

## **Innovations in Thinking and Learning**

### **Marlene Scardamalia – Empowerment through Community Relationships**

MARLENE: It's very empowering once students begin to realize that their ideas are really important, and in fact, they're needed by the community. And their ideas, their challenges, the risks they take, are a source of power. And they help drive the conversation. People rally around issues that they don't understand, as well as pieces that help them move forward.

So there's a level of engagement and a thinking that we need their ideas. So I think it's an attitude, it's a sense of a real commitment to their ideas. From a teacher's point of view, this notion that teachers can engage students in really important ways, and actually even learn from students, if you'd listen closely to what's happening. And you also have a sense of the curriculum of course, what kinds of understandings are important, how you need to move forward. But you actively work with the ideas of both of your students, the ideas in broader communities. You come to a dynamic form of interaction that I think students simply find very empowering. It's very exciting. I believe just as all of us who wish to contribute something to the world have a sense that it's just great when ideas are received and they make a difference, and they feel like you're doing something of worth to society. And I think that's what happens to young kids. They're not used to having their ideas thought of so importantly, that they might actually contribute. So when we talk about knowledge for public good, it's that they're making a difference. They feel it. And when they feel that people want to be engaged with them, they reciprocate through engagement.

I think one of the things that is most important about knowledge building in the research results we have is that you actually get higher achievement, that by thinking deeply, you come to greater understanding, a greater connectedness of ideas. And that actually shows up in achievement when you need to respond to questions. You've had more transfer, you've had more complex ideas worked through in more context. So the issue that it actually leads to lesser achievement is one of the questions that I think simply doesn't have a basis in fact for any of the research that we've done.