

## QUEST 2016

### Heidi Siwak Prototyping and testing practice

HEIDI: In my classroom, digital technologies, right, because Post-It notes are technology. I'll be the first one to say that a lot of work that we do is large space Post-It notes and chart markers, because what we're doing is making our understanding of complexity explicit. And the kids like to -- we like to have it visible in front of us so we can stand back and consider. So technology isn't just digital. The second piece is, digital is very much just embedded in what we do. So at this point in time, we have this big question, we need more information. Let's go look for authentic sources to help us understand. Or, we want to communicate some important learning, let's use this digital tool to go and communicate it. So it supports the big thinking that's happening in the classroom. That's probably how I would look at that.

Digital citizenship is very much what we do, especially at the beginning of middle school, we spend a lot of time just thinking about how to be a good citizen, how to support building global knowledge, so the kids recognize -- one thing they understand in my classroom is that our work in the classroom matters not just to us, because people outside are watching what happens in our classroom. And the discoveries and their insights and their willingness to share doesn't just improve our classroom, but they realize they're influencing -- people at the ministry, they're influencing other classrooms or influencing people in other countries. So they really come to value the kind of work that we do, because they realize their contributions matter.

Teachers put a lot of rules on themselves that don't actually exist. And in order to make these shifts into new models of learning, or improved models, or build on what exists already, you have to be willing to test an idea. So they look at their practice as a constant process of prototyping and testing, rather than locking in on this is how we do it. Then they're going to get to interesting places. And failure fits into that. There are going to be ideas that get tested that flop -- there's learning there. And you break down that learning with the kids as well in your classroom, so that everybody understands that, okay, this didn't work well, but we've learned this from this -- now we can build. And entering into that dynamic process of change is something teachers need to understand has to be happening constantly in the classrooms.