



Talking Digital Media and Learning: Talking Points

The following are talking points to be used as a guide during media interviews or when constructing communications materials. The recommendations presented here are based on FrameWorks' research on how to enhance Americans' understanding about the utility of digital media as an important learning tool, both inside and outside of the classroom setting.

1. Start with a Forward-Looking Value

As we set out to improve learning, our most important goal is to move our country forward. The best way we can do this is to take a common sense approach to update children's learning. This means identifying and teaching our children useful, real-world skills that our country needs to improve its ability to solve problems and meet new challenges. If we fail to act with this goal in mind, our children will be stuck with old ways of learning and outdated skills that will move our country backward. Instead, we work in a step-by-step fashion to improve learning for the progress of our country. (VALUES OF PROGRESS + PRAGMATISM)

2. Explain How Learning Happens

To ensure that our children are skilled to meet the challenges of tomorrow, it is important to understand how learning happens. To get concepts into the brain, they have to go through the body. Hands-on learning, with practical experiences that require learners to really use information to think things through as they solve problems, is the most effective way to make learning 'stick.'

3. Introduce an Explanatory Metaphor that Makes Concepts Concrete

A. To Emphasize Interactive and Experiential Learning:

Students are like cooks in a kitchen who need lots of hands-on practice working with the ingredients of learning – information – to know how to use it. In the kitchen, new cooks are mentored by more experienced cooks to select quality ingredients, reach for the right cooking tools, and apply lots of different skills to turn out a meal. As new cooks gain experience, they gain confidence and the ability to solve problems as they come up, or better yet, to anticipate problems and adjust to prevent them. They can move from the simple recipes to more complicated ones, and even start to improvise their own. They share their meals with others, learn from their reactions, and use that

information to refine their recipes the next time. If we want our students to become experts at working with information, we have to let them get their hands dirty in the learning kitchen. Experience is the only way to develop the judgment they need to skillfully and creatively handle the information ingredients they find in real life. (COOKING WITH INFORMATION SIMPLIFYING MODEL)

B. To Emphasize Mentorship (with Technology) and Learning Skills:

Students are like information drivers on a knowledge journey. On this journey, students need to be in the driver's seat and have their hands on the wheel. They need to learn the rules of the road, decipher signs, and skillfully operate their vehicle. But they can't learn this on their own. They need lots of help from more experienced drivers, teachers and adults, to guide them. With mentorship, students learn both basic and advanced driving skills so that they can operate their vehicle in a variety of conditions and reach their destination. It's not until students have mastered these skills that we let them drive on the open road on their own. A step-by-step learning experience prepares students to eventually become expert drivers on the knowledge journey of life. (INFORMATION DRIVERS SIMPLIFYING MODEL)

4. Then, link the Explanatory Metaphor to a Concrete Solution.

The solutions described here are for purposes of illustration only. Substitute your own policy, program, or innovative idea.

A. Learning technology offers us one of the best new ways to ensure that students get more time in the kitchen. One example is the role that videorecorded lectures can play in helping students master mathematics. Students can watch the step-by-step explanations for homework –which lets them rewind as many times as they need to make sure they get it. Then, in class, students can spend their time in hands-on problem solving instead of just listening and watching. The teacher is freed up to assist students as they work, offering hints or other help right when students need it. (SOLUTIONS)

B. Learning technology offers us one of the best new ways to ensure that students are drivers, not just passengers, in their learning. In a digital classroom, we expand the ways that students can receive mentoring as they learn to “drive” their own learning – not only is a skilled teacher right by their side, but other expert adults become available to them, and in some cases, the technology itself has “mentoring” functions built right into it – for example, students can often get useful feedback from the program as they learn. This type of learning, known as Connected Learning, is interactive, hands-on, and provides a real-world context for students to apply the knowledge they have gained and become life-long learners. When students are mentored to produce knowledge with today's digital tools, they get the chance to develop the skills that successful adults use in the workplace: critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills. These are the practical skills our country absolutely needs to make progress. (SOLUTIONS)

5. Putting It All Together

In order to keep America prosperous both now and in the future, we need to improve what students learn and how they learn it. To do so, it's wise to take a common-sense, step-by-step approach to make sure that our children's learning is not outdated. This means identifying and teaching our children useful skills that our country will need to build a productive workforce and community. If we fail to act with this goal in mind, our country will be stuck with old ways of learning that are both impractical in meeting our needs and unsuited to moving us forward. (VALUES OF PROGRESS + PRAGMATISM)

To improve learning, our approach must be learner-centered, experiential, and applicable to today's society. Like budding cooks in a kitchen, our students need lots of hands-on practice working with information ingredients to prepare them for the real world. This means teaching them how to select quality information and use today's digital tools to skillfully and creatively develop recipes for valuable knowledge production. (COOKING WITH INFORMATION SIMPLIFYING MODEL)

Because the information terrain is different today than in the past, students need to learn problem-solving and critical thinking skills necessary to traverse this terrain. To do this, they have to get their hands on the wheel and be in the driver's seat. But they can't learn this on their own. They need help from more experienced drivers. Teachers and adults play an important role in mentoring students to use digital tools for knowledge production. (INFORMATION DRIVERS SIMPLIFYING MODEL; ROLE OF MENTORED USE OF TECHNOLOGY)

Digital Media and Learning programs are a way to equip our nation's students to meet the challenges of tomorrow. This approach is interactive, hands-on, and provides a real-world context for students to apply the knowledge they have gained and become life-long learners. (SOLUTIONS)