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## Re-defining the Curriculum to Include and Connect Formal and Informal Learning

Accelerating rates of change, in our social and physical worlds, are intensifying the demands on our educational systems. Academic achievement in the subjects – e.g. languages, mathematics, and sciences – is still necessary, but no longer sufficient. The fast pace of technological advancements and change render the frontiers of knowledge discovered today obsolete or out of date a couple of years down the line, and the jobs in demand in the job market today completely different from the unconceivable jobs in demand tomorrow, accordingly attention must be paid to the universal cognitive, socio-emotional and spiritual competencies that enable the one who masters them to adapt and excel in whatever environment and conditions. Developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and spiritual competencies necessitates shifting from a subject matter focus to a disciplinary focus which entails adopting the methods and values of the disciplines to tackle real life challenges with their associated social and moral dilemmas.

Unfortunately, the resources dedicated to meeting these mounting demands are not increasing. School time dedicated isn't getting any longer. Referring to the diagram below, depicting average percentage of waking time spent by students in formal versus informal learning environments, school students spend a mere 18.5% of their waking time in school (LIFE Center, 2005). And school funds dedicated to providing access to real life experiences are shrinking.

Schools are now pressured to develop the whole child, and if they are to meet this challenge, constrained by resources as they are, they must embrace the whole life of the child. Schools must extend their curricular focus from the confinements of the classroom to the playground, cyberworld and home lives. Learning happens in school as well as at home. And within school it happens in the classroom as well as in the hallways and on the playground. The increasing amounts of subject matter content needed to be covered for academic achievement, along with the necessity of developing the physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual skills, and the limited classroom time, and the necessity of linking the subject matter content to real life experiences to develop disciplinary thinking, mandate extending the curricular paradigm to encompass all those experiences that can be designed, manipulated or utilized by the curriculum designer or instructor to attain specific learning objectives that can be measured, assessed and evaluated.

This presentation proposes a framework, and highlights several examples of, extending curriculum to include and connect formal and informal learning. Redefining the curriculum to include and connect formal and informal learning, has the potential to align the whole ecosystem, create more time and space for holistic development, provide contexts for experimentation and real life application, and engage differentiated students in continuous journeys of mastery. Furthermore, utilizing these already abundant out-of-classroom time and experiences it has the potential to significantly reduce the costs of quality education, opening up access to it, especially among those less privileged (Banks et al, 2007).

**References:**

Banks, J.A., Au, K. H., Ball, A.F, Bell, P., Gordon, E.W, Gutiérrez, K.D., Heath, S B., Lee, C.D., Lee, Y., Mahiri, J., Suad Nasir, N., Valdés, G., Zhou, M. (2007) Learning in and out of school in diverse environments: Lifelong, Lifewide, Lifedeeep. The LIFE Center (The Learning in Informal and Formal Environments Centre), University of Washington.

LIFE Center: Stevens, R. Bransford, J. & Stevens, A., 2005. < <http://life-slc.org/about/citationdetails.html>>