

Panel - Luncheon May 19th- Education Foundation Leaders- How Innovation is Supported

Mark Neiker, Pearson Foundation

Bernie Trilling, Oracle

Milten Chen, George Lucas Foundation

Neiker, Trilling and Chen all represent operating foundations, which run and implement reform programs as well as give grants. The three believed that private foundations should think about working more closely with public agencies and schools; they advocated a juxtaposition of philanthropic and business-related efforts by such foundations.

How do we help our school systems understand the valuable role technology plays in education and the positive impact it will have on student learning? The panel claimed that it was necessary to ask the question “Does it work? And how do you know?” Extensive research should be done in order to answer these questions and this research should be done by the federal government. The panel noted that the Global Literacy Foundation (GLF) had commissioned a literature review on cooperative learning that is presently being completed; they hoped that in the future it would serve as a tool for companies to show research on student learning.

While education administrators have specific, clearly-articulated goals in mind for reform, classroom management still poses a problem. The challenge for teachers becomes how they manage great learning experiences. Until teachers understand professional development, this challenge will prove insurmountable.

Q&A

The usual push backs on problem-based learning take too much time. Nothing is offset in schools and it takes more money. Where are the offsets? Trilling responded that if problem-based learning (PBL) is done well, there is deeper and better coverage than if every item is taught in isolation, especially cross-curricular projects. It is impossible to get some of the skills necessary in the 21st century without using a project approach. Also, he said, kids stay engaged in projects. A high drop-out rate in United States schools necessitates more engaging lesson plans and learning processes. Chen replied that less instruction occurs in classrooms than most people think, especially when the ratio of teacher to students is 1:30. There is a different model that will engage students, one well worth the cost of regulation and implementation.

Is the panel funding studies that deal specifically with the cost question as well as the value-add question? Chen replied that Hank Levlin at the Teachers College is looking at cost effectiveness.

How are you organized to work with other organizations (i.e. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) to provide teacher professional development? The panel responded that the Partnership for 21st Century Skills is currently working on a project with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) to create model learning lessons and activities that provide students with 21st century skills. The early work on the project can be found on the Partnership for 21st Century Skills website: <http://www.21centuryskills.org>.

What suggestions do you have for how companies can work with you on specific areas, such as professional development? Neiker replied that the Pearson Foundation always aimed to partner with other organization(s) after defining the operating parameters for a given project. It is difficult to scale successful programs, which makes it important for foundations to work together.

The GLF, whose professional development program is bolstered mainly by coaching and mentoring, provides non-traditional in-service. When teachers learn from other teachers, it is easier to create a technological platform for modeling and mentoring. The panel stressed a need for Fortune 500 companies to work with Colleges of Education.