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Future-oriented Education

A new way to describe our goal

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"Is what I teach today really what my kids need to learn?" tweets a teacher.

In more and more cases the answer is no — and we are all searching for ways to move our schools more quickly forward into the future.

I suggest every school and teacher adopt "Future-oriented Education" as one of their primary goals. Future-oriented Educating is educating with a firm eye on — in addition to the tests and the current curriculum — the real things our kids need in their future lives, as we, their educators, perceive them. It means consciously re-balancing our teaching away from being only past-oriented to being far more future-oriented than it is today. If someone asks a teacher or student: "What do you do here?" their answer should be "WE EDUCATE FOR THE FUTURE."

What This Consists Of

Part of Future-oriented Education, of course, is moving quickly to the tools of today and tomorrow.

But Future-oriented Education goes way beyond that — far beyond just teaching "old things in new ways" — to offer kids entirely new things that we don't teach today, either systematically or at all, but that are needed for tomorrow. These including connecting with people around the world via Twitter and Skype, doing complex analyses using new tools like Wolfram Alpha**,** creating new software apps, using CAD and 3D printing to create new physical products, simulating machines and populations using computer-based simulation tools, building and programming robots. and meeting in Virtual Worlds.

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Future-oriented Education also means adding whole categories to education that are not in the curriculum today. These include Effective Action, Effective Relationships, and Effective Accomplishment.

Future-oriented Education means going far beyond adding a few so-called "21st century skills" on top of what we currently teach. It means getting beyond teaching the same math, language arts, science and social studies we taught in the past to every student — and even beyond just adding more critical, mathematical and scientific thinking. It means adding a huge range of subjects we don't teach systematically today but that will be needed for tomorrow.

Future-oriented Education includes adding the "thinking" skills of creative thinking, problem-solving, inquiry skills, argument skills, design thinking, systems thinking, judgment, aesthetics, habits of mind, and self-knowledge of one's passions, strengths and weaknesses to what we teach.

It includes adding "effective action" skills such as of mindset, resilience, "grit", entrepreneurship, innovation, improvisation, breaking barriers, project management, coaching & being coached and the Habits of Highly Effective People.

It includes adding the "effective relationships" skills of communication & collaboration — one-to-one, in teams, in a family, in a community, at work and online — plus relationship-building, empathy, ethics, politics, citizenship, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

Additionally, Future-oriented Educating means **viewing technology as the "new foundation" of our education** — on the same par with reading.. We won't stop reading and writing, but we all need to be seeking a better balance between the old foundations of education and the new

And finally, Future-oriented Educating means moving toward **Accomplishment-Based Education**, where our students acquire the knowledge and skills they need through accomplishments in the real world, linked to their own interests and passions, and not just, as today, through made-up examples that are supposedly "relevant," or through made-up projects linked only to "standards."

The End of "Past-ucation"

The opposite of Future-oriented Education is "past-ucation." "Past-ucating" is continuing to do things in only the "old" ways. It's continuing to value the old over the new, rather than trying to seriously rebalance for the world of tomorrow.

I experienced this first hand when my son, then a 7-year-old second grader, had a "past-ucator" for his teacher. His classroom in 2013 was little different than my own second grade classroom in 1953. The teacher was uncomfortable with technology and accorded it

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little importance. Her students saw no balance between the text-based expository and non-fiction writing of the past, and the technology and graphics-based communication of the future. Her kids' PowerPoint presentations — finally allowed under duress — consisted of the students' previously-hand-written papers pasted in in their entirety, along with a couple of pictures. "Presenting" to the class was reading all the text word-for-word. There were no computer-generated pictures or writing on the classroom walls. The four computers that sat at the side of the classroom room were rarely ever turned on.

The worst part about such "past-ucation" is that the past-ucators' biases are communicated directly — consciously and unconsciously — to their students. My son tells me that asking *Siri* to find a definition for him is "cheating," and that Wikipedia "lies." From where does he get these ideas? Not from home.

A "New Balance"

Education is not just about preserving our collective past, but about preparing our kids for their future. In times when the future changed relatively slowly, it was good enough for educators to be the passers-on of the content and skills of yesterday. But we all know the future is arriving at an accelerating rate, and that the world our kids will live in will be profoundly different from today's. Our job as educators is to prepare them for that world.

We certainly must teach the past—but we cannot make it the only basis for our education. Today we require a "new balance" between the old and the new. More and more educators are now seeking that new balance, realizing that past-ucation—even when done well—is not enough. For our kids' sake, we must expose unmitigated and unrepentant "past-ucating" when we see it, and designate "past-ucation-only" as something that we can no longer tolerate. The more we rely on past-ucation (and that includes "new ways to do the old stuff") the less we are preparing our kids for their future, and the more we are handicapping them.

Future-oriented Education: Our Common Goal

To ensure our kids are as ready as they can be, our common goal must be to offer Future-oriented Education as much and as often as possible—with every teacher, school, district and even country finding their own path. A useful way to evaluate anything we do (or ask others to do) as an educator is to ask ourselves "Is this Future-oriented? Or is it just more past-ucation? Almost all of us can tell the difference.

Long-term, I believe that the best way to balance the needs of past and the future is to replace today's curriculum with one based on the far more fundamental skills of Effective Thinking, Effective Action, Effective Relationships and Effective Accomplishment — all enhanced, extended and enabled by the powerful tools and technologies of the 21st century and beyond. Although some have already begun emphasizing important skills like "critical thinking," and "creativity," we can, and must, go much further. Skill

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in acting, relating and accomplishing will be far more important in the future. ("Entrepreneurship" is but one example.)

I submit "Future-oriented Education" as a way to quickly communicate where it is we want to go — and "past-ucation" as a term for what to avoid. I believe Future-oriented Education is a useful goal for all of us — technologists, schools, parents, and particularly students — to demand from all educators and rally around.

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Marc Prensky is an internationally acclaimed thought leader, speaker, writer, consultant, and curriculum designer in the field of education.. He is the author of five books: From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom *(Corwin, 2012)* Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning *(Corwin, 2010),* Don't Bother Me, Mom, I'm Learning *(Paragon House, 2006),* Digital Game-Based Learning *(McGraw Hill, 2001) and* Brain Gain: Technology and the Quest for Digital Wisdom *(Palgrave MacMillan 2012). His writings have been translated into 10 languages.*

Marc is the Founder and Executive Director of The Institute for Global Future Education*, a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting Future-oriented Education, Accomplishment-Based Education, and The Future Curriculum in the world. He is currently speaking and writing books on these subjects.*

Previously, Marc founded and ran Games2train,com a corporate game-based learning company whose clients included IBM, Bank of America, Pfizer, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Los Angeles and Florida Virtual Schools. He is the Chief Design Officer of Spree Learning Games, an education-focused "curricular games" company.

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