

QUEST 2016

Marlene Scardamalia Idea-centred Learning

MARLENE: We need to bring ideas in the centre. Tasks and activities will always pervade our lives and so they should, that's just how life goes, but if you lose the ideas to the completion of those tasks and activities, you lose knowledge-building. Now, let me give you some sense of how we try to get this started and I'm going to take you into a grade one classroom to give you this sense. Ideas, if you listen around what's happening in classrooms, you hear all kind of profound ideas of kids, but they're very transient, they go, they don't have a life. In knowledge-creating organizations people have what they call collective intelligence, that is, there's a space where ideas live and grow. So, the transient life of ideas in classrooms needs to be converted to a place for ideas to live and grow and technologies that actually help them grow. So here's a child's idea, this happened early September, leaves are falling off the tree, the teacher, being accustomed to knowledge-building, hears a child say, I think the, oh, the child asked why do leaves change color. And the child says, I think the chlorophyll goes into the tree to keep warm for the winter. So. Creative idea. And the teacher says, wow, let's hold that idea, and helps become a scribe and puts that into a space where that idea can live. All students then are engaged in, gee, how do leaves change color in the fall, and you'll see a number of student ideas, and I'm not going to go through them but I think you would agree every one of them is a really creative idea. I want you to notice on the side my theory I need to understand, I'm going to talk about scaffolds and I'm going to come back to this. But we're talking grade one, and these kids are saying, my theory about chlorophyll is this. Well, my theory is this. So you learn to live in a space of ideas, and if we just go through these, you see the community space then has everybody's ideas, the fact that those are all red means they have all been red. So you live in community spaces where you read each other's ideas. You'll see students are using pretty sophisticated terms and I'll show you how the scaffold is helping them do that.

My theory evidence, so really advanced cognitive processes being supported. Knowledge form is the technology underlying this. Our idea is, if you could build technology that in every single facet of its design supported knowledge-creation, it supported the high level cognitive processes that help you sustain these complex worlds, it creates the collective spaces that you need to advance, that's what the technology is about and it itself, of course, has to be continually improved, as we fall short of our goals, then we need to redesign it as well as we design pedagogues. I want to be clear that it's not always about putting ideas in technology, kids talk in classrooms all of the time, the knowledge practices really try to favor a knowledge circle, eye to eye contact, the sense of equity that comes from working in a circle instead of presenting the way I'm presenting right now. It was marvelous for me to hear that Michael Fullan showed an unbelievably impressive piece of video about what kids were saying and doing, asked everybody in the audience what was your thoughts, collaboration, empowering positive, and he said, the teacher said, baby steps. And I was so excited to hear that because, I have to say, baby steps was my reaction, no actually I, baby steps wasn't my reaction, I thought, I wonder, I wonder if those kids are engaged in a project

that's powerful and talking about it, or if they're accustomed to a knowledge-creating organization. I had not idea, no doubt they were dealing with real ideas and the frantic problems, DNA, medical advances, they were clearly working with ideas that they were passionate about.

I couldn't tell if they were working as a community. Were they each, individually, onto this thing that was going to be their career, or were they really helping each other advance? Were they engaged? Democratizing knowledge. Was the whole class doing this or were these the best kids presenting what it is that they were doing? I couldn't tell from the video. Constructive uses of authoritative sources. I knew they were on to ideas of, DNA is the one I remember, but how much did they know about DNA, and could they advance knowledge in the field of DNA? I couldn't tell from the video. If you have a knowledge-creating community you've got to move on all of these fronts, you've got to move beyond idea diversity to a symmetry of knowledge-building, the world out there, people are doing splendid, magnificent things, if you can't keep up with that world and integrate it into your world, you can't keep the power of knowledge creation.