

# Learning Is Changing. Is Your PD Keeping Pace?

Since the advent of the Internet in 1997, things have changed. A lot. Learning used to be isolated and linear. Access to knowledge used to be limited, and experts were seldom available when needed. Today, however, the Internet has fashioned a learning environment with boundless access to information and people. In short, learning has become *connected*.

Will Richardson and Rob Mancabelli (2011) discuss the shift to connected learning in their groundbreaking text on Personal Learning Networks (PLNs), stating “We now have two billion potential teachers and the sum of human knowledge at our fingertips” (p. 542).

The consequences of connected learning permeate every aspect of our lives. We can now learn about new music recommendations from Pandora, visit almost any place in the world instantly via Google Earth, or widen our perspective by watching online videos from leaders in every field. Knowledge and experts are “on demand” every second of every day. And that’s just the beginning.

Alarming, many schools aren't able to keep pace with these shifts. Millions of students around the world attend schools that continue to offer learning experiences that treat both knowledge and teachers as scarce resources. With each passing day, schools that fail to embrace connected learning become increasingly irrelevant and ineffective.

## SO, WHY ARE SO MANY SCHOOLS STRUGGLING TO MAKE THIS CHANGE?

Well, it's important to remember that radical change in any field is hard (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Transforming a system that's remained largely unchanged for over 100 years isn't easy. There are also a host of complex factors that contribute to a school's ability to redefine learning.

However, mounting research reveals that a critical element slowing the learning revolution in schools is **ineffective professional development for teachers**. If we don't model connected learning experiences for teachers, then it's unlikely that connected learning will happen in their classrooms (Beglau et al., 2011). A well respected, national meta-analysis about teaching and learning laments, "Many approaches to teaching adults consistently violate principles for optimizing learning" (Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan, & Pellegrino, 2000, p. 26).

The Center for Public Education comments that 90 percent of teachers report participating in professional development, and most of these educators also believe that it was "totally useless" (Gulamhussein, 2013). That's because traditional professional development for teachers is frequently misaligned with best practices for connected learning. Instead, professional learning experiences are often top-down, autocratic, and didactic. The disjointed, one-shot workshop designs that typify professional development rarely generate desired changes. Research reveals that more than 14 aligned hours of professional development is

required before student learning is affected and most teachers aren't receiving that level of support (Yoon, 2007).

If we're serious about creating schools that matter, then we must also get serious about creating effective learning experiences for teachers. Although this is a tall order, don't despair. The same tools that have accelerated the need for change also offer educators amazing new opportunities to “**power up**” professional learning in their schools and districts.

Often, these tools provide free ways of connecting people, practices, and ideas. They facilitate professional learning that is nimble, interactive, and effective.

## SO, HOW CAN YOU GET STARTED?

The pages that follow provide you with one easy-to-implement, practical method for modeling a connected learning environment in your school, district, or region. Called Edcamp, the model leverages internal expertise, digital networks, and conversation to generate change. This book is the official “How to Edcamp” guide released by the Edcamp Foundation, a nonprofit, volunteer organization that supports Edcampers everywhere.

Edcamps are more than just an idea or theory; they're part of an international movement. The model has been replicated in 42 states and dozens of countries worldwide. Over 25,000 educators have participated in a regional Edcamp event, and many more have participated in an Edcamp-style event at their school. Thousands of blogs have been posted documenting both the Edcamp experience and concrete changes that teachers have made as a result of attending an Edcamp. An analysis of these reflections shows that Edcamps not only adhere to the tenets of effective adult learning, but they also prove highly motivating.

Get ready to meet Edcampers from every corner of the world, learn how to successfully organize an organic event with no predetermined

schedule, and uncover ways to personalize professional learning for every teacher in your school, district, or region.

Edcamp is a proven model that you can use regardless of your specific situation. It typifies the organic, connected learning that is absolutely necessary in today's world.

Join the thousands of educators across the world who have “**powered up**” their professional learning with the Edcamp model. Read on.

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