PLACES for Learning

Beyond Schools and Classrooms: A New Architecture for Human Learning in the HI + AI Era

Concept Paper | Version 1.2 | 5 November 2026

A working design for discussion, collaboration, prototyping, and continuous improvement

The proposition

What would we create for children if the conventional school system did not already exist and human intelligence could now work alongside artificial intelligence? PLACES for Learning proposes a new answer: Personalized Learning and Community Ecosystems that replace conventional school structures with Developmental PLACES connecting learners, families, PowerMakers, communities, and HI + AI. The purpose is to help every learner develop, demonstrate, apply, and continuously strengthen Learning Powers.

This paper is a conceptual design, not a claim that PLACES has already demonstrated superior outcomes. It sets out a system architecture that can guide prototypes, invite criticism, and accumulate evidence. Its ambition is analogous in spirit -- not technical detail -- to early visions of networked computing: describe the human possibility and organizing principles before every necessary tool and institution exists.

1 | The problem: adding new tools to an inherited system

Much of schooling is still organized around age groups, grade levels, classrooms, subjects, courses, schedules, and time-based progression. Excellent educators can achieve much within these structures. Yet too many children move through the early years without secure foundational capabilities, and adding AI tutors, dashboards, or automated lessons to existing structures does not necessarily change that result. PLACES begins with a demanding learner proficiency commitment: by approximately age nine, every learner demonstrates developmentally appropriate proficiency in the foundational Learning Powers, which are then advanced, connected, applied, and continuously strengthened throughout the Developmental PLACES. This is a design commitment to be tested and earned through evidence -- not a claim of results already achieved.

The question is therefore not simply how AI can make schools more efficient. It is whether a different learning ecosystem can reliably establish foundational proficiency early and make human development more personalized, authentic, connected, accountable, and affordable thereafter. PLACES is a proposed system-level innovation, not an incremental technology integration initiative.

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

2 | The opportunity: learning native to HI + AI

PLACES joins human judgment, relationships, ethics, creativity, and community with AI-enabled personalization, access to knowledge, feedback, pattern discovery, and adaptive support. AI is neither a replacement for human relationships nor a guarantee of better learning. It is a potential partner whose contributions must be designed, supervised, evaluated, and improved.

In this ecosystem, a learner can pursue a meaningful challenge, receive timely feedback, demonstrate growing independence, and carry evidence of development into the next experience. A PowerMaker can respond to the same evidence, redesign conditions, and improve professional practice while work is underway. The system is designed to learn about learning.

3 | The solution: three Developmental PLACES

PLACES organizes human development through three progressively different settings. The age bands describe the intended developmental focus; demonstrated capability, individual needs, and appropriate supports remain central to decisions about learning experiences.

Core Learning Spirals | approximately ages 4–9

Homelike, developmentally responsive PLACES in which children build and demonstrate proficiency in foundational Learning Powers through growth, practice, play, relationships, and guided exploration. By approximately age nine, every learner is expected to demonstrate developmentally appropriate proficiency, with individualized time and supports where needed. The spiral is an architectural and developmental metaphor for environments that expand with the learner.

Exploratory Learning Studios | approximately ages 9–14

PLACES where youth strengthen, connect, and extend Learning Powers through inquiry, interdisciplinary challenges, making, collaboration, and exploration of emerging interests.

Real-World Learning Spaces | approximately ages 14–18

PLACES where adolescents apply Learning Powers through authentic work, service, leadership, civic participation, and community partnerships. Real performance and responsibility increasingly shape learning.

These are not renamed elementary, middle, and high schools. They are intended to have different designs, experiences, partnerships, and ways of demonstrating development.

4 | The human purpose: ten Learning Powers

Learning Powers are the real things learners can do, demonstrate, apply, and continuously strengthen to succeed in life: Read, Write, Math, Dialogue, Illustrate, Explore, Engage, Relate, Play, and Pray. Together they encompass communication, reasoning, inquiry, visual expression, civic contribution, relationships, purposeful play, and spiritual or reflective meaning-making. PLACES commits to

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

foundational proficiency by approximately age nine, followed by increasing sophistication, independence, and authentic application through the Exploratory Learning Studios and Real-World Learning Spaces.

PLACES treats these as growing capabilities, not boxes checked once at the end of a course. Learners make proficiency, growth, application, and independence visible through authentic performances and other evidence. The meaning and implementation of Pray will require thoughtful, transparent options that respect family beliefs and applicable legal requirements.

5 | The people: learners, families, communities, and PowerMakers

PowerMakers are learning professionals who: 1) design, 2) model, 3) coach, 4) adapt, and 5) cultivate experiences that help every learner develop and strengthen Learning Powers. These five integrated Functions describe more than instruction: they include creating conditions, demonstrating performance, providing human feedback, changing approaches in response to evidence, and building a culture in which learners flourish.

Families and community partners are not peripheral audiences. They contribute knowledge of learners, authentic settings, relationships, expertise, feedback, and opportunities for performance. The learner remains an active participant with growing agency rather than a passive recipient of delivered content.

6 | Design and Flow: how learning comes alive

PowerMakers create Learning Layouts: living designs that organize Learning Powers, authentic challenges, experiences, resources, HI + AI supports, and evidence. These designs change as learning unfolds. Rather than adding AI tools to a classroom, PLACES envisions intelligence woven into the setting, activities, relationships, and decisions.

A Learning Field is a persistent, active HI + AI network of people, intelligence, resources, relationships, and evidence that brings Learning Layouts to life across Developmental PLACES. It senses observable learning signals, responds with timely support, and adapts experiences over time. With appropriate consent and safeguards, it examines how learners reason, revise, seek help, and gain independence -- not merely their final products. It does not claim to read minds: inferences about thinking are tentative and open to human review.

The human-AI partnership must be visible in action. A PowerMaker notices motivation, builds trust, interprets context, and makes ethical judgments; embedded AI can track patterns across many interactions, generate timely variations, and surface emerging needs that a person alone might miss. Together they make possible responses neither could reliably provide alone. Within this Field, PowerFlow moves ***dynamically*** through *Engage, Discover, Practice, Coach, Create, Demonstrate/ Reflect, and Flow Forward* -- not as a compulsory sequence.

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

7 | A second Flow: PowerMaker Learning

PLACES requires a new approach to professional preparation and continuous learning. Rather than relying principally on periodic workshops or professional-development days disconnected from learner work, PowerMakers develop their five Functions through their own Learning Layouts, Learning Fields, and PowerMaker Flow, supported by authentic practice, HI + AI coaching, peer collaboration, reflection, and evidence.

PowerMaker Proficiency is demonstrated capability to apply the five Functions effectively across Learning Powers and Developmental PLACES, supported by evidence of practice and learner growth. Initial onboarding becomes an entry into a continuing professional learning system, rather than a terminal course sequence.

A central inquiry follows: Which PowerMaker HI + AI flow practices are associated with measurable improvements in particular Learning Powers, for which learners, and under what conditions? PLACES distinguishes useful patterns from proven causal effects by testing promising practices rigorously rather than assuming correlations establish impact.

8 | Accountability: evidence for learners, settings, and families

Three complementary mechanisms make the ecosystem accountable. Learning Showcase Portfolios document and certify learner proficiency, growth, and authentic application of the ten Learning Powers. Representative Learner Sampling Assessments evaluate how effectively each Developmental PLACE develops those Powers, rather than treating every child's portfolio as sufficient evidence of setting quality. Continuous Customer Quality Improvement Systems capture and improve the experiences, relationships, growth, and value that learners and families care about.

These mechanisms answer different questions: What can this learner do? How effective is this PLACE? What is the experience and value for families? Privacy, safety, fairness, valid assessment, transparent criteria, and independent scrutiny must be built into implementation rather than added later.

9 | KAIZEN: the ecosystem improves itself

PLACES adopts Kaizen as a discipline of continuous challenge and improvement. Evidence and feedback inform changes in learner PowerFlow, PowerMaker practice, Learning Layouts, Learning Fields, and Developmental PLACES. Each improvement becomes the next benchmark to examine and surpass.

This is the key systems relationship: learner evidence informs PowerMaker learning; stronger PowerMaker practice changes Learning Layouts and experiences; new evidence shows what changed; accountability examines results and value; Kaizen drives the next revision. Neither learners nor the ecosystem are ever considered finished.

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

10 | From concept to evidence

The proposed architecture needs proof through practical implementation. An initial phase will define developmental performances and transparent proficiency criteria for selected foundational Learning Powers, build a small number of Learning Layouts and safe HI + AI workflows, prepare PowerMakers, and prototype a Core Learning Spiral with willing families and community partners. The larger proficiency-by-nine commitment will require longitudinal evidence and refinement before it can be substantiated.

A subsequent phase will examine learner growth and foundational proficiency, the usability of the Learning Field, PowerMaker practice, family experience, operating cost, access, safety, and the reliability of portfolio judgments. Comparative and longitudinal evaluation will follow as feasible. Findings will be reported with limitations and used to revise the model -- not simply to market it.

PLACES also faces open design questions: funding and affordability; governance and regulation; facilities; AI safety and privacy; inclusive provision for learners with disabilities; family choice; age-appropriate autonomy; and fair treatment of diverse religious and nonreligious families. These are substantive design constraints and opportunities for partners, not details already solved.

11 | An invitation to build and challenge PLACES

PLACES invites parents, learners, prospective PowerMakers, learning scientists, architects, AI developers, community organizations, microschool innovators, public leaders, and investors to help test a new architecture for learning. Partners can contribute developmental expertise, authentic settings, technology, capital, implementation capacity, and critical feedback.

The immediate goal is not to declare the end of schools. It is to create, evaluate, and improve a credible innovation that can eventually earn the confidence of families through demonstrated results. PLACES itself must live by the principle it proposes: every working design is a starting point for a better one.

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

Appendix A | One learner experience: a community health challenge

Illustrative scenario -- not an observed or validated PLACES implementation.

Setting: a Core Learning Spiral, approximately age eight. **Learning Powers:** Math, Read, Write, Dialogue, Illustrate, Explore, and Relate. **Authentic challenge:** help a neighborhood health center create a child-friendly guide for staying hydrated during hot weather. A PowerMaker works with a small group while each learner follows a personalized path. The experience contributes evidence toward the commitment that every learner demonstrates foundational proficiency by approximately age nine; it does not, by itself, establish proficiency in all ten Powers.

Design the Learning Layout

The PowerMaker identifies performances: read information, compare quantities, explain a recommendation, create a visual, and discuss choices respectfully. The Layout includes measuring containers, weather data, family perspectives, a rubric, and embedded AI supports. The PowerMaker establishes what evidence of reasoning and independence can be observed, with family-informed privacy boundaries.

Activate the Learning Field and PowerFlow

A community visitor poses the challenge. As learners investigate hydration, the embedded Field notices one child repeatedly changing a quantity estimate after seeing a diagram, while another explains quantities accurately aloud but struggles to record them. These are patterns in observable work and dialogue, not direct access to thought. AI offers different visual or verbal prompts and flags the patterns; the PowerMaker listens, recognizes confidence and context, and chooses hands-on modeling. Learners test ideas, make illustrated guides, explain their reasoning, and revise. Human and AI contributions are visible within the same experience -- not separate tool sessions.

Capture learner evidence

The portfolio includes the guide, an audio explanation, a measurement demonstration, learner reflection, and selected evidence of revisions and help-seeking. The learner and PowerMaker review how reasoning developed, distinguishing independent performance from prompted work. Families see understandable evidence of progress toward age-nine foundational proficiency, without turning every interaction into surveillance.

Generate PowerMaker Learning from the same work

Across similar Layouts, privacy-protected patterns may suggest that learners recall hydration advice but struggle to justify quantities. The Field can propose a targeted PowerMaker Learning Layout, surface examples of successful modeling, and compare subsequent evidence. Human colleagues test interpretations and decide what to change. Such patterns generate hypotheses, not proof that any particular practice caused improvement.

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved

Accountability and Kaizen

The portfolio documents growth; representative sampling evaluates the PLACE; families report value and experience. The PowerMaker and team refine both the learner Layout and the Field's prompts, safeguards, and interpretations. The next version becomes a new benchmark. Learner PowerFlow and PowerMaker Flow advance together, with the Learning Field itself learning from carefully evaluated evidence.

Appendix B | Architecture at a glance

ECOSYSTEM — PLACES for Learning

DEVELOPMENTAL PLACES — Spirals, Studios, Spaces

PEOPLE — Learners, PowerMakers, Families, Communities

GROWTH — Learning Powers and Evidence

DESIGN — Learning Layouts

FLOW — Learning Fields and PowerFlow

POWERMAKER LEARNING — Functions, Layouts, Field, Flow, Proficiency, Evidence

ACCOUNTABILITY — Portfolios, Representative Sampling, Customer Quality Improvement

KAIZEN — Continuous adaptation and advancement.

Source and status note: Terminology and system relationships are grounded in LearningFRONT's PLACES Learning Architecture Definitions, Version 3.1 (October 2026). The scenario and proposed development pathway are illustrative elaborations for discussion. This paper is a conceptual proposal, not an empirical validation or a legal/regulatory implementation plan.

Help shape the Future of Learning

- Explore the **PLACES Slide Deck**
- Challenge our thinking. Share ideas. Collaborate on prototypes.

Let's build and continuously improve PLACES for Learning

Contact Nick Hobar to explore options: Email or call 443.255.4944

 Copyright© 2026 LearningFRONT™ - All Rights Reserved