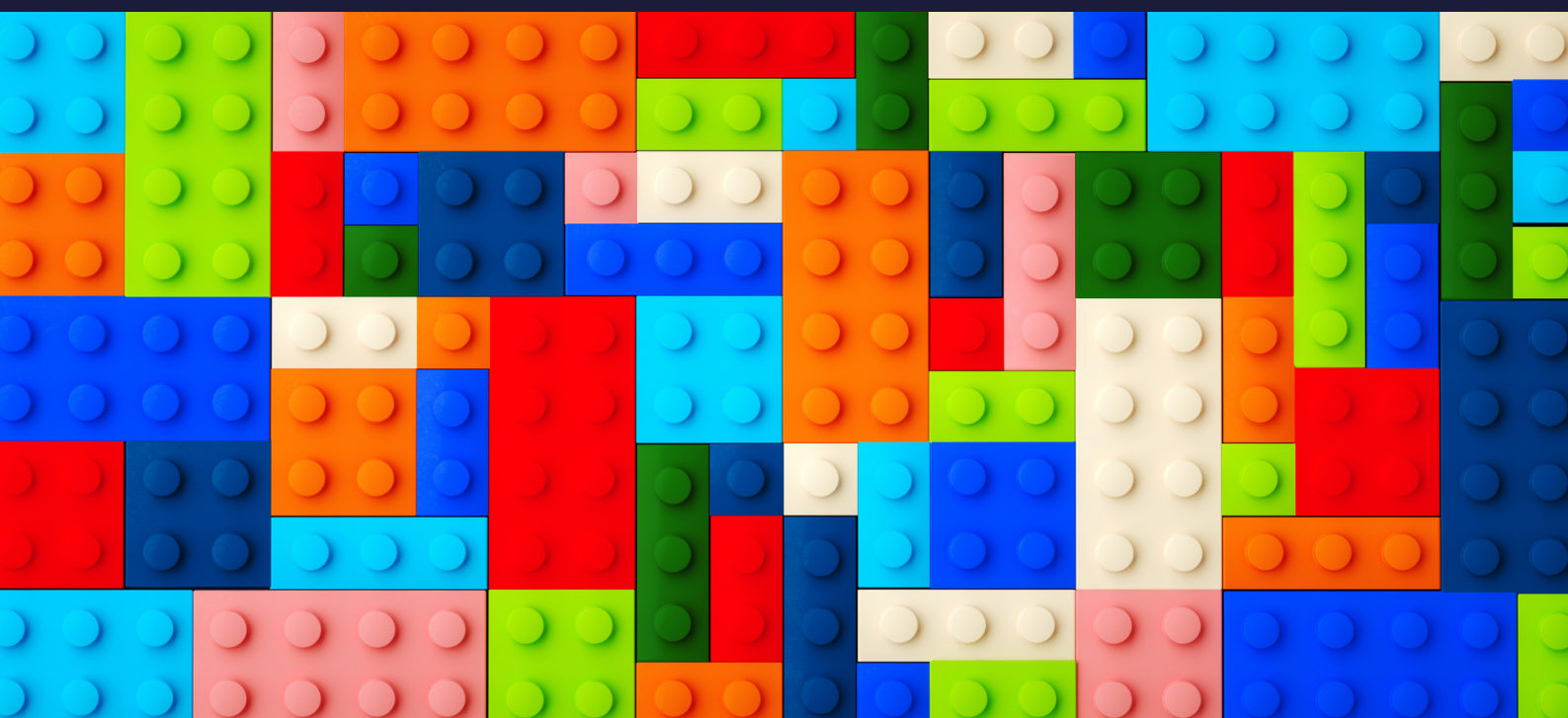
Think about the last time you played with Legos. Did you meticulously and sequentially follow the instructions and complete an exact replica of the picture on the box? Or did you dump out the bucket of pieces, envision something in your mind's eye and uniquely assemble pieces all on your own?

As mentioned at TEDx MSJC, both of these are fun and effective ways to play with Legos. Within either approach, each discrete building block plays an essential role as it is with education.

Some learn best by selecting the box, declaring a major, following the expertly-designed instructions, taking classes in the prerequisite order, and ending up with a certificate or degree - just as promised on the box top. **Their process is sequential, and their outcome is predetermined.**

Others learn throughout their life by picking from the pile. Taking a few courses here and there, attending a conference, a webinar series, gaining work experience, or surgically selecting specific audiobooks or seminars for advancement. **Their process is creative, and their outcome is unique.**

Who does your institution more often cater to? Those replicating the picture on the box, or those picking from the pile?



If you believe, like I do, that every “colorful block of learning” - whether it’s on or off a transcript - has value and should be captured, and counted, then it is time to quantify all learning that takes place in our learner’s life...not just the metrics of convenience.

## OLD MINDSET

Standardized Testing

Lecture-Based Teaching

Teacher-Centered

Time-Based Credits

Content-Focused Curriculum

Grades & Rankings

Course-Based Learning

Education Plans  
(checklist to graduation)

Classroom Confinement

Teacher as Sole Authority

Single-Discipline Focus

Education as an Event

Uniform Instruction

Passive Learning

Fixed Classroom Structure

Formal Education Exclusivity

Textbook-Centric Approach

## NEW MINDSET

Authentic Assessment

Active & Inquiry-Based Learning

Student-Centered

Prior Learning Assessment

Skills-Based Curriculum

Mastery-Based Learning

Competency-Based Education

Skills-Based Education &  
Career Plans

Blended & Hybrid-Flexible Learning

Collaborative Learning Communities

Interdisciplinary Learning

Lifelong Learning

Personalized Learning

Experiential and Work-Based Learning

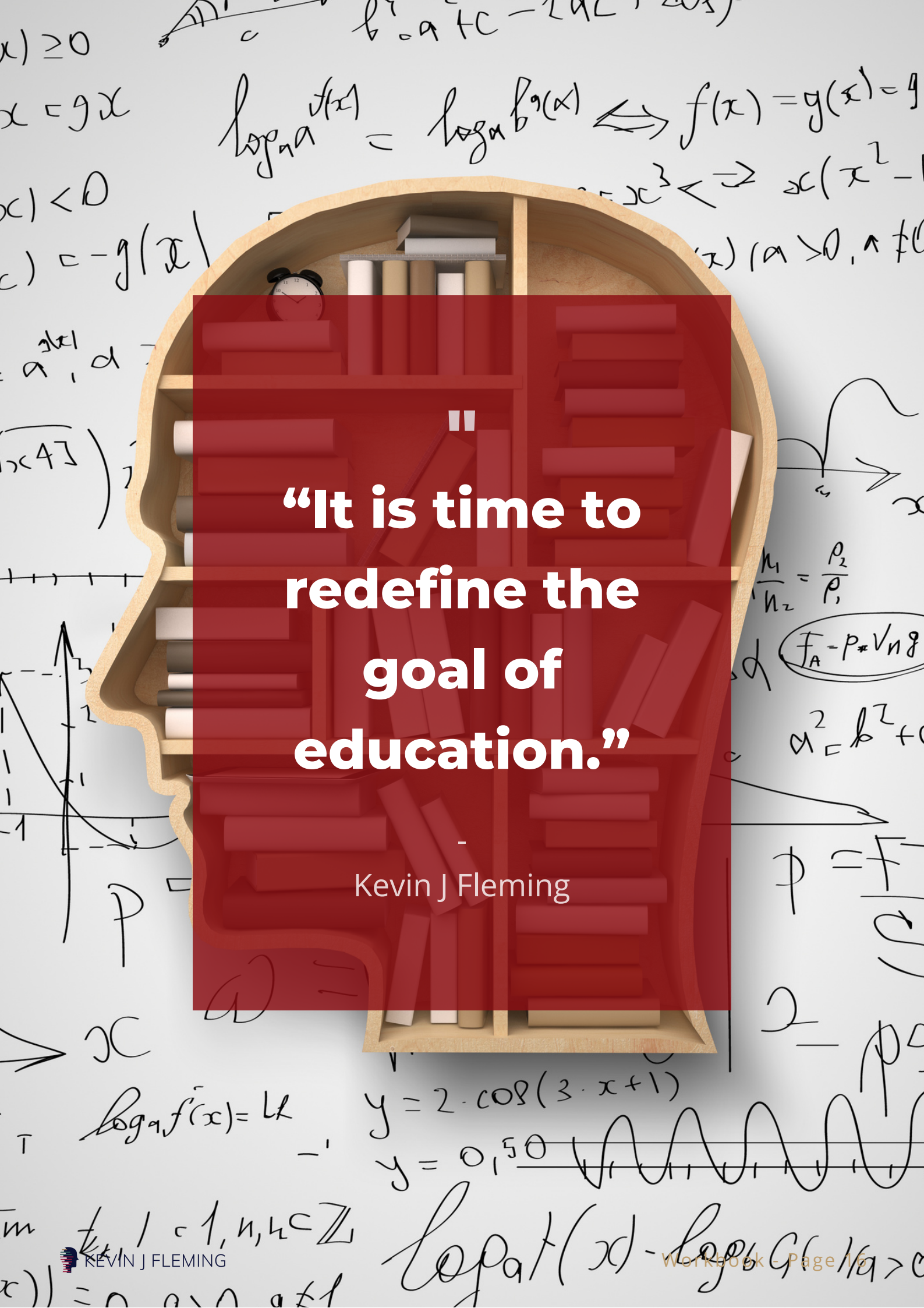
Flexible Learning Spaces

Prior Experiential Learning Recognition

Open Educational Resources (OER)

## There are more...but I’ll stop there.

Imagine a school or system focused exclusively on the left column. They certainly still exist. And they are scratching their heads right now wondering why enrollments are down and community confidence is low. These “new” approaches must not be feared, but embraced, tested, and refined. They are our future. If we start to count all learning as valuable, the goal basically redefines itself far beyond commencement into what truly matters.



“It is time to  
redefine the  
goal of  
education.”

Kevin J Fleming



To those of you dissatisfied with the status quo, I invite you to join me in changing our antiquated metrics and pivoting our mindset towards holistic career development and essential skill mastery for all.

## **THE RESULT WILL BE MOTIVATED, ADAPTABLE, CAREER READY, AND FULFILLED INDIVIDUALS.**



Not much in our environment needs to change. Most times, that swim meet moment just requires a redefining of the goal.

In addition to my talk @ TEDx MSJC and this guide, I have developed additional resources to help equip you and your colleagues in this transformative process:

**SUBSCRIBE TO MY  
NEWSLETTER**

I look forward to collaborating and equipping you with tools, insights, and new video releases to help change the dialog locally and eliminate the skills gap nationally.



# KEVIN J FLEMING

## RESOURCE LIBRARY



### PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

4 Skills & 4 Steps to a Successful Career is a FREE mini-program that can help your students understand the four different skills needed to be successful in the new economy. Each lesson plan also has a supporting video.

[MORE INFO](#)

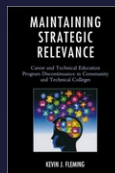
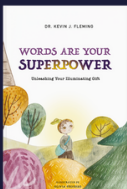


### VIDEO LIBRARY

Check out my video library for educational materials and use them to spark conversations in classrooms, board rooms, and dining rooms. Contact us for any inquiries and easily navigate to relevant sections using the links provided.

[MORE INFO](#)

### BOOKS



In addition to the educational bestseller "ReDefining the Goal," I have multiple books, research papers, and articles to inspire and equip you in this transformational change. Onward, Together!

[MORE INFO](#)

# AUDIENCE TESTIMONIALS



## **DR. NARINEH MAKIJAN, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR**

Dr. Fleming is the most inspiring and transformational leader I know. His books and videos have provided my USC master's in School Counseling students the opportunity to understand how to Re-Define the goal and successfully navigate and shift the paradigm to ensure students have a competitive advantage in the workforce. His message and materials have helped to shape the school counselor profession, as their role is so pivotal to students success.



## **BRYAN REECE, PH.D., COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHANCELLOR**

Dr. Fleming is among the most inspiring and innovative people I've ever worked with. He has a heart for students, builds great teams with his colleagues, finds innovative solutions for complex problems, and does it all with a contagious sense of joy.



## **RAUL RODRIGUEZ, DIRECTOR**

A data-driven message that finally connects with how we can best support our students. Dr. Fleming challenged my perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about what we are doing to prepare students for their career pathways and success in the job market. Whether a student is going to work after graduating from high school or going to a community college or university, ALL students must prepare for their future, and he showed us that there are options students have in making those choices.

[More Testimonials Here](#)



KEVIN J FLEMING

**"IT IS UP TO US TO  
EQUIP OUR STUDENTS'  
POTENTIAL WITH  
KNOWLEDGE AND  
TECHNICAL SKILLS SO  
THEY CAN BECOME  
WHAT THEY ARE  
DESTINED TO BE."**

**IT'S TIME. JOIN ME.**

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