

## Teaching Your Way Around the World

Teachers and administrators share their experiences in international schools around the world

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### Roots of Agile for Education

Posted on December 16, 2019 by Paul Magnuson

Not insignificantly, agility affected my personal framing of work and my thinking about how to get work done. My colleague Bill pointed this out to me one day. “You can’t go back, you know,” is what he said. So I started asking others working with agility if they had experienced something similar. They had, ranging from big Aha-moments to gradual shifts in thinking and practice that led to new ways of working.

So what’s *agility*? You’ll get different answers from different people, but you’ll likely pick up on a strong leitmotif of collaborative work, completed in short iterations, with lots of feedback informing the team and the work along the way.

There’s a document describing the basic elements, written in software terms, called the [Agile Manifesto](#). It remains an important touchstone for agility. But, of course, agility didn’t spring up out of nowhere. There are likely themes of agility since people have been people. The document stresses (and the bullets are a direct quote):

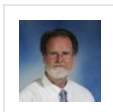
- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

While obviously written for software development, it is not hard to crosswalk the ideas into an educational context. *Focusing on individuals, who work collaboratively, and adapting that work as they learn more about it* has direct applications for students and teachers.

A group of agilist educators did reformulate the original manifesto into a guide for education, which they completed in 2016 and called the [Agile in Education Compass](#). It packages agile principles more directly and in language familiar to educators. Some members of that same group are working now on a process to certify educators in agility.

And with good reason, I think. The IB PYP guidelines and the new ACE protocol for school accreditation designed by NEASC are nice examples of why. These are large organizations that are pushing for the type of mindset embedded deep in agility. So why not develop a certification, and work on expanding the network of educators, who feel at home with the agile mindset? If it can advance the agendas that include greater student self-regulation and an ability to manage one’s own workflow, in collaboration with others, in my book that’s a significant victory.

Read more in the LAS Educational Research publication, [Spotlight](#), or follow my colleague Nic on Twitter (@agileinthealps) and visit her web page with the same name.



#### About Paul Magnuson

Several years ago, Paul Magnuson founded a research center at the high school level in collaboration with colleagues at Leysin American School. The center supports professional learning through a variety of programs, including year-long action research projects by faculty who receive competitive resident scholarships. In addition, the center works with schools and universities around the world, hosting 10 to 15 visiting scholars annually, and consulting and presenting at schools and other organizations. Paul has created a number of tools and programs, including classroom observation schemes, language immersion summer camps, the middle school at LAS, and most recently, edge, a high school program which offers an alternative to traditional school through greatly increased student agency. His current interests are the documentation of edge, pulling agile into

education, and self-regulation for both students and teachers.  
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