

Dear potential trade school organizer,

Thank you for caring about alternative education and mutual aid.

This is a document about organizing non-hierarchical teams, building a positive group culture, and spreading information widely. After sending hundreds of emails to people about starting a Trade School in their area, we decided that it was time to put our information in one place.

If you hate toolboxes, don't worry- so do we! You don't have to read any of this to make a good Trade School, but we think reading this is a good idea because it could help you avoid repeating the mistakes we made right away. Maybe you'll also get inspired by the things that inspired us. We hope this document helps us answer less emails.

Use the information that makes sense for your community, send us updates based on what works for you, and disregard the rest.

Good luck!

Trade School New York

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Principles

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What:

Trade School is a learning experiment where teachers barter with students.

We place equal value on big ideas, practical skills, and experiential knowledge.

Why:

Everyone has something to offer.

Trade School is not free—we believe in the power of non-monetary value.

How:

Trade School runs on mutual respect.

We are motivated by integrity, not coercion.

We are organized without hierarchy.

We share power and information.

We are actively working to create safe spaces for people and ideas.

Our organization is always learning and evolving.

We are inspired by Mess Hall and the Principles of Cooperation:

http://www.messhall.org/ten_points.html

<http://www.ncba.coop/ncba/about-co-ops/co-op-principles>

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time; but if you are here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

—Lilla Watson

Agreements

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___ I will welcome all people to Trade School, creating a safe space that supports anti-oppression, values rigor, and promotes generosity. Trade School is about relationships of trust and mutual aid: the voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit. As an organizer, it is my job to create a space of respect. This may mean developing community agreements with my group that intentionally dismantle the structures of oppression that marginalize some, and divide us all. These may include racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, transphobia, xenophobia, religious discrimination, ageism, and ableism, among others. Without these intentions Trade School can't really be open to all.

___ I will collaborate and cooperate. I understand that individual freedoms are not above our collective safety, well-being, and ability to function cooperatively; individual freedom without responsibility to the community is not how we relate. I want to be part of a group that is based on shared power and the inherent value of every person. I will take responsibility for gathering the initial group and calling people together, but I will work towards sharing power for a decentralized, horizontal group.

___ I will make space for sharing ideas and information, not for advertising. I will NOT allow teachers to promote a product, a business, or the exploitation of other people. Trade School exists to help more people share skills, ideas, and resources- not to promote brands, companies, or exploitation. Trade School is not about getting rich- it's about mutual aid. I will not allow brands to dominate Trade School. Sponsor or partner logos or names will not appear on the homepage. I will create a separate page dedicated to your sponsors (if necessary), and link to the page. Anywhere it appears, the sponsor's logo will be smaller than the Trade School logo.

What is Trade School?

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Trade School is a non-traditional learning space that runs on barter.

Anyone can teach a class.

Students sign up by agreeing to meet the barter requests of teachers.

On the day of class, students and teachers gather in a space that is made available by Trade School organizers. In New York, we make our own furniture, cook food in the space, and serve tea to welcome people. Students give barter items to the teacher, and class begins.

Trade School celebrates hands on knowledge and experience. It is a place to learn with other people who value practical wisdom, mutual aid, and the social nature of exchange.

Local Trade School chapters open whenever a group of volunteers decide to organize one collectively.

How did we do it?

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The first time (2010), everyone contributed time and materials to support the communities that value cooperation over competition. Rich Watts bartered design work for GrandOpening's storefront space and help conceptualizing Trade School. Louise Ma and Rich Watts designed the website and Caroline Woolard coordinated with teachers to make the class schedule. We made a weatherproof flag, bucket furniture, hook-filled shelving, and a huge chalkboard. Incredibly rigorous, creative thinkers gave time to Trade School from day one.

This second time (2011), we wanted to open Trade School for longer than a month, and needed to raise money to pay for rent because we couldn't find anyone who would barter with us for a three month rental in Manhattan. We raised money on Kickstarter, and after a LOT of searching and discussion with various venues, we were approached by Old School at 32 Prince. It's an old classroom in Nolita, so it seemed perfect. Saul Melman joined our team as well, helping to coordinate and conceptualize the project. We also have a handful of generous volunteers, and more enthusiastic teachers and students than ever.

The third time (2012), we wanted to open up the organizing to anyone who was interested in helping. Rather than working as a team of 3-4 people, we now have 6-12 people who vote and work on Trade School. We started drafting our principles for clarity, and use rotating facilitation, consensus, and stack to keep our meetings organized. We now have big group meetings with report-backs from teams who focus on different aspects of Trade School independently: we have a party team, a venue team, a design and website team, a furniture team, a sponsorship team, a special events team, and a class coordination team.

The Software

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We give you a Trade School website for your area (ex: tokyo.tradeschool.coop) that allows you to schedule classes, coordinate with other organizers, accept and approve class proposals from teachers, make forms for students to sign up for classes and receive emails, and tell the world about what you're doing. You make your own logo!

How much does it cost?

If you can afford \$300, we'd really appreciate the help. Or Zubalsky spent over 2.5 months of full-time work writing the code for this software, Rich Watts and Louise Ma spent over a month designing and refining the front end, and Caroline Woolard spends 5-10 hours a week, year-round, answering emails and talking to excited organizers of potential Trade Schools. If you have absolutely no money, we will share the website and technical support with you for free. If you raise money (\$5,000 or more) for your Trade School, or if your organizing group can access funds over \$5,000, then we ask that you give us 10% of that income (for example, \$500 for a budget of \$5,000, \$1,000 for a budget of \$10,000) to recognize our work and time.

How do I get tech support?

We are available to help (which is why we like donations for our time!). Please read this document and try to get the information online BEFORE you ask for help.

If you still can't figure it out, email help@tradeschool.coop.

Students and Teachers

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Finding teachers

Where can you find teachers? You probably already know people who are great storytellers, who give tours, who teach their children, or who are professors who want to share information in a new setting. They probably just need a little bit of encouragement to set up and teach a class. For the first few classes, you will probably have to invite people. Ask people who will open Trade School with excitement- people who can speak to a range of topics, demonstrate a range of approaches to learning (from workshops to tours), and/or who know a lot of people. The first few classes should spread the word, set the tone, and create a standard of rigor and generosity.

When we first opened Trade School, we spent the month before we opened asking people we knew if they wanted to teach. We invited a range of good story tellers and radical educators: a mushroom expert and forager who wrote the Audobon Field Guide (Gary Lincoff), a woman with an MBA and an MFA who taught “Business for Artists” (Amy Whitaker), a singing enthusiast (Laura Harris), a master composer (Amanda Matles), and an arts festival producer (Chloe Bass). These people each invited their friends to come to their class, and many of their students became teachers who then invited more friends to their class. This is how it spread- word of mouth, emails, and links to our website.

Selecting teachers

We do not select teachers or turn potential teachers away. We ask for proposals so that we know what people want to teach, but we accept 99% of teachers. If there are any issues with the proposal, we give feedback and work with teachers to improve the class. We want to give everyone a chance to share what they know.

For special events (like when/if we work with museums and places with big PR and large audiences), where we can only fit a few classes in one night and lots of people want to teach, we take proposals for and give priority to people who have put in a lot of time to make Trade School work. For example, we give teaching priority to people who have donated food or cooked for us, people who repeatedly taught amazing classes on our regular schedule, and to people who both share information as teachers and learn as students at Trade School.

Demographics

If all of your friends are the same age, race, class, sex, and sexual-orientation, you should consider how this relates to your goals for your Trade School. For example, is Trade School really “open to everyone”? At Trade School NY, we are beginning to work with community-based organizations to develop a better program that isn’t only made by and for educated white creatives. We think Trade School will be better with a wider audience because our goal is to build a culture of mutual respect in NY, and respect can be built by appreciating differences, confronting oppression in the classroom, and learning from people who are not all the same.

What teachers ask for

Teachers might say “I don’t need anything” or “I don’t feel comfortable asking for anything” or “I just want money.” Encourage teachers to make a long list of things they buy or obscure things they need, and show them what other teachers have asked for (fresh produce, music suggestions, research tips, materials, drawings, etc.) for inspiration. If someone wants to take a class, but shows up at the last minute or can’t bring an object, let them help clean up the room or assist the organizers.

Students become teachers

At the end of each class, ask students to consider teaching a class. People might say “but I don’t know anything that anyone else wants to know.” Or, “I don’t have any skills.” If you ask them what they do for a job, what they like to do, or what their friends ask them to do, you will probably be able to help them see that there are a lot of skills/ideas/experiences they have that you and others would like to learn about.

Student sign-ups

Students usually sign up for a class online by agreeing to bring something that their teacher requests. You can also work out a system where anyone can sign up for a class in the physical space- but remember to enter it online so you don’t overbook your classes!

Walk-in students

If people wander in or come without bringing anything, just welcome them and say “please help us clean up at the end of class.” Remember who they are and make sure they help at the end. If they want to work out an IOU with the teacher, that is nice too.

“Most curators and artists have expressed wariness about the notion of a preconceived audience...What is usually not questioned, however, is how one’s notion of one’s self is created. It is the construct of a vast collectivity of people who have influenced one’s thoughts and one’s values, and to speak to one’s self is more than a solipsistic exercise- it is, rather, a silent way of speaking to the portion of civilization that is summarized in our minds.”

—Pablo Helguera, on audiences

No-show students

We have found that 50% of people who agree to bring barter items actually show up. This is typical of events in general, but a sad statement about our culture of flakes. Hopefully, people will stop saying “I’ll be there” and then not show up. Until we can hold people accountable and people can learn to take better responsibility for themselves, make sure you allow DOUBLE the number of students to sign up for each class. For example, if a teacher says “I want 10 students,” leave 20 spots to be filled. If they all fill, we find that about 10 will actually show up. In the rare case that all 20 show up (about 1% of the time), you will have to deal with it.

Class time

In New York, we’ve found that classes should be 1.5 hours with .5 hours between classes, so that there’s enough room to ask questions, clean up, give barter items to the teacher, and hang out. If the class involves a craft like felting or book-making, leave 4-5 hours or require two classes. Most craftspeople who haven’t taught before forget how long it takes to get everyone at the same step. Craft classes should be smaller and longer to allow for one-on-one help. Most importantly, we encourage participatory formats: workshops, break-out groups, walks, and discussions.

Class topics

Classes can be on anything. We’ve had a cartoon-drawing class taught by a 10-year old, a foraging in the street class, a philosophy and plumbing class, and a class about squatting the condos. As long as the person has real-life experience with the topic, or can relate a theory to practice well, it’s a good fit. We try to get a balance of craft traditions and contemporary tactics, and to balance book-learning with hands-on tactical experience.

Location

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We've found that with limited volunteers/staff, it's best to have a space that can be reached by the public directly- a public space, storefront or basement is ideal. If you have to direct people from the street to meander through a space, you will need more volunteers every night and you may find out that more students are lost in the building than you want to deal with. The other nice thing about being close to the street is that you can attract local students and teachers who haven't heard about Trade School online. We like to create our own space, because existing independent from institutions allows the group to build its culture and bring Trade School to larger institutions for special events only.

Trade School started because we were given use of a storefront (Rich Watts had done design work for a group that couldn't pay him, so he asked to be paid via use of their storefront). We didn't know what to do with the space, but after a wild brainstorm session about many possible barter storefronts, we decided that "barter for instruction" and a barter school had a lot of potential. We have done special events with the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Art and Design, but only after we had a gathering of people who knew that we were truly about mutual aid and not just big, flashy education-entertainment (as the museum events can feel if you don't have a context outside of the museum for your community of people to get to know each other).

After the first year, so many people were excited about Trade School that we decided to try to open again. No one would barter with us in exchange for a storefront the second year, so we ran a Kickstarter campaign (<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/OurGoods/trade-school-0?ref=live>) and raised money for rent and materials. That felt a little weird (many students ended up donating money and giving barter items to teachers), and we had a bad relationship with the landlord we were renting from. We hope we don't ever have to ask for so much money again, but if you absolutely cannot find space and need to rent some, go for it! We have found that even in NYC, there are enough spaces with empty areas for us to exist on surplus and gifting of space (rather than renting). When landlords donate space to us they also demonstrate that they are aligned with our values- people who are interested in sharing excess capacity, not turning as much as possible into something for sale.

The third year (starting March 2012), we've decided to go with donated space- enough art spaces know about us now that we are getting offers for free spaces. We are working with a gallery, a school, and a museum for a few intensive Trade School events. We accept the museum and gallery spaces as long as they give us autonomy, allow us to clear away any sense of a white cube with a visitors desk. Again, we build the group culture of mutual respect in independent spaces and bring it to big institutions for one-night-only events. Most importantly, we don't work with institutions that are not aligned or in support of our values.

Here are some things to consider:

Where will you be located and what are the demographics of the neighborhood?

Who are the students, teachers, and participants that you hope to engage?

What are some of the challenges faced by people in the area?

Will you have a space to do the dishes like a slop sink?

Can you get a key to the space?

What are the hours you can access the space?

Does the space want to censor your classes?

Do they want their brand involved directly?

Insurance

In New York, we've had issues with insurance—landlords want us to cover it and it's way too expensive (sometimes more than rent would be). In 2011, here's the language we used that made the landlord comfortable with us not paying for insurance:

We trust you, so please trust us. Trade School is a litigation free zone.

The FACILITY USER agrees to defend, protect, indemnify and hold harmless the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, its properties, the Archdiocese of New York, OurGoods LLC, and Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan against and from all claims or cause of action whatsoever arising from the negligence or fault of the FACILITY USER or any of its agents, family members, officers, volunteers, helpers, partners, sponsors, employees, students, function attendees, guests, invitees, organizational members or associates which arise out of the identified FACILITY USAGE at the properties of the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, even if such claim arises from the alleged negligence of the Parish, its employees or agents, or the negligence of any other individual or organization.

Organizing

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A cooperative (also co-operative or co-op) is an organization owned and operated by a group of individuals for their mutual benefit. A cooperative is defined by the International Cooperative Alliance's Statement on Cooperative Identity as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise." Basically, a cooperative is a business owned and controlled equally by the people who use its services or by the people who work there.

Trade School operates as a cooperative organization, which means that it is organized horizontally, without any one member having the power to hire or fire any other member. The cooperative may be closed and require an application for membership, or be open to new members as long as they attend an orientaton meeting, or may be completely open. All major decisions are made by a one-person, one-vote system, because all people should be valued.

At Trade School New York, we moved from 3-4 organizers in 2010 and 2011 to 6-12 organizers in 2012. This is both good and bad. More people means more things can get done, but it also means more group scheduling and longer meetings. We now have to be clear about what constitutes membership in the group (so that new people don't come in and vote on things they won't work on because they never come back), and a need for intense self-control and good facilitation so that we focus on the agenda so that random details or new ideas don't make the meeting run off track.

Group culture

As an organizer, you may spend as much time in meetings helping Trade School get off the ground than you will in classes enjoying Trade School. If the organizing group builds trust and has fun together, it will be reflected in Trade School itself.

Here are some tips:

1. Transparency

Create a group culture of accountability and shared work. Keep each other in check by sharing personal goals for your relationship to Trade School, as well as possible struggles with power and cooperation. Try to ask for help being accountable and owning up to mistakes.

"The ways we get things done are also the ways we carve out spaces to fully see and appreciate each other...Voluntary association and accountability are, at heart, about freely given promises that people make to each other with no outside force compelling them to follow through aside from the weight of their mutual commitments."

—Cindy Milstein

"In a healthy group, power and responsibility are balanced. Power is earned by taking on responsibilities, making commitments and keeping them- sometimes by making mistakes and taking responsibility for them... In a thriving group, people invest trust in one another. But to do so, there must be systems of accountability in place. To create trust, to communicate in ways that transcend our normal win/lose dichotomy, we must shift our focus from advocacy to inquiry, from asserting our point of view to listening and opening up to others."

—Starhawk

2. Scheduling

Meet on the same day each week to avoid scheduling conversations.

Meet in person to discuss anything important and to avoid getting email-overwhelmed.

Rotate or pair up for all tasks: facilitating meetings, hosting classes, taking minutes, etc.

3. Meetings and group size

If you're going to work on consensus (and we recommend you do), remember that every person you add to the group could double the amount of time it will take to make a collective decision. You might want to make a procedure for bringing new people into the group (aka potential members can come to meetings but can't make decisions for a bit). Keep the group small if possible (we worked in NYC with 3 primary organizers and 5-20 volunteers during events for the first and second year of Trade School). The people who are most impacted make the decision. Don't vote or voice strong opinion on an issue that you won't be effected by.

4. Power and responsibility

Inevitably, your group will have to deal with power and responsibility. Here are some tips to consider when trying to be as cooperative as possible:

Inform reporters that this is a collective project and list names if necessary.

Try to co-present the project if the group is asked to give a presentation

Divide the \$ equally or based on need (going by hours worked can ruin fun).

If offered airfare+hotel to talk about TS, ask for equivalent \$ for the project and present over skype or make a video instead, emphasize supporting the project, not your celebrity .

Announce how anyone can apply/join the group if they want to help organize.

Have open conversations about priviledge (see below) and hire a facilitator to help you out.

“Groups that refuse to let people earn social power (the influence you gain by working hard for the group) inevitably favor those with unearned social power. The loudest, strongest, most educated or most charismatic get heard; those who do the actual work may be ignored.”

—Starhawk

“Power comes from work and moral courage, not coercion, threats, or control of resources. This is called “power-with” and relates to empowerment, not “power-over” or entitlement.”

—Starhawk

5. Privileges and anti-oppression practices

Power and privilege play out in our group dynamics and we must continually struggle with how we challenge power and privilege in our practice.

We can only identify how power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression affect each one of us. Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice all forms of oppression will continue to divide our movements and weaken our power. Developing a anti-oppression practice is life long work and requires a life long commitment. No single workshop is sufficient for learning to change one's behaviors. We are all vulnerable to being oppressive and we need to continuously struggle with these issues.

Dialogue and discussion are necessary and we need to learn how to listen non-defensively and communicate respectfully if we are going to have effective anti-oppression practice. Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address oppression head on.

6. Having fun together

The more time you spend hanging out, having fun and/or talking about your personal struggles and goals, the more you will trust each other's good intentions in meetings or atleast be more empathetic about where people are coming from. This can lead towards a group culture of honesty about discomfort and group conversations about personal and group transformation. For example, if I tell the group that I am trying to learn to step back and listen more, and ask for help with this, it will be easier for me when someone reminds me that I am talking too much. Or, if I know that someone is having a really hard time at work or in a relationship, I will be more sensitive to them in meetings.

Publicity and Funding

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If you actually want to build community, your focus should be on the experience in the room and not press or institutional backing. However, you'll need to build some reputation via press or word of mouth in order to receive donations like food, space, and volunteers. Here are some things to consider:

Why are you interested in working on Trade School? Think this through and have a candid conversation about it with your collaborators. What encourages the organizers most? Reputation, feeling needed, power, ...what else?

How will having press in the room effect the student's ability to learn and the teacher's ability to teach? If someone from the press contacts you, be sure to ask the teacher if that's OK, and then contact each student to make sure every single one is OK with press being in the room. You may have to ask the press to show up only for the first or last 5 minutes of class.

How will your group dynamic change if some people are paid and others aren't? How will students respond to a barter environment when they know that some hosts are paid? Will you pay yourself by the hour, divide the money evenly and consider it a stipend, or give each collaborator an amount based on what they need to survive?

If you exist independent from any institution/sponsor, you can build our own culture and bring Trade School to larger institutions for special events without having to deal with long term with an institutional culture (of elitism, beaurocracy, whatever).

If you accept money from individuals or get grants, will it be tax-deductible for people who donate? If donors want this, you need to become or work with a non-profit. We work with a non-profit. We are "fiscally sponsored" by The Field (<https://www.thefield.org/Profile.aspx?SAID=2141>), which means that The Field takes responsibility for the accounting and reporting that is necessary for official non-profits (501c3 businesses). For more information about the complex issues behind being a non-profit, read: <http://www.amazon.com/Revolution-Will-Not-Funded-Non-Profit/dp/0896087662>)

"We move in and out of officially sanctioned spaces for art, keeping one foot in the underground the other in the institution."

—Temporary Services

Who are we?

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We are Or Zubalsky, Caroline Woolard, Louise Ma, and Rich Watts. We work on Trade School in New York with a bunch of other organizers, but we also want to see Trade School grow anywhere people are excited about it. We are the people who built this site, wrote this pdf, and will fix software bugs and answer emails about your local Trade School.

<http://tradeschool.ourgoods.org/about/>

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/OurGoods/trade-school>

Why did you get involved?

Louise Ma (front end design): I'm interested in an open forum where theoretical and technical investigations can co-exist, where low-brow and high-concept can cross-pollinate. I'm for an environment where people are brought together by the passionate interests they share with their peers.

Richard Watts (front-to-back-end design): I'm involved because I believe people teaching other people are people at their absolute best. I think barter provides for the type of subjective value that allows the exchange of knowledge to flourish unencumbered by the expectations and stress of money. The world will be a better place when everyone takes time out of their day to teach someone else something.

Caroline Woolard (people corresponding): I am involved because I want to encourage cooperation and discussion about value. Trade School demonstrates that value is subjective, and that people ARE interested in supporting one another. Where else will you find a teacher's knowledge (the class) right next to the teacher's wish list (the barter items)? Trade School is a small part of the solidarity economy-economic practices that reinforce values of mutualism, cooperation, social justice, democracy, and ecological sustainability. I hope Trade School allows mutual respect to emerge between people. With mutual respect, anything is possible.

Or Zubalsky (computer engineering): I think my reasons changed over time. At first, I got involved because I was just excited to learn about this project. I thought this was a great idea and I wanted to know more about it and possibly take some part in. I thought (and still think) Trade School is a wonderful model for education which has the potential to be accessible to many different people. I like how simple it is. As I got more involved, I started becoming more interested in seeing how this model can work in different countries and communities. The idea of this happening makes me happy. Also, I have to say that I was never a part of a group like this, and it's interesting to even just be in this environment.

How did it start?

It all started in late 2009 because three of the five co-founders of OurGoods (Louise Ma, Rich Watts, Caroline Woolard) were given an opportunity to work with GrandOpening, and we had a wild brainstorm session about many possible barter storefronts. We decided that “barter for instruction” had a lot of potential.

So, from February 25th to March 1st, 2010, we ran Trade School at GrandOpening in the Lower East Side. Over the course of 35 days, more than 800 people participated in 76 single session classes. Classes ran for 1, 2, or 3 hours and ranged from scrabble strategy to composting, from grant writing to ghost hunting. In exchange for instruction, teachers received everything from running shoes to mixed CDs, from letters to a stranger to cheddar cheese. We ran out of time slots for teachers to teach and classes filled up so quickly that we had to turn people away. This made us think, “we should keep doing this!” We opened again from February 1st through April 1st in 2011 in an empty school, paying rent with the support of charitable donations and running on donated time from 8-20 volunteers.

In 2012, Or Zubalsky said, “I want to help you make a system to share with anyone in the world.” Or spent over 2.5 months of full-time work writing the code for this software, Rich Watts and Louise Ma spent over a month designing and refining the front end, and Caroline Woolard spends 5-10 hours a week, year-round, answering emails and talking to excited organizers of potential Trade Schools. Though we are based in New York, we now we have Trade Schools in many parts of the United States (Los Angeles, Virginia, New Haven, New York) as well as across the globe (Milan, Singapore, London, Paris, and Gaudalajara so far).

How does OurGoods relate to Trade School?

OurGoods.org is a barter network for creative people. OurGoods.org connects artists, designers, activists, and craftspeople to trade skills, spaces, and objects directly. Trade School is just one of many possible barter spaces for face to face interaction. What about a barter movie theater, a barter restaurant, or a barter clinic?

Trade School helps OurGoods because, in some ways, OurGoods.org is just a directory of creative people who are ready to connect in real space to begin a barter negotiation. In-person meetings are incredibly important. For example, how do I know whether or not you are actually good at what you say you’re good at? I won’t know how I feel about you until we meet in person. Trade School is a way for members of OurGoods to meet people who are interested in barter. It’s a community of people who are open to alternative exchange where dialog and transaction MAY emerge, but where class instruction remains the focus.

Further Reading and Resources

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On pedagogy and schooling:

Augusto Boal, Games for Actors and Non-Actors
Paolo Freire and Myles Horton. We Make the Road By Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
<http://www.ewenger.com/theory>
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/ls_discussion.html

On different ways to teach a class:

<http://www.unconference.net>
<http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?WorkingInOpenSpace>

On social practice, and the potential for Trade School to be art or social change:

Pablo Helguera's book, Education for Socially Engaged Art
http://www.temporarieservices.org/reading_material.html
http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt_manualpage.html

On facilitating good meetings and group culture:

<http://owsoutreach.pbworks.com/w/browse/#view=ViewFolder¶m=How%20to%20Facilitate>
<http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>
http://www.starhawk.org/writings/empowerment_manual.html#pre-order

On groups, non-profits, and horizontal organizational structures:

<http://www.amazon.com/Revolution-Will-Not-Funded-Non-Profit/dp/0896087662>
http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Cooperative_Bylaws

On barter and alternative/solidarity economies:

<http://www.communityeconomies.org/Home/Key-Ideas>
<http://ourgoods.org>
<http://solidaritynyc.org>
<http://vimeo.com/31841684>
David Graeber's book, Debt: the first 5,000 years

Other alternative schools that inspire us:

<http://secretschool.tumblr.com>
<http://edupunksguide.org>
<http://nyc.thepublicschool.org/about>
<http://schoolofthefuture.org>
<http://www.anhoekschool.org>
<http://site.mildredslane.com>
<http://www.superherosupplies.com>
<http://www.hopeginsburg.com/sponge.php>
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/ls_discussion.html

“Do. Don't ask other people to do it for you... let's build better systems by and for ourselves.”

—Carne Ross