



MARCH 2021

BUILDING A CULTURE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

**IT STARTS WITH YOU, BUT IS
NEVER ABOUT YOU**

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WE ARE A COMMUNITY

These Circles have been a place of community and belonging that we have the opportunity and responsibility to convene amidst a time when there is so little convening.

WE ENGAGE PEOPLE

In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brene Brown writes that “True Belonging” is a belonging that leaves room for people to feel free to express their differences. Belonging is different than fitting in. And trust is the key ingredient to belonging.

Community Belonging is our Collective Job

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“Pay attention in your community to the folks that might not feel like they belong for any number of reasons - you can't always spot them right away, many of them have gotten good at faking or disengaging after years of disempowerment. It's not your job alone to fix the systems of racism, sexism, ageism and ableism but that doesn't mean you are off the hook. As we celebrate Black History month, let's remember BIPOC people don't need you to go around saying you will give them a voice in the conversation- they already have a voice. They need you to see the real work of community belonging as a collective job and they need you to roll up your sleeves and get to work. Your work might look different than mine. That's okay! We can wave to each other from our respected lanes of influence.”

”

-Cheryl Dorsey
CEO of Echoing Green

A Community of Entrepreneurs

*Authored by
Impact.Ed Team*

Social Entrepreneurship education starts with a deep sense of community belonging. Brene Brown defines belonging as “being part of something bigger but also having the courage to stand alone, and to belong to yourself above all else.”

When we conceived the idea of Impact Circles, we knew there would be value in bringing together social entrepreneurship educators and leaders. We thought the Circles would be a way to surface the learning that each member has experienced through their own unique journeys, and that by bringing together each new collection of people we would connect people and ideas to scale social entrepreneurship work across even more schools and communities. And that is definitely happening. But something else is happening in ways that I am not sure our team fully comprehended.

It's becoming clear how much leaders in this work are craving a space to be both introspective and proactive. We've found that our circles have allowed space to satiate that craving.

The Circles provide just enough scaffolding and facilitation for members to engage in that personal work and connect as a community. It has been liberating to discuss problems of practice openly with one another in community partnership with those that share similar values.

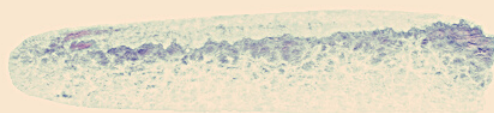
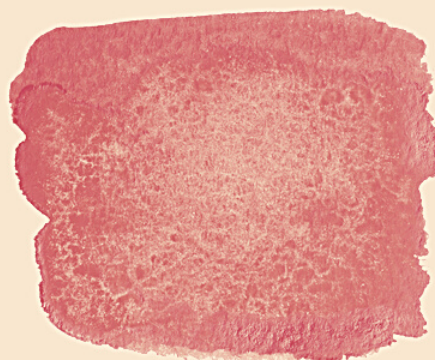
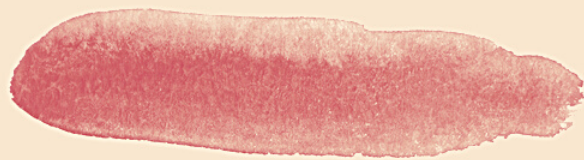
We've always been proponents of creating and cultivating community -- it's the foundation of our organization. But the micro-communities that unfold during each six week Circle remind us of how important it is to provide intimate and safe spaces for leaders to reflect on their own personal journeys as cathartic experiences for themselves and as valuable learning for those enrolled as their peers.

Our aspirations are high, no doubt, but our hope is that each Impact Circle is about belonging and not fitting in.

We know we will once again find solace and joy in those other places where we feel we belong, too. But for right now, those spaces are limited. We are so grateful that the six week Circles continue to be a space where individual growth and introspection collides with community. It's a place of belonging when disconnection has unfortunately become somewhat of a norm.

Belonging is different than fitting in. And trust is the key ingredient to belonging.

We have all experienced what disconnection and grief and community heartbreak feels like recently. It is universal. It is deeply personal. It will require a reckoning with privilege, power, and opportunity, and what excites us most about this moment in education is that it is ripe for entrepreneurial leadership. In the pages that follow you will find the stories of a few leaders who are on their own personal journeys in that work.



A Collaborative Paper

We believe deeply that actively belonging to our communities (professional and personal) will reignite in us what has been lost this past year and reconnect us to our primal entrepreneurial tendencies for connection, community and collaboration

The articles in this piece have been written by participants of our most recent Impact Circle. Over the course of six weeks, we engaged in meaningful learning about social entrepreneurship education and social entrepreneurial leadership. This paper is the culmination of the work together. We hope you share your voice here one day as a member of an upcoming [Impact Circle](#). 



A Note to My Fellow Teachers: You are Doing Enough

*Authored by
James Campbell*

The 2020-2021 school year has not been a typical year. For many it has led to questioning the value of in-person education versus virtual education. This year has burned some teachers out to the point where they are leaving the profession. Then there are some who have jumped into super hero mode, creating plexiglass shielding desks and navigating between both the room and the Zoom in order to reach all learners. Questions have arisen about the validity of learning loss and the gaps in learning as families and instructional institutions adjust to learning during Covid-19.

The biggest question, though, amongst most educators is the lingering question: "am I doing enough to impact and inspire students' lives long term?"

Social Entrepreneurship could be an answer to the question of "am I doing enough." So often educators take on the role of superhero and implicitly give students the false sense that they need to be superheroes, too. But that's not at all fair. In fact, buying into the superhero narrative is actually detrimental. Instead, what might happen if we explicitly taught students to move outside themselves and be present in their communities?

Instead of a hero mindset, **social entrepreneurs take a partnership stance. I am designing *with this community* and not for this community.**

What social entrepreneurship does is ask them to start with Empathy. Being empathic allows students to understand that to serve a community means you are part of the community.

It helps them adapt to changes in the environment, the economy and new information in ways that most disciplines ignore. These are all valuable skills that students need to help them not only become successful entrepreneurs, but also lifelong learners and productive citizens.

There is a misconception that people are afraid of change, but it's not that. It's that people are afraid of *being changed*. To solve some of the world's most pressing problems requires that we make change. If we partner with the community and with our students in some of the most challenging times, we'd have greater impact.

Social entrepreneurs take a partnership stance: *I am designing with this community and not for this community.*

School systems in many ways are broken and the past year, the brokenness has been exposed. If educators take on the role of Social Entrepreneurs and teach those skills explicitly to students, then we can stop asking the question "am I doing enough to impact and inspire students' lives long term," and instead ask "what can I give up and do less of, so that I can spend more time empowering my students to engage meaningfully with our community"?





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*We realize the importance
of our voices only when we
are silenced.*

”

-Malala Yousafzai

Liberating Structures

Authored by Clara Ngo

Often, I am muted by others, but this time, I chose to mute myself and I was liberated.

During our Impact Circles, our goal is to support each other and give feedback to the work that we do. In this one particular meeting, Meghan introduced us to the Troika protocol by Liberating Structures. The protocol is meant to be done in triads. Throughout the process, each person acts as a "client" and presents a problem while the other two act as consultants. The purpose of the protocol is to provide clear structure and rules around who can talk when, so that each person feels heard around a problem of practice.

The second time we used the Troika protocol, it was literally liberating.

The issue I brought up was this: "My school's focus on DEI during Black History Month is resulting in Black/White conversations. As an Asian-American, where do they fall, especially for students but also for the adults?"

This issue is important to me, especially for identity development for the Asian American students at our school. If their identity isn't included in the narrative, they feel invisible. I feel invisible.

For a long time, I was hesitant to bring up my personal experience and raise this issue. I felt guilty because I want to stand in solidarity with the Black community and the injustices they are facing and it is Black History month.





I did not want to diminish their experience with bringing my own in, especially when society often tells Asian Americans, “Your issues aren’t so bad in the scheme of things.” “You’re a model minority.” “You are pretty much white.” When you hear this enough, you believe it and will not speak up. However, the issue needed to be addressed.

Given the Liberating Structure, I felt the Impact Circle team giving me this message: “We are here to listen to you. We will focus on your issue.” As I sat with my camera off and muted, I felt that the others were beginning to understand and even feel my pain. It was the clearest form of empathy. They talked about solutions as if they were me.

I felt both liberated and heard for the first time in a long time.

They didn’t diminish my experience or challenge them while comparing them to others.

Being muted, I couldn’t intervene and share what I was thinking. I was nodding and agreeing with them in my space as they spoke, but they couldn’t see me. I felt both liberated and heard for the first time in a long time.

As I was aware of taking up space from the Black community, I wanted to especially check in with Clyde, a Black American, who was one of the co-leaders in the group. He shared that it was “good to have a conversation with someone that allowed me to say things that are potentially ignorant or hurtful and be protected by the structure, so that I can grow in my understanding of self and in my empathy for others.” Again, I felt heard.

We owe it to the future generations we teach and who are watching our every move, to diversify the Social Entrepreneurship field and to continue to push each other to provide liberating structures for all people and voices.

How does this relate to social entrepreneurship, you may ask?

Oftentimes, when we think entrepreneurs, we think white males, but the space is much larger than that.

The field is currently being redefined and needs to include all voices across different genders, cultures, race, religions, ages, abilities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and mindsets. Liberating Structures offers 33 different structures for facilitating conversations. It allows for more inclusion, participation, purpose, and efficiency. We owe it to the future generations we teach and who are watching our every move, to diversify the Social Entrepreneurship field and to continue to push each other to provide liberating structures for all voices.



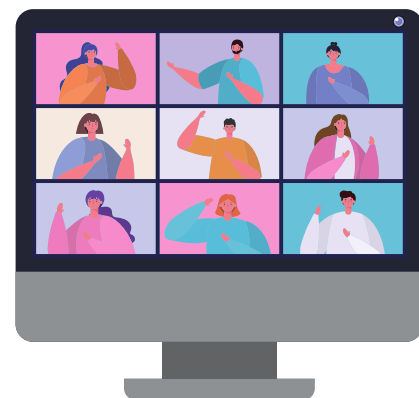
Resource Highlight: Liberating Structures



Often, traditional conversations, interviews, surveys, meetings, or presentations can be bias or exclusive. Try a Liberating Structure during your next meeting, you may be surprised with what opportunity you've been missing this whole time.

Troika Consulting Online

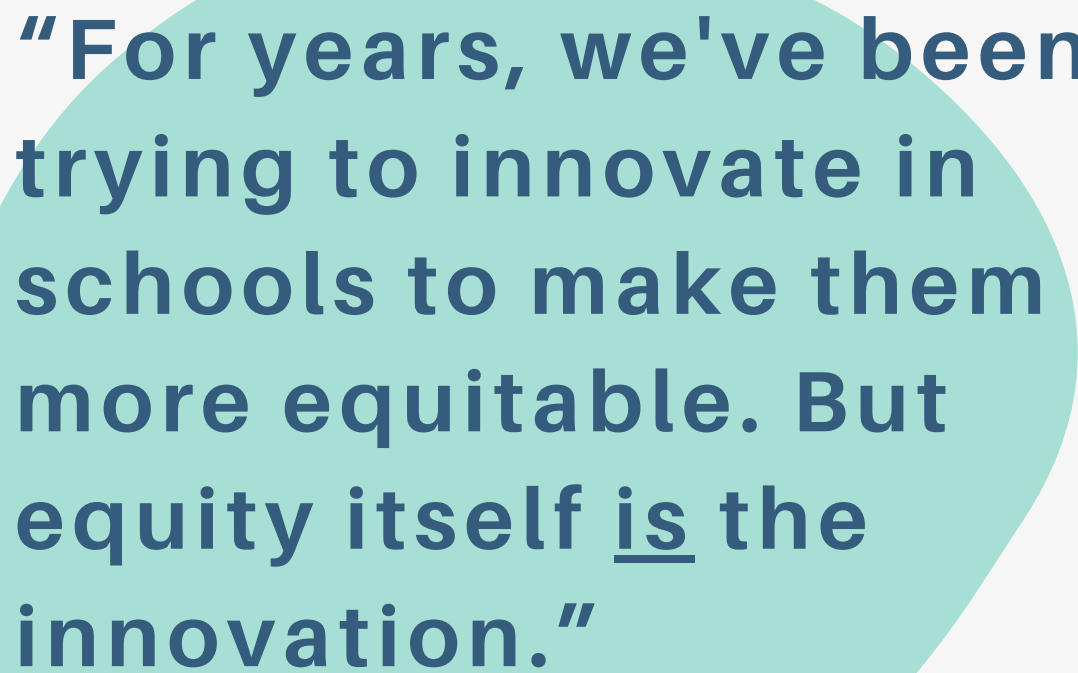
1. The first client shares his or her question (1-2 min)
2. The two consultants ask the client clarifying questions (1-2 min)
3. The client switches his/her/their video off and mutes themselves. The consultants generate ideas, suggestions, coaching and advice (4-5 min)
4. The client switches the video/mic back on and shares the most valuable lessons and learnings from the experience (1-2 min)
5. Repeat steps 1-4 for each additional participant.



Liberating Structures offers **33 different structures for facilitating conversations**. It allows for more inclusion, participation, purpose, and efficiency. Here are some to try out in your community:

- To better understand your client try **Simple Ethnography**
- To better align your team and your goals/mission, try **Nine Whys**
- Sort Challenges into Simple, Complicated, Complex, and Chaotic Domains with the **Agreement Certainty Matrix**





“For years, we've been trying to innovate in schools to make them more equitable. But equity itself is the innovation.”

-Caroline Hill, Founder of 228 Accelerator

Essential Education

Authored by Jim McCue

How do we bridge the contagious, intoxicating conversations happening in education reform circles with the practical, bureaucratic, compromising, and political world of school systems on the local and state level?

“What we need is an unschooling, moving past the factory-style education model that was so characteristic of education before COVID-19...”

“What if we were to personalize education in such a way that students were the ones leading the discussion? Not such a standardized approach, but one that felt more authentic. Students guide their learning, and as a result, the teacher acts less as a lecturer and more as a facilitator!”

Frankly, there is no shortage of brilliant innovators, but there is difficulty in scale, sustainability, and willingness for risk.

Of course, as COVID-19 has demonstrated, we need to be agile and not prescriptive.

It's not just extending the invite to more folks to attend “the party,” but more collectively defining where the party will take place, what will be served, what activities will be offered, and what music will be played.

We should still ask the question of, “What outcomes do we want for students as a result of a reformed education system?,” but who is included in writing, editing, revising, and sharing that question is paramount.



Featured Writers

Meet the writers behind this work



James Campbell is an innovative and empathic educator who believes the role of education is to serve students so they can serve the world. He provides workshops and learning experiences at schools, at conferences, and virtually. At the time of publication, James served as Director of Innovative Programs and Strategic Initiatives at Atlanta Girls' School.



Born and raised in Alhambra, CA, **Clara Ngo** attended UCSB and graduated with a BA in Math and Business Economics, and a Masters in Education. She taught in international schools in Vietnam for 7 years, as a math and design teacher for 6th-12th grade. Clara values seeing things from multiple perspectives and helping her students do the same. In the classroom, she loves seeing students' brains develop and witnessing the amazing things kids can do and think of. In her free time, she enjoys playing basketball, and she can count to 99 with her fingers.



Jim McCue sees education as a pursuit and experience that lives all around us — one that requires trusted relationships, critical consciousness in service to and with others, and personalized, asset-based expression of self.

Jim received his B.S. in finance and B.A. in economics from Saint Joseph's University, as well as a master of public administration from the Evans School of Public Policy & Governance. In his free time, he enjoys running the trails of the Wissahickon, cooking tasty vegetarian meals, and spending time with his family.

About Impact Circles

Impact Circles are small groups of social entrepreneurship educators and social impact leaders who believe that this work is hard and requires a networked approach. The ultimate goal is to create a community, build creative confidence, and tease out the great work that is happening across our country.

The magic, or secret sauce, of this work is that not only do we meet, learn with and from one another, but we also commit to producing content that reflects our growth and learning for others to learn from as well. And here is the manifestation of our individual and collective learning. We hope you enjoy!

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to expand the community of *social entrepreneurship educators* in an effort to amplify the bright spots of what is working well, and use the collective genius to do even better, more meaningful work to impact our individual communities of learners. It is just as much about radical innovation as it is about radical introspection.

Join Our Community

Plants need the soil, wind, rain, and sun to grow. They need things we can't even see, like fungi and other microorganisms.

So too, we need the community around us, the universe of people who lift us up and who nurture us in order to thrive and grow. In this type of community, we are part of a system, which means we tend to all its parts.

CLICK THE LINK
BELOW



JOIN US

IMPACT CIRCLES
HOSTED VIRTUALLY BY THE
IMPACT.ED TEAM

2021 | WWW.SOCENT.EDUCATION





FAQs on Impact Circles

Who can join an Impact Circle?

Teachers, administrators, social entrepreneurs, community members...your role does not matter as much as your purpose. We aim to gather people who are can see themselves in our vision: *We envision a world that is equitable, just, and generative. We believe that the mindsets and skillsets of social entrepreneurship are critical to achieving this vision, and that a supportive community is key to growing the individuals that contribute to collective impact.*

When do Impact Circles meet?

We meet virtually for one hour per week synchronously via Zoom. Additionally, our team provides asynchronous discussion prompts and exercises meant to extend the learning.

What should I expect during each session?

We use discussion protocols, examples and resources from our own individual practices and online collaborative tools such as Slack, Mural and Flipgrid to create our learning environment. Our goal is to facilitate in a way that is both engaging and inviting.

What else should I know?

Over time, the group becomes a close knit community that regularly shares resources and collaborates on projects. The connections forged and ideas shared are what fuel the Impact Circles.

Impact.Ed Leadership

THE EDITORS, PROJECT MANAGERS AND THOSE THAT STOKED THE IMAGINATIONS OF THE WHOLE TEAM



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HILLBROOK SCHOOL



MIKI TOMITA
FOUNDER AND CEO OF
EDUCATION INCUBATOR



Thank you for reading!

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IMPACT PAPER #3

Designed to generate systemic change by amplifying the voices of changemakers and connecting those who are working to create equitable communities