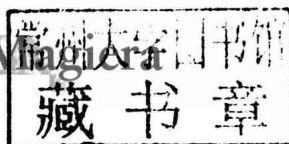# courageous
EDVENTURES

Navigating Obstacles to
Discover Classroom Innovation

JENNIE MAGIERA

COURAGEOUS EDVENTURES

Navigating Obstacles to Discover Classroom Innovation

Jennie Magiera

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PRAISE FOR *COURAGEOUS EDVENTURES*

"Jennie Magiera does a superb job of providing practical ideas and strategies on how to actually implement innovative practices in today's classroom. Her knowledge and experience as a change agent further strengthen the techniques presented and will help educators truly envision what's possible in classrooms today."

Eric Sheninger, Corwin Author and
Senior Fellow, International Center for Leadership in Education

"Jennie Magiera leads people on a great journey through this book with some great ideas to get started in the classroom right now, or the inspiration to find your own way leading to innovative ideas for learning and teaching. A great book for those wanting to bring innovation to life in their classrooms."

George Couros, Author of The Innovator's Mindset, *and*
Innovative Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Consultant

"This book is certainly courageous. Instead of offering a step-by-step guide for your next technology purchases, Jennie Magiera masterfully designed an ecology of learning that is rich not only in assorted learning technologies, but in learner experimentation, autonomy, collaboration, problem solving, reflection, and so much more. Her expansive approach to technology integration and the principles underlying it will be relevant for many years. Suffice to say, the ideas found on every page of this book will be just a as relevant a decade from now as they are today."

Curt Bonk, Professor at Indiana University, and
President of CourseShare, LLC

"Jennie Magiera guides teachers as they navigate obstacles to discover classroom innovation in her new book, *Courageous Edventures*. She starts off asking teachers to be courageous and bold because true progress and innovation only happens when they disrupt the status quo and take big risks. Jennie knows how daunting this is for teachers so she thoughtfully created strategies so any teacher can feel safe and comfortable embarking on this journey. The book is organized in four sections based on a sailing metaphor that helps teachers prepare for their Edventure, navigate problems, empower students to set their own course, and then reflect on the journey. I highly recommend teachers and administrators to read *Courageous Edventures* to guide them and encourage discussions around changing teaching practice."

Barbara Bray, Creative Learning Strategist and
Co-author of Make Learning Personal *and* How to Personalize Learning, *Oakland, CA*

"In *Courageous Edventures*, our innovative educaptain, Jennie Magiera, charts our course for the perfect blend of inspiration and practical and actionable ideas that can help to reinvigorate the classroom. A must read for new and veteran teachers alike that can remind us all why we teach."

Adam Bellow, Founder of EduTecher and EduClipper

"*Courageous Edventures* shares both inspiring tidbits and practical strategies for changing a school, a classroom, or a lesson. Magiera provides a valuable blend of personal stories and applicable examples for educators in any setting. I encourage educators to read the book and think about how they can be more courageous in their own practice."

Zachary Walker, Author of Teaching the Last Backpack Generation
National Institute of Education, Singapore

"*Courageous Edventures* is full of insightful and actionable ideas for transforming your classroom. Magiera paints a picture of innovative teaching and learning that is accessible for educators at all stages of their career. I love Magiera's student-centered approach to using technology to reach authentic audiences and the colorful stories from the classroom. This is a must-read for teachers searching for a road map for deeper learning!"

Monica Burns, Author and Speaker,
Apple Distinguished Educator, Founder of ClassTechTips.com

"Principals, superintendents, and other leaders in education, share this book with your teachers now. Magiera's thoughtful and delightful insight into the best of what's happening in our schools will inspire new teachers and reinvigorate veterans to provide the classroom experiences our students need to thrive in and shape their world."

Kevin Brookhouser, Author of The 20time Project:
How educators can launch Google's formula for future-ready innovation

"Magiera takes us on a Courageous Edventure by outlining a blueprint for charting a new course while navigating rough waters in order to sail into the Great Beyond. Her words of wisdom, stemming from her career as a practitioner, are encouraging yet simultaneously challenging—challenging educators to create new, authentic learning experiences for all kids. Whether your setting is urban, suburban, or rural, Magiera will push your thinking, challenge the status quo, and support your work in developing Future Ready classrooms and schools. *Courageous Edventures* is a great read and a needed tool for your toolbox!"

Thomas C. Murray, Director of Innovation
Future Ready Schools

"With *Courageous Edventures*, Jennie Magiera has created a book that is both powerful and accessible to teachers who want to transform their classrooms into more modern, active, empowering spaces. Magiera's powerful voice and passion for the work shine through on every page, making this a fun read as well as a deeply helpful read as well."

Chris Lehmann, Founding Principal of Science Leadership Academy and
Author of Building School 2.0

"This book is written for any educator looking to sail into an innovative classroom. Ms. Magiera uses humor and stories to identify with educators and help guide the reader through the transition of a traditional classroom to an innovative classroom. This book takes you on a journey and is packed with ideas, examples, and resources that would be invaluable to any educator."

Kelly Fitzgerald, Online Learning Integration Specialist
Leander ISD

"A practical and resource-filled guide to using technology to true advantage in the classroom."

Betsy Ruffin, Retired Educator, Technology Consultant
B Ruffin Enterprises, Cleburne, TX

"*Courageous Edventures* is as fun as it is wildly useful for teachers wanting to move from hope for more effective teaching and more satisfying professional experiences to realizing both. Magiera helpfully explores the general (building professional networks, reflecting collaboratively, etc.) and the specific (her brilliant "Gripe Jam," fascinating ways to use OK Go videos, and much more) in ways that will hold the attention of both veterans and newbies. This is a perfect book for those in teacher education programs and professional study teams at all kinds of schools."

Rushton Hurley, Educator and Executive Director
Next Vista for Learning

COURAGEOUS EDVENTURES

To Mom and Dad, my first teachers:

*Thank you for always challenging me to
be better, try harder, and love life.*

I miss you so much.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my all of my students, past, present, and future—thank you for allowing me to help you grow and learn. You're the reason I do what I do every day.

To my professional learning community—thank you for sharing your inspiration, passion, and love of education with me. We're better together, and I'm better because of you. Without this amazing network of educator friends, I wouldn't have the courage and confidence to edventure.

To the many who shared feedback and encouragement on this book as it was being developed, written, rewritten, and rewritten again—thank you for being so generous with your time and support.

To all of my friends and family—thank you for always being there with encouraging words, big hugs, and infinite love.

To my sister, Katherine: Thank you for being my little sister and big hero. You're the author I hope to be; I'm your biggest fan. Mom and Dad would have been so proud of you, as I am. *"And I love you very much."*

And of course, to my husband, Jim: You're the love of my life, my best friend and other half. You make me smile every day and make me a better version of myself. I'm happiest when I'm with you. *"I love you, have a nice day."*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennie Magiera always knew she wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. Throughout all of her roles, starting as a Chicago Public Schools teacher to currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer for Des Plaines School District 62, she has always made teaching and supporting students her priority. A White House Champion for Change, Apple Distinguished Educator, Google for Education Certified Innovator, and TEDx Speaker, Jennie works to improve teaching and learning through innovative new practices. She is also passionate about transforming professional learning, which she's personally championed through her work as an international speaker, member of the Technical Working Group for the U.S. Department of Education's 2016 National Educational Technology Plan and cofounding PLAYDATE as well as other new conference concepts. Jennie has earned degrees from Phillips Exeter Academy, Columbia University, and University of Illinois–Chicago. Aside from her students, Jennie's great loves in life are sci-fi, mashed potatoes, Tabasco sauce, her dog, and her husband. You can find Jennie on Twitter at @MsMagiera or through her blog, *Teaching Like It's 2999.*

PREFACE

*Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth.*

—Rumi

Will you join me on an adventure? We must be courageous. We must be bold. As educators, we hope for limitless possibilities for our students. However, too often we are told what we can't do, given restrictions, and trapped into boxed curricula. Everyone's an expert on education because everyone went to school. The rhetoric is about avoiding failure and maintaining the steady plod toward increasing test scores. Yet true progress and innovation is achieved when brave individuals disrupt the status quo and take big risks.

To go on our adventure, we need to be brave enough to sail in new directions. This means embracing the possibility of failure, preparing for potential storms and inevitable rocky shores. It means taking a set of fresh eyes to chart a course around the many challenges, the naysayers, and the wall builders. This is possible. We can break free from the blockade of negativity to dream bigger for our kids. The good news is that others have already embarked on this journey and have left us clues on how to follow. In fact, the story of daring exploration becoming accessible to all is a tale that has been repeated throughout history.

Over 3,000 years ago, Polynesian ancestors set out in canoes to sail across the ocean and discover new worlds using nothing but the stars, water, and wind to guide them (see Figure 0.1). As the voyagers sailed off, the majority of their brethren remained on land, watching and waiting to see how they fared. Perhaps those left behind wanted to go along but couldn't for lack of vessels. Perhaps they wanted to follow but feared the hazards. Perhaps they thought these adventurers were completely bananas and wanted no business in that adventuring nonsense. However, when the early explorers returned, it became clear that there were increased opportunities just over the horizon. So the explorers shared their discoveries, described the path, and encouraged others to follow.

FIGURE 0.1 Polynesian Sailors
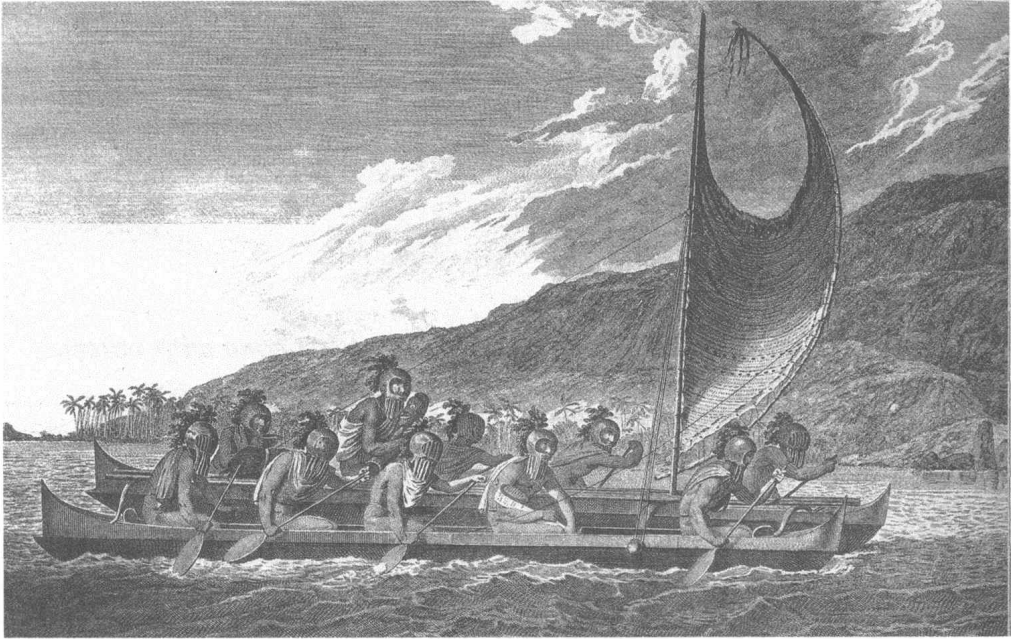
SOURCE: Public Domain. John Webber—Alexander Turnbull Library

We are experiencing a similar pattern today in education. The early innovators have already set out on a course to discover new possibilities for their students across the digital sea. Of those who didn't partake in this endeavor, some wanted to join but couldn't for lack of devices or connectivity. Some were intrigued but hesitated due to the many challenges. Still others simply weren't sold on the idea. Now that the early innovators have gone forth, have succeeded, and are sharing the stories of increased student opportunity, we are drawn to follow. But what of the hazards we may encounter: the many obstacles facing students, teachers, and schools that seem to prevent passage toward innovative learning? Fear of these hazards stops many from even attempting the first step. This book will help you both face and overcome those obstacles so you may embark on your own edventure.

I remember my first edventure. On July 29, 2010, I was getting ready for bed and decided to check my e-mail. As I read through my messages, I burst into tears—big, melodramatic sobs. My husband peered over my shoulder to see what I was reading and exclaimed, "Oh, congratulations, honey! You got the iPad grant! Look at you, crying because you're so happy." As he pulled me in for a congratulatory hug, I sullenly corrected him. "No, Jim. I'm not crying because I'm happy. I'm crying because now I actually have to do all the garbage I made up in the grant. I have no idea what I'm doing."

You see, I wasn't what you would call an "early adopter" at this point in my life or career. I had never seen an iPad in real life. In fact, I may have openly teased my friends who purchased one, congratulating them on buying

a soon-to-be outdated "giant iPhone that can't even make calls." I wrote this grant because it was something new, something different for my students. I had a vague notion of the possibilities that it could unleash but no clear idea of how to set forth in that direction. The grant I had written was riddled with impossibilities—some actually impossible (i.e., the many Flash-based websites I claimed I would use that could not run on an iPad) and some seemingly impossible (i.e., I would automatically differentiate for each student individually at all times of the day through the use of iPads.) The sweet irony was that since the concept of iPads in education was so new—this was only a few months after the iPad was publicly released—the folks who reviewed my grant also had little idea of how this would look.

And so that August, they wheeled a cart of 32 iPads into my classroom. At first, my experience was both terrifying and confusing. I spent endless hours after school trying to figure out "how to iPad." After several months of trial and error, I realized that I was focusing on the wrong thing. I began to understand that my goal shouldn't simply be to do something new for the sake of it being new or to get better at using these new tools. Rather, my focus should be to solve existing problems with new methodologies—and in the process, to reimagine how teaching and learning could look and feel like. The iPads weren't the destination. They were a *vehicle* for reaching existing goals.

Although this realization was huge, I was still daunted by the challenge of figuring out where to begin, what first steps to make, and what risks to take. I wrote this book to be the compass and guide I wish I had at that time. It is also the guide I wish I had in my current role as a support to thousands of teachers making the same journey that I once took. It encompasses the learning experiences I had through failure and iteration, crowdsourcing and collaboration, research and exploration.

This book is for educators endeavoring to make a tangible and positive impact on teaching and learning through technology use. Whether you have a device in the hands of every student or nothing but a laptop and projector or you're simply looking toward the future, this is your partner in inspiration and "I can do this" ideas. As a teacher, I rarely found time to sit down and read long professional texts. Keeping this in mind, I've filled this book with images, diagrams, lesson ideas, and resources that you can download for use immediately. Moreover, the format of the book is set up so you can use it as a quick reference to solve certain problems or follow it as a step-by-step guide to transform your practice.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

These chapters are organized into four sections—Part I: "Charting Your Course," Part II: "Navigating Your Problems", Part III: "Sailing Into the

Great Beyond" and Part IV: "Reflecting on Your Edventure." You can read through from beginning to end to chronologically steer each step of your odyssey. However, you can also simply pick up the book, find what you need, and dig in immediately.

Part I: "Charting Your Course" sets the foundation and focus for your work. It is about preparing for the edventure: setting up your room, students, devices, and mindset. The concept of problem-based innovation (PBI) is explained and you will learn how to create your own Teacher Innovation Exploration Plan (TIEP). This will be the focus document to help you plan and chart your progress.

Part II: "Navigating Your Problems" prepares you for the edventure by first identifying and navigating around the problems that currently exist to formulate your TIEP. They are the nagging "yes, but . . ." you hear in the back of your mind when thinking of attempting something risky. This section is set up in a problem–solution structure with a litany of educational problems listed by category. For each problem, there are various suggestions offered. If you're looking to dive into a digital renovation of your room, you can set focus goals through Part I by creating your TIEP and then use this section to look for solution ideas.

Part III: "Sailing Into the Great Beyond" takes advantage of your "cleared waters" from Part II to push onward into the next frontier of classroom innovation. In this realm, you learn to hand over the wheel to your students and empower them to set their own course for learning. This is the meatiest part of the book, as it explores the power of student agency as well as the forethought and process needed to successfully support it.

Part IV: "Reflecting on Your Edventure" is about how you can reflect upon and share your experience (and even plan the next). Once you've finished reading this book, where can you find additional help? How can you continue to audit and improve your practice? Here, I share some tips and ideas that I use on a regular basis to continue learning and growing in order to become a better version of myself.

So come on board, and hold on tight, because we're heading off for an edventure to change your classroom . . . and perhaps the world while we're at it.

Disclaimer About the Tools Mentioned in This Book

Pepsi or Coke? Mac or PC? Burger King or McDonalds? With brand rivalries like these, people tend to pick their team and stick with it. I've witnessed patrons sending back drinks when they order a Coke and instead receive a Pepsi. I've seen friends venomously arguing

about which phone platform reigns supreme. It seems that they are married to their brand choice—and for many, this comes with a fierce loyalty.

The same seems to go with educational technology rivalries. iPads or Chromebooks? Edmodo or Schoology? AppleTV or Chromecast? In these cases, I was once a staunch advocate for or adversary against one program, site, or device. I thought these loyalties were forever. And yet, as I spend longer in the constantly evolving landscape that is educational technology, I am discovering a new truth: There are no long-term relationships in educational technology. I may be a believer in Brand A or Device B one month, but the next month—or even sometimes the next week—something new will come about that will tip the ship and I find myself switching teams.

Therefore, the tools mentioned in this book are temporally bound. They are relevant and recommended as of the date I wrote about them. However, things change. So the challenge I had was to write a book that will remain mostly static over time about a landscape that is ever changing. My response was twofold:

1. Write about pedagogy, not tools. For the most part, the ideas posed in this book are about philosophies, strategies, and learning—not the tools. When there are tools mentioned, they are given as an example of what's out there right now. As I mention frequently throughout the book, the learning opportunities are point, not the tools.

2. Provide a companion website with updated lists of tools, features, and ideas. The companion website can be found at http://resources.corwin.com/courageoused ventures. There are QR codes throughout this book to reach the corresponding webpage or resource.

In addition to taking this approach, I want to leave you with three tips on how to audit the educational technology tools you encounter, both those you will find in these pages and those you are already using.

Tip #1: Embrace the Competition

Competition in some forms can definitely be ugly. Yet, in the case of competing companies, they can boost progress. When the iPhone first came out, it was the only one of its kind. It was, by default, best in its class. Then, as the Android and Windows smartphones started to improve, they pushed iOS developers to rethink their approach and up the ante. The big teams had to think outside of the box that their competitors created . . . and so the box grew bigger. As spoiled consumers used to the bigger and the better, this works out quite nicely. As educators used to glacial progress when it comes to learning tools, this is incredibly refreshing and exciting. Finally, teachers are the recipients of a speedy improvement loop.

(Continued)

Tip #2: Consistently Audit What You Think You Know

As a result of this competition, these products are constantly updating. A product that was once subpar or missing a key feature can become the best fit for your needs overnight. For example, I used to harbor strong negative feelings toward a certain learning management system while favoring another. Then a large site update occurred, and I was forced to reevaluate my stance. I must admit that it's hard to keep up; as everything is constantly changing, nothing is ever set in stone. This can be frustrating when we're used to learning something and then relying on that knowledge as we move through our work. Despite this, taking time to regularly revisit tools you think you know, or ones you've previously dismissed, can prove incredibly fruitful.

Tip #3: Loyalty to Students Over All Else

At the end of the day, it isn't about brand loyalty. It's about what is best for our students. I used to feel bad about switching from one product to another. I thought of myself as a "fill-in-the-blank brand" person. But when it comes to choosing devices or programs for educational use, that all goes out the window. We shouldn't be loyal to brands; we need to be loyal to our students. When selecting an instructional tool, we need to be asking, "What can solve our problems of practice? What can push our pedagogy? What is going to provide the best user experience and opportunity for my students to succeed?" And if those answers change from one week to another, that's okay, as long as it's our students who are benefiting.

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