

QUEST 2016

Marlene Scardamalia The Great Divide

MARLENE: One of education's oldest and most long-standing results is the rich get richer. People think this is for the economy but it's profoundly about education, and education has not historically beaten this really, really tough finding. If you come into school, in kindergarten, with more knowledge, you will leave school with more knowledge. So, what you come in with is the very best predictor of how well you will take advantage of school. Now, one of the problems is that, as we have digital technologies, there's actually evidence that it's increasing this disparity. If you read better, if you know more words, you search the internet better, you find more ideas, you don't do simple searches, you do complex searches. You get information that's so difficult you can't understand it, but you don't give up, you talk to other students, you work with those ideas. You are actually able to pick up more knowledge more quickly because you have more knowledge, and the technology is an enhancer of that. So the rich get even richer with digital divide, the next divide, which is even a greater magnifier of disparities, is the creation of new knowledge. Why is innovation, like the estimates vary but, sometimes three percent of the population, sometimes ten percent of the population, imagine it's even 50, our challenge is 100 so, and I think it's far from being 50. So, this notion of living on this trajectory, what I want to say, if you start working intensively and hard with knowledge, in communities, with technological supports that are not you doing your cool, neat project, but are living in communities, connected with other communities, where the discourse of the community is forever moving things forward, you're more likely to stay on this trajectory. It's one of the reasons I love this teacher who said baby steps about this profoundly good thing. It's always the next thing that you're looking at, not what you can do right now that keeps you on this trajectory, you've got to just, you've got to like it, you've got to like change, you've got to like working with people, you've got to like this if you're going to live.

If you're in a community where as a community you're saying, are we getting stuck? Could we do something better? Like, in communities not built for this, it feels difficult, it feels hard, it feels like you're putting too much pressure. On communities who love advancing, these questions come naturally. I just want to give you one more episode from some working classrooms. Underlying the technology then, is the interactions of the people. So I can take those views that showed you that everybody was reading everybody's notes, and I can build an image, this is called learning analytics, it's actually going to change the face of assessment in education, it's growing as a field, that's awesome, teachers who are powerful creators of knowledge-building communities can get communities where every student is connected with every other student, we're starting to get the equality, we're getting the connectedness, and we can look at this, we can, 30 seconds, get feedback, so if you're not doing that, you know what your challenge is for doing it. Now I just want to end with a, this notion of pervasive knowledge-building. Then wherever you would be, you would think, wow, I'm in a subway station, and I could improve life.