Leah Grabelsky

LEARNING & PROGRAM DESIGNER

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Learning and program designer with 20+ years designing curriculum, professional learning, implementation systems, and knowledge products across classrooms, schools, and district programs. Builds both the learning and the infrastructure around it—curricula and assessments; roles, routines, and tools for implementation; and case studies and knowledge systems that help practice travel. Work has included districtwide curriculum redesign, schoolwide instructional systems, professional learning and coaching, founding-school implementation design, and learning and program design for a NYC initiative that expanded from 21 to 200+ schools. Experience spans direct classroom practice through system-level design, with recent work extending that practice into generative AI-assisted curriculum, differentiation, assessment, and interactive learning.

SKILLS

Learning Design · Curriculum Design · Instructional Design · Program Design · Professional Learning Design · Assessment Design · Implementation Systems · Continuous Improvement · Instructional Resource Development · Framework Development · Knowledge Product Development · Generative AI-Assisted Learning Design

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

LEARNING & PROGRAM DESIGN PROJECTS — 2025–Present

Independent Consultant

- Reviewed curriculum modules for the Alliance for Decision Education, evaluating instructional design and providing feedback to inform revision.
- Facilitated design of the operating model for Central Brooklyn Literacy Academy, a new NYCPS school for students with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities; with the founding principal, translated emerging decisions into a staff handbook defining instruction, assessment, roles, routines, and communication.

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Bronx, NY — 2025–2026

Social Studies Teacher — JHS 144 Michelangelo

- Designed and taught a full-year Early American History curriculum for 100 students across four sections, including Honors and ENL, with differentiated texts, scaffolds, and assessments for learners ranging from newcomer English learners to advanced students.
- Used Claude and Gemini to accelerate curriculum and assessment design, including differentiated and multilingual adaptations and a 50-question cumulative exam synthesized from roughly 75 lessons; used item-level analysis and professional judgment to identify student-learning patterns and refine materials.

DOBBS FERRY SCHOOL DISTRICT, Dobbs Ferry, NY — 2022–2024

Assistant Principal — Springhurst Elementary School

- Co-led a literacy curriculum audit and classroom pilots at Springhurst Elementary School, comparing science-of-reading-aligned programs through site visits, structured teacher input, and pilots of finalist programs.
- Supervised, evaluated, and developed 60+ teachers and staff, with responsibility for recruitment, hiring, onboarding, coaching, and instructional improvement.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, New York, NY — 2019–2022

Academic Response Team Specialist — Brooklyn North Borough Office

- Facilitated design of a fully linked 20-lesson memoir system with a middle-school teacher team, connecting objectives, assessments, mentor texts, student work, and a standards-based rubric; led a 2½-hour session enabling educators at other schools to understand and adapt the model.
- Built reusable learning resources during remote instruction, including a best-practices guide connecting digital tools to instructional rationale, instructional video lessons, and a 60+ resource library organized by whether materials were models, adaptable resources, or ready to use.
- Coached 60+ K–8 teachers and leadership teams in six schools on curriculum planning, formative assessment, and implementation of HMH Into Reading and Illustrative Mathematics.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, New York, NY — 2017–2019

Assistant Principal of Instruction — High School of Arts and Technology

- Led a schoolwide instructional focus on argument writing, supporting about 450 students and about 2,700 pieces of writing annually, built on a shared rubric, subject adaptations, instructional tools, and teacher inquiry routines that used student evidence to refine instruction.
- Led development of a 9–12 English scope and sequence with department leaders, aligning genres, standards, and reading/writing expectations across four grades and six marking periods.
- Designed professional learning and three-week coaching cycles in curriculum, formative assessment, and differentiation.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, New York, NY — 2014–2017

Associate Director of Program Development and Design — Learning Partners Program

- Designed program structures for the Learning Partners Program as it expanded from 21 to 200+ schools, including common expectations, leadership roles, cross-school learning, facilitation routines, and knowledge-sharing structures that schools could adapt locally.
- Co-developed the Cycles of Learning framework, adapting Carnegie Foundation Improvement Science into a practical school-team cycle for defining a learning question, testing instructional practice, examining student evidence, refining the approach, and documenting learning.
- Led field-based inquiry and knowledge-sharing across participating schools; co-authored two published case studies documenting how school teams tested, adapted, and spread literacy and mathematics practices, directed companion video profiles featuring teachers and principals, and established processes for reviewing and publishing school-created instructional artifacts.
- Applied the program's inquiry discipline to its own design: built data-collection protocols, observation tools, and analysis routines, then used implementation evidence to inform the 2017–18 redesign and ongoing changes to content and delivery.

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Lowell, MA — 2011–2014

Instructional Specialist — Butler Middle School

- Led districtwide 7th-grade ELA curriculum redesign and the transition to Common Core; launched Writing Workshop and Leveled Literacy Intervention through demonstration teaching, side-by-side coaching, and professional learning.
- Directed coaching cycles and professional learning in curriculum, pedagogy, literacy, and data analysis during Butler Middle School's improvement from Massachusetts "Level 3" to "Level 2" status.

EDUCATION

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION — Ed.M., School Leadership
BROWN UNIVERSITY — M.A.T., Secondary Social Studies
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY — B.A., Psychology/Sociology

SELECTED DESIGN WORK & PUBLICATIONS

NYCDOE Learning Partners Program Case Studies (2017) · Middle-Grades Memoir Writing Unit (20 lessons) · Central Brooklyn Literacy Academy Staff Handbook · Carnegie Foundation Annual Summit Poster: Teacher-Driven Improvement Science (2018)

TECHNOLOGY & LANGUAGES

AI & digital learning: Claude, Gemini, NotebookLM, Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT · Google Workspace and Google Classroom · interactive HTML learning artifacts
Languages: English (native) · American Sign Language (professional proficiency; taught ASL at Wesleyan University) · Spanish (conversational)

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Studies Teacher — Somerville & Needham Public Schools, MA (2004–2010): Designed and taught history, civics, geography, and literacy intervention; also designed civic-learning projects for authentic audiences, including the student-initiated "Black Code" campaign.

Founder & Director — Deaf Plus, Interlocken International Summer Camp: Founded and directed a Deaf-inclusion program.

Fulbright-Hays Research Fellow — Russia (2010): Developed and presented social studies curriculum.