

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2030



Waiting for the children’s concert to begin, parents were talking about how elementary school had changed since they had been there a generation earlier. They noted first that some things had stayed the same – certainly the activities, the sport and the drama as well as the music were not that different, though with the longer school day and year students had more time for them. Also not that different was the face-to-face teaching of early reading and writing, although the teaching was consistently good now, and there was a shared understanding among the teachers, who planned together, what the best practice was. At the beginning of the term the content and teaching approach for the next few months was explained to parents very clearly and the role they could play at home was

reinforced. The availability of excellent online materials that child, teacher and parent could all access at any time reinforced the face-to-face teaching and parents could get an update instantly on how their child was doing, what her next steps needed to be, and how as parents they could help.

The teaching of subjects such as American history had been transformed too by the availability of wonderful simulations which enabled the children to feel as though they were present and indeed able to participate in the Dred Scott trial or the moon landing. Whereas for math and ELA there was still a devoted, recognizable lesson each day, usually in the morning, in these curriculum areas the idea of a standard lesson had pretty much gone. At any one time the children

were involved in one or two major themed investigations, supported and encouraged by the teachers, drawing on resources beyond the school and often culminating in a presentation to the year group or even the whole school. Then every week, each child had an hour one-to-one with their personal tutor, reviewing the week just gone and looking ahead to the next. The children were encouraged to reflect on what they had learned and how they had learned it. Once a month the parents were invited to join this conversation.

The problem parents had in the evening was stopping the children from pursuing the educational activities that it was so easy to continue at home. Some professor or another from MIT had said recently that the best thing the state of Massachusetts ever did was to invest in the collaboration of great educators and great edtech innovators thus enabling computer games, curriculum content and assessment to be integrated and generate these remarkable materials. They had understood back then that the way to exploit technology was to put teaching and learning in the lead and change the system to accommodate it. As the children came onto the stage to rapturous applause, the parents’ conversation came to an abrupt end with the thought that this professor had hit the nail on the head.