

Models, not blueprints

By Kevin J. Fleming & Sandra Adams

IN THEIR BOOK, A PERFECT MESS, ERIC ABRAHAMSON AND DAVID H. FREEDMAN (2006) TELL THE story of architect Frank Gehry, whose acclaimed designs evoke strong emotions from people who encounter them. Gehry designed a perfect scale model for an unconventional new building at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, the authors described. (Look up the Peter B. Lewis Building!) Contractors admired the model, then asked Gehry's team for the blueprints. There were none. It must be a joke, right?

Gehry's team insisted that the contractors should study the model to derive the measurements they needed. Because

Gehry's design relied more on emotion and impression than on accurate angles or measurements, he felt that a two-dimensional drawing would undermine the delicate impression that came from the three-dimensional model.

Innovation lives outside our comfort zones.

Without blueprints, the contracting teams were required to engage their own creativity throughout the building process to transfer the feel of the model to the finished product. It was much more involved work, but it turned out to be more innovative

too. Contractors and architects worked together to bring the model to life, developing new framing techniques, new material treatment procedures, a new approach to surveying construction sites, and a new assembly method for metal panels. They had been pushed outside their comfort zones and to innovate. Because they were challenged to create the big picture themselves, rather than following a mechanized set of instructions. By giving the contractors more autonomy, not only did the architect achieve his vision, but those around him also reached new depths of knowledge (Abrahamson and Freedman, 2006).

How does this architectural vision connect to education?

Kevin J. Fleming, Ph.D., author, educator and keynote speaker, has a vision for CTE leadership that mirrors Frank Gehry's. Fleming designed Catapult to provide leadership teams with support, resources, and clear direction to realize their own unique school visions. Via research, observation, dialogue, and questioning, Fleming came to realize that, for success: An aim must be clear, and everyone must get on the same page. This is how catapults are launched. Changing the trajectory of an entire school requires involvement from everyone on the team. Visions are realized when leaders engage in crucial conversations with all stakeholders. And when teachers are given opportunities to lead change efforts in professional learning communities.

By giving teachers greater autonomy, leaders will support both individual and collective efficacy gains – resulting in widespread positive cultural shifts.

Teachers need to be given models, not blueprints. And yes, this can be a difficult task for leaders and curriculum developers, because it means giving up some control over the process. But it doesn't mean giving up total control of the work. Frank Gehry wanted the finished building to look and feel exactly like the model, and he didn't compromise on that demand. For success in complex thinking tasks, the person doing the work needs to have ownership of the process.

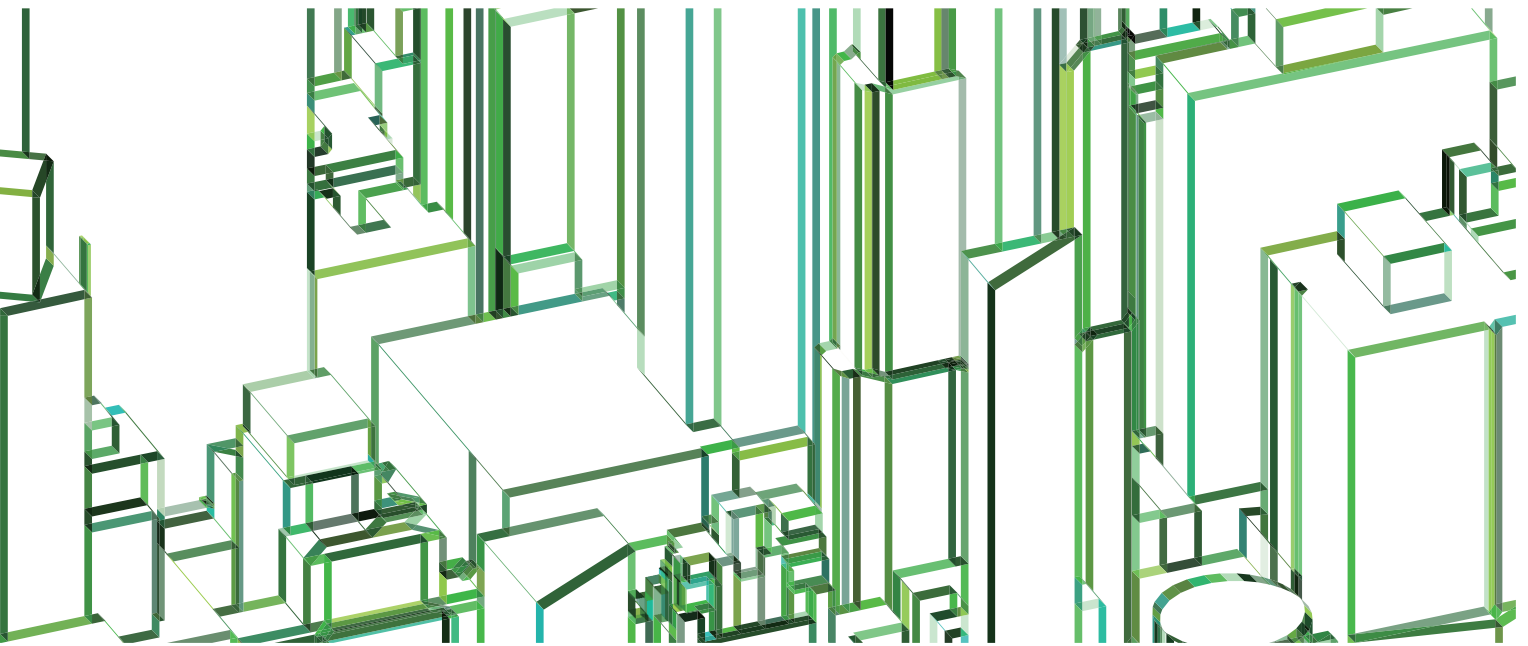
Move forward with intention.

To address the need for greater innovation, while also being cognizant of everyone's time, Kevin J. Fleming designed a program to offer maximum institutional impact. Relevant subject matter experts deliver targeted support available exclusively to every employee in a district or institution. This level of inclusion — board president to support staff — leads to increased engagement, broader buy-in sooner, and ultimately, a paradigm shift. PD becomes a meaningful, shared experience.

A note on time

In addition to pushing for greater innovation in CTE professional development (PD), we are wise to pause and consider time constraints as well. Many teachers simply do not have time for another initiative. They do not have time for more at-home work. Fleming recognizes this point and aims to provide the resources and connections leaders need to catapult their teaching teams to the next level of performance. Adams' (2021) research supports Fleming's contention that travel time, logistics, and access to relevant resources present significant obstacles to PD for CTE educators.

Catapult leverages the best research on leadership and professional development to ensure germane content, captivating orators, meaningful reflection, customized tactical extensions, cohort-based learning, and relevant action planning. Further, marketing collateral provided makes it easy



for districts to communicate intent with their audiences. This model leaves a big impact with fewer logistics to manage. Move your entire institution forward with intention. Common themed keynotes are vetted and calendared in advance, and recordings are made available for educators to view when convenient. Participants extend virtual sessions with work in an interactive Playbook to reflect and plan. Offering a boutique, programmatic focus, each Catapult leadership and professional development series focuses on true systemic change and cultural advancement.

Do you, as a CTE leader (a coach, to follow Fleming’s sports playbook allusion), possess the ability to adapt and change to meet your faculty, staff and students where they are? The Catapult experience demonstrates how we launch onto the right trajectories when we, as teams of educators, align our visions for high-quality CTE. Developing collective momentum involves learning to think Frank Gehry and Kevin J. Fleming and others who’ve broken through old models to innovate.

Collective momentum also involves understanding that, when the huddle snaps, everyone moves into action.

Everyone plays a vital role on the team. But to achieve success as a team, the practice of planning, communicating and collaborating as a team must be well established. ■

Kevin J. Fleming, Ph.D., is a CTE educator, keynote speaker, founder & CEO of Catapult, and an author of three books. He currently works as vice president of planning and development at Norco College in southern California. Further, Fleming has produced multiple, viral animation videos including “Success in the New Economy.”

Sandra Adams, Ph.D., is a CTE administrator, keynote speaker, an author of four books, and the founder of CTE Classrooms, LLC. She has been a frequent contributor to *Techniques* and supports high-quality instruction across all CTE program areas. Adams demonstrates a passion for teacher-led change and the need for shared leadership models.

REFERENCES

Abrahamson, E. and Freedman, D. H. (2006) *A perfect mess: The hidden benefits of disorder*. New York, Little, Brown and Company.

Adams, S. (2021). *PLC in CTE: The power of professional learning communities to create thriving cultures of achievement within career and technical education*.

ACTE's CareerTech
VISION 2022

Did you know... ?
Kevin J. Fleming was inspired to launch Catapult after engaging in conversations with ACTE's Postsecondary, Adult and Career Education (PACE) Division. Attend VISION 2022 to learn more about ACTE, PACE and Catapult.

careertechvision.com

ACTE
Association for Career and Technical Education