**Discussion Questions**

*Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing our Kids for the Innovation Era*

For this year’s board book, we wanted to read a book that provides concrete ideas and solutions for opportunities and challenges that we’re tackling at Making Waves. Given how the pandemic is disrupting both K-12 and higher education and how it is changing the future of work, we thought it would be interesting to read a book about how schools and colleges can evolve to better prepare students to thrive in the new workforce.

Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith wrote Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing our Kids for the Innovation Era in 2015, but their reflections on how to change our current models of education to prepare students to be passionate and creative problem-solvers at work are still relevant today. This book talks about wholesale structural changes that need to occur across K-12 and higher education, though it’s worth noting that while the authors present themselves as iconoclastic, there are times when they are traditional, and even in conflict with our approach, despite their call to reimagine and do things differently, e.g., their views on charter schools, the Common Core standards, and Teach For America. That said, there’s a lot in this book that's interesting to discuss.

Important note – this is the first board book we’ve selected that we hadn’t first read ourselves! Fingers crossed that it sparks interesting reflections and discussion.

1. At MWA and CAP we’re talking more about what it would look like to provide quality alternate postsecondary pathways that aren’t a college degree. The authors say that the notion that “the college degree is the essential credential” is a “premise that is completely out of date” and that a singular focus on college-ready curriculum leaves students ill-prepared for life, career, and citizenship (146). What do you think? Does this impact how you’re thinking about our approach to postsecondary pathways?
2. The authors say that education in the 21st century should provide kids the opportunity to opt into content they’re excited about so they can discover their passions and purpose, develop critical skills, and be inspired (46). They also say: “We need to help students develop decisive life advantages – things they are so good at, so passionate about, that they stand out in adding value to their employer or community (46). At MWA and CAP, to what extent are we supporting students to discover their passions, so they are developing decisive life advantages? If we’re not, what are the obstacles – our philosophy, our curriculum, our coaching approach, state-level K-12 and college requirements?
3. The authors share several narrative stories of millennials and how the current higher education system didn’t adequately support them or prepare them for the innovation era – Jaime, a student from a low-income background who struggled to adjust to UCLA, took a year off, and ultimately graduated but with significant student loan debt (77); Rebeca, an affluent student who didn’t find what she needed at Harvard so dropped out and became an entrepreneur (185). What stood out to you from their stories? What did it make you think of our Wave-Makers and their college experiences?
4. This book explores “the contradiction between what students must do to earn a high school or college degree versus what makes them most likely to succeed in the world of work, citizenship, and lifelong learning.” If we want to reimagine our school so students are most likely to succeed in the world of work, how should we do this when our kids will still be held to standards of the current system and come from socioeconomic backgrounds that don’t provide a safety net?
5. Annmarie Neal, former chief talent officer at Cisco, said, “The students that thrive within today’s education system are achievement driven, rule-oriented, compliant, linear, singular in focus (i.e., a business or engineering major). The world of work today requires future leaders to be relationship or collaboration driven, rule-defining, creative and innovative, lateral and polymathic in focus” (167). What role should MWA and CAP play to develop students who are creative and innovative problem-solvers?
6. In chapter 4, the authors dive deep into their ideas for the optimal K-12 curriculum, exploring content areas like Math, English, Writing, Speaking and Presenting and Science (83-144). In the final chapter, the authors detail several concrete innovations in colleges (241) and in K-12 schools (246). Did any of the suggestions made around curriculum changes resonate with you? Which innovations most inspired and excited you?