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The Power of Place-Based Learning

A training project in Hawaii that uses place-based learning, which is capitalizing on a remarkable worldwide journey of two double-hulled canoes

High School to College Transition

A two-segment half-day workshop designed for high school teachers to address inquiry based research and college expectations for students

Building Brighter Futures

A partnership to strengthen school libraries and increase use of the Nashville Public Library's collections for children and youth





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This article describes a training project in Hawaii that uses place-based learning, which is capitalizing on a remarkable worldwide journey of two double-hulled canoes—the Hōkūle‘a and Hikianalia—as a vehicle to help students connect history and culture to their own lives. The author describes how teams of teachers and librarians engage the students in experiences that nurture a deeper appreciation for traditional local practices, and that invite them to embrace a sense of kinship with—and responsibility to—the larger community called Earth.

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Limitless Libraries (LL) is a partnership between Nashville Public Library and Metro Nashville Public Schools to strengthen school libraries and increase use of the Nashville Public Library’s collections for children and youth. In 2012 a study to assess the impact of LL was commissioned, a survey of students was conducted during 2013, and the full report documenting the findings was released to the public early in 2015. This article focuses on the various outcomes reported by LL students and how the incidence of those reported outcomes varied for selected student demographic groups.

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The use of game design by the teacher librarian is a way to meet students where they are while utilizing inherent interests and abilities in a culture where use of various devices and gaming is the norm. Wong emphasizes that in a constantly changing digital world, fostering the ability to create games rather than just consuming them, students can be taught to explore, experiment, and learn. In this way, students gain a better understanding of technology and game design, and have the ability to assist in shaping the digital world while developing skills needed to compete in a digital-driven, global economy.

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Library Learning Commons - Future Forward And Marc Prensky's Education to a Better World

David V. Loertscher and Carol Koechlin

We follow with eager anticipation the work of lead educators who cast their expertise and energies to the important task of developing new vision for education. Many argue that school is failing the majority of our youth, and dramatic change is necessary and looming on the horizon. What are the needs and demands of education for the future and what opportunities will unfold in this century? For our readers, how can school library learning commons help lead the way?



The prominent lecturer and author, Marc Prensky, has issued his new book *Education to a Better World* (Teachers College Press, 2016). If you thought that flipped educating was unique, Marc outdoes other educational theorists by proposing that the traditional classical education be replaced by project based learning on steroids.

Prensky calls for abandonment of the strictly 'Academic' model and MESS (Mathematics, English, Science and Social Studies), which dominates most curriculums in North America now, and focus all education programs on the "Empowerment to Better the World Model," where students are coached through real world projects that they care about.

Prensky would have all students worldwide engage solely in projects that would improve conditions at home, in the community, country, or across the world. The traditional content would be embedded as needed when a particular project required a particular skill or background knowledge. Instead of an emphasis on assessment of what is known, students would be judged on their accomplishments in solving the problem of the school, community, and beyond.

Taking an either/or stance, Prensky burns the bridges of traditional content-based education as totally outmoded and inappropriate for the kids and teens facing today's and tomorrow's world. We would argue that a both/and position would have made Prensky's arguments stronger, since each student would have individual choice along the pathway of the educational journey. But before arguing that point, let us look at the brilliant proposal Marc makes for project-based accomplishment.

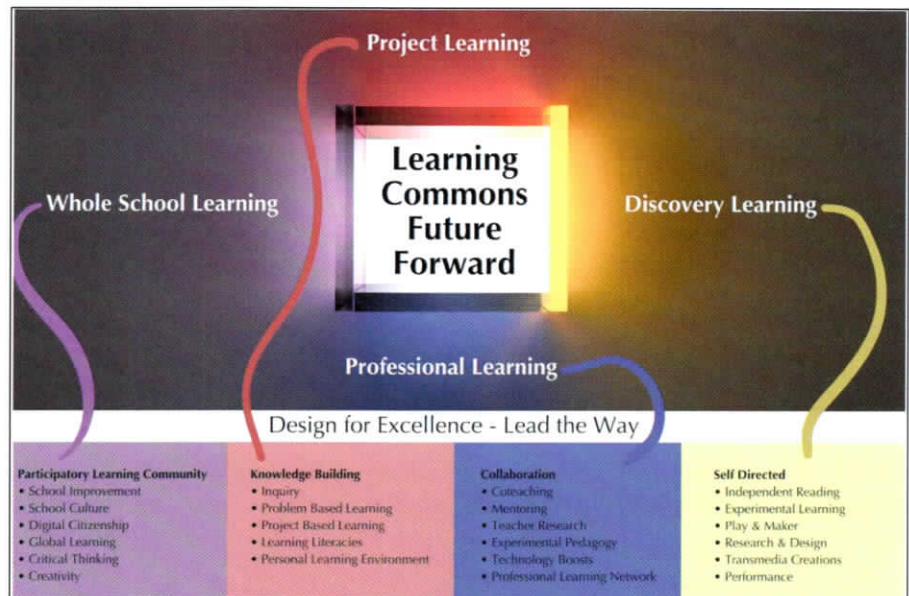
In Prensky's world, teachers become mentors instead of content deliverers. Each child would be guided in the formulation of an idea that would change the world. This might be anything from changing the food served in the cafeteria to working on a polluted swamp in back of the school, to disaster recovery or infestation of a lake with an unwanted species of predator. Mentors would teach, bide, and promote what we have termed for some time in education, the soft skills. They would be paramount with traditional and classical knowledge learned if needed to solve the problem at hand. By senior year in high school, students would have perhaps 100 projects in a portfolio of accomplishment. Instead of this portfolio displacing scores on "what I know," the total emphasis is on "what I can do."

The brilliance of Prensky is his outline of what accomplishment really means to an individual student. This ability is cultivated each day in the development of effective thinking, effective action, and effective relationships. He develops each one of these characteristics into a long list of soft skill behaviors that mentors actively assist each learner in acquiring.

In addition to his lists, he describes how the mentors would work daily with their students to develop these skills and embed other content skills as needed. We applaud him for this type of outline, since it fits so well into the concept of the library learning commons as described in Loertscher and Koechlin: *The New Learning Commons Where Learners win!* (Learning Commons Press, 2008; 2nd ed. 2011).

The vision for a library learning commons in the school

centers on both a physical and virtual space in which learners both consume knowledge as well as create it. Such a place is an environment in which individuals, small groups, and large groups are working simultaneously on various projects, making, creating, or learning content boosted by a very rich information and technology environment. Thus, it becomes the center where not just teacher librarians or instructional technology specialists work, but a place where various mentors can promote and implement a wide variety of learning tailored to the needs of both individuals as well as groups. It combines the best of Prensky with the best of content teaching and mastery of what is already known in the world, and both reside side by side. We can well imagine that the library learning commons is the place in the school to provide the personalization that Prensky envisions



first in a microcosm, and, as the system develops, the library learning commons expands to fill the entire school. For an in-depth look, check out the website of Loertscher and Koechlin at: <https://sites.google.com/site/school-learningcommons/>

Happily, there are already a core of teacher librarians and instructional technology coaches out there who already fill the role of mentor as Prensky envisions. These persons along with other master teacher/mentors could form the staff of the library learning commons and then expand as needed. Thus, every child has one or several mentors that help individualize the education that each person needs and wants. It is the best of both worlds rather than a steady diet of just one strategy. And, it places the child at the center and in the driver's seat of his or her destiny.

There is much to be said in support of project based learning, and it is a significant solution component of the change needed to prepare learners for their future worlds. As our readers know, we have been working for many years to help teacher librarians and classroom teachers design 'real' not 'fake' projects. Teachers should not waste a student's time and energy on low level projects that often encourage 'cut and paste' mindless regurgitation of facts. Instructional designs must engage learners in deep thinking

EFFECTIVE THINKING	EFFECTIVE ACTION	EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS
Understanding Communication	Habits of Highly Effective People	Communication & Collaboration
Quantitative & Pattern Thinking	Body & Health optimization	• One-to-one
Scientific Thinking	Agility	• In teams
Historical Perspective	Adaptability	• In families
Problem-Solving	Leadership & Followership	• In communities
• Individual	Decision Making	• At work
• Collaborative	Under Uncertainty	• Online
Curiosity & Questioning	Experimentation	• In virtual worlds
Creative Thinking	Research	Listening
Design Thinking	Prudent Risk-taking	Networking
Integrative Thinking	Reality Testing/Feedback	Relationship-building
Systems Thinking	Patience	Empathy
Financial Thinking	Resilience & "Grit"	Courage
Inquiry & Argument	Entrepreneurship	Compassion
Judgment	Innovation	Tolerance
Transfer	Improvisation	Ethics
Aesthetics	Ingenuity	Politics
Habits of Mind	Strategy & Tactics	Citizenship
Growth Mindset	Breaking Barriers	Conflict Resolution
Self-knowledge of one's:	Project Management	Negotiation
• Passions	Programming Machines	Coaching
• Strengths & weaknesses	Making Effective Videos	Being Coached
Stress Control	Innovating with Current & Future Technologies	Peer-to-peer
Focus		Mentoring
Contemplation & Meditation		



YA FICTION

MIDDLE SCHOOL MUDDLES

Reynolds, Jason. **As Brave as You**. Atheneum, 2016. 432p. \$16.99. ISBN: 9781481415903. Grades 5-8. Spending a month with his grandparents in the Virginia countryside is nothing like Genie's life in Brooklyn. For starters, Genie and his older brother, Ernie, who prides himself on being cool, must scoop up all the dog droppings and fling them into the woods. They have to pick peas and sell them at the market. There's no cell phone service and limited access to the internet at a neighbor's. Genie's beset by worries, including his parents' deteriorating marriage and his blind grandfather's omnipresent pistol. It's his habit to jot down dozens of questions, big and small, in a notebook. And he does find some answers as he begins to understand his family's history and the effects on it of war and segregation. Funny, sweet, painful—the story captures life as it really is, complex and rewarding.

Peck, Richard. **The Best Man**. Dial, 2016. 240p. \$16.99. ISBN: 9780803738393. Grades 4-7. Archer Magill, 12, is surrounded by people who love him, including his father, grandfather, and uncle. They are kind men, who also care for each other, a welcome group rarely found in middle school novels. Narrator Archer is warmhearted himself but a bit clueless, especially about the adults around him. Luckily his best friend, Lynette, is happy to take charge. Flashbacks convey their funny escapades when younger. Now in middle school, Lynette recruits an aristocratic British boy with a bodyguard to save them from bullies, a wish fulfillment fantasy for many readers. Weddings bookend the story, one hilarious and the other heartwarming when Archer's cautious gay uncle finally finds love. Brilliantly understated and not to be missed.

Creech, Sharon. **Moo: A Novel**. Harper, 2016. 288p. \$16.99. ISBN: 9780062415240. Grades 4-7. In this engaging mix of prose and poems, narrator Reena, 12, her parents, and her younger brother, Luke, move from a large city to a small coastal town in Maine. It's a big change but Reena and Luke, who's seven, happily adjust to biking around on their own, free from noisy city crowds. But when their parents volunteer them to help a strange old woman with farm chores, they dread it. Luke finds Mrs. Falala scary and Reena dislikes cleaning out the cow's barn. To Reena's surprise, as time goes on, she grows attached to the cow and even chooses to show her at a local fair. Reena gains confidence as she masters new tasks and takes pride in her new physical strengths. Meanwhile, Luke and Mrs. Falala strike up an unlikely friendship. The poems play with font types and size, and word placement, adding a whimsical note to the congenial story.

Davies, Jacqueline. **Nothing but Trouble**. Harper, 2016. 320p. \$16.99. ISBN: 9780062369888. Grades 5-8. Sixth-grader Maggie knows what she wants in life: to get into M.I.T. She also wants to match the prowess of her father, long dead, in executing clever, elaborate pranks, known as hacking. Her father left details about his own hacks in notebooks that Maggie treasures and pores over. Her scientific and engineering skills sharpen as she listens to his advice in her head and anonymously pulls off pranks that charm her fellow students. When a new girl who loves art joins forces with Maggie, the pranks take on a more artistic flair. Together the girls have the school and then the town sitting up and taking notice. Even Maggie's unhappy grandfather and her mother, worn out from responsibilities, start changing. But what will happen when the authoritarian principal, who's furious about the pranks, identifies the girls? Long a loner, Maggie learns that friendship has its joys and that secret pranks can bring people closer together. This is a highly entertaining novel with a rare engineering-obsessed protagonist.

and collaborative knowledge building. Consequently we celebrate Prensky for the stand he has taken to challenge students with real world problems and move away from traditional projects that are content oriented.

In our work on developing the Learning Commons approach for schools, we have also consistently encouraged teacher librarians and school administrators to develop the Learning Commons as a participatory learning community where everyone gets better and better at whatever their task is. Their task as a student may be working on an inquiry project, but there is so much more to offer. We strongly believe that a lot of important learning occurs through discovery, when we invite learners to play with technologies, make materials and, yes, even with knowledge and ideas. And the same goes for teachers as learners, thus the learning commons is the center of whole school experimentation with learning and the design of learning.

Our challenge for change leaders: What about surrounding every learner with both what they want and need? The opportunities are limitless.