

# 5 Habits of Innovative Educators



Habits are unconscious patterns of behavior that are acquired with frequent repetition. This post will look at what habits exist among innovative educators. While the conditions in education are not ideal for our disruptive educators, there are individuals working hard from within the system to create change. Whether you are looking to join

them, better understand them, or you are one of them, this post is for you.

## 1. They are idea blenders.

Innovative educators are like Warhol and Picasso -- they steal ideas and concepts from outside of their domain and find ways to infuse those ideas into their work. When faced with a problem, they don't just look at what another teacher does or how another school solved the problem. Disruptive educators look to Fast Company or the latest blog post from [Seth Godin](#) to forage for solutions. Idea blenders are using their expertise in education and blending it with the expertise outside our industry to create solutions that challenge the status quo.

*Join them:* This [Pinterest board](#) has a collection of brands, blogs, books and more for the idea blending educator.

## 2. They ask their biggest critics for feedback.

Change agents in education are surrounded by a supportive group of people that can and will give them honest feedback. No one feels scared or defensive in the exchange of feedback, because the educator has been intentional in creating a trusting environment where constructive criticism is welcome. They know that ideas go from good to great when shared with others. These individuals are annoyed with "yes people," and much prefer thought provoking constructive criticism. Feedback is solicited from several facets

of the educator's life. They look to their students, spouse, boss, colleagues, the twitterverse, and just about anyone with an opinion willing to help improve their idea.

*Join them:* Here is [a great blog post](#) with more of a discussion on and explanation of this habit.

### **3. They fail fast and fail forward.**

"Failing" is normally a *dirty* word in education, but not for disruptive educators. They know that failure is an imperative part of the creative process. Innovative educators are brave enough to try new ideas in and outside of the classroom. They will spend plenty of time standing up to critics and pushing through the red tape just to try out their ideas. This being said, it would be a travesty for them to just quit when it doesn't work perfectly. Disruptive educators are good at acknowledging failure (see: honest feedback), and know when it's time to pivot.

*Join them:* Here is some [great advice](#), inspired by toddlers on an ice rink, about failing fast and failing forward.

### **4. They are passionately curious.**

If you observe innovative educators in a conversation with a student or a colleague, you'll see how they become hyper-focused and they ask lots of questions. They are constantly learning. This is also why they are idea blenders, because their curiosity leads them into a new web-design class or a subscription to an entrepreneurship online magazine. When faced with a problem, they don't fumble, they investigate. They ask lots of questions... really thoughtful questions. This goes beyond a commitment to lifelong learning, it is a habit of always asking why, and then taking the initiative to answer that question. Often, this is why they also love technology. It is because technology presents them with a new puzzle to figure out.

*Join them:* Here is a great [listing of MOOCs](#) to check out. Also, visit Eventbrite and look for classes or conferences in your area. Remember to look for classes that are outside the

EDU box.

## 5. They believe in their students.

Being a change agent in education is probably one of the most difficult, thankless and frustrating jobs out there. Our disruptive educators are square pegs that constantly feel like they are being jammed into a round hole. When you study the commitment they have for their work among all of the challenges they face, it is very similar to the commitment that an entrepreneur has for their start-up. They are willing to pour their blood, sweat and tears into each disruptive initiative because they know that it will ultimately improve the educational experience for their students. It is *so much* easier to be a complacent educator. Being innovative takes a kind of persistence and passion for their students that is inextinguishable. Some people will mistake their persistence for naive optimism, but they know that if they just keep pushing boundaries they will make a difference. This is why they get up in the morning.

*Join them:* We all love our students, but sometimes a reminder of our impact on their potential is helpful. Check out these [TEDx youth speakers](#) to be reminded of just how important our job is.

It was intentional to use the word "habit" when framing this post. We may all have an example of times when we engaged in some of the behaviors listed above. I would challenge everyone, including myself, to think about the definition of a habit (stated in the very beginning of this post). How frequent are you engaging in these behaviors? Is it habitual in nature? Meaning, are you doing these without even thinking about it?

Would love to hear your thoughts on the following as well: Would you add any habits? What stories do you have about being a disruptive educator? What other resources would you share?