



## Empower: What Happens When Student Own Their Learning

*John Spencer, A.J. Juliani*

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Kids begin their learning journey as curious problem solvers who ask questions and create solutions. As they go through school, something happens to many of our students, and they begin to play the game of school, eager to be compliant and follow a path instead of making their own.

As teachers, leaders, and parents, we have the opportunity to be the guide in our kids' education and unleash the creative potential of each and every student. In a world that is ever changing, our job is not to prepare students for something; instead, our role is to help students prepare themselves for anything.

In Empower, A.J. Juliani and John Spencer provide teachers, coaches, and administrators with a roadmap that will inspire innovation, authentic learning experiences, and practical ways to empower students to pursue their passions while in school.

Compliance is expecting students to pay attention. Engagement is getting students excited about our topics, interests, and curriculum. But when we empower students, they crave learning that is both meaningful and relevant to their life, now and in the future.

Empower is for you if ...

- You are a teacher eager to get students making, designing, and creating their own learning path in (and out of) the classroom
- You are a superintendent, district administrator, or principal who is leading change and working to help your staff thrive in a twenty-first-century learning environment
- You are a coach, staff developer, or teacher leader who is crafting professional learning experiences and wants to encourage colleagues to be the guide on the ride

Empower is focused not only on what happens when students own their learning but also on how to reach a place where that is possible in the midst of standards, set curriculum paths, and realities of school that we all have to deal with. Written by real educators who are still working in schools and with teachers, Empower will provide ways to overcome these challenges and turn them into opportunities for our learners to be unabashedly different and remarkable.

Join the conversation online using the hashtag #EmpowerBook and learn more at [EmpowerBook.co](http://EmpowerBook.co).

## **Empower: What Happens When Student Own Their Learning Details**

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# From Reader Review Empower: What Happens When Student Own Their Learning for online ebook

## Katie Seehusen says

Empower was an interesting read that challenges the way we do school. How do we get students more invested in their learning so that they become more intrinsically motivated? How can we help students to be more invested in what they are learning? How do we help students to choose how to demonstrate what they know and what they've learned? How do encourage students to be ok with failing and get back up and try again? These were many of the big questions that this book posed. These are big ideas and big changes, yet they encouraged teachers to try, even in small steps to help empower students to take more ownership into their learning.

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## Jack Adams says

This book was fantastic.

I have been questioning a lot of things to do with teaching recently. This book has inspired me to try a lot of new, exciting things to try help motivate the learners in my classroom.

Hoping to push forward and implement things soon!

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## Naryn Searcy says

I enjoyed this book and found it both inspirational and practical. As a teacher it made me reflect on the amount of choice I provide in my classes (not enough at the moment) and reminded me of the responsibility we have as educators to provide students with the opportunities to develop skills such as self-starting, self-managing, risk-taking, creating, and reflecting that will prepare them for an undefined and constantly changing future. As an administrator I appreciated the short bursts of text and accessible lay-out of the book (teachers are busy and this was fun and easy to read). I also appreciated the fact that the book didn't preach that it had "the answer," instead highlighting the benefits of design thinking while honouring the complexity of challenges teachers face, the value of other instructional approaches, and some general restrictions of the education system. *Empower* inspires the reader as well as describes a useful framework, and also provides educators with a way to start small while allowing themselves and their students to dream big.

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## Danielle Glewwe says

I enjoyed this book! It was very thought-provoking, and a great book for a teacher who wants to take the next step to creating a truly student-centered classroom. The authors made it very clear that this was their personal story and experiences, and wouldn't be peer-reviewed or full of data. Very true! I think the big thing to remember is small daily changes make the biggest differences. What I've taken from this book is that I still need to continue taking steps to personalize for my students. Differentiating is a great beginning step. Find your passion, and encourage your students to do the same. :)

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### **LaTonya says**

LORD JESUS THERE IS SO MUCH REDUNDANCY IN THIS BOOK!!!! The overall topic is great, the purpose is also great HOWEVER, the first 6 chapters to me, were all literally repeating the SAME THING but with a different title and I found passages that used even the same words!! Lol smh I did however pull out lots of good information, especially in chapters 7,8 and 12, that I plan to implement. Smh great topic but I feel the creativity in the makeup of the book was to hide the redundant points being made. Loved the 'Wasted Day' ideas, the consumers to creators process and the different student assessments.

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### **Lindsey says**

I enjoyed reading this book and the validation that it gave me that I'm doing something right in my classroom. I learned a tremendous amount from the book, but also silently high-fived myself when I read scenarios or ideas that I'm already using in my teaching! A good read for people who really want to focus on what's important for students in school!

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### **Niki says**

"Empower: What happens when students own their learning" is a great resource for educators. With a great layout and style, authors John Spencer and AJ Juliani share helpful and relevant information to guide educators in their quest for student ownership and leadership.

I did enjoy "Launch", their previous text, more than "Empower", but still a highly-motivating educational read that I would recommend to all educators.

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### **Diane says**

"We are guides on the ride. Think of each school year as a journey. What will our journey be this year? We're all a part of this epic journey. We all learn from each other."

#### **The Why**

Truth #1: Every child deserves to own their learning.

Truth #2: Empowering students transforms social/human connections.

Truth #3: Stories will always have us. Empower students to create and share their learning stories.

Truth #4: The only thing you can prepare students for is an unpredictable world.

Truth #5: Literacy is about learning, and learning is about unlearning and relearning.

Truth #6: Teachers have a huge impact on students' lives. Empowering our students amplifies that impact.

#### **Shifts in thinking:**

Making subject interesting ... tapping into student interests

Require ... Desire

Providing choices ... Inspiring possibilities  
Compliance ... to self directed  
Consuming ... Creating  
Taking assessments ... Assessing your own learning  
Failure .... Failing

### **Questions & Quotes:**

What decisions am I making for students that they could make for themselves?

How could this be more "adjustable?"

What can students do to modify this to meet their own needs?

Entrepreneurial thinking:

Self starter + Self Manager = Self Directed

How do you encourage students as self starters?

1. Inspire them. What matters to them? What are they passionate about?
2. Create opportunities. Carve out time in the week/month: 20% time, genius hour, geeky blog out, Wonder Day
3. Provide tools
4. Encourage creative risk taking
5. Model the thinking problem - use examples from your own life
6. Affirm it. Celebrate their moments of self starting
7. Help find them a community

Students will need to be able to invent and reinvent their jobs to stay relevant. That could be said of teachers, as well.

### **LAUNCH cycle**

L - Look, listen and Learn - wonder, awareness of a problem,

A - Ask tons of questions

U - Understand the process or problem - conduct needs assessment, interviews, research articles, analyze data - using strategies they find useful

N - Navigate ideas - apply newly acquired research/knowledge to solutions, generate a concept by brainstorming, analyzing and combining; develop a plan of action

C - Create a prototype - could be an action/event - not just tangible product

H - Highlight what works and fix what's failing

### **LAUNCH to an audience**

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### **Laurie says**

Every time I get suckered into buying these books hoping one of them will actually show me HOW to do the things their titles promise. This is another book that outlines what we would like our classrooms to be like but fails to tell us how to take even small steps to accomplish it. I've done Genius Hour, but I need ways to go deeper into empowering students to be self-motivated learners. This doesn't help at all.

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**Kara Belden says**

4.5 This is a super quick read that has inspired my teaching and given me so much to think about. I strongly feel that every educator should give this book a chance. Unexpectedly, the discussions surrounding this book have been even more powerful than the book itself. The book is pitched as empowering students, but the book also empowers teachers. I will now forever ask myself, "What decisions am I making for students that they could make for themselves?"

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**Rita Shaffer says**

I enjoyed the discussions of the district-wide book study around this book and am excited to see the projects people are working on!

There were several great reminders about what is best for student learning and I enjoyed the authors' writing styles.

Fellow educators, I think the topics in the book are things we should be thinking hard about!

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**Amy says**

Quick read, lots of graphics, repetition, challenging.

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**Kim says**

This book was a quick perfect educational read over a school vacation week. As a school librarian, it made me reflect on how much I encourage students to research what they are passionate about. What do they want to learn about and how can they find the information they need to learn it? This book strongly encourages educators to allow time for students to find something that they want to learn about within your curriculum framework and to have them pursue it and to provide students with more choices in their learning. As a busy mom, I appreciated the short bursts of text and images/infographics. Empower inspires educators as well as describes a design framework, and also provides them with a way to start small while allowing themselves and their students to dream big.

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**Melody Riggs says**

This was a good read. It was general enough to apply to any subject and also practical enough to show that sometimes students (and teachers) are limited by standards and tests, but they can still be empowered anyway.

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### **Amy says**

I love the format of the book and the tone is sincere, passionate, and appealing. In my opinion, the content basically consists of cheerleading for a new way of teaching (think Genius Hour, 20% time, etc...) and arguments for breaking with the old, traditional ways of instructional delivery. And while I'm in complete agreement, I've been in that heart and mind space for years. The authors admit that this book is not an instruction manual, which is not what I was looking for in the first place, but I desperately wanted to hear some more concrete strategies about how to work in this way within the standards, with larger assessments, and/or within the yearly curriculum map.

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