What’s the Point?

Getting to the Core of What Really Matters in 21st Century Education

IDEA: what if we stopped thinking about school as preparing students for real life, and made it real life...

Middle School students often pose the question; ‘What’s the point’. It is a time of excruciating self-examination, growing uncertainty about everything, and a waning willingness to rely on their parents. It’s an agonising time of realising the idea of what they would like to be with the awareness that they have little idea of how to get there in a rapidly changing, challenging world. Today’s students are constantly engaging with digital media from video games to podcasts and social networking. In reality, schools are still about content containment, while the real world is about information flow.

Students today are audience focused. They are always wondering who cares? Am I understood? A quest for an audience is a good thing…It locks into what we know works best; Authentic Pedagogy.

With opportunities to communicate and express oneself in today’s digital world, teachers are challenged to ensure students make sense of visual complexities and make the appropriate connections (Wilson, Wright & Peirano, 2007 p169). Schools have a responsibility to work within a digital culture, empowering digital citizens. Technology enhances student academic achievement. Saye and Brush (1999) emphasise the role of multimedia-supported teaching strategies as a contributing factor towards students’ higher-order thinking. The role of the teacher is to develop and encourage critical thought and questioning within their discipline and assessment tools rich in constructivism; in content, context and presentation method. The information is accessible, and the task of just finding it is not enough, when the opportunity to understand it presents itself.

More than 70% of kids under 4 years old have used a computer…. Only about 30% of our kids in schools are asked to create a learning product using technology….

Technology and Learning: A Symbiotic relationship
Inspiring Learners now and into the future

Some of the most common classroom tools were invented as early as 1900. But with new mobile technology tools, such as phones and iPads, any location can be turned into a classroom. Current education models are ill-equipped to engage the fast-paced minds of learners.

So what really matters? The 21st Century is here, and so are its tools. We need to start using and stop discussing it so much. It’s all about the needs of today’s learners now.

Let’s teach our students that there is a whole world out there, and we can do that by bringing this world to the classroom and, at the same time, taking the classroom to the world out there. Let’s bring the world to our lives as learners!
Web 2.0 = Edu 2.0

Some ways to use Web-based communication and presentation tools in the classroom...

- Create a promotional or informative video, share on YouTube

- Use Google Docs to collaborate on essays to create a high-band ideal example, benchmarking assessment. You can even post a substandard example and watch students edit it. There is a chat mechanism for you to assist.

- Create a Glogster (online multimedia poster) for easy class assessment, note taking/sharing and marketing. Great for covering dot points.

- Skype with business organisations and experts in the field. Model what good networking looks like in the classroom

- Use a template (posted on my blog), create a Facebook page for your project (it is against Facebook User policy to create a fake one...)

- Set up a class Twitter, follow experts of choice to daily gather information.

- Edublogs for ongoing connection with other classes and their projects, your class and a great documentation of a learning journey

- Creating contained chat rooms in tinychat, to communicate with students and model online discussions. Could also invite experts in for a mini conference

- Harness the tools that Senior Students have by opening discussion using Poll Everywhere and their mobile devices. Mobile technology is the most important tool for our learners, with 83% using it most for texting.

Check out My Blog ‘A View from the Middle’ for more resources and thoughts on Web 2.0 in the classroom. I have placed all information for this presentation and some other bits and pieces under the page web 2.0 in the classroom:

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