Beyond the Classroom: From Virtual to Reality

Stephen Downes ~ Madrid, Spain

June 28, 2008

A Voyage on the *Tribal Warrior*

Built in the Torres Strait more than 100 years ago as a pearling lugger, it now promotes awareness of the Aboriginal community

This is a story of reconciliation.
This is the meaning:
Let us come together and talk peace

The Tribal Warrior Association uses the boat to train Aboriginal youth to attain their Master Class V Commercial Maritime Certificate

What is Virtual? What is Reality?

The theme of this conference suggests that online learning is something that is becoming real, becoming mainstream….

I want to suggest that online learning will help education itself become real…

My Thesis:
Online learning moves education of out the text-based language-based classroom and into the community… and thereby makes it more real

A Range of Reality…

TEXT --- STORIES --- SIMULATION --- EXPERIENCE

Less Real

More Real

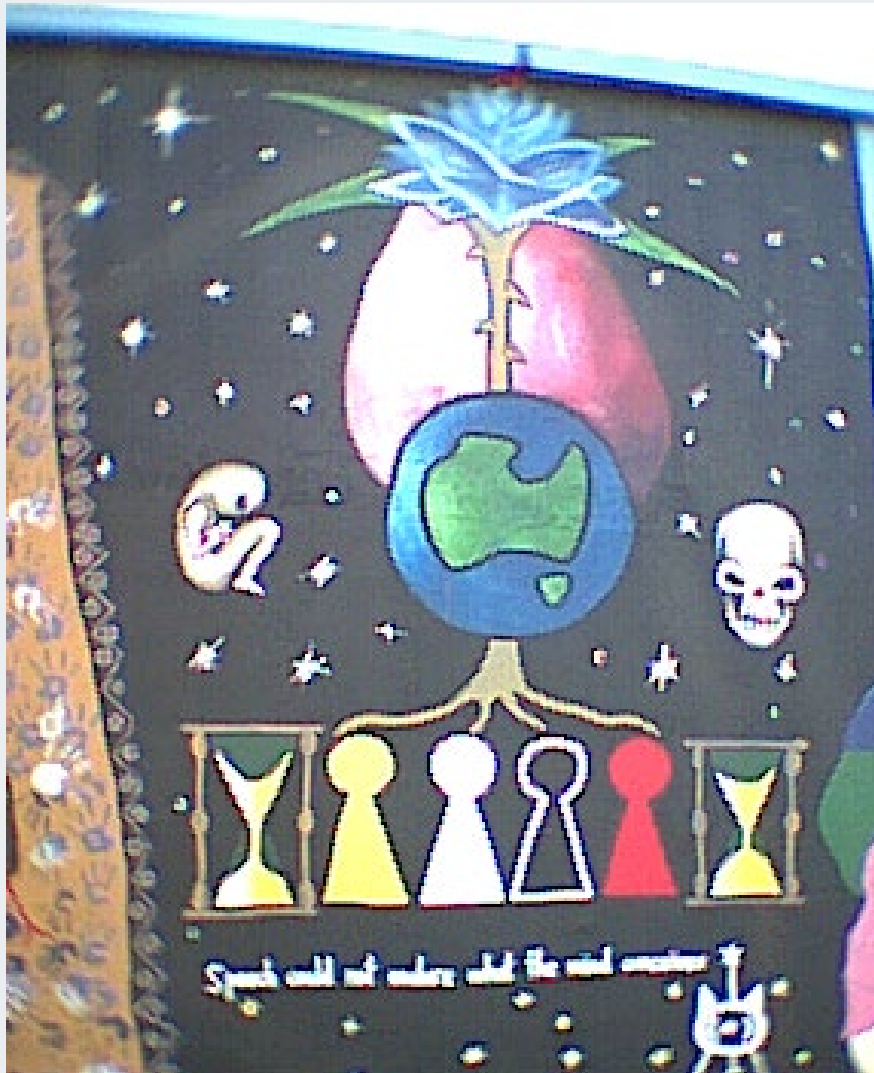**More Abstract**

Less Similar

Less Interaction

Less Abstract

More Similar

More Interaction

The written word, powerful as it is, is an abstraction, at remove from what it represents, and therefore vague, subject to ambiguity and multiple interpretation

Text is virtual
It is the *most* virtual
The term *virtual reality* was most applicable when the internet was text-based

Speech could not endure what the mind conceives

We make learning more real though storytelling

- The personal experience and the interaction of the teacher takes learning beyond text and makes it more real for the learner

There are many forms of storytelling

Our art and artistry tell of our history, our culture

There are many forms of storytelling

Music and theatre create a wider range of experience, stimulating more senses, touching us emotionally

But it's even better when we participate, interact…

When we ourselves become the story
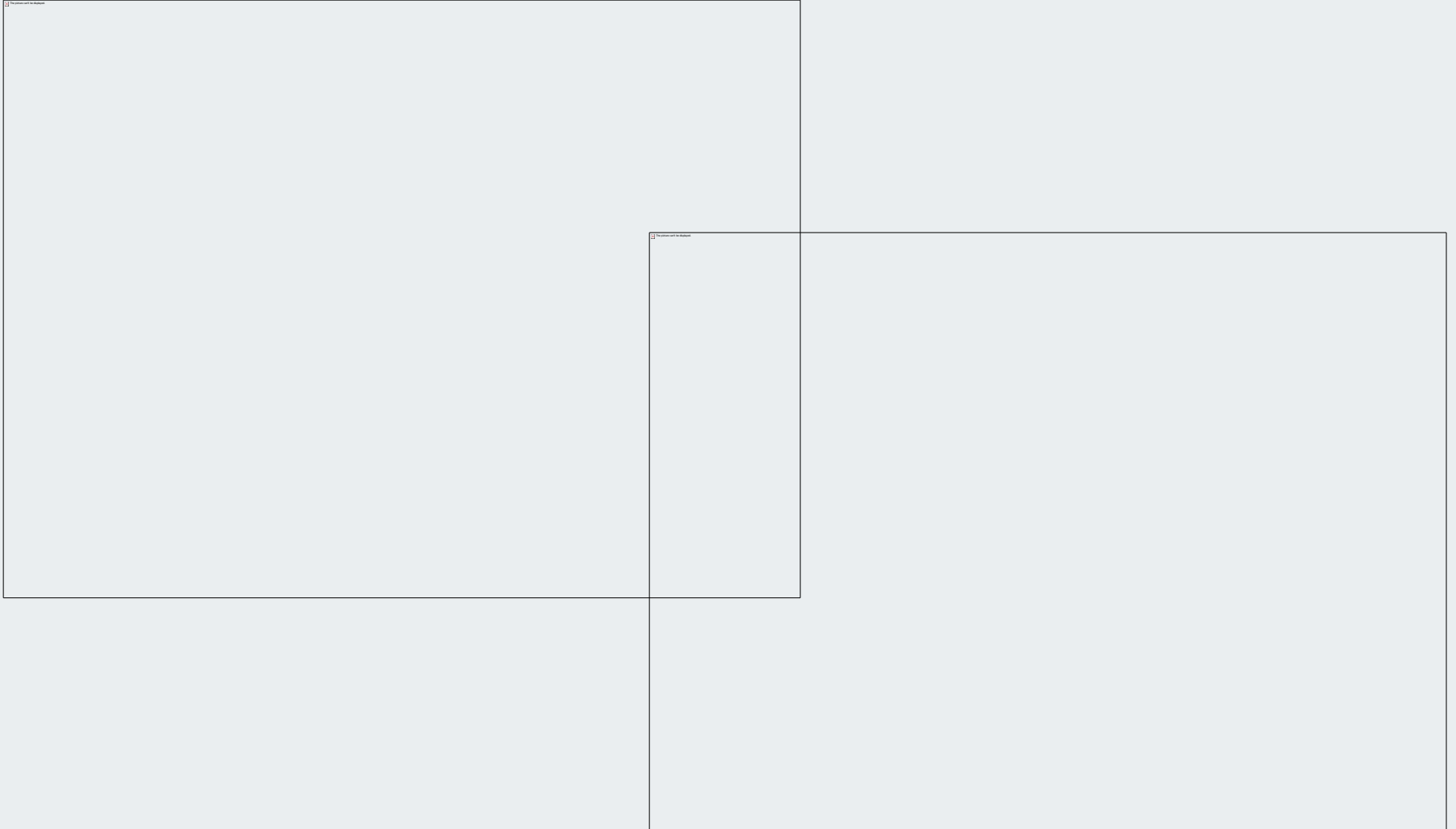
Most online learning stops here

- It focuses on the text…
- If it's good, it adds an element of dialogue, of storytelling

>»But if it seems virtual, it's because it *is* virtual…

- We can do so much more…

For example: What does learning 2.0 mean to me?
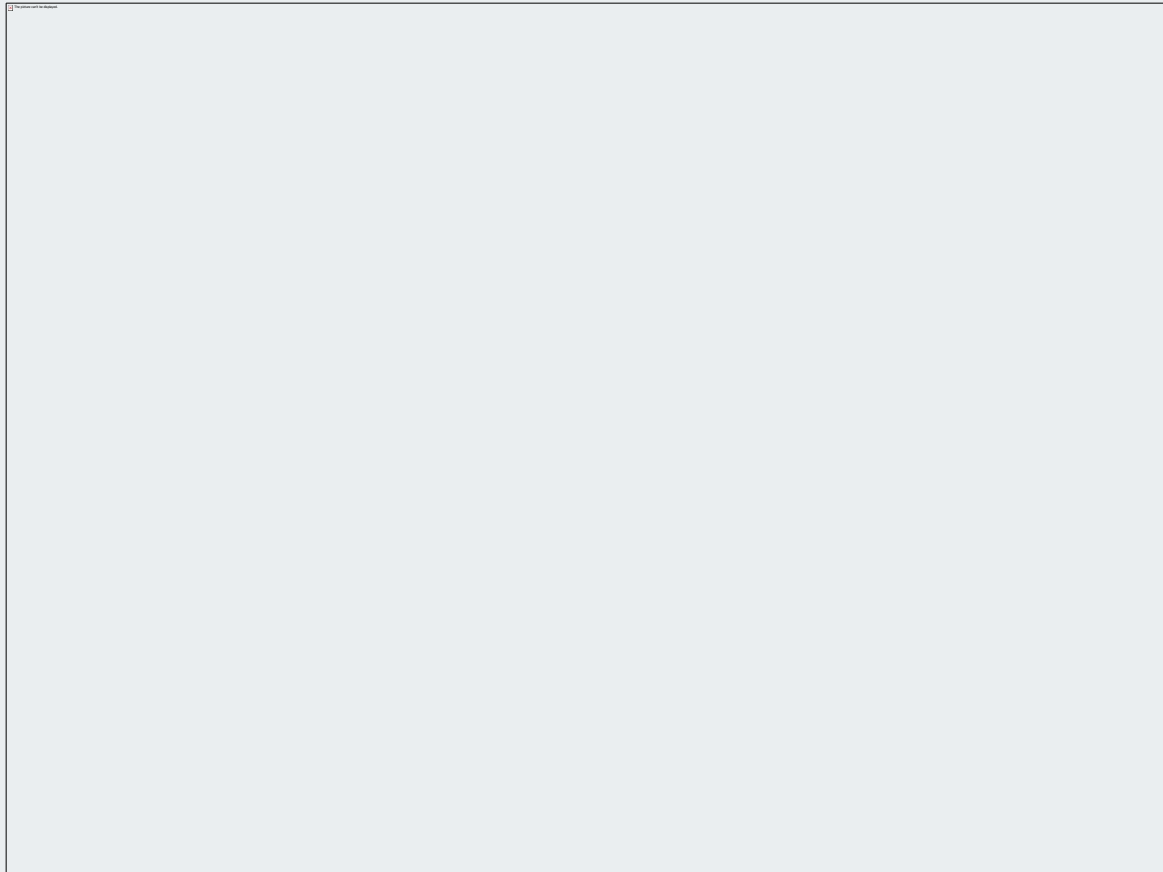
- A place to store (and share) my photos

http://www.flickr.com

- A place to store (and share) my videos

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4126240905912531540
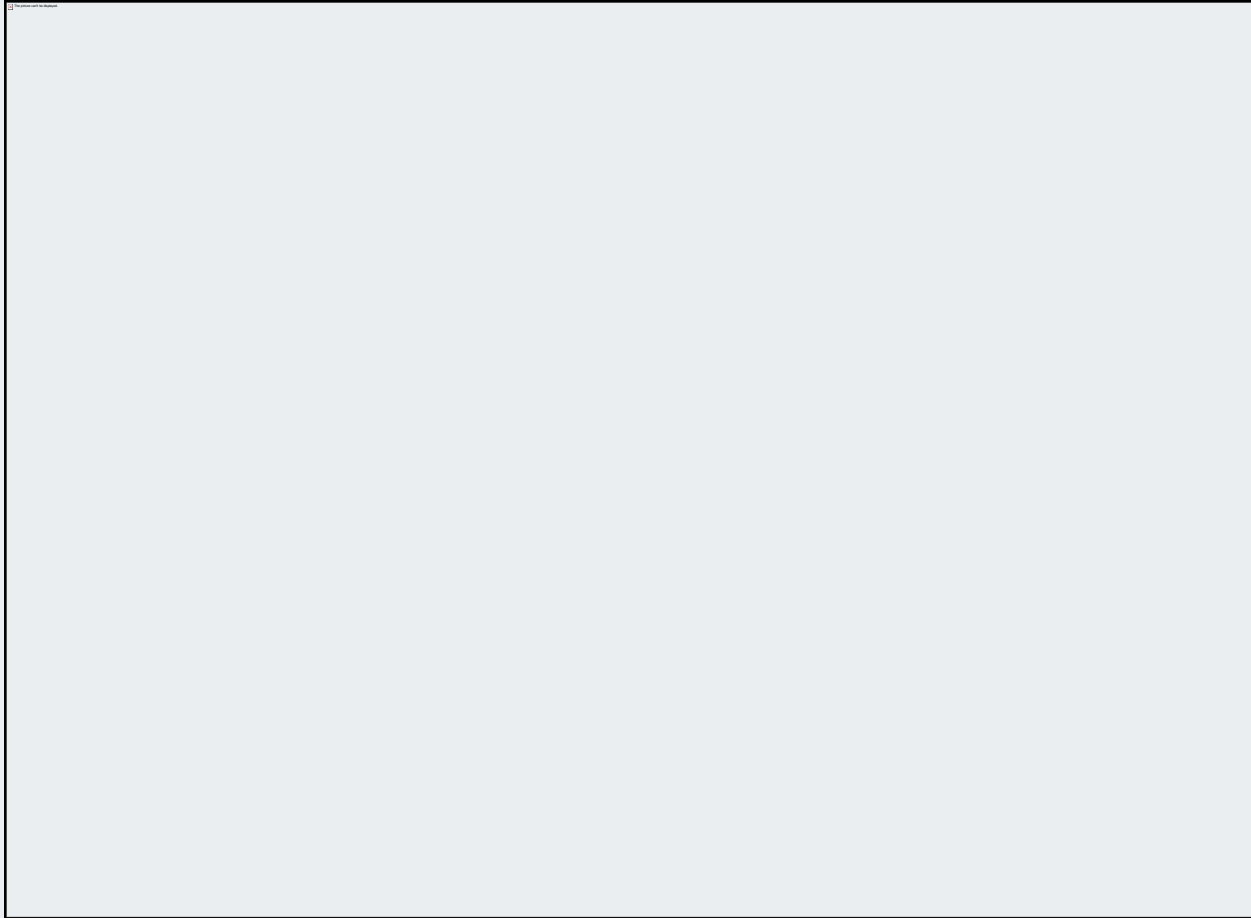
- A place to write an essay with my colleague in Montreal

http://docs.google.com
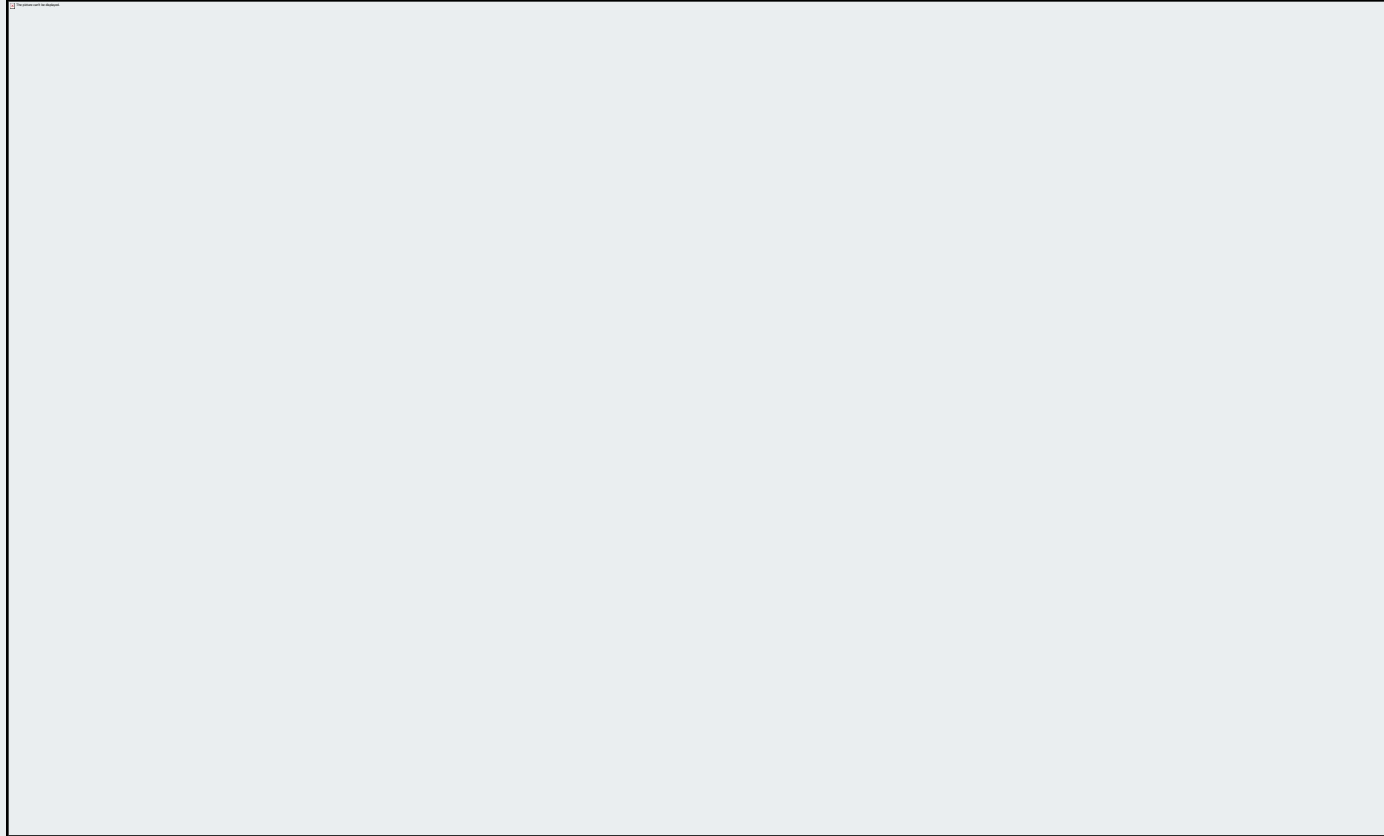
- A way to stay up to date - *right* up to date - with my friends and colleagues

http://www.google.com/reader
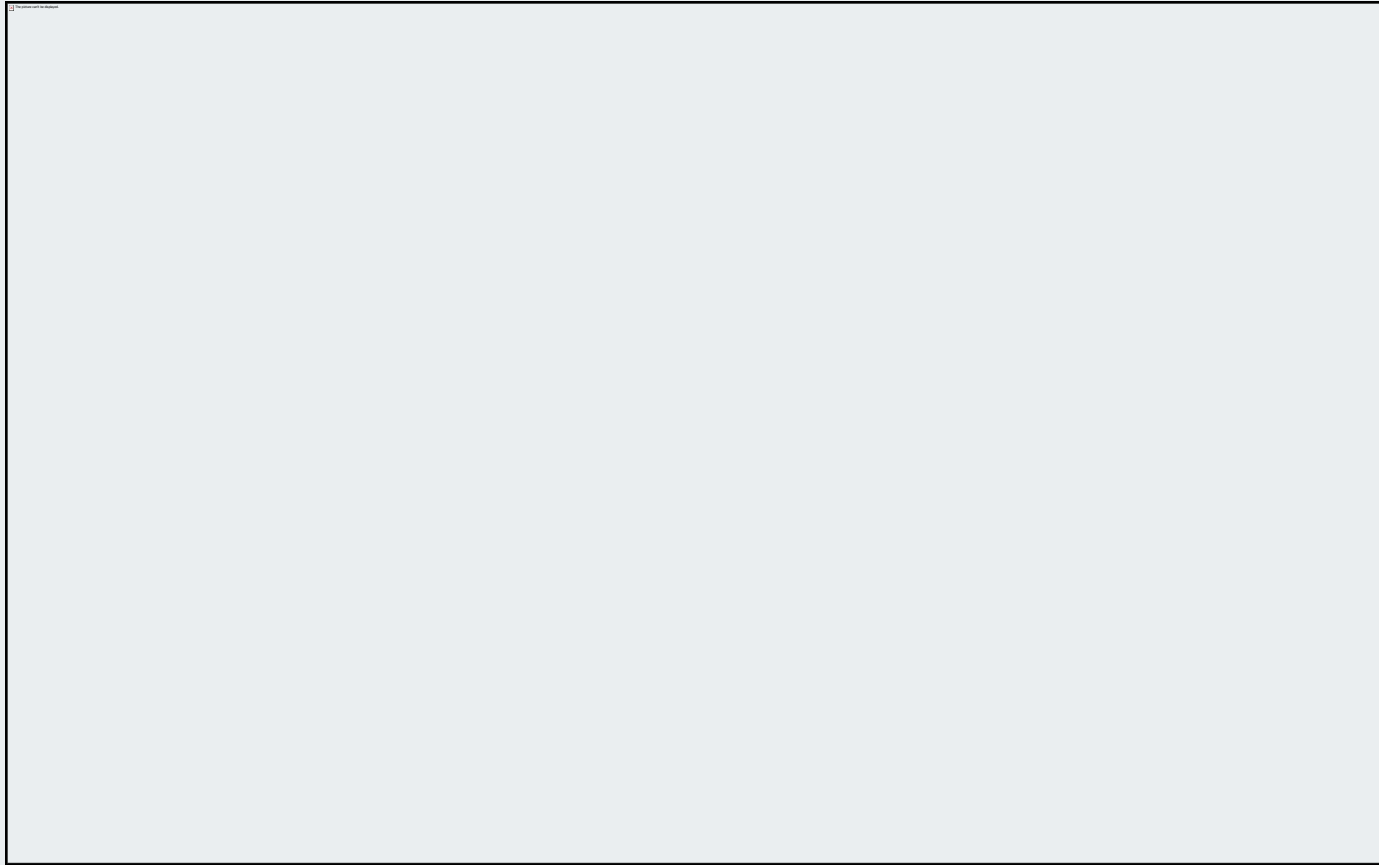
- A way to save on phone calls

[The picture can't be displayed.]

http://www.skype.com
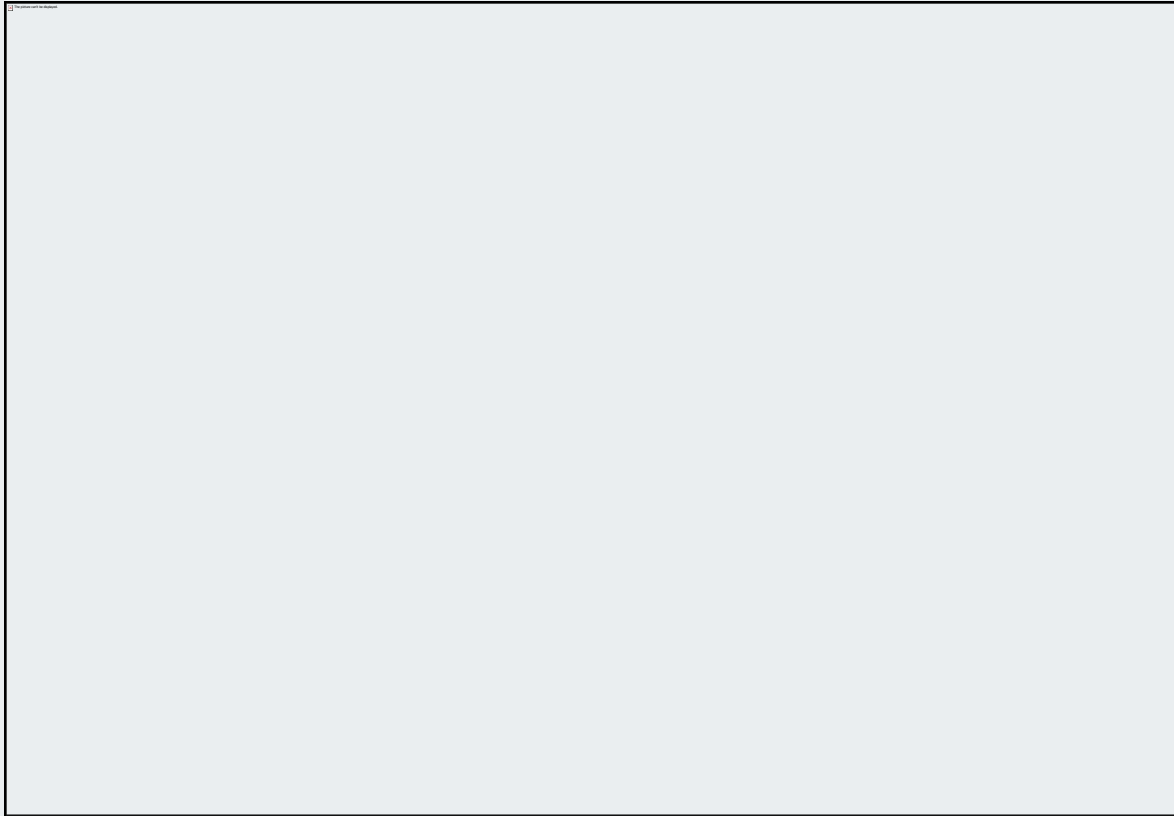
- Knowing where I'm staying before I get there

The picture can't be displayed.

http://maps.google.com
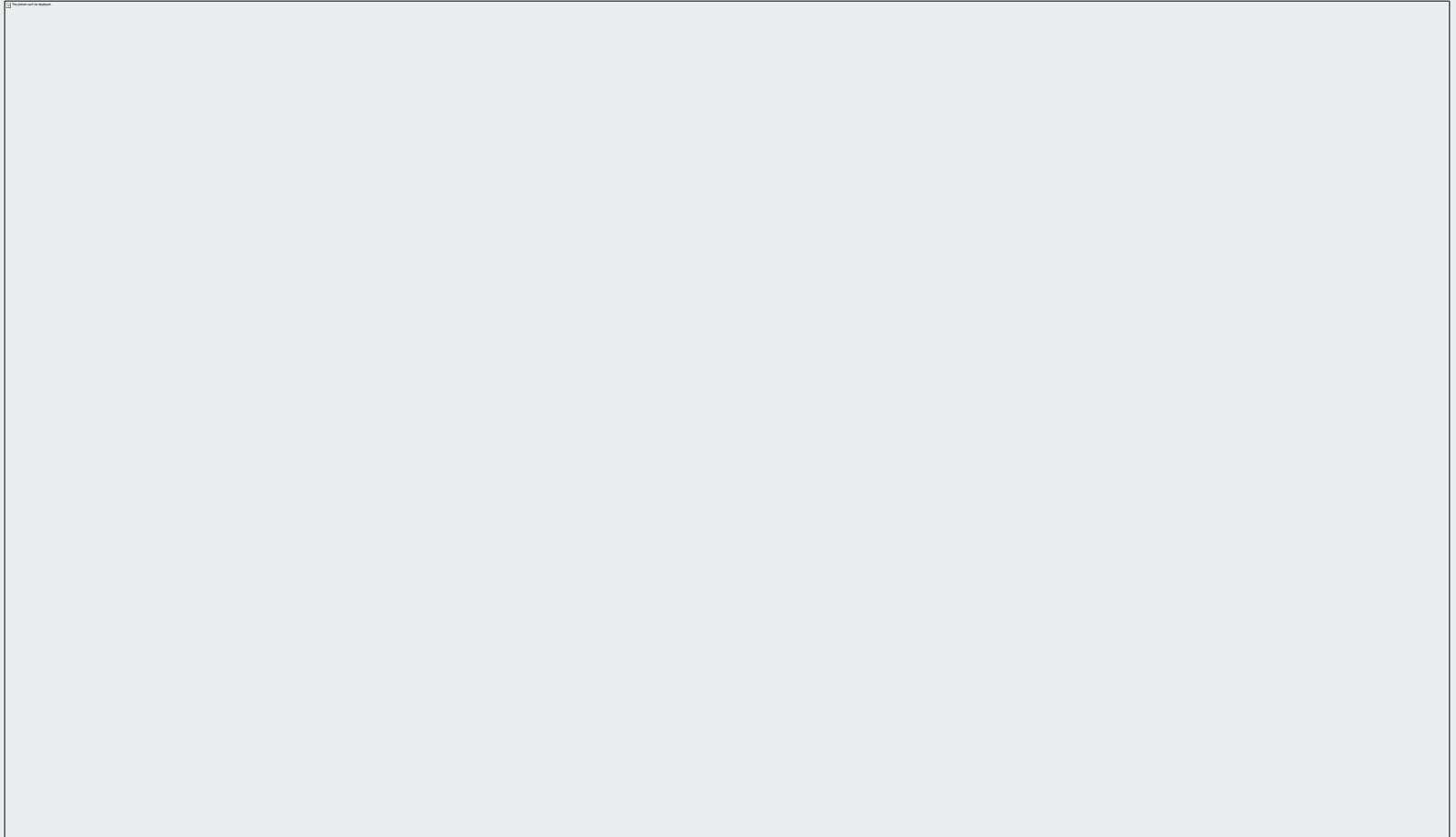
- An Easy Way To Draw Pictures

http://www.gliffy.com

What does Learning 2.0 mean for a learner?
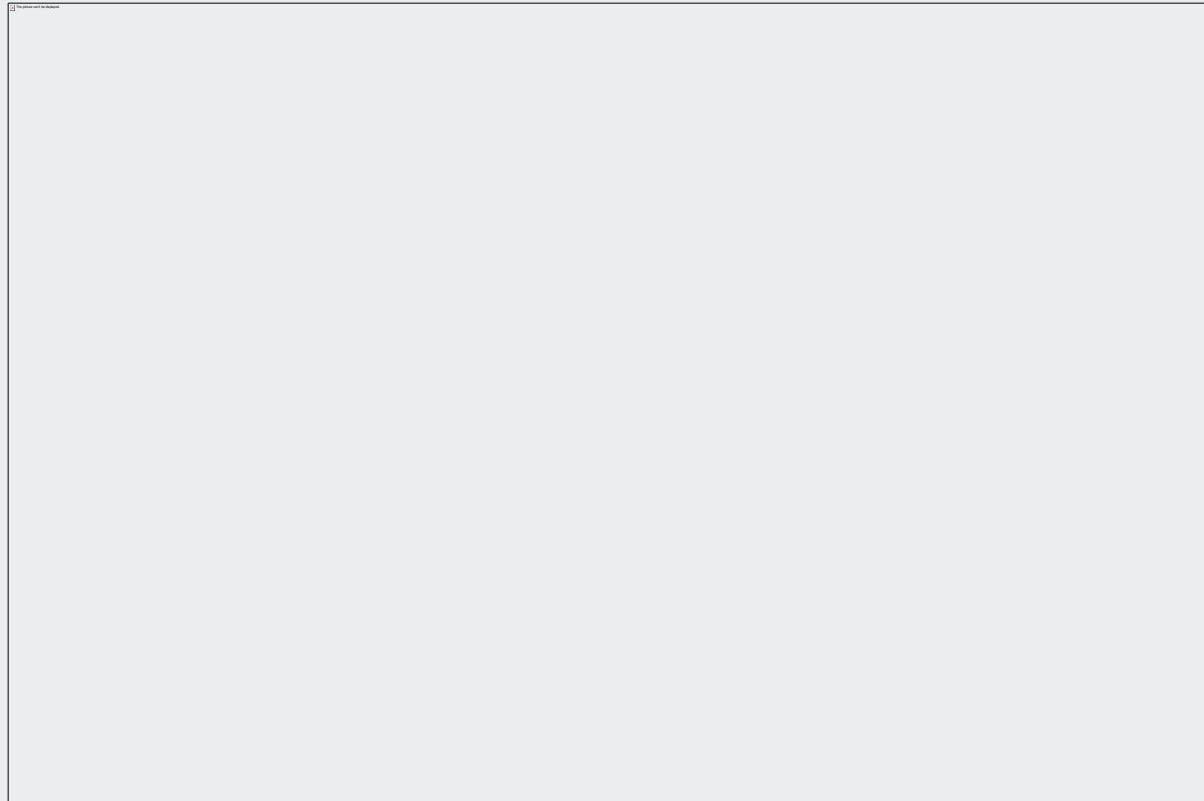
Three Views of Learning Resources:
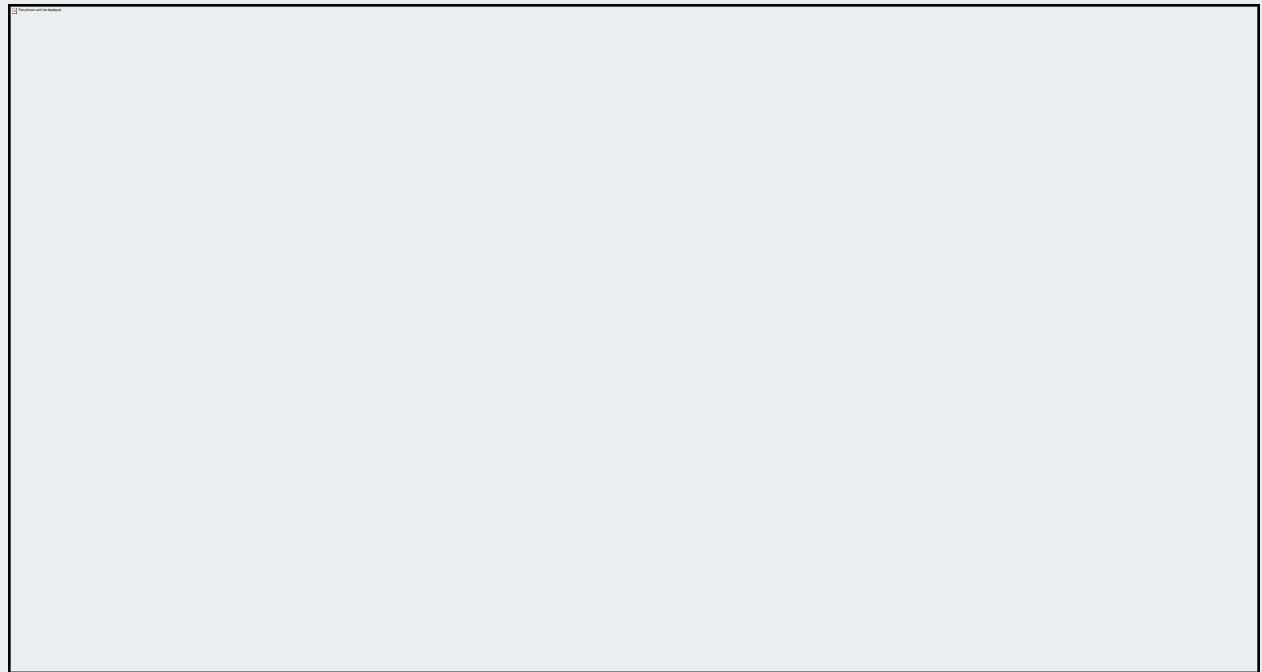
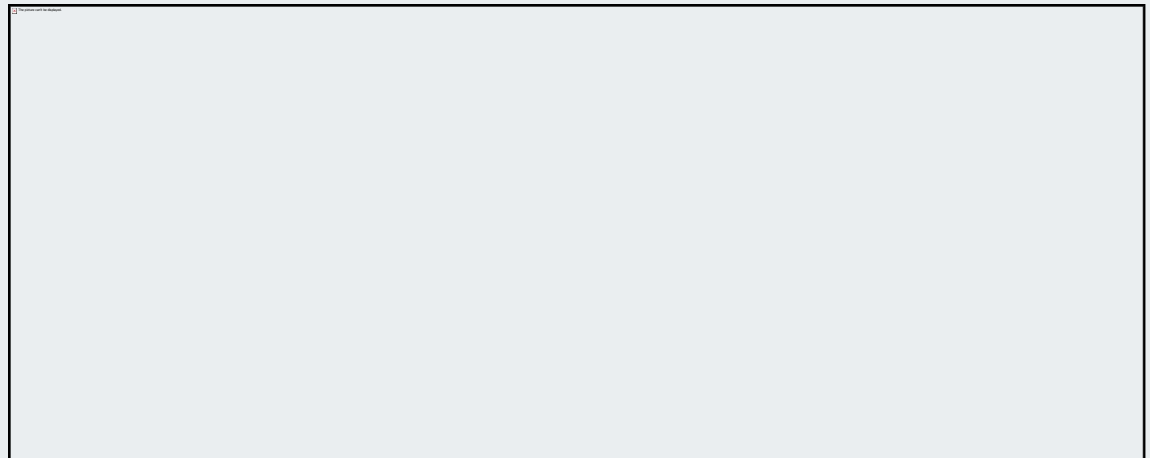# 1. Learning Resources as a *thing*

– Book, content object, etc
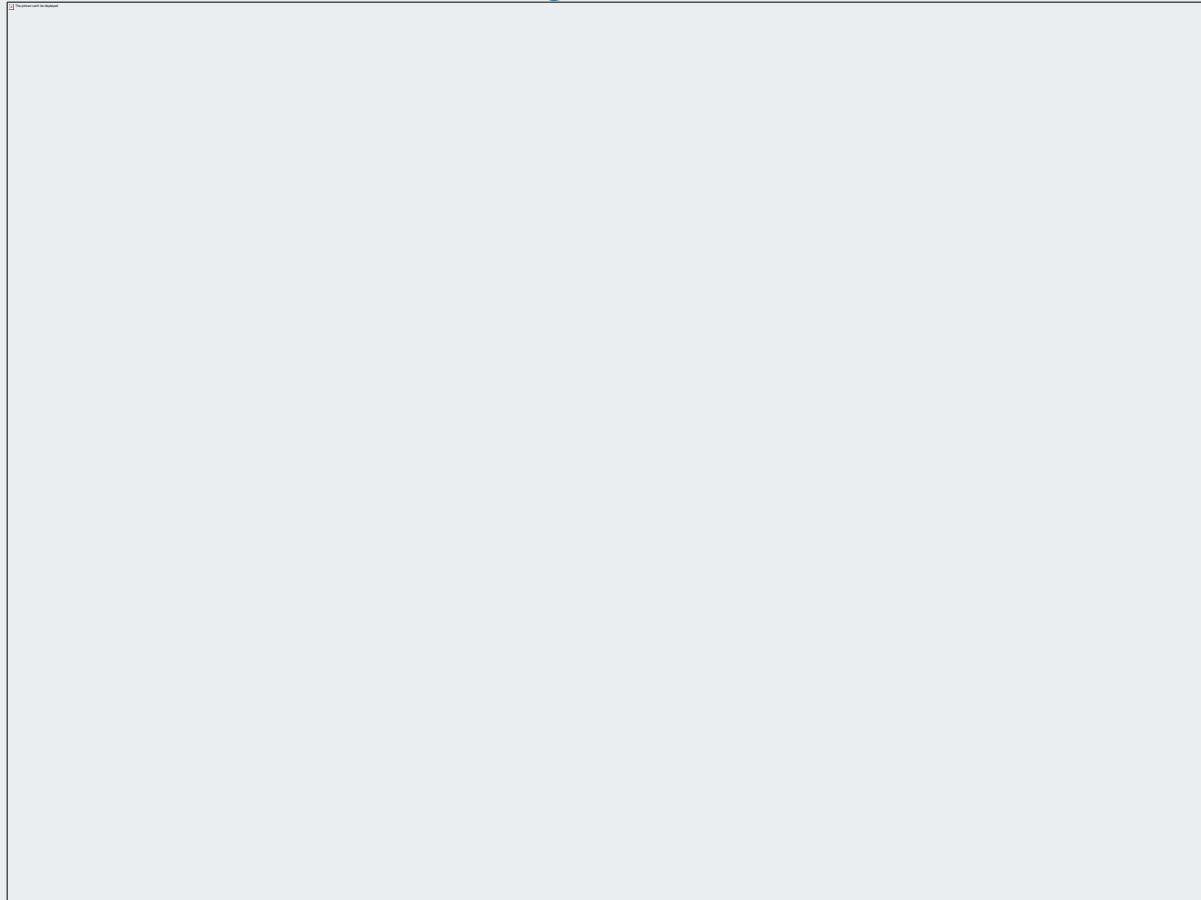
2. Learning Resources as *events*
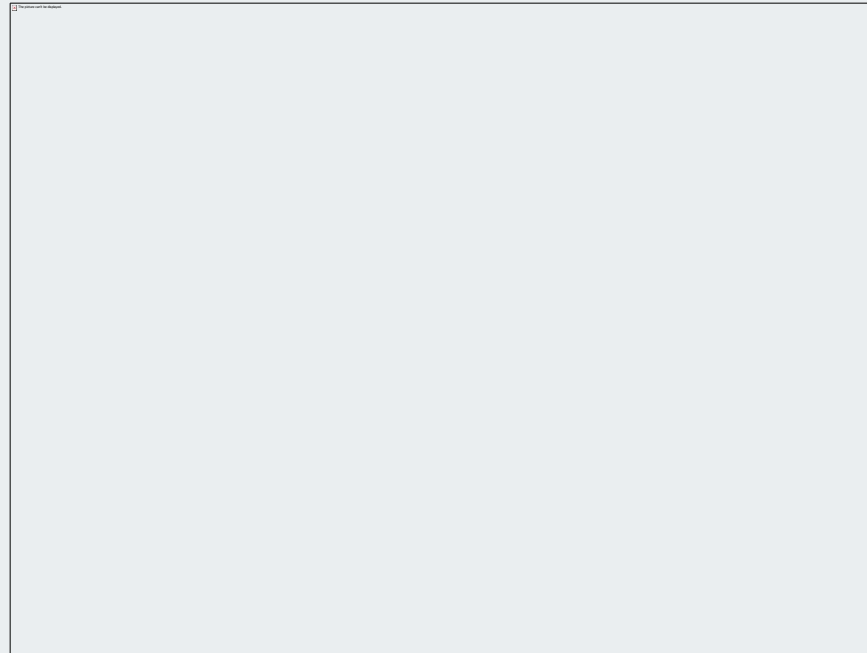
– *Class, lecture, seminar, meeting*
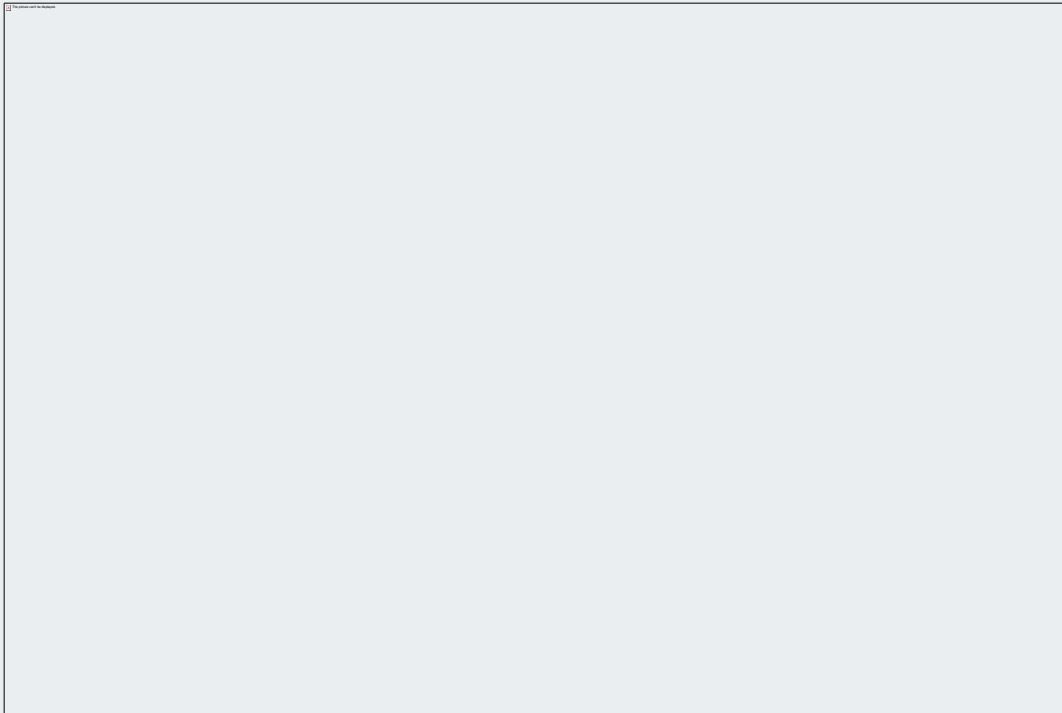
- The first two models are *information-theoretic* and *medium-based* models
  - They stress *content*
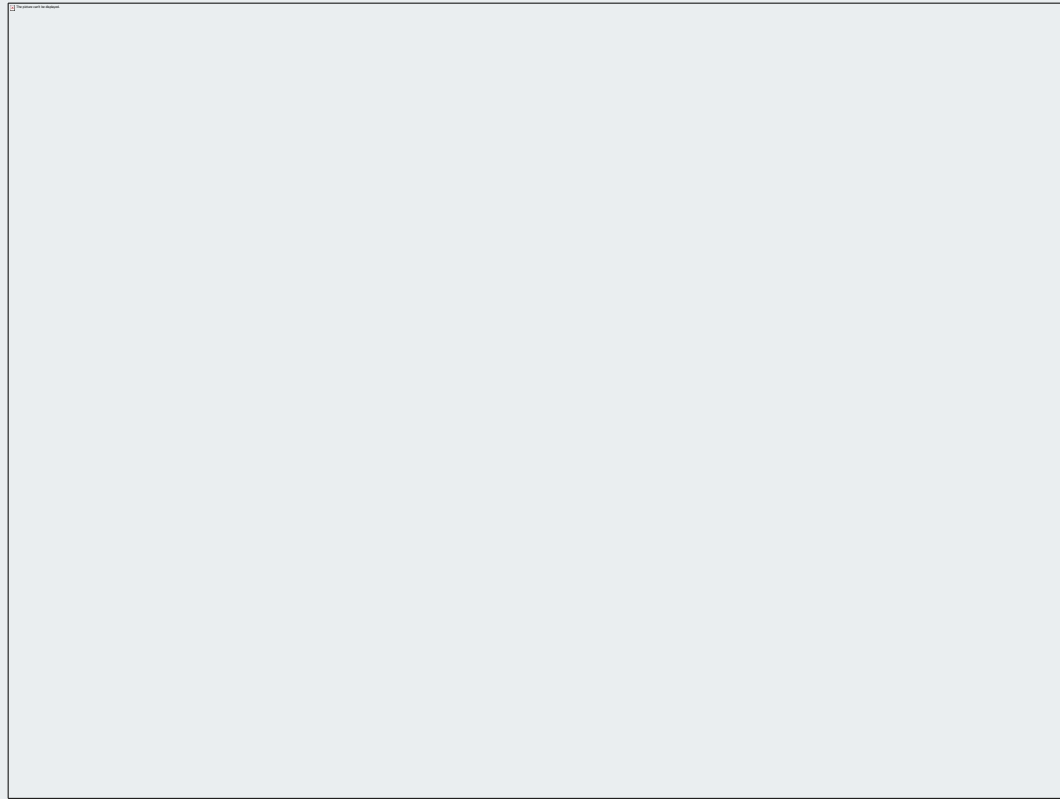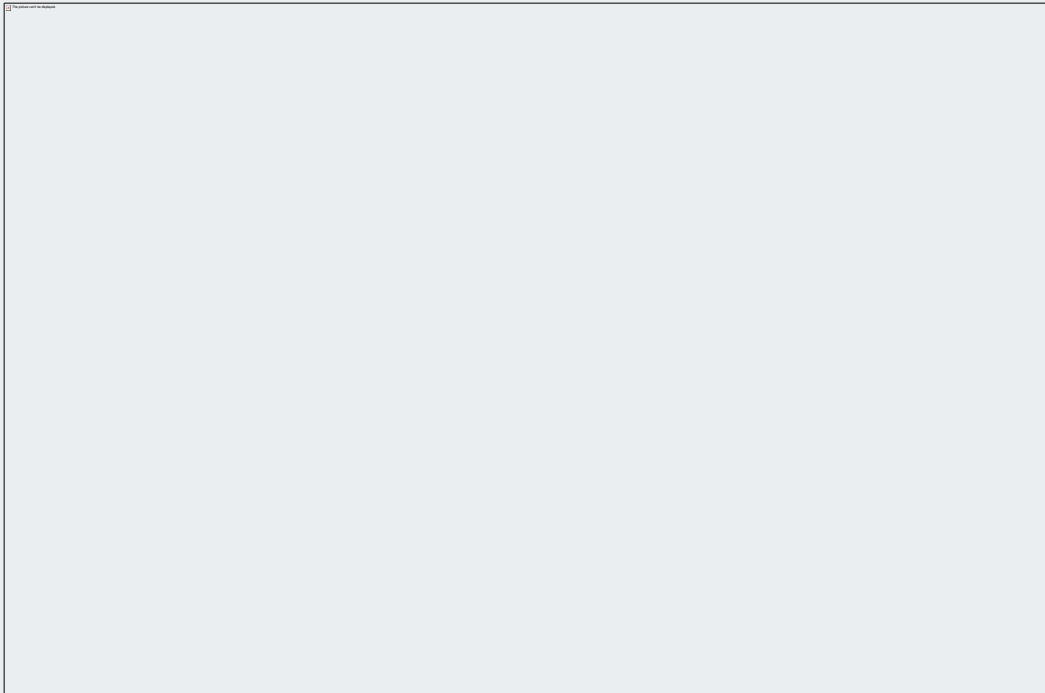 - They stress *rules*

3. Learning Resources as *flow*
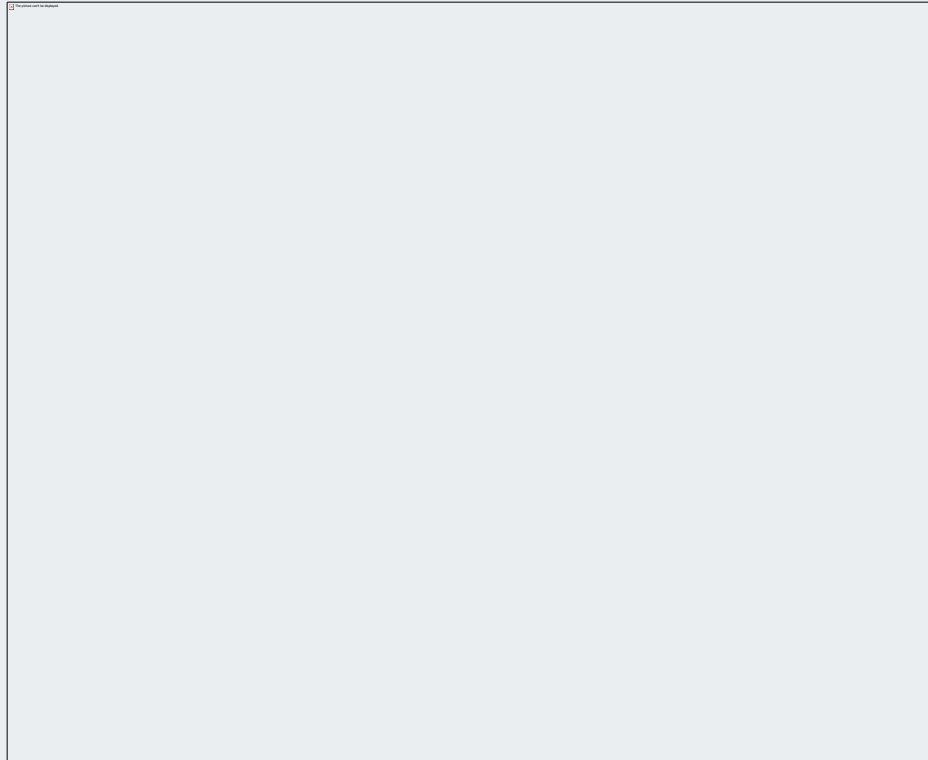
– Stresses experience

– Stresses pattern recognition

What does this look like?

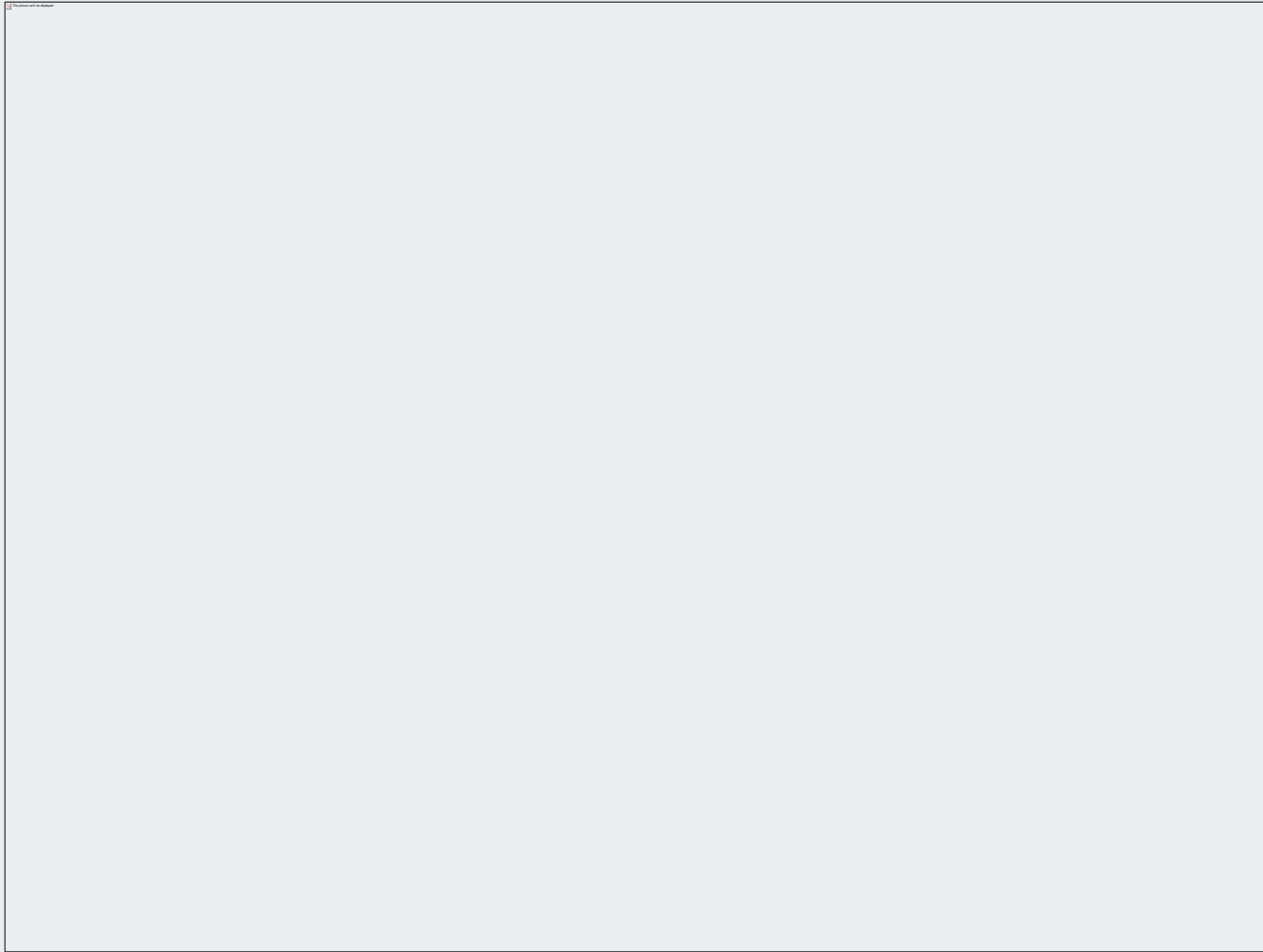The picture can't be displayed.

- User generated Content
  - Personal, opinionated
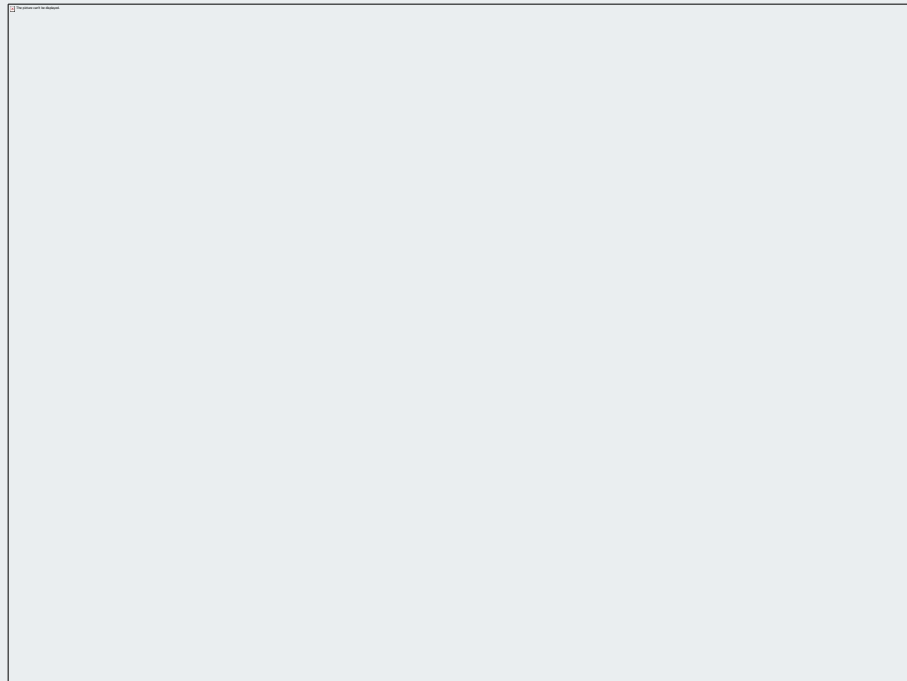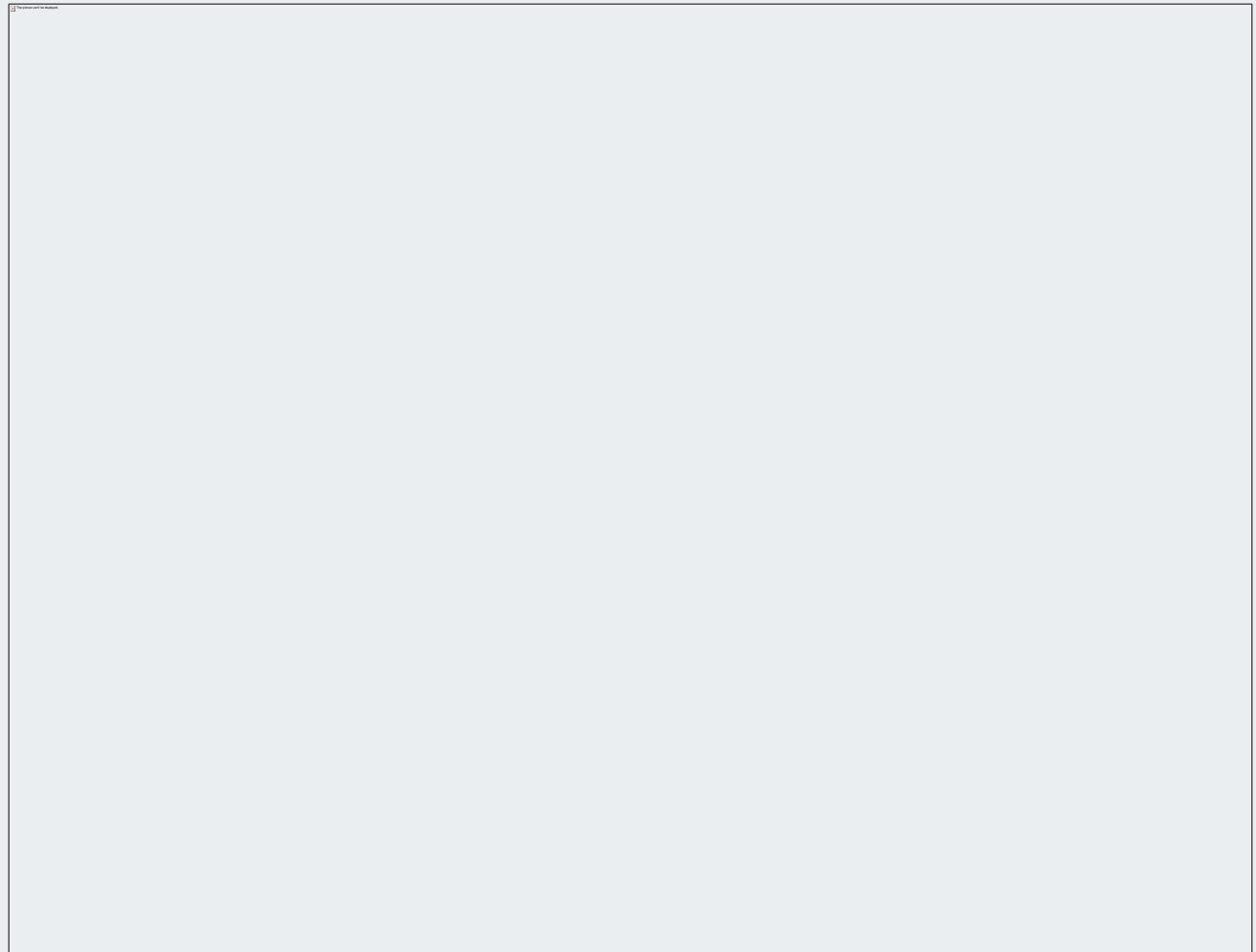
- Network of interactions

- Immersive Learning

- New Roles
  - For students - as creators of learning
  - For teachers - as coaches and mentors
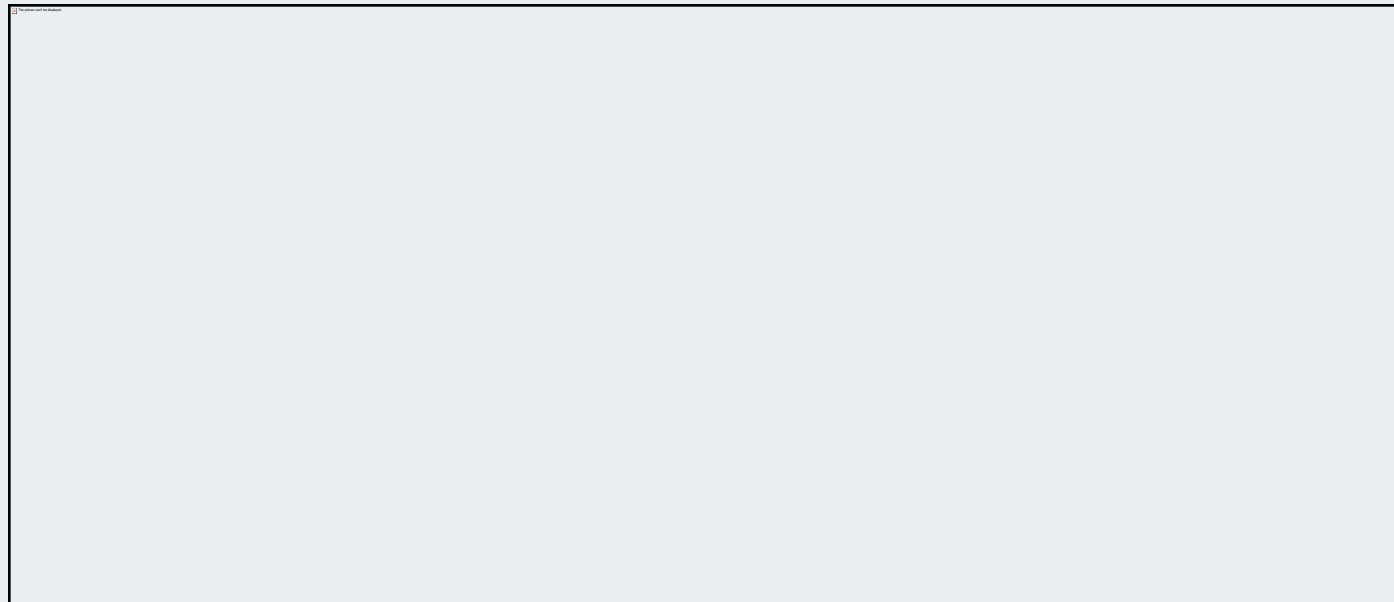 - For the rest of us - as teachers

Learning as a network phenomenon…
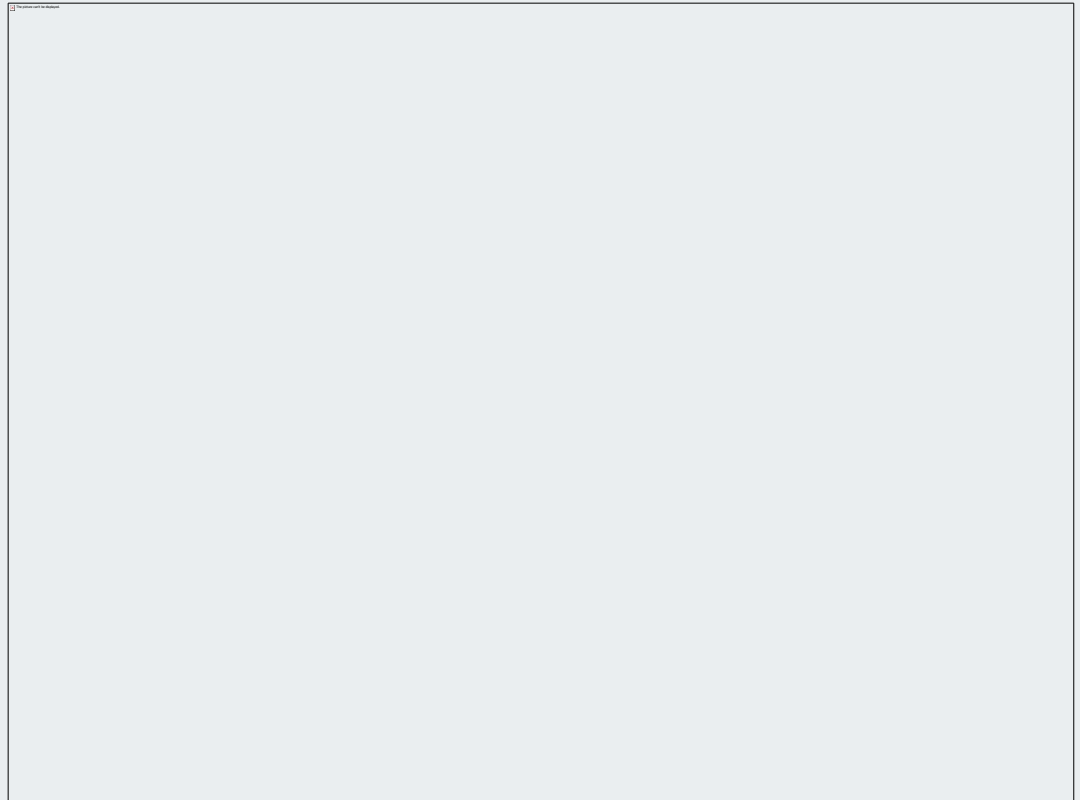
- Web of user-generated content (eg. Wikipedia)…

http://www.wikipedia.org

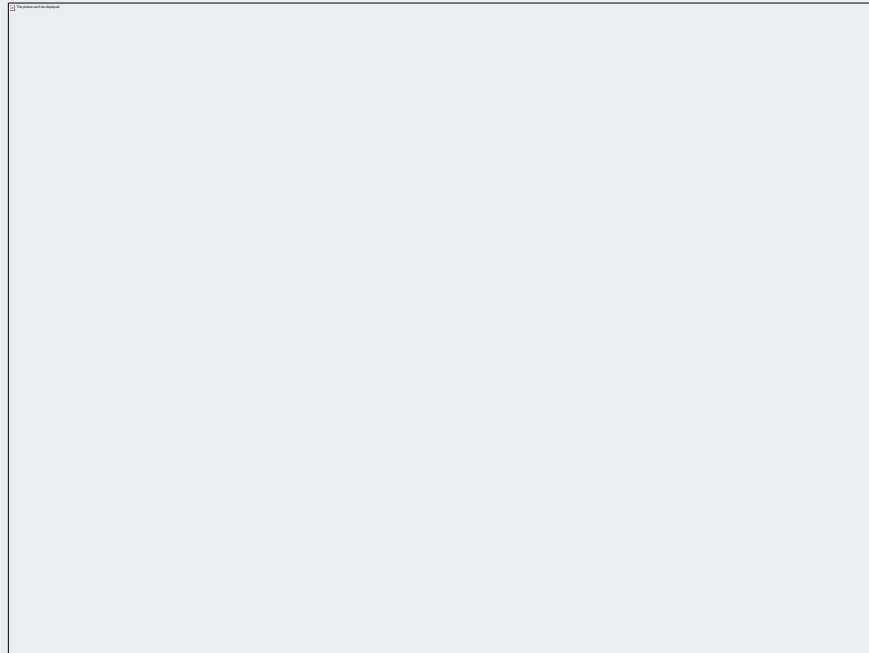- Social networks and communities (entails a genuinely portable (and *owned*) identity

http://www.facebook.com

- Networks of interactions (aggregate, remix, repurpose, feed forward) – syndication

An ecology…

- The *personal* learning centre

Immersive Simulations…

Digital Peacekeeping

USC Information
Sciences Institute
-- large IMAX-type screen
-- populated with autonomous digital
constructs

Detroit…

5th Graders at Lessinger Elementary School use Palms to draw wildflowers while on a field trip at Madison Heights Nature Center
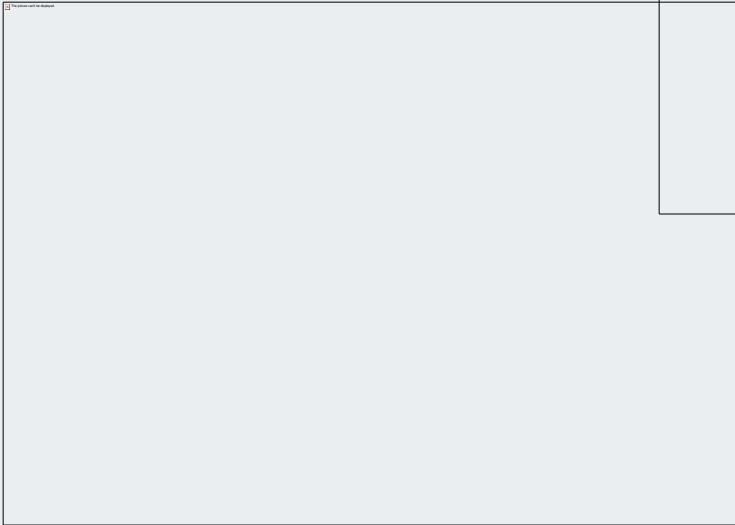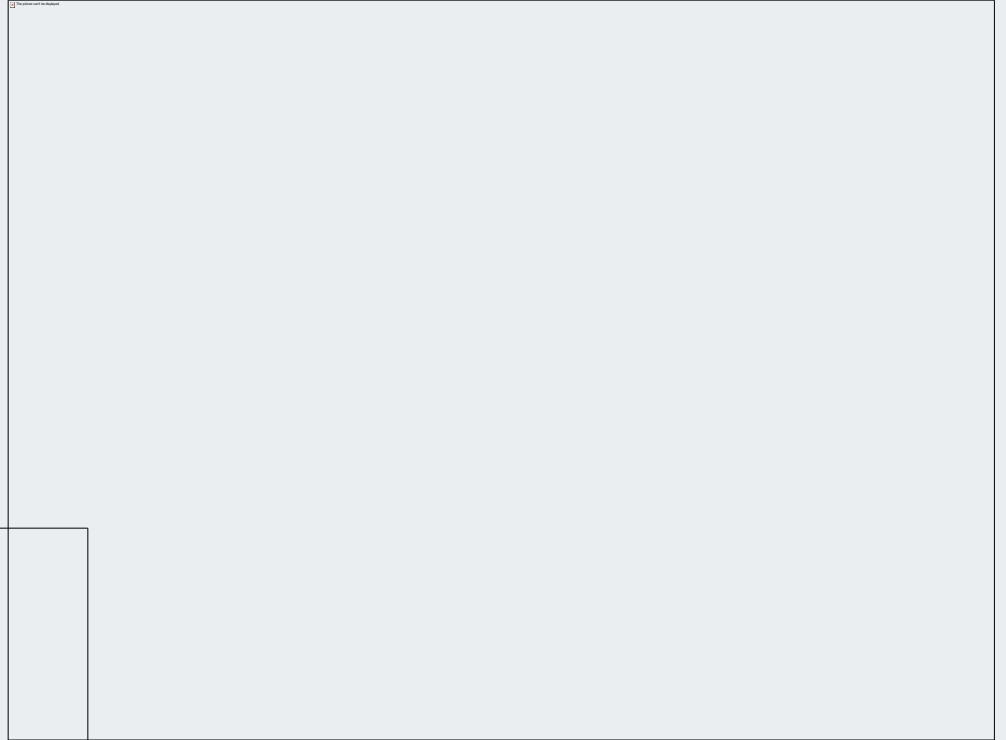
Hawaii…

Ocean of Knowledge

11 junior high school students will spend 11 months studying in a maritime environment

Denmark…

Chaos Pilots specialize in real-world projects

http://www.kaospilot.dk

The next step… Ambient Intelligence

"… people will be surrounded by intelligent and intuitive interfaces in everyday objects around us and an environment recognizing and responding to the presence of individuals in an invisible way by year 2010 - Jari Ahola

http://www.ercim.org/publication/Ecrim_News/enw47/intro.html
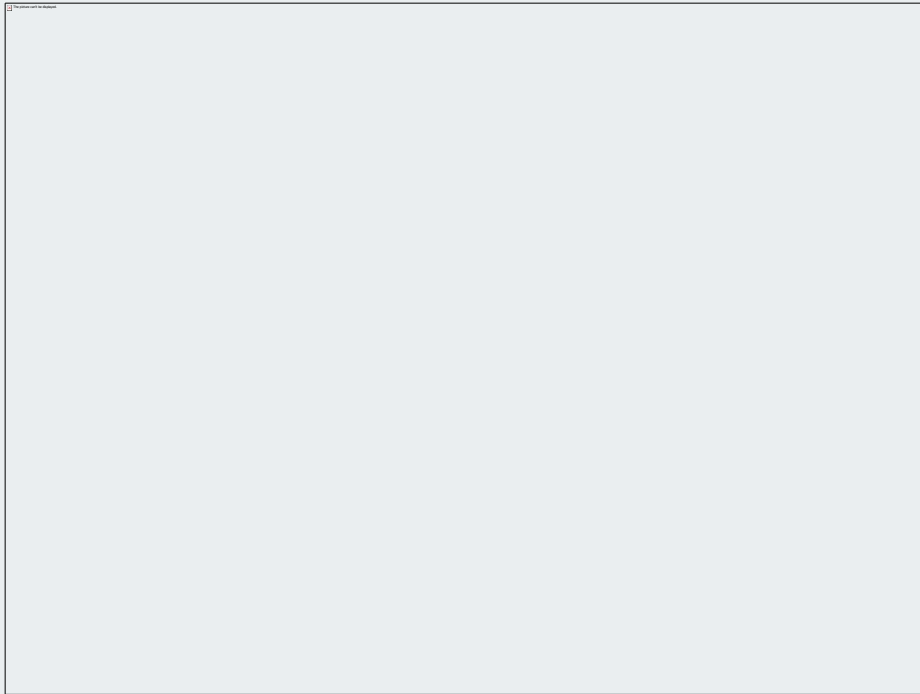
The smart
fishing rod…

How would you teach civic politics?

What we did at MuniMall…

How do we shape learning in the classroom to anticipate learning outside the classroom? What do we need to teach?

How to predict consequences

Even though we are epistemologically shut off from the "ocean of consequences," it is critical to be conscientious of the immense power an action can have.
*- Jack Cohen*

http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~pa34/cohen2006.htm

.. will allow us to explore complex phenomena and their consequences

- increased physicality (eg. Wii)

- increased complexity (eg. Sim City)

- increased interactivity (eg. WoW)

http://www.elearnmag.org/subpage.cfm?section=reviews&article=7-1

How to read

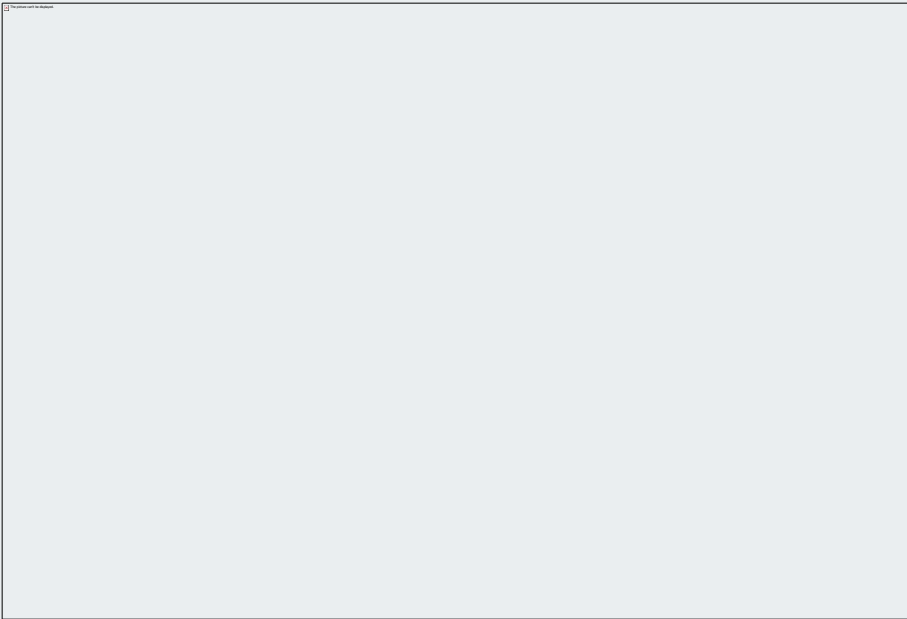How to look at some text and to understand, in a deep way, what is being asserted…
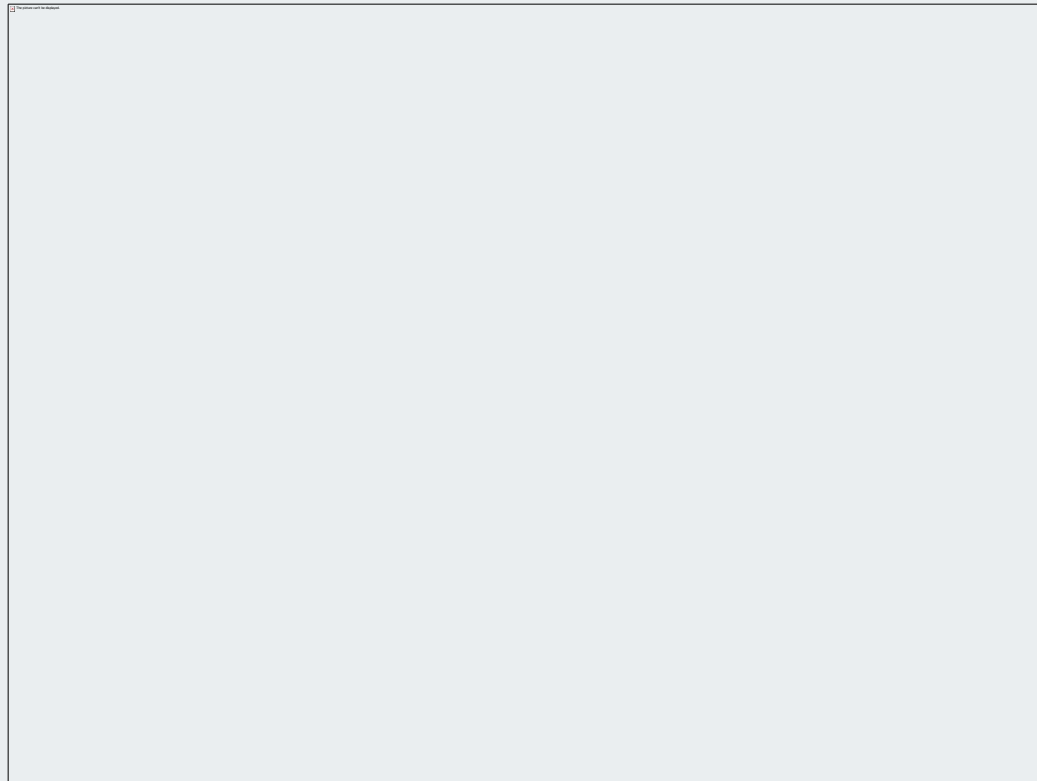
Rather than memorizing form (the old way) multimedia teaches to look for *signs* in the environment (the new way)

these are indicators

We don't just consume, we also create

reading reading reading reading writing reading reading writing readi

How to distinguish truth from fiction

The first thing to learn is to actually question what you are told, what you read, and what you see on television.
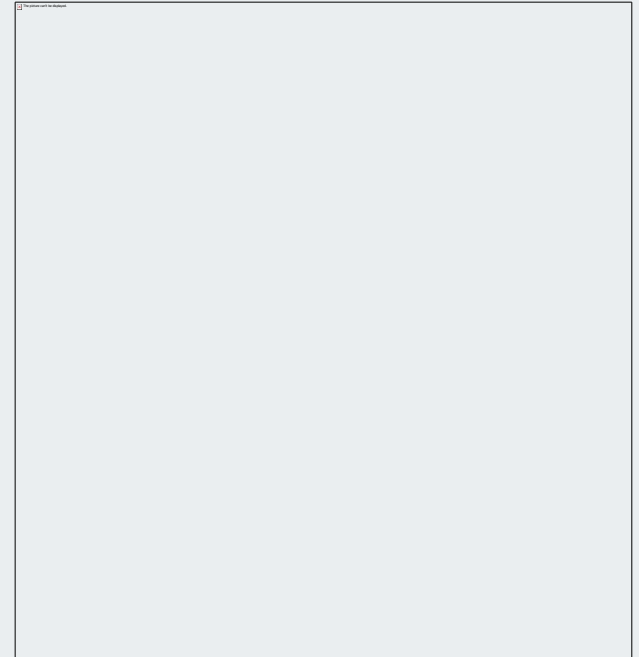
fisking

- autonomy

- diversity
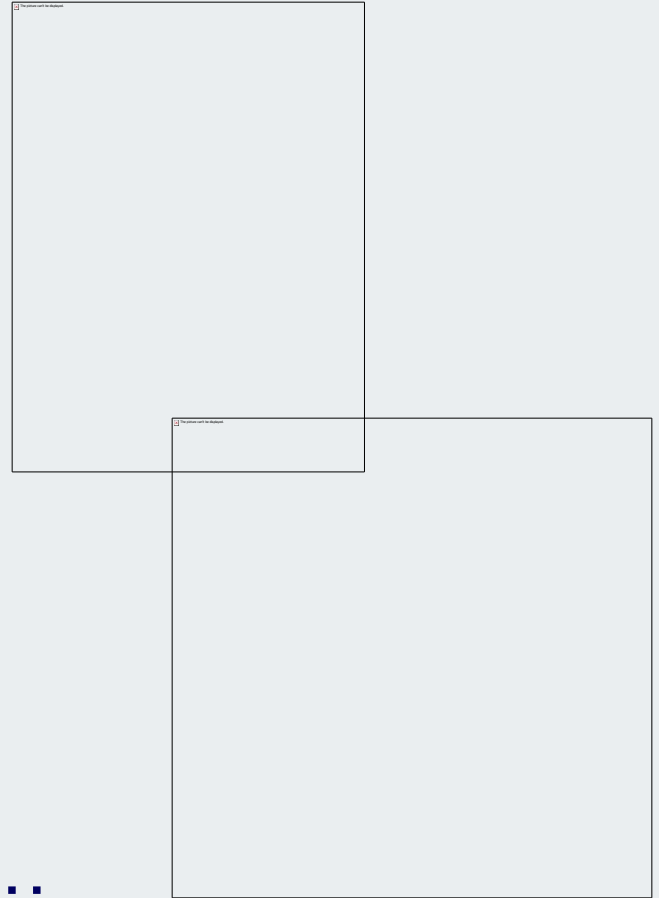
- connectedness

- openness

The Semantic Condition

fact-check your a

How to empathize

The ability to imagine oneself as another person…

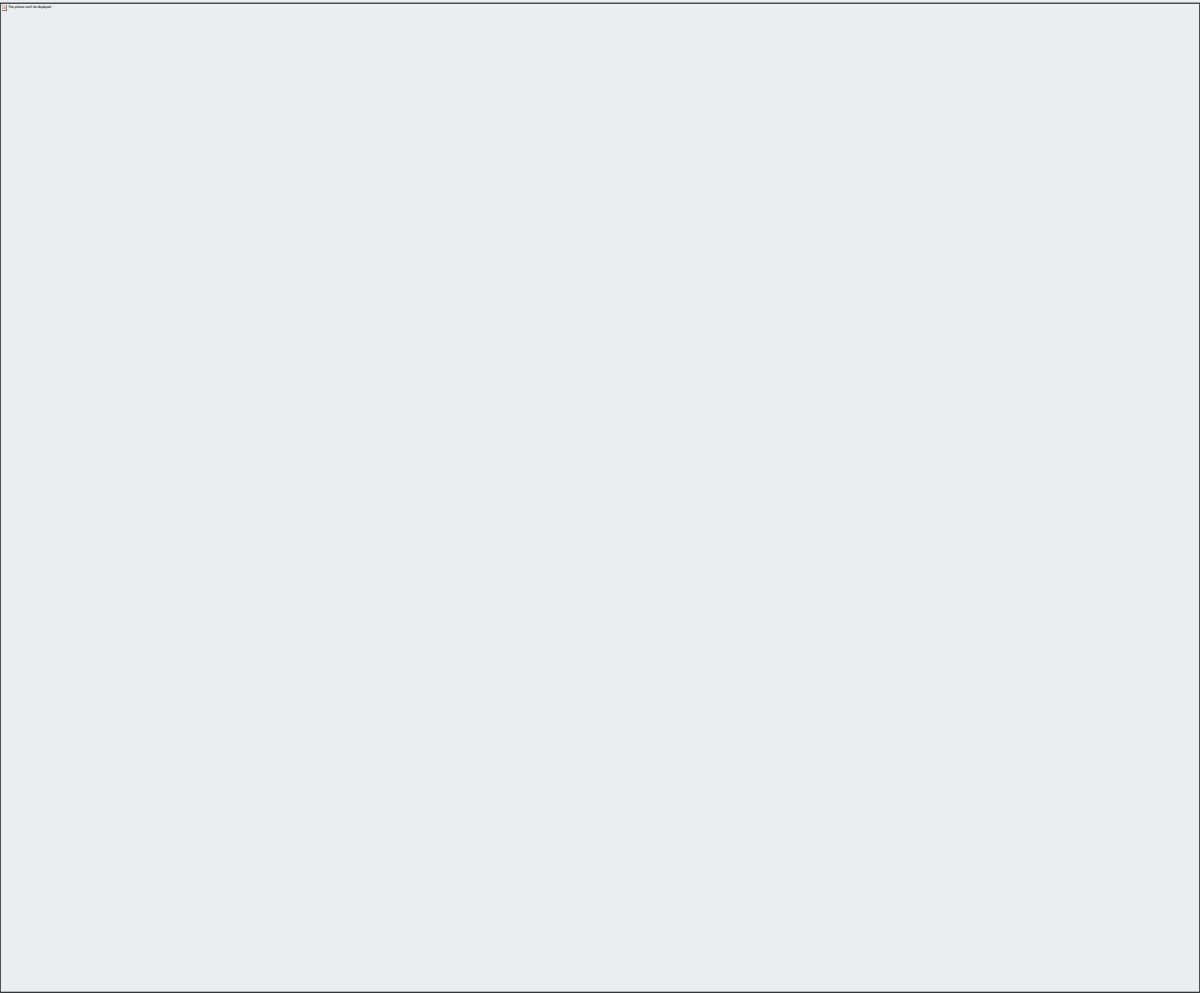The ability to *be* another person…

IDENTITY SHIFTING

new tech

World Wide Web

Read My Blog

MMRPGs

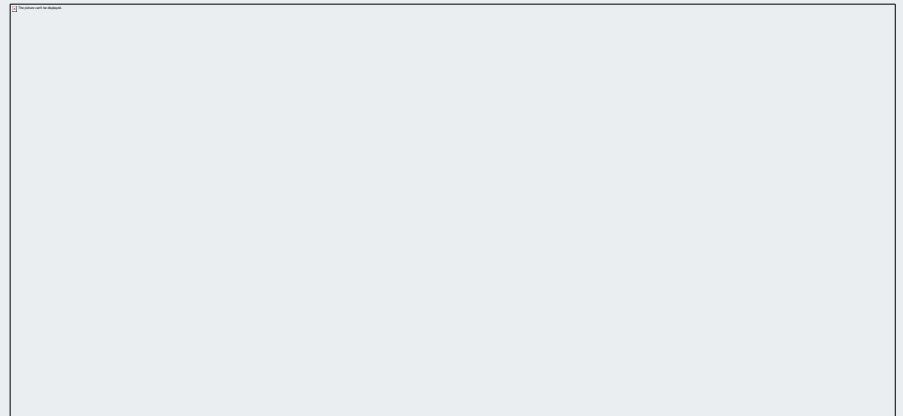Opens new worlds and puts us into the shoes of other people

MIRROR NEURONS

How to be creative

Has unprecedented tools for creating… capturing… combining…

Mash-Ups

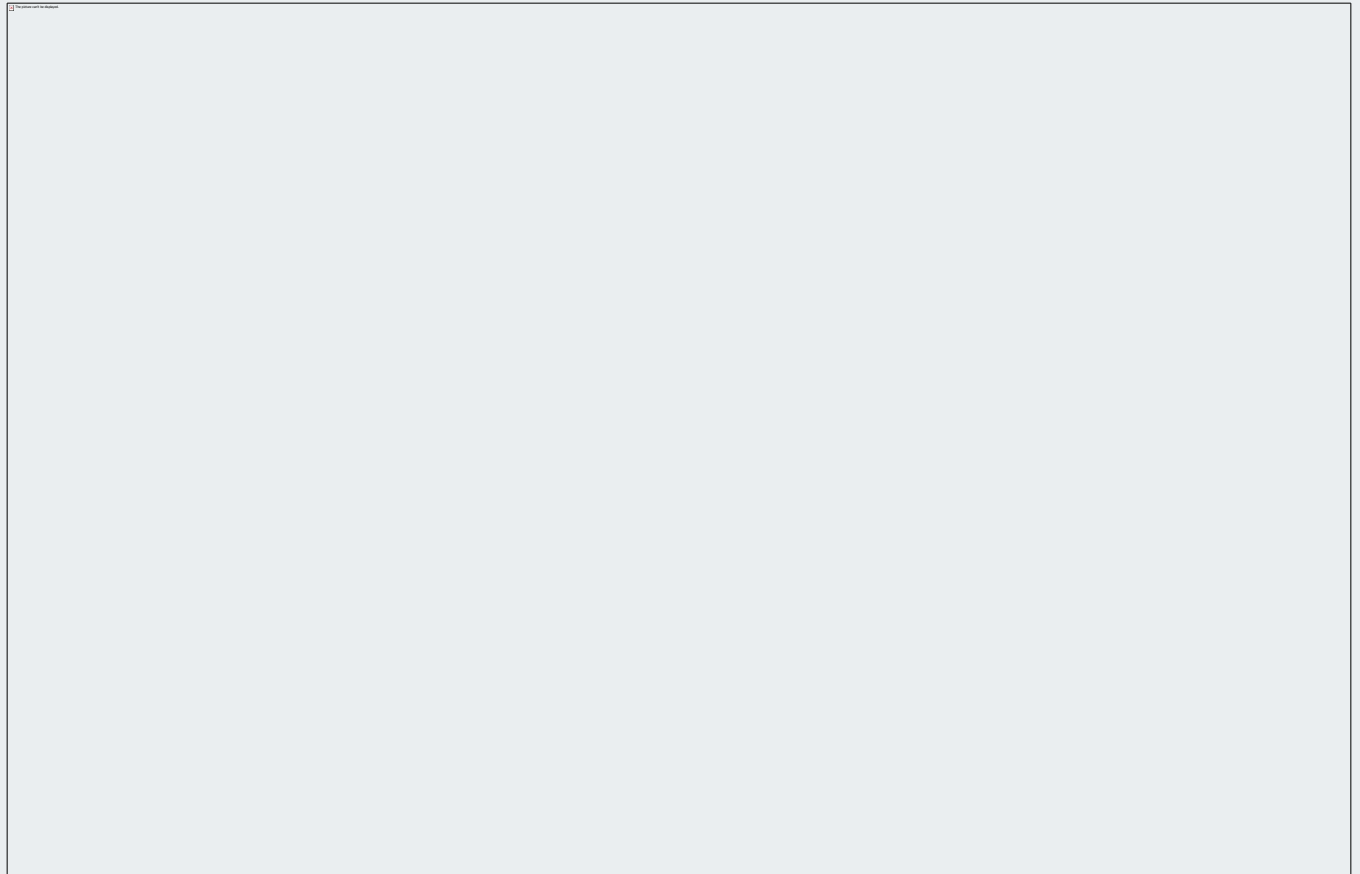Unprecedented challenges too: Have you tried to play Myst?

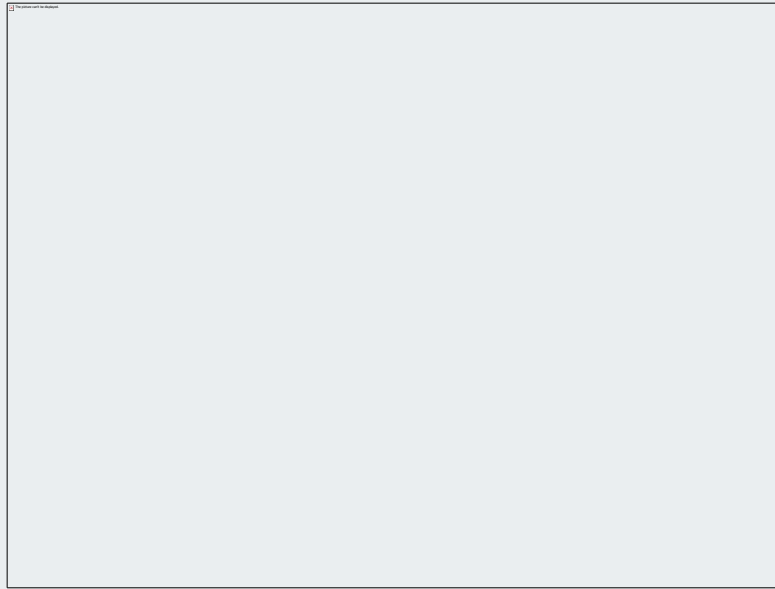http://www.piledriver.com/images/MLS_mashups.jpg

devote some time every day to an art - music, photography, video, drawing, painting or poetry.

How to communicate clearly

new tech

Gives people a *real* audience and allows them to pose real questions

http://www.nyu.edu/its/ftc/ls/images/blog.gif

Educational Blogging
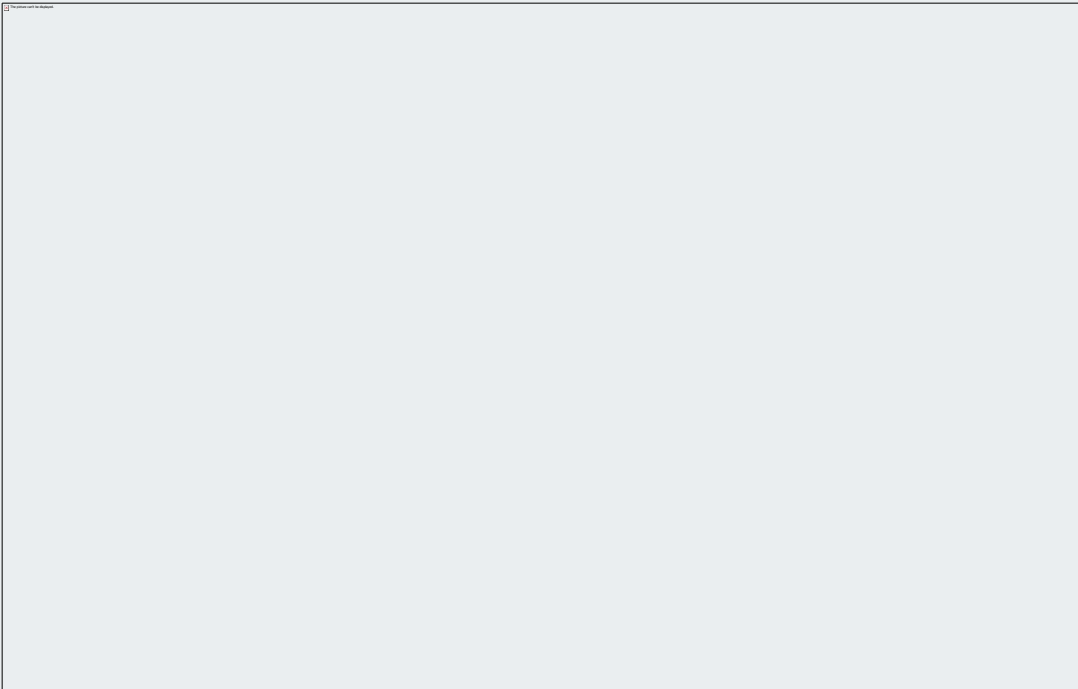
and lets them create

collaboratively

http://www.downes.ca/post/38526

gliffy wiki co-comment subthaedit youtube wordpress drupal flickr faceb
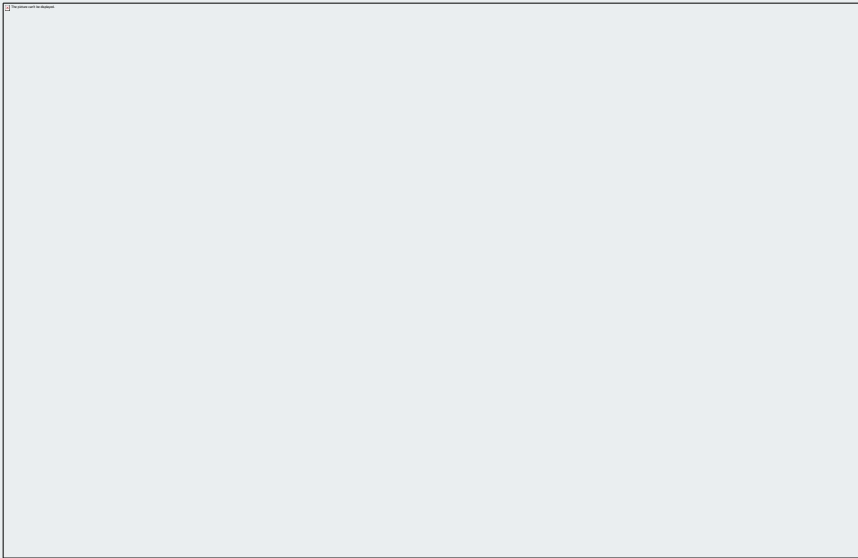
How to Learn

When you learn, you are trying to create patterns of connectivity in your brain. You are trying to connect neurons together, and to strengthen that connection.

lets us take control….
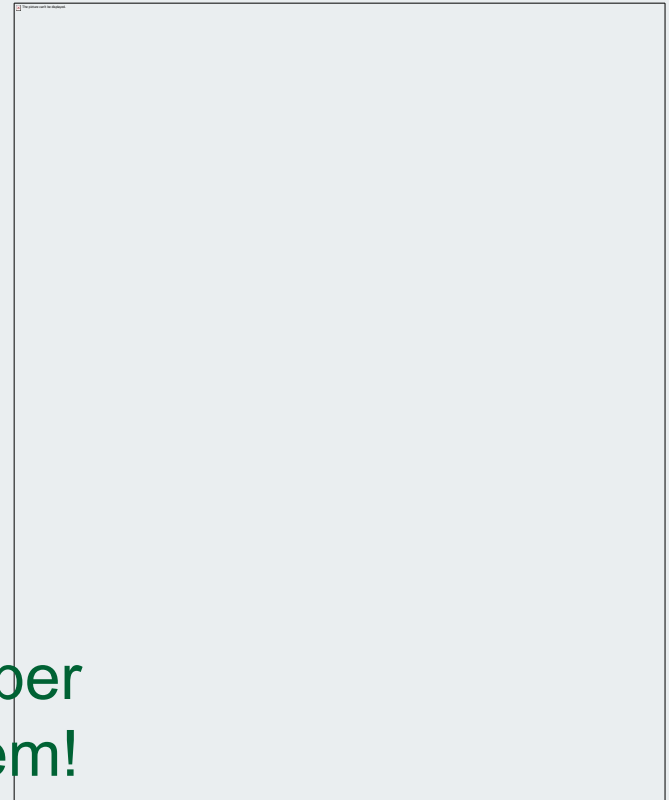
(yes, it's that simple)

It's our media

It's our content

It's our patterns

It's our learning

Be the Node

How to stay healthy

If your school is not facilitating proper exercise and nutrition, demand them!
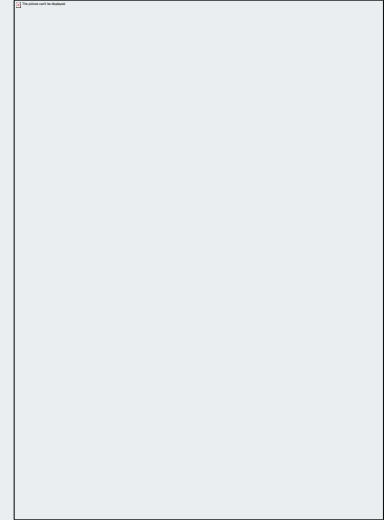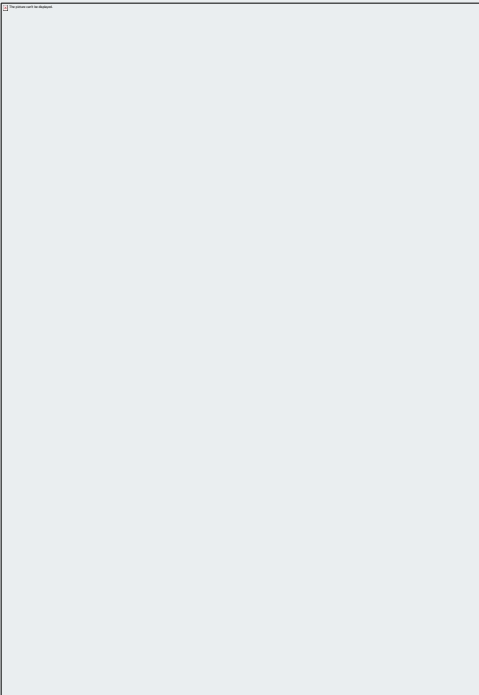
new tech

Lets us check
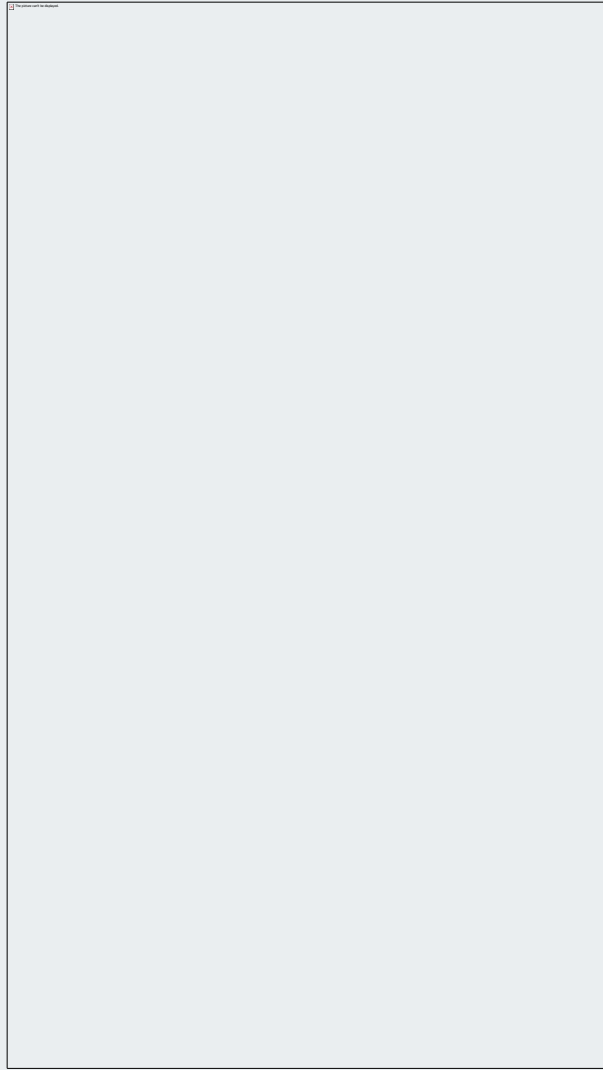
Lets us learn for ourselves

Lets us compare notes
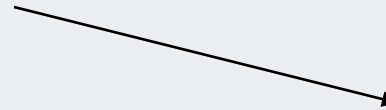
Lets us exercise

Together

How to value yourself

In order to value yourself, you have to say "I am valuable."

THIS IS PRACTICE

new tech

Tell yourself that you are smart, you are cool, you are strong…
Say it out loud, in the morning, each day
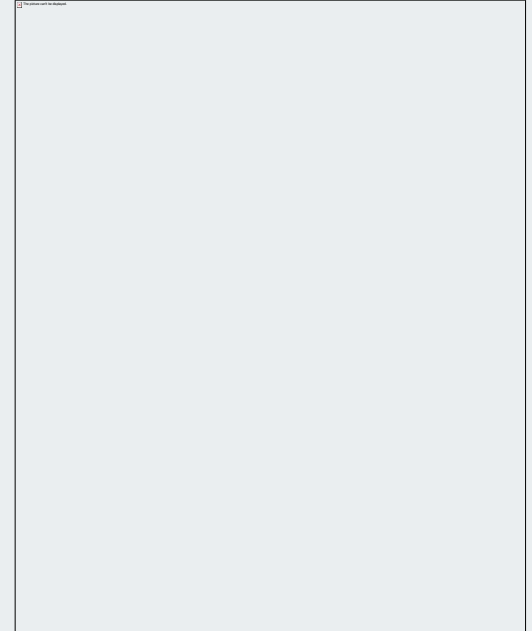Then, practice these attributes.
Be smart…

ONLINE…

Google / Yahoo Groups

My network is my support group

Skype / IM / Email

I am the network

Blog / Wiki / YouTube

How to live meaningfully

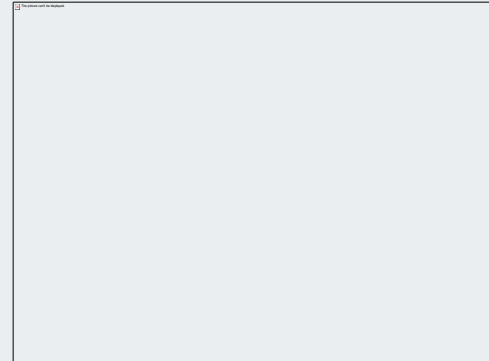What you are doing right now is the thing that you most want to do

New technologies give us choice

The world is (quite literally) what we make it

(just ask the people who made Second Life)

When you realize you have the power to choose what you are doing, you realize you have the power to choose the consequences.
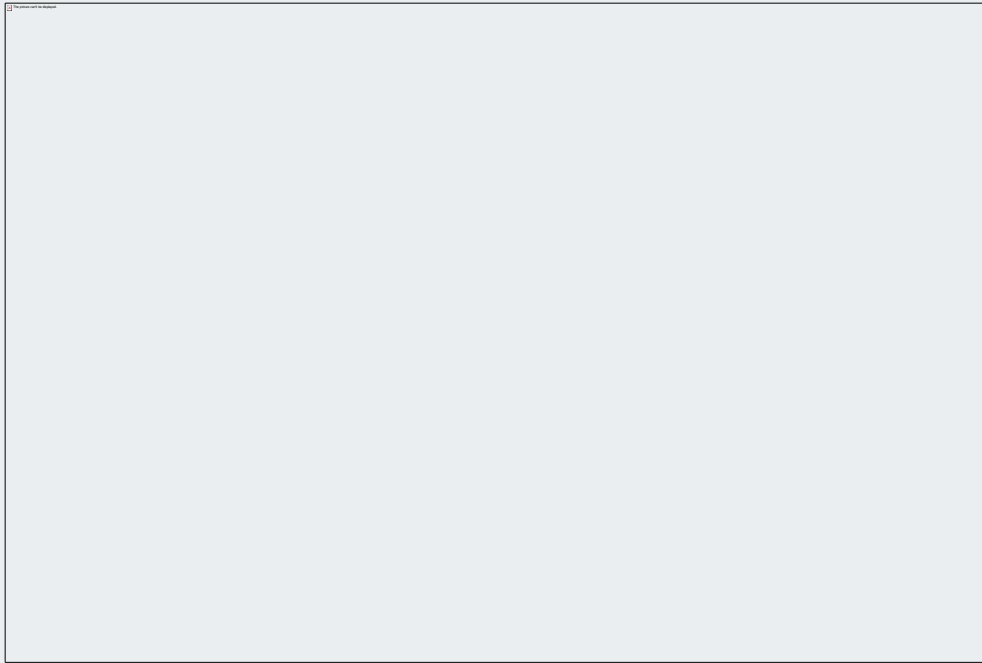
Everything you do has meaning

Which brings us back to the *Tribal Warrior…*

The most real learning is reality

The Internet frees us from the classroom…

From Virtual…

To Reality…

Stephen Downes

http://www.downes.ca