

# HOW TO CAST A GREAT TEAM

Recruiting the right people,  
so you can create bold ideas



The  
Super School  
Project

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.

**BABE RUTH**

**Think about a team you admire.**

**A sports team.**

**A team you've seen in a movie.**

**A team famous for  
a historical achievement.**

**Now it's your turn to build  
a great team.**

**When you think about the best teams you've witnessed—or been a part of—what do they have in common?**

**Most likely, they're driven by a big goal (to put a man on the moon, win the championship, create something new for the world). The members are great individually— but together, they're unstoppable. And they have a way of working together that makes the most of their collective talents.**

Taking on the XQ Challenge is in itself an audacious goal. You'll cast a team, then head into the unknown. No one knows exactly how to build the next American high school. And that's the point. You will be charting your own path.

Let's take this step by step. Start by determining who has the skills, the passion, and the ambition to embark on this journey with you.

# To envision and build a super school, you have to find the right talent.

**What is needed to create truly breakthrough ideas? What will be required to invent the next American high school?**

**In our view, it all comes down to people. We believe that there's tremendous potential in you and the people around you.**

Students and teachers with ideas they've been holding on to, waiting for a chance to make them real. Parents with curious minds and a willingness to work hard for

their kids' future. Businesspeople who know what's truly required of learners when they join the workforce. Educational leaders, activists, and researchers who know there are better ways to accelerate learning.

Your goal is to find these people—and mobilize them. Who do you want by your side for the entire project? Who will you want to tap into at particular moments? Who will help you lobby for your ideas?



**What people know.  
Who people know.  
What people are naturally good at.  
And how well people work with others.**

**That's what matters.**

**Keeping that  
in mind, who  
do you want  
to recruit?**

**Like Phil Jackson assembling the Chicago Bulls of the '90s (Jordan, Pippen, and Rodman), or George Lucas finding the perfect trio for Star Wars (Han, Luke, and Leia), casting the right team is a carefully considered effort.**

**Casting a great team is like creating your own legion of superheroes.**

One way to think about casting a great team is that you have to get two things right:

**1**

Cast for what people know and what they know how to do.

Ensure that you have all the right players. You can't have an entire team of shortstops.

**2**

Cast for how people fit within the team.

Create the right chemistry—the right mix of visionary and practical, of imaginative and contrarian—to help make your super school idea powerful, then tangible.



**What kinds of skills do we need on our team?**

**Who would push our team to be more ambitious?**

**Who can help our team persevere**

**through the tough parts of the journey?**

# 1

## Cast for what people know and what they know how to do.

Think about who you need to have on your team to build a super school. Who should you collaborate with?

The experts on your team don't need to have Ph.D.'s or professional training. Look for anyone who has the superpowers your team needs—whether they are people who live near you or people you meet online, such as through the XQ Community.

And be creative about whose ideas you could “recruit”—from historical figures who inspire you to innovative thinkers who are famous for their big ideas.

### TIP:

Because we know that a great team isn't easy to assemble, we have created the XQ Community where you can search for people by their geographic regions and skills.



Visit the community at [xqsuperschool.org](https://xqsuperschool.org).

### A TEACHING & LEARNING EXPERT

Someone who has experience teaching knowledge and skills to young people, and is always trying new ways to make ideas stick

#### For example:

- + High school or middle school teacher
- + Principal
- + Coach
- + Curriculum developer
- + Museum or arts educator
- + Youth services provider
- + Counselor
- + Community college or university professor

### A FINANCIAL EXPERT

Someone who's a master with money and able to rethink how it might be managed

#### For example:

- + School or district finance staff
- + Financial analyst
- + Accountant
- + Investor
- + Fundraiser
- + Business analyst
- + Banker

### A PHYSICAL SPACE EXPERT

Someone who understands physical spaces—what works and what doesn't—and asks questions like “What if we reimaged this space so it isn't bound by walls?”

#### For example:

- + Architect
- + Engineer
- + Builder
- + Urban planner
- + Interior or landscape designer
- + Experience designer

### A TECHNOLOGY EXPERT

Someone who lives and breathes the rapidly changing world of technology and has a keen instinct for finding creative ways to harness technology

#### For example:

- + IT professional
- + Coder or developer
- + Tech-savvy student
- + Computer expert
- + Technology journalist
- + Data analyst

### A DESIGN EXPERT

Someone with the skill to envision a world that doesn't yet exist and turn that vision into reality

#### For example:

- + Product or graphic designer
- + Visual artist
- + Information designer
- + Architect
- + Theater or fashion designer

### A COMMUNICATIONS & MOBILIZATION EXPERT

Someone who knows hundreds of ways to share a new idea with the world, and how to rally people around it

#### For example:

- + Writer
- + Journalist
- + Advertising professional
- + Public relations specialist
- + Social media specialist
- + Data visualization engineer
- + Faith leader
- + Campaign strategist
- + Social activist



## A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

Someone who has a genuine understanding of what young people care about and is committed to creating new opportunities for them

### For example:

- + Teacher
- + Coach
- + Youth services provider
- + Physician
- + Psychologist or social worker
- + Neighborhood leader
- + Parent

## AN OPERATIONS & ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

Someone with experience setting up new enterprises and a keen knowledge of how to design the operations of an endeavor

### For example:

- + Independent business owner
- + Nonprofit leader
- + Process designer
- + Operations manager
- + General contractor
- + School administrator
- + Company executive
- + Consultant

## A RESEARCH & EVALUATION EXPERT

Someone who knows how to ask insightful questions, gather data, and seek out answers on any subject

### For example:

- + College professor
- + Graduate student
- + Evaluator
- + Analyst
- + Opinion poller
- + Journalist

## A POLICY & LAW EXPERT

Someone who deeply understands our legal system and/or public policies, as well as how to work the system with confidence to help make our ideas real

### For example:

- + Lawyer
- + Public official
- + School administrator
- + Government policy staffer
- + Policy consultant

# Who else do you want on your team?

Don't limit your team to the people you know or those who live near you. Think about whom you might team up with virtually, whom you might take inspiration from, or whom the XQ Institute may be able to rally to get on board.

## A HISTORIC VISIONARY

A historic figure who inspires your thinking about the world and your education philosophy

### For example:

- + Education thought leader
- + Movement builder
- + Status quo fighter
- + Revolutionary leader

## A MOONSHOT TEAMMATE

A famous person you might dream of having on board, who may not be an active member of your team but could propel you to bolder, bigger ideas

### For example:

- + Global education superstar
- + Corporate CEO or entrepreneur
- + International author
- + National or global policy leader
- + Athlete
- + Musician
- + Actor

## VIRTUAL COLLABORATORS

People around the world who are doing innovative things, and whom you might be able to team up with virtually

### For example:

- + Online bloggers and activists
- + Virtual communities
- + Online forums
- + Hackers
- + Artificial intelligence

## A \_\_\_\_\_ EXPERT

Get imaginative. What other types of expertise will complete your team?

### For example:

- +
- +
- +
- +
- +

# 2

## Cast for how people fit within the team.

Of course, it's not just what people know or know how to do that matters. When it comes to inventing bold new ideas or approaches, it's also how they contribute to the process—how they help create the right chemistry on the team. Are they particularly strong at coming up with ideas? Building on other people's ideas? Being the voice of practicality? Helping the team stay focused?

So in addition to casting people for what they know and know how to do, think about the role they play on the team.

### IDEA GENERATOR

Someone who always shows up with bold ideas that go far beyond the norm and who inspires others to think differently

### SYSTEMS THINKER

Someone with a knack for seeing how all the parts fit together—how changing one thing affects everything else

### SENSE-MAKER

Someone who can look at a complex problem and quickly determine what matters most

### COALITION BUILDER

Someone who can rally people around a common cause and inspire them to make it their own

### ENERGIZER

Someone who is amazing at keeping the team's energy and confidence up, whether it's getting them excited about an idea or helping them weather the tough times

### VISIONARY

Someone who has a clear idea of what the future looks like and the path the team must walk to get there

### REALITY CHECKER

Someone who is pragmatic, quickly recognizing what's possible and what's not—and always thinking about how to make new ideas possible

### COORDINATOR

Someone with an innate talent for keeping everyone organized—who is energized by helping teams adapt to rapidly changing conditions

### CONTRARIAN

Someone who isn't afraid to challenge people's thinking, but does it in a constructive way that leads to new and better ideas

### IDEA REFINER

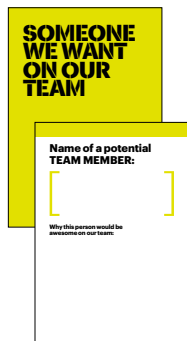
Someone who loves playing with ideas—taking others' ideas and making them even better

# Cast your team

As a collection of individuals, your team should have a wide set of talents, skills, and ways of thinking.

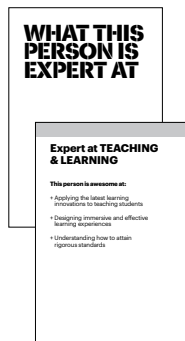
In this kit, you will find a set of CASTING CARDS designed to help you think through the team you need to take on this challenge.

## There are three types of cards:



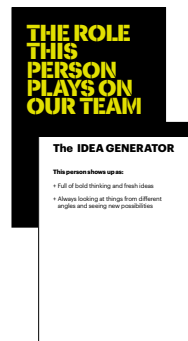
### NAME CARDS

The names of potential team members from your network or from the XQ Community



### EXPERT CARDS

The different types of experts you might need to design a super school and make it a reality



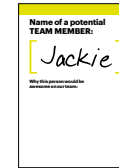
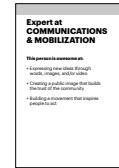
### ROLE CARDS

The different roles people often play on teams. Each individual can have multiple roles

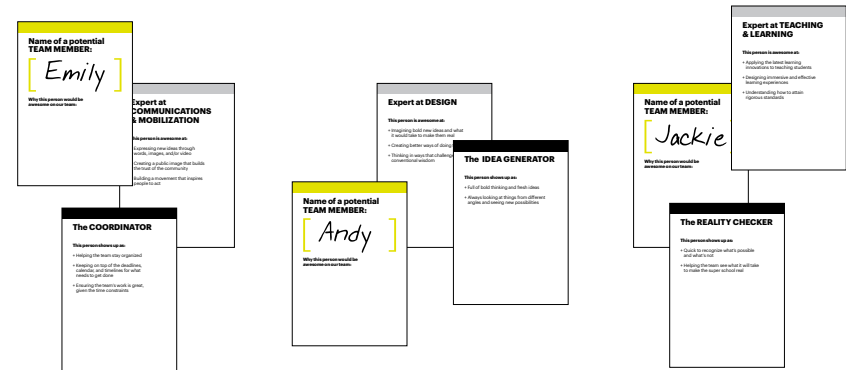
## How to use the CASTING CARDS:

Look through the three types of cards. Lay out a first pass at casting your team, using whichever cards you need.

For example, your first pass might look like this:



Then, build on the cards you chose. Add characteristics to the people you named, and name people who have the characteristics your team needs. Adjust until you've got your team.



### TIP:

If there's a type of expert you need, but you don't know anyone who can fill that spot, don't worry. You can tap into our online XQ Community to recruit passionate experts for your team.

 Visit the community at [xqsuperschool.org](https://xqsuperschool.org).

Getting the right people and the right chemistry  
is more important than getting the right idea.

**ED CATMULL**



Tweet your ideas.  
**#RethinkHighSchool**

Get activated.  
**[xqsuperschool.org](http://xqsuperschool.org)**