

Middle Level Essentials, April 22nd and 23rd, Las Vegas, NV

Creation, Collaboration, and Communication: Getting the Most Out of Your Students in a Networked World

Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants

I don't really buy into this argument. There are plenty of students who know as little about technology as some of their teachers. The key is there is a significant portion of our students who "default to technology." Too much implication that you either "get it or you don't." I think it is possible for folks to be "Digitally Naturalized."

New Media Landscape

We live in a world where information is published, then filtered. That hasn't always been the case.

We have to teach our students how to be good/effective information filters. How do I find the information I need and guarantee that it is as accurate as currently possible?

Illiterate of the future won't be those who can't read and write, it will be those who don't know how to learn, unlearn, and relearn something new. -Toffler

Verifying Information in the Digital World

Most teachers learned how to verify information in an analog world: books, magazines, newspapers, etc. We learned to look at authors, publishers, references, critical analyses, etc to determine if a book had value. Those same skills are useful today when verifying information online. We need to teach kids to ask:

- Who is the author?
- What is the author's purpose, bias, intent for sharing this information?
- Who links here, and to what sources does the article link?
- Is there any more recent information on this topic?

Wikipedia

Inaccuracies are everywhere in life, just ask Dan Rather. Inaccuracy can be the price you pay for instant access to knowledge. Wikipedia is one of the few sources of knowledge that actually gets MORE accurate as time goes on. Encyclopedias get outdated, Wikipedia gets updated. It is also self-healing. There is a focus from Wikipedians on citation of information. Two most amazing parts of any Wikipedia entry?

- History - every previous version of an article is available, so you can see the process of knowledge forming in action.
- Discussions - See what people are debating regarding the topic and what information within the article is disputed.

What better research project than having students create the Wikipedia entry on their school from primary source documents about the school's history. Examine newspaper articles, interview older staff members, explore old school yearbooks, etc

Personal Learning Networks

Learning now takes place anytime, anywhere. No longer confined to the walls of schools. Schools were built on the concept of information being a scarce commodity. We now live in a world of information abundance. One way of building a filter for this “information overload” is to build a personal learning network.

Ways to build a PLN:

- Start reading blogs about education and post your thoughts and reflections to your own blog
- Join Twitter...follow educators and engage them in conversation...share links, discuss your ideas for education
- Create a culture of sharing within your own building. Set up a wiki for your staff to discuss best practices, post lessons, ask for help. Remember, the smartest person in the room, is the room itself.

Why do all this? Why worry about a PLN, verifying information online, privacy concerns?

Teachers must understand the world we and our students experience in order to teach in it. You can't teach reading without being a reader yourself. You don't learn to swim by sitting beside the pool. You can't understand the way students think about the world without pushing yourself to either.

So How Do We Get More Out of Our Students?

Allow them to **Collaborate**

- Learning is shifting back toward an apprenticeship model: “How do I find the person or group that lets me learn what I need/want to know?”
- Students learn by interacting with others. The more nodes on their network, the more people they have with whom to learn.

Allow them to **Communicate**

- Face it...you don't know everything! And that's okay...shift your role from All Knowing Teacher to Master Learner, help kids learn how to learn.
- Find folks who know more than you and outsource your teaching to them. Skype with experts in the fields you are studying. Find classes in other parts of the state, country, world to learn with. Check out the [SkypeAnAuthor Wiki](#) and find an author to talk to your class about reading and writing.
- Develop a wiki for your students. Let them get comfortable editing each other's entries, and then find another class for collaboration.

Allow them to **Create**

- Have them create curriculum based content in a variety of formats to share with others with whom you collaborate and communicate.
- Blogs, wikis, podcasts, videos and screencasts, comics, Fan Fiction...the possibilities are huge.

- Sharing smart content on the web helps students create a positive Digital Footprint and avoid the pitfalls of sharing inappropriate content on the Web.

NOTES

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