6 RELEVANCY GAPS…

(AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THEM)

Scott McLeod & Dean Shareski

Thank you for attending our 2017 ISTE session. All materials and resources are available at:

bit.ly/iste2017

On the pages that follow are some of the practical steps and strategies identified in our upcoming book, Different Schools for a Different World:

bit.ly/mcleodshareski

More are included in the book, along with further description of the 4 big shifts that schools are making and the 10 building blocks that schools are using to remedy some of these relevancy gaps. The book also includes profiles of some schools around the world that are closing these relevancy gaps and how they are utilizing the building blocks in various combinations to transform learning and teaching.

Please stay in touch!

Scott McLeod, dangerouslyirrelevant.org, @mcleod

Dean Shareski, ideasandthoughts.org, @shareski
Deeper Learning Schools: 4 Big Shifts

1. Higher-level thinking. Deeper learning schools are moving from an overwhelming emphasis on students mostly doing lower-level thinking tasks - factual recall and procedural regurgitation - to students more often engaging in tasks of greater cognitive complexity - creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication and collaboration. In other words, students are living more often on the upper levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (or Webb’s Depth of Knowledge wheel) than the lower ones.

2. Student agency. Deeper learning schools are moving from classrooms that are overwhelmingly teacher-controlled to learning environments that enable greater student agency - ownership and control of what, how, when, where, who with, and why they learn. Student agency allows for greater personalization, individualization, and differentiation of the learning process.

3. Authentic work. Deeper learning schools are moving from isolated, siloed academic work to environments that provide students more opportunities to engage with and contribute to relevant local, national, and international interdisciplinary communities. Students begin fostering active networks with individuals and organizations for mutual benefit.

4. Technology infusion. Deeper learning schools are moving from local classrooms that are largely based on pens/pencils, notebook paper, ring binders, and printed textbooks to globally-connected learning spaces that are deeply and richly technology-infused. The new affordances of mobile computing devices and online environments allow the first three shifts mentioned here to move into high gear.

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10 Building Blocks for Schools of the Future

Project- and inquiry-based learning environments that emphasize greater student agency and active application of more cognitively-complex thinking, communication, and collaboration skills.

Community projects, internships, digital simulations, and other problem- and project-based learning experiences that foster students’ ability to engage in authentic, real-world work.

Competency-based education and standards-based grading efforts that shift the focus of assessment from seat time to learning mastery.

1:1 computing initiatives (and concurrent Internet bandwidth upgrades) that give students powerful digital learning devices and access to the world’s information, individuals, and organizations.

The expansion of digital and online (and often open access) information resources that increase the availability of higher and deeper learning opportunities.

Online communities of interest that supplement and augment more-traditional learning communities that are limited by geography and time.

Adaptive software and data systems (and accompanying organizational models) that can facilitate greater individualization of learning content and pace.

Alternative credentialing mechanisms that enable individuals to quickly reskill for and adapt to rapidly-evolving workforce needs and economic demands.

Flexible scheduling that moves students away from 50-minute time chunks - and a prescribed number of hours and days in a prescribed location - and toward opportunities for students to learn longer, deeper, and in more places about important life skills and concepts.

Redesigned learning spaces that accommodate flexible, student-centered grouping and learning tasks rather than classrooms that are dictated by instructor or janitorial needs.
PRACTICAL STEPS & STRATEGIES

The Information Literacy Argument

- Treat information literacy and technology fluency as essential student learning outcomes. For example, technological proficiency is one of the essential Schoolwide Learning Outcomes at New Tech High and educators there regularly assess for it as part of their students’ project-based learning (see Chapter 7).

- Spark a conversation about the ability of both students and adults in the school system to identify and protect themselves against digital misinformation, ‘fake news,’ phishing, spoofing, catfishing, hacking, malware, and other attempts to cause digital harm.

- Design professional learning initiatives based on the results from internal surveys and assessments of teachers’ and administrators’ technology-related beliefs, understandings, and skill sets.

The Economic Argument

- Pay more attention in both instruction and assessment to non-automatable ‘21st century skills’ such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, written and oral communication, teamwork and collaboration, leadership, and global awareness. For instance, when the students at New Village Girls Academy engage in their passion projects and community internships, they regularly incorporate a number of these skills into their work (see Chapter 7).
• Initiate internal conversations, school board discussions, and community town halls about what it means to prepare ‘future ready’ students and graduates these days.

• Invite local and regional manufacturers and corporations to discuss with educators and parents the impacts of global competition and concurrent skills sets and hiring criteria in their work sector.

The Learning Argument

• Be intentional about creating structured avenues for students to participate in online communities of learning.

• Utilize the trudacot discussion protocol (bit.ly/trudacot) to help foster robust technology infusion and realign lesson plans and instructional units toward deeper learning, greater student agency, and authentic work.

• Value learning that takes place outside school. For elementary students in particular, think about homework that honors all of the learning that takes place at home and in the community.

The Boredom Argument

• Have teachers continuously ask, “Could students do part or all of this instead of me?” (particularly in technology-infused classrooms).

• Create communities instead of classrooms. Recognize that students have a say in classroom design and to a great degree, the learning itself. Be sure to include
specific ways for them to learn from and with one another.

- Explore inquiry- and project-based learning methods—and service learning within local and online communities—that would allow students to engage in more meaningful, authentic, real world work. Iowa BIG, for example, does an excellent job of this through its community project pool (see Chapter 7).

The Innovation Argument

- Implement numerous, reiterative, small-scale pilots of a few days or weeks in which school and educators try things, receive quick feedback, and iterate into new, better versions.

- Spark internal and community conversations about grading, ranking, discipline, and other school punishment-reward systems that impede risk-taking and innovation.

- Begin the long-term process of redesigning schools and classrooms—and exploring alternative scheduling structures—to facilitate more modern, flexible learning spaces. SAIL’s classrooms, for example, look very different from traditional spaces because of its moveable furniture and its orientation toward student-centered blended learning (see Chapter 7).

The Equity Argument

- Recognize that students’ lack of access to higher-level instructional experiences and deeper learning opportunities is as important as achievement gaps on lower-
level standardized tests. Many deeper learning schools—including New Village Girls Academy (see Chapter 7)—are explicitly designed around the idea that higher-level thinking work also can lead to significant improvements on traditional assessments.

- Conduct instructional and digital equity audits to determine which students have access to robust learning and technology opportunities in schools and which do not.

- Spark internal and community conversations about instructional and technology equity and their relationship to the future readiness and life success of graduates.

Available at bit.ly/mcleodshareski