

New Pedagogies for Deep Learning: A Global Partnership

Engage Secondary Students Because the Future Depends on it.



New Pedagogies for
Deep Learning[™]
A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

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Engage Secondary Students Because the Future Depends on it.

As we stumble into summer, having survived an exhausting and traumatic year with COVID, we likely want to dump the stress and run to seek the tranquility of a sunset at the dock. Not so fast. Before you go, be sure to pack some guided reflection time. After all, this has been a year like no other. It deserves your contemplation. You are different now. Your colleagues are different now...and so are your students. When you come back to school, it will not be the same. To put it plainly, the “disruption fun” has just begun.

Yes, the challenges will continue. The new school year will require us to continue to be resourceful, agile, and open to new possibilities. Pressing issues like the global pandemic, climate change, social-political divisions, and yawning inequities call for a wholesale reboot of our education system. As secondary educators we must prepare students now for the uncertainties of tomorrow. In a decade, the students you are teaching today will be charged with the massive responsibility of tackling the world’s most prickly problems. Memorized math formulae and rehearsed soliloquies won’t get us out of the fix we are in. *We need to engage our students differently because the future depends on it.*

All of this is a hard pill to swallow, especially when teachers already work hard and give their best. We need to rethink the skills and smarts our students need so they can lead the way through these immediate challenges. Let’s examine where secondary educators can redirect their finite energies to reach students with impact.

If COVID has offered us any lessons, it’s that on this precarious planet we are all tangled up together. One’s suffering is our shared suffering. As educators, we are in the business of developing people who will recognize our shared humanity and flourish for their own good and for the good of others. At New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, we want students to be good at learning and good at life. So, we are centred on developing Global Competencies that prepare all students to flourish in a complex world. These Global competencies are character; citizenship; collaboration; communication; creativity; and critical thinking. These Global Competencies stick with you for life. We believe Deep Learning is the greatest legacy you can give your students.

If you want to engage secondary students and prepare them for tomorrow, here are 12 provocations to put you on a Deep Learning path.

- 1) Hold high expectations for all students.** This is not about perpetuating the superficial achievement agenda. This is about investing in each student’s potential to contribute meaningfully to our society. Not one student can be abandoned.
- 2) Student voice matters as much as yours—maybe even more.** Adolescents make sense of the world and their critical role in it by having a voice and processing their understanding with others. Stop telling. Start asking. Listen more. It’s that simple.

- 3) For students today, choice is an expectation, not a privilege.** Our secondary students are exposed to an infinite number of choices every day. This “Instagram-Amazon-Netflix” generation does not have to settle for what we’re serving up. They know they can always find what they want elsewhere. During COVID this has become especially true. Many students have opted for on-line learning rather than face to face. The numbers of students who have withdrawn or are ‘missing in action’ have increased dramatically. Some secondary students are questioning whether they even need to attend school at all.¹

As secondary educators, we can provide authentic choice as part of our practice. Think of it this way: providing no choice to students feels autocratic. Two choices is an ultimatum (You take this or you take that). But a choice of three or more is authentic choice and it feels liberating. We need to fold this thinking into our daily engagement with students.

- 4) Know them so they can realize themselves.** Students do not come to you empty, waiting for you to fill them up. By the time they hit secondary school, they have had formative experiences that are beginning to shape who they are becoming. Your job is to help them unearth their hidden gifts and enable them to become all they can be. Seek to know them as individuals. Hear about their interests and obligations. Observe how they interact with others. Ask their opinions. Listen to their curiosities and doubts. Deeply understand their strengths and needs and design learning for them, not the class you held last period.
- 5) The adolescent brain is not like your brain.** Those brains are under construction until the age of 25. Adolescents are developing their identities and how to express themselves. They are seeking a sense of independence and autonomy, moral reasoning, and strong relationships independent of family.

Research is also showing that the adolescent’s brain is wired to connect with others and contribute to society.² When young people give back to others as they do in Deep Learning, they are using their energy to do good in the world and this changes their brains in terms of the way they think, act and interact with others. The Deep Learning experiences young people have builds up their neural pathways--the networks of connections. What they don’t use, they lose. When kids are activated by the 6 Global Competencies, their brains develop very differently than students who are “sitting and gitting” content that is irrelevant to their life.

Our New Pedagogies for Deep Learning global network of thousands of educators has co-created a tool that addresses how to engage with the adolescent brain in mind. Check it out at the end of this paper.

¹ Wong, J. Teachers warn that some students have checked out of school and it will be hard to get them back. CBC news. (April 7, 2021)

² Denworth, L. Adolescent brains are wired to want status and respect: That’s an opportunity for teachers and parents. (May 1, 2021)

6) Treat them like you trust them.

COVID has reminded us that our relationships with our students is central to their success. And you can't have a healthy relationship without trust. But here is the irony: adolescents don't only have to earn your trust. You have to earn theirs. Honour your commitments by following through. Organize your class in service of them, not you. Navigate the murky waters of consistency and equity by explaining your decisions honestly. Think about how your messages will be received before uttering them. Be open to their feedback. Authentically express your care.

7) Stop using the textbook as though it's a sacred text.

There's no prize at the end of the year for reaching the end of the textbook. Textbooks are only one source of knowledge and not the sole authority of your subject area. They do not adequately represent the diversity of perspectives, contested views, discoveries made last week, or perhaps most importantly the interests and backgrounds of the students you serve. So, what if you put it aside and looked to the actual curriculum?

If you dig into the curriculum and examined the verbs (what students are expected to be able to do) you will notice the Global Competencies are embedded in there. The curriculum is a launch pad for designing engaging, relevant learning and is waiting for your magic touch.

8) Engagement thrives in the community you co-create. We used to believe that we had to engage students with technology to get with the times. After a year of on-line learning, we now understand that technology can be as deadening as worksheets. With your students clarify the kind of class-community that they want to belong to. Once they have that vision, co-create norms that help everyone to interact and realize their collective potential. Check in on those community norms regularly by inviting students to recognize each other's contributions.

9) Assessment must belong to them. If students immediately see you as someone who will evaluate and identify their shortcomings, who will determine their success or failure, you have already lost them. They will have checked out because they don't own their success, you do. However, if you recognize their assets and deliberately shift to regular and effective use of student conferencing, peer and self assessment and descriptive feedback as your primary assessment strategies, they will own their next steps. You guide, they drive.

10) Breathe. Laugh. Move. Stress is here to stay. Rather than ignoring it and moving on, we need to adopt behaviours that peck away at its perniciousness. Addressing well-being means facilitating a healthy classroom environment. No yoga required. Learning that includes space and time to breathe (and be silent), to laugh (not at the expense of inclusion) and move about can go a long way to foster brain connectivity, stimulate endorphins, and release serotonin.

11) Be flexible. You were never really in control anyway.

Secondary classrooms can be demanding and unpredictable places. When learning doesn't unfold as we expect or as quickly as we wish, we naturally want to tighten our control. Usually this takes the form of teacher-centred behaviours. We return to direct instruction. We give them the correct answers. We fill the awkward void of wait time with our own explanations. It may give us a feeling of control, but it deprives the students of theirs. It's time to de-front the classroom.

Shifting the secondary classroom to one where students thrive, make meaning, and own their learning does not happen instantly. Be kind to yourself. Take baby steps. Remember you are learning too.

12) You are what the world needs now. You are more than enough. The best time to make a lasting difference in the lives of your students was the first day you began teaching. The second-best time is now. You have never been more important to the lives of students than you are this very minute. You are not "just" a teacher. You shape the future. The vocation of education sets the table for every other vocation. The world needs the best you've got to give.

This brings us back to where we started. Take time to rest, recharge and reflect on this past year. Recognize that school will be different when we return but together, we can make it irresistible and impactful. Developing the Global Competencies and pursuing Deep Learning is just the beginning of a hopeful, optimistic future for students and for us as professionals. Thus, we leave you with one last provocation before you head off into that summer sunset: How will you engage your students as though the future depends on it?

Questions for Discussion:

- 1) What excites you about the Global Competencies for secondary students?
- 2) Which of the 12 provocations left you thinking?
- 3) What provocation is missing?
- 4) How can the attached Deep Learning with the Adolescent Brain in Mind Tool support your work?



Pedagogical Practices



Adolescents:

- Want to understand the purpose/relevance
- Are accustomed to receiving information quickly, and expect to multi-task
- Want to make a contribution
- Challenges, simulations, experiences, role play help brain development
- Prioritizing competing information and complex decision making can be challenging
- Seek independence and self-efficacy
- Seek novelty and creative exploration, problem solving
- Managing emotions can be a challenge; self regulation is still under construction
- Question from various perspectives, capable of abstract thinking



Learning Partnerships

Adolescents:

- Seem to push away adults but they need healthy relationships, mentorship and connection
- Seek autonomy and are processing their own identity in relation to others
- Need to develop trust, seek sincerity in others
- Have a biological drive to be with peers, one's age group
- Can be self-conscious, concerned about how others perceive them, social fit
- Want to exert their voice and make choices
- Are still developing an understanding of boundaries and limits



Adolescents:

- See their device as central to their day to day lives
- When devices are taken away, it is seen as punishment
- Motivated to seek immediate rewards
- Social media and picture taking are important forms of interaction and engagement
- Videogames can improve decision making; speed of processing; ability to remember visual information and multi-tasking ability. Negative effects can include aggressive thoughts, and lack of exercise, social engagement and interaction with the natural environment
- Digital allows them to express themselves
- Need continuous and explicit awareness of other dangers, sexting, bullying

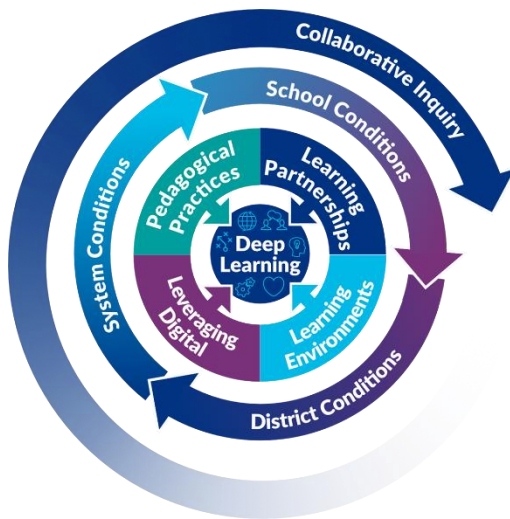
Adolescents:

- Many don't feel like they belong in school
- Need affirmation and to be heard
- Need to feel safe, accepted and acknowledged in order to take risks in class
- Sensitive to judgment
- Can thrive in some contexts and not in others
- Brains are still developing and can respond to stress differently than adults
- Disengage if they are not accountable or do not have clear roles within a group
- Sometimes misinterpret social cues, facial expressions
- Struggle with ignoring external distractions
- Are on a different sleep/wake cycle and Need 9+ hours sleep

Leveraging Digital



Learning Environments



New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) is a Global Partnership dedicated to transforming learning so that all students contribute to the common good, address global challenges and develop the Global Competencies needed to flourish in a complex world. Educators from across the globe are collaborating to activate powerful, student centered, real-world learning by fostering six Global Competencies. The Deep Learning framework provides a comprehensive solution to reimagining learning and includes a set of tools, measures and planning processes that enables schools, municipalities and systems to shift practice and impact well-being and equity.

Learn more: <https://deep-learning.global>