

Re-imagining Learning: A Virtual Clinical Learning

The Problem(s)

Students: Enrollment in schools is growing (the number of students already in school will increase 50%). The demographics are changing (FRP lunch will triple in the next 12 years - to 35%). Not all students learn the same way (Ave SATs going down). Students are wondering about the value of post high school education; simultaneously some are moving to college early.

Teachers: Many teachers are retiring (the average teacher age is over 50). The pool for future teachers is not large enough to meet the demands. Teacher tests are creating a barrier currently that can impact the future. Novice teachers are leaving the profession in large number in the first five years.

Technology: By 2005 the use of computers will be required for virtually all jobs. Technology is upon us. Technology is a "hook" through which we can capture many students' imaginations. It is also making schools increasingly irrelevant to all kinds of students. It is separating students from their teachers.

Learning: Even with technology the predominant mode of teaching is in a classroom or studio with a "talking head." We need new models to teach the new skills of and for the future. Current practitioners at all levels must change the way they provide instruction.

Business and Industry: Many companies need students with good thinking, problem solving and technology skills, as well as good working habits and good basic skills right out of high school.

Life: Technology is isolating people from experience.

The Challenge(s)

The challenge is to design and implement a comprehensive approach to what learning/teaching/schooling could and should be, in and outside of schools for all students (especially ones unmotivated or excluded in our current paradigm).

That means "training" all teachers starting with pre-service and including in-service professional development as well as teachers of teachers. Many good paradigms are being explored and implemented which use technology to train teachers and teach students but to our knowledge no one has put it all together nor "re-imagined" the constellation of learning and teaching as it will be required and desired in the future from pre-service to in-service to direct service.

We need to create a teacher preparation model for circumstances that are different from those in existence now. We also need to create a student learning model which is different from what typically exists now. That is, to create alternative learning environments which place some students in different

relationships with each other, with the school, connected to business and universities; and a virtual clinical learning world for teachers which can be used in multiple ways throughout their careers.

The Proposal

This consortium of:

- public university
- a community college network
- private colleges
- school districts
- educational collaborative
- a professional educational organization
- a technology business
- a government contractor
- non-profit training provider
- a charter school
- a think tank
- a business and education network, and
- the stateDoEs,

represents all the steps along a continuum concerned with (or at the intersection of) teaching and learning. Each has an unique niche and brings an individual contribution to this enterprise.

Together the consortium will plan/design and pilot a “virtual clinical learning world” (with many alternative learning environments for both adults and young people) to solve the problem and meet the challenges stated above. The project will not reinvent what already promises to work; it will “reimagine” and weave together current programs, where appropriate, to leverage the current thinking into the next phase. In the next phase, there might not be enough qualified teachers to staff our schools. In the next phase, students will not be learning just in classrooms and schools. This project intends to take the steps beyond what currently exists by building ON extant capacity to achieve new levels of learning.

The Features/Elements of the Project

Developing Teaching Professionals: Preservice

Teaching ALL prospective teachers to use the technology to teach in new and future-oriented ways so that they can teach students the new skills they need to know. Some of this will be done through distance learning and telecommunications; some on the campuses of the partners. We need to think about differentiated staffing: training people to become master teachers, teacher assistants, technology assistants, consulting specialists etc.

We need to think about how different students learn differently, to create new learning environments for them and to prepare to teach in those new settings. What technologies and existing projects can we build on and with? We need to explore the cutting edge and use this technology to teach teachers the skills and knowledge they need so that they can teach students what they need to learn for the future.

Furthermore we need to think about how to reeducate professors of education in the colleges and universities who will have some responsibility to train new teachers. University and college faculty also need to learn new ways just as inservice teachers do.

The focus will be on the *complexity* of teaching and learning, and the *complex* of content: civics, citizenship, communication and environment.

Teachers will emerge with appropriate credentials as well as the desired skills.

Maintaining the Quality of the Profession: In-service

All that has been said about pre-service must also be considered for in-service learning. The forms may be different because time is different for working teachers, but the questions and the ideas are the same. The sense of urgency is also the same because we have students in the pipeline who need the new capacity promised by this proposal.

For in-service teachers, it will be useful to have teachers join as teams and partners in the process. Recertification will be a result of inservice. And today, every state is rethinking its licensure and endorsement requirements.

Seeking New Times, Places and Arrangements for Learning: Direct Service-Changing the form and function of schools

Especially for those students who have been excluded, and focusing first on grades 7-12, this project will be transformative and inspirational. The innovative technology will enable students to be self-directed about the NEW skills they will acquire and the knowledge base they will need. These skills have already been identified so we can build on them rather than spend time and energy defining them.

The questions we will address are what is the best way that these skills can be learned by both teachers and students and how the skills connect with the state-wide and nation-wide standards, focusing on language/literacy/media/technical writing/communication/civics/citizenship and the environment.

We will design new learning arrangements/organizations which can be delivered with/through the technology. There are many examples of outside-of-school projects from the days before technology. Now we have virtual schools, distance learning, home schooling, satellite meetings...what else can we add to this vision? How can we enhance this vision? How do we harness these new energies and possibilities? In this project we will use all the technologies available from the "artificial" such as the web, telecommunications to the real, such as face to face meetings with colleagues and learning settings with young people, all to develop a new approach to teaching and learning using technology.