21st Century Teaching and Learning
Dr. Chris Dede

[ANIMATED INTRODUCTION: COLLAGE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER WITH TECHNOLOGY WITH TEXT ON SCREEN READING 21st Century Teaching and Learning Key messages from Chris Dede

[CHRIS DEDE GIVING A PRESENTATION USING PROJECTION SCREEN]

CHRIS DEDE: …it's much harder to unlearn than to learn, so the importance of communities like this, the face-to-face community that we have today in the workshop and the virtual community that you have through your interactions, is it provides the chance to unlearn intellectually, emotionally and socially all of those baggage from the 20th century, so that we can invent the 21st.

21 Century learning needs to be life-wide, personalized and diagnostic, and that is actually quite important because there is a lot of research that indicates that 10 years after you graduate, how well you're doing in life depends more on your intrapersonal and interpersonal skills than on your cognitive skills. It certainly depends on all of them, but the fact of the matter is that your ability to think metacognitively, to manage your own work, to collaborate with others is incredibly important. This model of life-wide learning, mobile learning, personalized learning, similarly draws on what we see happening in the 21st century workplace, where people are not sitting in factories, they're out throughout life, collaborating together, inventing their work, if you will, as life progresses.

If students are learning life-wide, the teacher becomes an orchestrator of what happens in the classroom, and then coordinates with what is happening outside of the classroom. I don't believe that the most talented teacher can cover everything the kids at that developmental level need for the 21st century within the limits of the school day and the school place. We have to use the rest of the world to help us help them learn and to personalize learning.

So the most important thing about this digital teaching platform and about what we as teachers do is diagnostic assessment. So I and a lot of other people, with my colleagues, are working at what we call Virtual Performance Assessments where we use virtual worlds to try to create the kind of rich environment in which it is possible to assess sophisticated intellectual, personal and social skills.

Social media are often used for entertainment or in relatively trivial ways, but they are in fact powerful mechanisms for sharing, for thinking together, and for co-creating, and when I use social media in my teaching, I'm aware that I'm also communicating what are called new literacies. Now I know you've thought a lot about this topic of digital literacies or new literacies. It can be controversial because reading and writing and mathematics are fundamental. Literacy is something that's fundamental, so are these new things really that important?

Well, we see them all around us all the time. I have a 13-year-old daughter still - we adopted her from India. When she comes home to do her homework, she does transmedia navigation. She has the textbook and the encyclopaedia, but she also has websites, Wikipedia, instant messaging windows with her friends and they're having to use judgement. They're having to synthesize together sources that are incomplete, inconsistent, possibly biased, possibly inaccurate, just as we do in our lives as adults.

It's true that getting away from the world is powerful in learning about the world, but now we can say something more in 21st century learning. We can say, but when you're in the world, you're going to have a device with you that knows who you are and how like to learn, where you are and what around you has been augmented for learning, and who you like to learn with and how to reach them. That's a very intriguing vision.

Think about the kinds of skills students are going to need in this future. The technology doesn't do anything unless it's a catalyst for deeper content, for more active forms of learning, for more authentic forms of embedded assessment, for links between school and life - that's what you're doing, and that's what I've tried to sketch.

TEXT ON SCREEN: "The technology doesn't do anything unless it's a catalyst for deeper content, for more active forms of learning, for more authentic forms of embedded assessment, for links between school and life." - Chris Dede