

[The NEW School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools](#)

By Anthony Kim and Alexis Gonzales Black

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Author Bios

Anthony Kim

Anthony Kim is a nationally recognized leader in education technology, school design, and personalized learning. As founder and CEO of Education Elements, he has been involved in helping hundreds of schools and districts change the way they think about teaching and learning. As the author of “The Personalized Learning Playbook: Why the Time Is Now”, Anthony has influenced many educators. He has contributed to many publications on new school models including “Lessons Learned



from *Blended Programs: Experiences and Recommendations from the Field*". Anthony is a nationally recognized speaker on personalized learning and his work has been referenced by the Christensen Institute, iNACOL, EdSurge, CompetencyWorks, EdWeek, District Administrator, and numerous other research reports.

Anthony is passionate helping school district can become more nimble, understanding what motivates adult learners, and designing schools that plan for the needs of our future. Outside of education, Anthony is passionate about triathlons and learning about people who overcome remarkable challenges. He is a San Francisco native and continues to live there with his wife Angela and rescued dogs.

Alexis Gonzales Black

Alexis Gonzales-Black is the co-author of *The NEW School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools*. She is an expert in organizational design and change initiatives with deep experience in the education, retail, and technology sectors. A principal designer at the global design firm IDEO, she designs and implements new organizational models to fuel innovation, agility, and engagement.

Alexis earned a BS in biology from James Madison University and developed a passion for teaching and social justice as a high school science teacher and recruitment director for Teach for America. At Zappos, Alexis led college recruiting and diversity initiatives before co-leading the online retailer's transition to the Holacracy model of organizational design. She founded Thoughtful Org Partners, a consultancy where she partners with organizations to break through rigidity and introduce self-organizing principles and practices.

Alexis's work has been widely covered in such media outlets as Forbes, Fox, CNN, Wired, and Business Insider. She is a board member of Responsive Org and formerly a



member of the Nevada State Board of Education and the WestEd Board of Directors. She lives in Oakland with her family.

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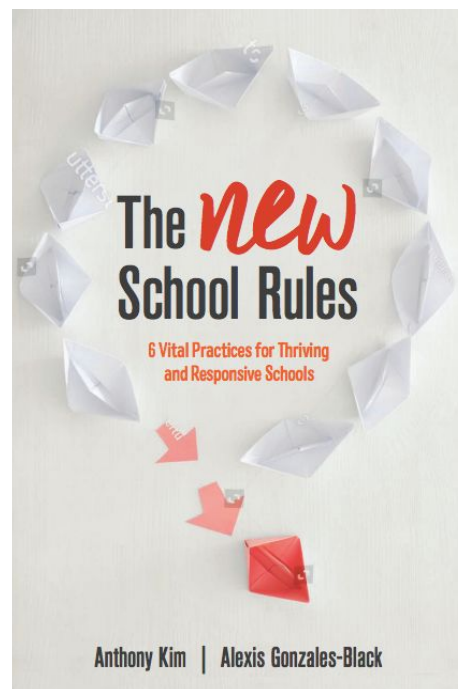
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Description: The NEW School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools is both a practical guide for how to improve the practices of school and districts as well as a thoughtful examination of the self-imposed barriers that can get in the way of getting work done in organizations. Designed to be actionable, the book offers leaders the ability to implement immediate change in order to have a lasting impact. While many books in education focus on curriculum, budgeting, technology or talent, The NEW School Rules focuses on processes, people and organizations. It is a game-changer in the space.



Press Release

Renowned Leaders in Education and Business Co-Author New Book that Revolutionizes School Practices and Outcomes

"The New School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools" Offers Actionable Solutions to Instill Immediate Change and Lasting Impact Across Today's Schools

San Carlos, CA, January 30, 2018 - Authors Anthony Kim and Alexis Gonzales-Black today announced the launch of their new book, [*The New School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools*](#). Designed to increase the effectiveness of schools in a rapidly changing world, *The New School Rules* provides both a practical guide for improving the practices of school and districts, as well as a thoughtful examination of the self-imposed barriers that can hinder the completion of work in any type of organization.

Schools today face a myriad of challenges that hold them back from overall betterment and student improvement, and are in dire need of processes that improve decision-making and increase the velocity at which decisions are made.

"It is a must-read for leaders of teachers, schools, and systems," writes Tom Vander Ark, author of *Getting Smart: How Digital Learning Is Changing the World*.

The New School Rules offers a solution with its definitive roadmap that readers can implement as soon as tomorrow. While many books in education focus on curriculum, budgeting, technology or talent, *The New School Rules* expands cutting-edge organizational design and modern management techniques into an operating system for empowering schools with the same agility and responsiveness that are so vital in the business world. Its content features:

- Six simple rules that create a unified vision of responsiveness among educators
- Real life case studies that illustrate responsive techniques implemented in a variety of educational demographics
- 15 experiments that school and district leaders can use to increase responsiveness across faculty and staff

"In education we often see problems like growing achievement gaps, yet even with heroic and exhausting efforts to implement new programs, products, and team, we often don't get different results," said Anthony Kim, co-author of *The New Schools Rules* and CEO of [Education Elements](#). "The challenge is not rooted around lack of effort, but a need to find ways for teams to work better together. We know from physical science that the shape of the vessel is as important as the effort of engine. In essence, every organization is a vessel that needs to be shaped. *The New School Rules* provides 6 vital practices which help organizations work on their vessel."

Anthony Kim and Alexis Gonzales-Black came together several years ago around a shared desire to support school systems and a collective set of experiences and ideas from the business and education industries around how to do so. After several years of ideation, experimentation and collaboration they are excited to provide district leaders with a pathway to organizing for success.

"The world's most innovative organizations are remarkably flexible, with ideas emerging from all levels, a willingness to embrace change, and a palpable joy in uncovering the path forward," said co-author Alexis Gonzales-Black. "Our educators and the teams that support them deserve to work in these kinds of dynamic environments – and our students deserve the opportunity to thrive in a rapidly changing world. *The New School Rules* tells the stories of six districts that decided to operate differently, the rules they followed, and the experiments that you can try starting tomorrow."

To celebrate the release of *The New School Rules*, author Anthony Kim will host an official launch party on Thursday, February 15, 2018 during the [AASA National Conference on Education](#). While enjoying cocktails and appetizers, Kim will give a brief presentation on the new book and offer book signings for attending guests. For an invitation to the event, contact amy@edelements.com.

The New School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools is currently available for purchase on [Amazon](#). Additionally, educational leaders can find templates, resources, and practical activities to make these rules come alive at www.newschoolrules.com. For further information, to request a review copy or press kit, or to interview the authors, please contact Alexis Fried at alexis@resoundmarketing.com.

Endorsements

Tom Vander Ark

Getting Smart

Super practical rules on school change with all stated problems, lessons, and experiments you can try tomorrow. *The New School Rules* provides guidance on defining the work, encouraging experimentation, sharing leadership, accepting ambiguity, and turning schools into learning organizations. *The New School Rules* is a must read for teacher, school, and system leaders.

Michael Horn

Co-Author of *Disrupting Class*

Every school district should read, digest and grok this book. In it, Anthony Kim and Alexis Gonzales-Black make a major contribution around how schools should organize, plan, create teams, and more. Not enough attention is paid to these areas that can have profound positive impacts on students, teachers and the community.

JD Solomon

Editorial Director, District Administrator Magazine

Discussions about improving education inevitably gravitate to things—curriculum, standards, assessments, technology, PD. In *The NEW School Rules*, Anthony Kim and Alexis Gonzales-Black make a highly compelling case that to fundamentally improve education the focus must be on process—specifically, the organizational management, structure and practice that govern how decisions are made and actions occur. And the authors go beyond simply supporting their hypothesis; they provide school administrators with an accessible how-to guide for implementing the kinds of organizational changes that will lead to real improvements in student outcomes.

Dale Erquiaga, President/CEO of Communities In Schools and former Nevada State Superintendent of Public Instruction

“The *NEW School Rules* is as important for adult learning as it is for student learning. This work recognizes that adults in the system have to learn, evolve, and grow if our kids are to succeed in an ever-changing world. I wish I’d had this book years ago!”

Matthew Kramer, CEO of The Wildflower Foundation, and former CEO of Teach For America

“When we take something as beautiful and life-giving as education, and find that managing the institutions that provide it is soul-crushing, we know something is very wrong. *The NEW School Rules* shows us the problem, offers an alternative vision of educational administration, and gives us the practical tools to unlock new energy in ourselves and our colleagues. Every administrator should read this book.”

Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com, and New York Times Bestselling Author of Delivering Happiness

“The NEW School Rules offers a critical and timely framework to ensure that future generations are equipped to thrive in a rapidly-changing world.”

Cami Anderson, Former Superintendent of Newark Public Schools

“The NEW School Rules is a concrete, battle-tested roadmap for leaders who want to do right by kids by having the courage to help adults embrace change. The NEW School Rules encourages districts and schools to fundamentally rethink how they are organized in order to become more responsive, agile, innovative and, ultimately, effective. What I appreciate most is that the book is both visionary and evocative – and also practical and instructive. We must build education institutions that put kids’ needs in an ever-evolving world ahead of everything else.”

Melissa Wood-Glusac, English Teacher Grades 9-11, Thousand Oaks High School, Thousand Oaks, CA

“A principal can pick this book up and find excellent advice to help her lead a school without micro-managing.”

Kathy Rhodes, Principal, Hinton Elementary, Hinton IA

“The NEW School Rules is inspirational, easy to read, and realistic. It offers specific, doable steps to help you get started with implementation and make strides toward becoming part of a responsive organization. Ideal for an administrative team book study.”

Jill Gildea, Superintendent, Greenwich Public Schools, Greenwich, CT

“The NEW School Rules tackles organizational change in an interesting and accessible way with adaptable tools and protocols you’ll want to implement in your schools. The

desired outcomes are clearly defined through an empathetic design approach.”

Interview Resources

So why did you write this book?

Anthony: For the last 7 years at Education Elements, and throughout my career as an entrepreneur, I have noticed patterns about how our ways of working can sometimes hold us back, rather than move us forward. School districts across the country spend millions of dollars on a long list of programs and initiatives to improve student outcomes, yet we're grateful if we see student academic gains of a couple percentage points. Decisions take too long. Increasing and changing demands lead to confusion and too many things falling between the cracks. Everyone's energy is sapped in the effort to defend decisions rather than taking action. I knew there was a different way to approach the way districts and organizations meet, function and make decisions, and that changes we could make to processes and protocols might lead to better academic results, teacher retention and higher quality school systems. This book reflects my thinking and experiments we have been running, in hopes that other can learn from it.

There are six rules you outline in the book, is one more important than any of the others?

I believe that at some point a highly effective organization will need to implement all six and in fact, in many ways, they work together. But I also believe in incremental steps and change. If you can start doing one thing differently next week, you should do it. Do not wait until, you can put all six into practice.

Have you tried to implement any of these rules in your own organization?

Yes, in fact we have tried to implement them all. A few years ago I recognized that there was much we could do to improve our organization. We began exploring ways to improve our meetings, our organizational structure and our overall approach to our work and found that while some of the transition was difficult, the end results were positive.

Our meetings are now places where work actually gets done. We make decisions faster than we did before but I also think we make better ones too. The change to how we approach roles and accountabilities has not only helped our current team, but has been positive in how we recruit and onboard others. It is hard to say which rules has made the most impact, but if I had to pick just one I would say that the idea of teaming and building trust and allowing authority to spread has led to some of the most positive changes.

So is this really something school districts can do?

Absolutely - not only something they can do but something they should. In a recent workshop with 75 educators and leaders from around the country we talked about how to start this with just one team. Participants mapped out the work that team needed to get done, the roles they needed to fill, and how they could approach the work in a new way. In just 60 minutes they walked away with a change they could make to one team, which will then spread to another and another one after that. I think someone could read this book and make changes right away. And even small changes will make a big difference.

Story Ideas

- Tales of Districts Doing Things Differently: Tell the story of 3 districts who have changed their approach to organizational design and decision-making in order to change student outcomes
- How Decision-making in the District Office Impacts Learning in the Classroom: Explore current obstacles in district decision-making and how they get in the way
- Farmers Markets not Cathedrals, How can be More Nimble: Talk about how the way district organizations are structured makes it difficult for them to respond to rapidly changing environments
- Put Money in Districts to Work: Story demonstrating how we've spent billions on programs and technology, but nothing on how districts work.

Speaking Engagements and Topics

Typical speaking engagements include keynotes (45 - 60+ minutes) or interactive game-based workshops (60-120 minutes).

Anthony Kim, co-author, is available for speaking engagements about the ideas in his latest book, *The New School Rules* as well as on the themes from his previous book, *The Personalized Learning Playbook*.

Topics include:

- 6 New School Rules that Will Transform Your District
- How New Practices Can Help Districts Change Old Habits
- Ways District Can Make Better and Faster Decisions
- This Shift from Traditional to Responsive: How School Districts Can Improve Student Outcomes through Organizational Changes

[Please see speaker details and bio here.](#)

Keara Duggan, designer and facilitator, is available for speaking engagements about the ideas related to the book *The New School Rules* as well as on the themes from *The Personalized Learning Playbook*.

Topics include:

- Effective Change Management
- Leadership Development and Coaching
- Building Team Culture, Goals, and Roles
- How To Create A Culture of Innovation in Your District
- How To Implement The 6 New School Rules In Your Team

[Please see speaker details and bio here.](#)

Contact

Ben Politzer, ben@edelements.com for more information about the book or to inquire about speaking engagements.

Book Excerpt - from Chapter 1

WHEN PLANS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR PURPOSE

All of us have been expected to put together a strategic plan, whether it's for one semester or 5 years. We labor over these plans— sometimes over the course of 12 to 24 months—dreaming up the path ahead and detailing the resources we'll need. We aim to be future focused, but out of necessity our assumptions are based on the current realities of our schools and districts. Then we present our plan for approval.

Unfortunately, once we're set to go, we find the situation has changed before we've gotten started. Technology programs or platforms may have changed or been discontinued. People have changed—in districts with a high number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, teacher turnover can be over 22 percent (Di Carlo, 2015)—and the new team isn't up to speed. Policies have evolved and buy-in has dropped off. Yet many of us have been penalized when we don't follow the plan. We can't seem to let go of this pattern, repeating the process year after year.

The plan offers a comforting illusion. It suggests we can anticipate the future and prevent failures, but ultimately it is only an illusion. Your mind may automatically default to the old adage "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." But try this thought experiment:

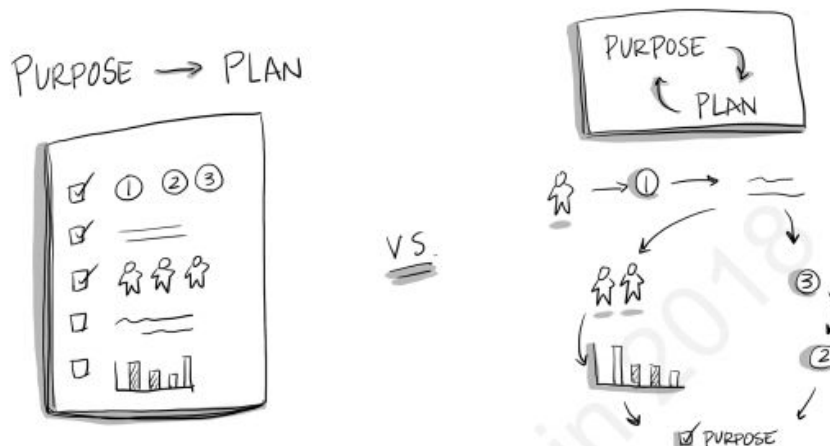
Is failure occurring in your organization?

Are you falling short of goals, missing benchmarks, or experiencing any degree of failure already?

The answer is probably yes.

Failure, at least to some degree, is inevitable. In fact, by failing early and often we can limit the negative impact of failure and benefit from the experience and data we gain in the process. Failure helps us surface organizational deficiencies and uncover our own blind spots. And of course it gives us a good dose of humility. It's hard to imagine that anyone has the capability of planning perfectly, anticipating every action. In fact, it could be argued that the most successful organizations are able to execute in parallel with failures.

Take school improvement planning as an example. Generally, low-performing schools are compelled to create a cumbersome plan outlining goals, actions, benchmarks, evaluations, and more. The length and complexity of these plans almost ensures that no one understands how they should be used, and they are often developed by people far removed from the day-to-day work and the real needs on the ground. Planning in a vacuum ties teams and schools to a plan, emotionally and mentally, to everyone's detriment. It makes it harder to adapt, even when data—and the larger purpose—suggest taking a different route.



Behind the Book

I've been working in the field of education, educational technology, and personalized learning for 17 years. As the leader of several companies, I've engaged with public schools and some private ones all over the country. In just the past 7 years, as founder and CEO of Education Elements, I've traveled to hundreds of states, schools, and district offices.

School districts across the country spend millions of dollars on a long list of programs and initiatives to improve student outcomes, yet we're grateful if we see student academic gains of a couple percentage points. Decisions take too long. Increasing and changing demands lead to confusion and too many things falling between the cracks. Everyone's energy is sapped in the effort to defend decisions rather than taking action.

Often, we're lucky if we don't see negative results through these efforts. It's easy to point fingers at policies, the curriculum, or our people, but I've observed a different underlying issue. The culture of our schools, organizational structures, and methods of communication and decision-making--not educational approaches--are the actual drivers for success or failure.

Teachers and students come to a school everyday and they thrive when their school is inviting and engaging--where a place where they want to be and want to spend time. District and school leaders play an important role in establishing a culture that encourages effective collaboration, creativity, and learning for everyone. Organizational practices that focus on the concept of "responsiveness" focus schools and districts on the needs of the future, not the past, and rally administrators, teachers, children, families, and communities. The culture of our schools, organizational structures, and

methods of communication and decision-making—not educational approaches—are the actual drivers for success or failure.

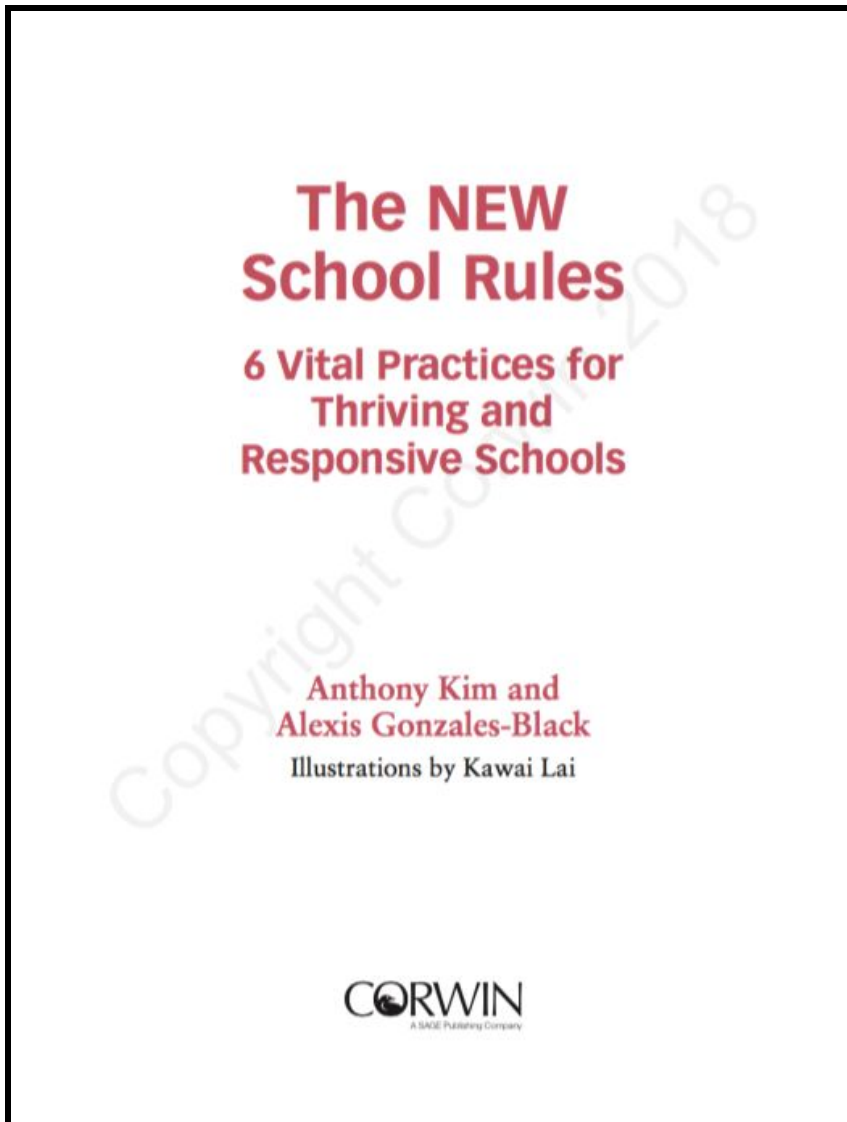
That’s what drove me to write this book for district and school leaders. As leadership expert Tom Northrup says, “All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they are now getting. If we want different results, we must change the way we do things.” This book is for every leader who wants to instigate change and create environments of growth, excitement, and passion.

Why This Book Matters

School districts face a myriad of challenges. While many are the same ones experienced by any organization in the country, the impact of getting it right, versus the consequences of getting it wrong, are perhaps much more significant than most. School districts are responsible, every day, for shaping the lives of students. How we prepare them today has a direct correlation to how we prepare them for tomorrow. The need to do right, to be as effective as possible, is an urgent and pressing one. Many of the reforms in education are targeted at the level of students and teachers, for well-intended and solid reasons. But we must also look at the level of the district organization, and recognize how changes we make at that level can have positive impacts everywhere else as well.

This book matters because it addresses head on the challenges districts face, while giving actionable steps to make changes; changes that can happen starting immediately. With the ability to implement bite-sized actions and whole-school improvement, [The New School Rules: 6 Vital Practices for Thriving and Responsive Schools](#) makes it possible for schools and districts to make the shift from traditional and hierarchical to responsive and nimble. When decision-making improves and the velocity at which decisions are made increases, students benefit.

Title Page and Contents



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