

## Hyper Commentary

### New Wine in Old Bottles?

#### New Teaching and Learning Requires New Structures and Tools

The pervasiveness of technology in our lives does not extend to teaching and learning in schools to the extent that it could or should. In many classrooms our grandparents could stop in and feel right at home - the teacher talks, the students listen and respond, (often on worksheets), and the students are tested periodically on their recollection of facts, many of which are either irrelevant or of minimal value in advancing the human condition.

There are many classrooms where this scenario is not the case. In these classrooms the teacher has set the stage, then assumed the role of the facilitator as students go about the task of finding information using electronic resources, analyzing the data, synthesizing it and expressing ideas in new ways using technology. The good news is that the more contemporary classroom is growing and the old fact - driven classroom is diminishing.

The bad news is that the overall structure to support the use of technology in our classrooms is not changing as fast as the technology is driving it. The day is still chopped up into 40 - 50 minute modules and the content of subjects is still segregated as if that is the way it really exists. In many districts it is like pouring new wine into old bottles. Neither the structure of classes nor the tools used to teach match the way we know students learn best or the world they will be going into.

It's time for most districts to stop and take a look at the real world that they all say they are preparing students for. In the real world, people work together in teams to solve problems. They use technology as tools for collecting data, analyzing and reporting the solutions to their problems. The day is not divided into factory style modules reminiscent of the 19th century industrial age. Today's "real world" reflects the digital communication age. People communicate with each other and work in flexible time frames to complete the tasks at hand.

When will we wake up as a nation, not just selected schools with either affluence or foresight, and create a system that will make our schools developers of a progressive future rather than replicators of a long gone past? The only way that this will happen is if we each do a small part to help our respective districts move forward. We can support the use of technology, the restructuring of the content and strategies we use, the rebuilding of the notion of what takes place at which times in a school day. If we all put a little bit in, then eventually a critical mass will be reached at the momentum will be on the side of the future. When this happens, our children will be the benefactors.

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