Building Learning Communities 2014

Alan November's conference has become an institution. I believe I have attended all on the East Coast but one. I have been his guest for several years now (which I appreciate a great deal) and enjoy the current setting: the historic Park Plaza Hotel in Boston.

I have presented on several topics over the years, most recently including this year, on Global STEM education, specifically.

I found that attendees interpret Global connections as having students in the US 'speak and share ideas and experiences' with their counterparts in all parts of the world. Approximately 30 countries were represented at BLC 2014 and Alan organized a "meetup" for those interested in connecting.

Global STEM Education, as we interpret it is more focused and encourages skills and knowledge building.

One exciting outcome of a conversation Alan and I have had is that next year there will be a STEM strand...then we can actually explore several aspects...global STEM education and global connections. I hope and expect that I will be able to help to organize it.

I am happy to finally have heard Michael Fullan.

What I have learned over five days:

Significant shifts (from Alec Couros):

Atoms to bits
Scarcity to abundance
Consuming to creating
Individuals to networks
Standardization to personalization

I also heard Private to public lives, compliance to care, consumer to producer (similar to the item above but from Michael Fullan)

One of the challenges I am dealing with now is the last one...I know there is power in multiple voices but, in my opinion, only if they are informed and well intentioned. I have seen, as I suspect has everyone else, the destructive poet of unfounded claims and accusations which spread on social media and once in the ether acquire a life of their own and the damage cannot be un-done. As a result I don't use social media except to respond to people I have met. If someone invites me to connect through Linked In I do so only if I know the person and/or the organization.

Other sound bites that invite reflection:

- The critical consumer needs to create
- Making learning visible
- Contributing to the education of others
- Digital residents vs visitors (no longer immigrants and natives)
- The implementation plan is not for the planners
- Leadership from the middle (including the district and the schools)

(I believe I always practiced this principle ...an average of from the top with advice from the 'bottom')

- Deep learning is the goal...shared depth of learning

- The unplanned Digital Revolution:

Push...school is boring, alienating
Pull...the digital world and its new pedagogies
exciting/ engaging for teachers & students
elegantly easy to use
Technology is ubiquitous
real life problem solving

The synergy is pedagogy, change knowledge and technology to raise the bar for outcomes.

Alan's parting observations to the attendees

Consider concentrating one of these

1. Teach students to assess their own work. The technology can help..Kaizena

2. The most important teacher behavior is the quality of the feedback to student work...voice is better than writing

3. Make thinking visible (blogging is an example) Langwitches, Mindcraft are available tools)

4. Critical thinking on the internet. Give students a search challenge on the first day of school

5. Globalize the curriculum.Connect kids to others around the world

Below are the apps, programs and practices which were recommended by various presenters. I have not yet had a chance to explore all of them myself (the conference ended yesterday) but as with all resources I cite, the educator needs to determine whether they are useful for those the teach.

Quadlogging
Deviant Art
Scratch
fanfiction.net
EOLorg
YouTUBE education
Project Mash
Play with info
MYOB learning
Twitteracy...tweeting as a new literacy
Answer Garden
Back channel
Near Pod
Knowma
Educreations
Adobe Voice
Tech smith
Jung
EduCanon
Blendspace

Mathtrain TV
Google Custom Search
NewK 12
LearnZillion
OER Commons
Wikipedia book creator
Active textbooks
Alex
Canon sense media
Graphite App flows
Read write Think
NBC Learn
Watch Know Learn
YouTube education site
TED talks
Symbaloo edu.com
Diigo
Live Binders
Scoop it
Pinterest
EduClipper
Printfriendly
Curriki
SAS curriculum pathways
NROC...hippocampus
Wikis
Connections
Google ebooks
Wikibooks
International Child Digital Library
Google Science Fair
Kids Science Challenge
3M Young Scientist Challenge
Discovery Ed and Siemens
EGFI
Teach Engineering

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