You already know what needs to change and you already know why. This play-by-play guide, based on years of experience leading change in schools and featuring loads of practical advice, will teach you how.

Become an Edupreneur

If you would like to know more about what is inside this book, just flip to the first page.

Aaron Tait and Dave Faulkner are the award-winning founders of Education Changemakers, where they draw on decades of teaching and leadership experience to help educators unleash teacher-led innovation in schools across Australia and around the world. Find out more at www.educationchangemakers.com.

FREE CHAPTER
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First things first
The edupreneurs we search for

‘Right now, this is the most challenging school in the country, and we want you to be its new principal.’

Dave was twenty-seven when he received this phone call.

Two years later, a planeload of school and system leaders, philanthropists and education experts landed on the dusty outback runway near his school. With notepads in hand, they asked him how the school had been turned around so quickly.

They wanted to know what the solution had been at this school, so they could also apply it elsewhere. But Dave’s answer was not what they expected.

‘If you want to know the answers, I can give you some of them, but the majority of them will come from my team.’

Dave had spent two years creating an environment among his staff, students and community where they all felt like they could identify problems in the school, create solutions to these problems and make things better.

Aaron received a similar call to Dave’s when he was twenty-five.

‘This school is broken. We want you to come and lead it.’

A year later, he left the East African school and slum he had called home, content that the school had seen dramatic improvements in attendance, student wellbeing and achievement, and staff retention. He also knew that the best solutions had not come from him; rather, his role had been to create an environment where everyone in the school was solving problems and getting better, every day.

In 2010, we were both invited to speak at a conference. Aaron was a social entrepreneur, working to improve the lives of people living in extreme poverty in Africa with his organisation Spark* International.
Dave was the director of what is likely the world’s largest education region, near the famous Uluru in Australia.

Over a drink later that day, we traded stories of schools that we had led, and realised that our leadership approaches were almost identical. Early in our careers we had both realised that our job as leaders was to unleash the passion and innovation of our staff, rather than try to solve all of the problems ourselves. At the time, Aaron was trying to unleash grassroots innovation at scale by finding and backing entrepreneurs in very poor communities, and Dave was trying to build a movement of innovative and highly effective teachers and school leaders across his region. We were doing the same thing, in different parts of the world. We now wondered if we could work together to build something great. We called the idea ‘edupreneurship’ and made a plan for Aaron to travel to the outback a few months later to spend time with some of Dave’s best teachers to help them lead improvements in their schools.

That night we had no idea that the word ‘edupreneur’ had been coined more than a decade before. The next morning, Aaron typed the word into Google and read that it had come into popularity in the early 2000s, and was used to describe tech entrepreneurs, often with MBAs, who had built education websites for kids. We had huge respect for these kinds of people and knew they were doing great things for education, but this was not what we had been talking about! The term had been hijacked!

We wanted to see if we could bring the energy and innovation of the startup world into schools and unleash teacher-led innovations; brilliant ideas created by teachers who worked in classrooms and worked every day to change things for kids.

So we got to work. We started with fifteen teachers. We gave them some tools and the confidence to identify problems in their schools,
First things first

propose solutions, engage people behind those solutions, and change things.

And change things they did.

We were blown away. We saw attendance rates go from 40 to 90 per cent. We saw teacher retention, student wellbeing, outcomes and community engagement change rapidly. We started to spend time with schools that needed ‘turning around’ as well as with very strong schools that simply had a commitment to get better every day, and we found that the same conditions were necessary for success. And those conditions were simple. School leaders and the education system needed to create an environment where teachers had the confidence and the capacity to continually identify challenges in their schools, try to search for relevant, local solutions and, if they worked, be encouraged to share their successes.

Since starting with this original group of fifteen teachers, we have worked with thousands of teachers and school leaders to bring the speed, creativity and risk-taking of entrepreneurship into staffrooms and classes around world. And we are doing this because we truly believe that entrepreneurial leaders can provide some of the best solutions for positive change in the world. The more people there are standing up and deciding that they are not happy with the status quo, and building solutions—either as business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs within organisations—the better the world we can create together.

The economist Joseph Schumpeter defined entrepreneurs as the ‘creative destructors necessary for major advances’. We do what we do because we believe that education needs more people like this—people who aren’t afraid of identifying problems and building game-changing solutions to address them.

So in this book, we are reclaiming the word ‘edupreneur’ to define any teacher or school leader who looks at their classroom, their
school or their community and says, ‘This could be better, and I am going to do something about it’.

Chances are, if you have opened this book, you are someone who thinks like this.

*Edupreneur* is a book designed to inspire and equip you to make the changes that you want to see in your school, your country, your world.

A generation of kids is waiting for your next move.
Make it count.
What?
Why?
HOW?
Plenty of thought leaders in education are jetted around the world in business class from conference to conference. Their role is to disrupt our thinking as educators and to help us dream of new possibilities. They inspire us. They make us question things.

Your job as a teacher or school leader is much harder—because you need to turn ideas into practical solutions.

No doubt you come back from conferences or professional development opportunities inspired by the thought leaders on the stage. Perhaps you even buy their books or tweet the links to their TED talks.

But how long does the post-conference high last?

Maybe you return to school and are bombarded by curriculum changes, reports, parent–teacher meetings and behaviour issues? You know that things should be better, but you are so busy putting out spot fires that you never get around to leading the change you want to see. You become reactionary rather than being revolutionary.

Then a few months later, you see another inspiring keynote speech online or at a conference and you hear again that things need to change. You gasp in unison with the rest of the audience at the photos of a classroom from last century next to one from today, shocked that nothing has changed. You hear the words ‘industrial education system’. You eyeball yet more graphs with lines sloping downwards, rather than going up. You get told over and over that education needs to change.

The thing is, we all know making changes in education is complex and tough. We all know what needs to change and why it needs to be changed.

What is missing is the how.

This book helps with that. We have spent years working in schools and know that the education sector is incredibly complex. But rather than adding complexity, we are taking a step in the other direction.
First things first

As Ernest Schumacher said in his awesome book *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered*, ‘Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.’

We truly believe that making change in schools can be broken down into a few simple and clear steps that you can get stuck into with your staff, students and parents today.

In *Edupreneur*, we present the tools and ideas that you and your team can draw on to identify challenges, come up with great solutions, mobilise people behind them and change things. The Changemaker Journey has been created by us as we have tried to lead changes in schools and been galvanised by working alongside thousands of teachers and school leaders over the last few years.

So given our belief that the *how* can often be very simple, we have written *Edupreneur* in as simple and fun a style as possible.

If you are looking for an academic book, where every second sentence is referenced and a third of the book is made up of references and further reading, you will not find it in *Edupreneur*. It is not a thesis that has been turned into a hardback; it is a play-by-play guide that has been developed over years in schools and classrooms. This is deliberate—because we want this book to be read, by teachers.

See, the funny thing is that the thesis that Aaron wrote at Cambridge (which he is proud to say he received a high distinction for, but is less proud to say he now struggles to understand) was only read by himself and his examiner (although his wife very kindly read the introduction). We hope that many more people will read this book, however, and have decided to write it as if we are having a great chat with you in the staffroom at lunch. This means we sometimes start sentences with ‘and’ and ‘but’—and we would like to extend our deepest apologies to English teachers around the world (who are probably wriggling uncomfortably in their seats!).
So treat this book more like your favourite old t-shirt, rather than the shoes you bought for your wedding and never wore again. Write all over it. Take it around with you. The older and more worn it gets, the more value it has had for you. If you think it is useful, give your copy to a teacher on your staff, and see what ideas they come up with.

*Edupreneur* is more Jamie Oliver, less Heston Blumenthal. The ideas in here are things that you can get started on today, with all the bits and bobs you already have in your cupboard, instead of something you need a decade of training in Michelin-starred kitchens to grasp.

It’s also more of a road map than a guidebook. The next time you are in school and it feels like the thing you were trying to change is all going wrong, open this book up, get an injection of inspiration and figure out where you are on your journey. We are not going to tell you the must-see museum, or the one route you need to take; rather, we are giving you the tools you need to build your own journey, and create your own solutions.

We work with thousands of teachers and school leaders every year with these ideas, and when they really go for it as edupreneurs they truly do amazing things.

Like the young teacher who kept her proud old public school open by turning it into a specialist beach volleyball centre; the kids are now thriving academically, even though they have beach sand between their toes. Or the teacher who figured out how to provide a world-class education in a rough township at a fraction of the cost of nearby schools. Or the teacher who committed to making ‘class time more fun than playtime’ and massively changed the learning outcomes of her kids in the process. Or the maths teacher who loved maths but hated the bad rap it always got, so committed to building a movement of educators who would share ways to help kids fall in love with maths. Or the two teachers who worked to make sure new
teachers were happy and thriving in their first year in the profession. Or the teacher who said to head office, ‘Give me the worst behaved kids in the region, and I will build a school for them.’

Throughout this book you will meet educators like this. If you are already one of them, you have found a new tribe to join. If you are just starting out, welcome. We can’t wait to see what you build.
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Can your swimming instructors swim?

Imagine you didn’t know how to swim but wanted to learn. You hear about an organisation that is offering swimming lessons and you sign up.

You go along to the class and find out that the teacher has never swum before. They take you through a slide show that outlines the concepts behind swimming and some pointers on what to do if you get in trouble, and show you videos of amazing swimmers winning gold medals at the Olympics. You don’t get in the pool during the class and, at the end, they wish you luck in your swimming career.

You don’t feel too comfortable about swimming yet, so you look for more classes. You go to a few of them, and they all have nice marketing and cool websites, but they teach you the same thing as the first one you went to, and you still don’t get in the pool.

Then imagine one day, you go to a swimming class, your instructor can swim and, after a quick briefing, they have you jump in the pool. At first you struggle, floundering your way around the pool, swallowing water and trying to figure out how to stay afloat (and not remembering anything from the educational slide shows). Your instructor is there and can help you if you are really sinking, but they know that you will learn quicker the less they hold onto you. They can yell out some tips to you, but it is up to you to listen to them, and choose which ones you want to take on board.

In this book, we are your swimming instructors. We know how to swim—we have used these techniques to stay afloat and win races before.

So who are we?

After finishing high school Dave, with a burning desire to make a difference in the tough communities he had grown up in, decided
to become a teacher. While still in university he headed out to a severely disadvantaged community as an intern teacher and put his hand up to teach the most difficult class. This trend continued, and with each transfer and promotion Dave volunteered for the most challenging jobs. The young people in the toughest settings were his why; indeed, the harder the kids were to reach, the more determined he was to reach them. He was appointed a principal at age twenty-four, and that same year he became a father. Over the next twelve years Dave, with his young family alongside him every step of the way, worked across a number of the most challenging communities in Australia. He worked tirelessly day after day—driving the school bus at seven in the morning to pick up students, for example, and working late into the night to create better opportunities for those students. As Dave’s own children reached school age, people would often comment, ‘Are you not worried about your kids’ education in these difficult schools that you run?’, to which he would always respond, ‘If the school I lead isn’t good enough for my kids, it isn’t good enough for any kid’.

Aaron brings a different skill set to the partnership. He also grew up wanting to make a difference in the world, but dreamed of doing it as a peacekeeper. He joined the military in 2001 as a seventeen year old with the goal of one day wearing a blue UN beret, but was deployed to Iraq the day after 9/11 and served in active and often very hostile operations. He stayed in the military for seven years as an officer, spending his spare time when he was home from operations completing two master’s degrees, or in favelas, townships and slums around the world trying to help people living in poverty. After leaving the military he ran a secondary school for orphans and street kids in Tanzania, built an orphanage for HIV/AIDS orphans in Kenya and completed a third research master’s at Cambridge University. With his wife, Kaitlin, he co-founded Spark* International—an organisation that has backed hundreds of social entrepreneurs in Africa and Asia. With these social entrepreneurs he
First things first

has helped change the lives of hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty through the creation of a job, the building of a home or supporting someone to significantly improve health or education.

We started Education Changemakers (EC) in 2012 with a goal of helping build a generation of teachers and school leaders with the confidence and skills to change the game for millions of children. Throughout Edupreneur we share a few of our practical stories of leading change in education, giving you an insight into both our failures and successes.

The EC tribe is made up of thousands of passionate teachers from around the world who have helped to improve and refine the ideas in this book. These teachers include heroes like Summer Howarth and Louka Parry from Australia, Jeff Li in Harlem, Chris Bradford in Johannesburg, Jabiz Raisdana in Singapore and Laura McBain from High Tech High in San Diego. And now that you are reading this book, we can welcome you to the EC tribe as well! Perhaps in our next book, we will be telling your story?

Many of these teachers like to hang out on Twitter, so feel free to join the conversation using #educhange.

Now, we are almost ready to get you to jump in the pool.

It’s a journey

Trying to solve problems and make things better can often feel overwhelming. But friends, this little Changemaker Journey (overleaf) that we have built makes things much easier! We think it is an awesome play-by-play guide to help you unleash great ideas in your school. At any point, you can move back or forward in the journey, and checking in with it is a nice way to see where you are at. You will see us link back to this journey throughout the book, and it will all make a lot more sense to you very soon!
1. What am I passionate about?

2. We believe...

3. But right now the reality is...

4. What are the root causes?

5. Other players?

6. Focus on one root cause.

7. Ideate fifty solutions.

8. Prototype the best two.


10. Pivot or persevere.

11. Turn the idea into something real.

12. Prove it gets results.

13. Make it scalable and sustainable.

14. Take it to scale and change many lives.

15. Return to step 1 or retire.
How to use this book

Well, ultimately, that is up to you to decide.

You can read this book all the way through, get a blast of inspiration and ideas, and then refer back to it when you need to.

Or you can do what you often try to get your kids to do and learn by doing, a little bit at a time, trusting the process and only moving on as you complete each step.

It's totally your call.

You may choose to write all over this book (in fact, if you send us a picture of your copy covered in annotations and sticky notes we will tweet it!).

Perhaps you will use it to create new solutions to old problems. To focus on what matters. To turn your passionate ideas into awesome realities. To help you collaborate with the brilliant minds in your staffroom. To create the changes you know your students need.

You might grab bits. You might love it all.

You might absolutely hate it, scream, ‘This is not an academic text!’ and stop reading at this page. If your copy is an ebook, you can easily deal with your frustrations — just delete the file and free up some space on that tablet of yours. If it’s an old-fashioned paperback, make sure you put it to good use as a doorstop, shred it up to make kitty litter or add it to the pile keeping your computer screen at the right height.

Still with us? Great! We do have one little favour to ask before you delve in.

We know that you are busy. So busy that often you don't have time to read a book like this and invest in yourself.

But we have made this as easy a read as possible. So take a bit of time out.
Maybe a few good hours on a weeknight or a Sunday afternoon. Turn off the laptop, stop checking your emails, pour yourself a glass of something (or make a cup of tea) and soak up some new ideas. Every time you get a new idea for your school, write it down. You might find yourself grabbing this whole process and trying all of it with your team, or you might just grab a few concepts.

If you come up with a cool idea that improves the learning outcomes of the kids in your class, that is awesome, and the book has achieved its aim. If you spread that idea to other classes and other schools, that is super awesome!

You might be coming into this book with an idea that you are already working on, or with nothing at all. The approach is the same for both and we encourage you to trust the process.

So what do you need to get started?

It’s pretty simple, really. All you need is:

• an open mind
• trust in the process
• some sticky notes (or just rip up some small squares of paper)
• a pen.
Turn it into something great.

Create something good.

Start with nothing.
About us

Education Changemakers exists to unleash teacher-led innovation. If you want to know more about the work we do in classrooms and schools across Australia and the world, or would like to work with our team, visit www.educationchangementakers.com.

Education Changemakers is a founding donor of Spark* International, an organisation that supports startup impact entrepreneurs who are bringing people out of poverty. A percentage of any proceeds from this book is directed to the education entrepreneurs that Spark supports around the world. Visit www.sparkinternational.org for more information.

Education Changemakers is proud to be a certified B Corp. Visit www.bcorporation.net to discover how the power of business is being harnessed to change the world.
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Dr Jason Fox

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Dr Amantha Imber

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Anna-Lucia Mackay

Future Brain
Dr Jenny Brockis

Think One Team 2E
Graham Winter

Brave
Margie Warrell

Smart Work
Dermot Crowley

Fit
Warren Kennaugh

WILEY
Your School:
You already know what needs to change and you already know why.

This play-by-play guide, based on years of experience leading change in schools and featuring loads of practical advice, will teach you how.

Become an Edupreneur
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