

Innovations in Thinking and Learning

Marlene Scardamalia – The Genesis of Knowledge Building

MARLENE: Knowledge building was born out of the intersect of, what if expertise, deep learning and writing, the act of putting ideas out into the world, could be combined in a way that actually gets us the power of integrative thinking, in the sense that you're rising above, you're creating something that's putting ideas together an interesting and profoundly new way. Ideas have to have a place to live. If they're going to be in the world, they simply can't be on the chalkboard and in casual conversations where they can't be remembered, they can't be continued. So if students were to engage in writing ideas and we had multimedia affordances so they could put ideas in different ways, but writing, still, was really important for us in the early part of this.

So for us, one of the delightful changes was, we engaged students more in writing, in the technology-facilitated environment. And we actually got the strongest writing results. They were writing to convey an idea. They were writing to an audience that cared about their ideas. Once you're a knowledge builder, you come to like critical input, because it's actually going to help you. You seek out people who know more than you, because you're going to learn something from them.

So students were – we were profoundly impressed with how much they would actually shift into the knowledge-transforming, knowledge-building processes, when given the opportunity. So the history really comes out of the confluence of expertise, deep learning and written communication translated into a way that made knowledge-transforming processes accessible to young students.