Connected Learning

Social and digital media available via the internet connects students and young people to each other and to a host of formal and informal educators, providing limitless opportunities to seek and acquire new knowledge and skills. Connected learning is learning that is "highly social, interest-driven, and oriented toward educational, economic, or civic opportunity." [1]

How It's Developing

Connected learning takes advantage of the vast amount of digital and social media available on the internet and the connectedness of today's culture. It capitalizes on research that has shown that students achieve higher-order learning outcomes when their work is focused on topics that are personally interesting and relevant to them. [2] Connected learning also creates peer-supported learning environments, allowing students to learn together (and with experts) through interaction, sharing, and providing feedback [3] In order to succeed in the academic environment, connected learning seeks to provide activities and opportunities that are personally interesting and peer-supported and that connect to academic subjects. Advocates argue that traditional models or learning and activities in school may have been too limiting and may not prove productive in an age of lifelong learning. [4]

Connected learning is focused on production, taking the diversity of activities and interests that can be pursued through technology and the network of peers and experts available in a connected environment and allowing students to produce, create, experiment, and design. Through this model of learning and with a focus on production, students and young people can develop skills and knowledge relevant to their formal education and that will be meaningful in future work and social settings. [5]

Connected learning advocates highlight its potential to bridge the gap between formal education methods and settings and interactive, hands-on learning that can happen at home and in other spaces outside of school. [6] By leveraging digital technology and social networking that is increasingly accessible across socio-economic backgrounds, connected learning might also help level the playing field between the haves and the have-nots. [7]

Why It Matters

By encouraging exploration and interaction with resources, connected learning may re-engage learners with some of the fundamental benefits of libraries, including access to a broad range of information and the freedom to learn at one's own discretion. [8]

Connected learning happens across learning networks including school, home, libraries, and community centers. [9] Connected learning also supports the idea that learners achieve best when learning is reinforced and

supported in multiple settings, providing opportunities for libraries to engage other institutions as partners in connected learning environments. [10]

In order for connected learning to help level the playing field between the haves and have-nots, students must have regular access to new and emerging technologies and the internet. Libraries that provide access to new technologies and the internet will be better able to integrate themselves into connected learning environments. Those libraries interested in becoming more supportive of connected learning environments will need to ensure that they provide communities with access to these essential components of the learning model.

With a focus on production, connected learning could provide opportunities for libraries to engage communities in the production of new knowledge and resources that could further connect and integrate the community's role in the library.

Connected learning might also serve as a model for faculty, professionals, or even the community, encouraging the use of technology and connection to advance professional development or even community development. [11] Connected learning might also inspire teachers to engage librarians as well as authors, administrators, and parents, integrating many different peers into a connected learning model. [12]

Notes and Resources

[1] "Connected Learning: An Agenda for Social Change." Mimi Ito. *The Huffington Post*. January 15, 2013. Available from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mimi-ito/connected-learning_b_2478940.html

[2] "Why Connected Learning." Connected Learning Alliance. Available from http://clalliance.org/why-connected-learning/

[3] "Connected Learning: Reimagining the Experience of Education in the Information Age." Connected Learning Principles. Connected Learning. Available from http://connectedlearning.tv/connected-learning-principles

[4] "Connected Learning versus Blended Learning: New Terms, Old Debate." Justin Reich. *Education Week*. January 29, 2013. Available from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/edtechresearcher/2013/01/connected_learni...

[5] "Why Connected Learning." Connected Learning Alliance. Available from http://clalliance.org/why-connected-learning/

[6] "Connected Learning: An Agenda for Social Change." Mimi Ito. *The Huffington Post*. January 15, 2013. Available from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mimi-ito/connected-learning_b_2478940.html

[7] "Connected Learning: An Agenda for Social Change." Mimi Ito. *The Huffington Post*. January 15, 2013. Available from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mimi-ito/connected-learning_b_2478940.html

[8] "Libraries Play A Central Role in Connected Learning." Karyn M. Peterson. *Library Journal - The Digital Shift*. October 21, 2013. Available from http://www.thedigitalshift.com/2013/10/k-12/libraries-play-a-central-rol...

[9] "Connected Learning: The Power Of Social Learning Models." Te@chthought. July 13, 2014. Available from http://www.teachthought.com/learning/connected-learning-the-power-of-soc...

[10] "Why Connected Learning." Connected Learning Alliance. Available from http://clalliance.org/why-connected-learning/

[11] "Higher Education in the Connected Age." Diana Oblinger. *EDUCAUSE Review Online*. April 1, 2013. Available from http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/higher-education-connected-age

[12] "The Connected Educator: All About Connectedness." Tom Whitby. *Edutopia*. October 6, 2014. Available from http://www.edutopia.org//blog/connected-educator-all-about-connectedness...