

A Rapidly Changing Culture *will* Impact Schools: The Question is How?

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Getting the Discussion Going: One Disruptive Innovation

Facts: Computers have been in North American schools for 20+ years.
In 1981 there was 1 computer for every 125 students in school.
In 1991 there was 1 computer for every 18 students.
By 2000 there was 1 computer for every 5 students.
Today many schools have 1 computer for every student.

Facts: In spite of over a billion dollar investment in computers for schools,
Grade 5 students use computers an average of 24 minutes per week (in labs).
Grade 8 students use computers an average of 38 minutes

Although high school students use computers significantly more than students in grades 5-8, most students who use computers in schools today use them as a tool (activity center or word processing instrument) or they study the computer as a topic (i.e. computer class). Relatively few students use the computer as a primary teaching mechanism that helps them learn in ways that are customized to their intelligence.

Fact: For two decades, computers have added significantly to the cost of education without any significant impact on revolutionizing the classroom experience. Traditional instructional practices have changed little over these two decades. In many schools, a classroom does not look much different than it did twenty years ago. Lecturing, group discussions, small cooperative group work and projects with occasional video (streamed in via computer) are still the norm in most North American schools.

Something different is “brewing”

Fact: 45,000 students enrolled in an online course in the fall of 2000
1,000,000 students enrolled in an online course by the fall of 2007

Even though over 1,00,000 students enrolled in online courses in 2007, the total number of online courses offered one year ago represented only 1% of the total courses offered in North American high schools. Multiple factors converging together suggest that, within 10 years, 50% of all courses offered to North American high school students will be online - 50% of a high school student's academic program will be earned outside of the classroom.

Questions:

1. This has the potential of significantly changing the face of how students will be doing school. In what way(s) could this reality impact schools as we know them today?
2. What issues does this change introduce to the school leader of tomorrow?
3. Of all the skills that characterize the educational leader today, which will be critical in the future? Are there new skills that would need to be developed?