



PRESS RELEASE

— For Immediate Release —

Research Report Confirms Effectiveness of Challenge-Based Learning

In the largest study to date of the practice anywhere, new findings from the New Media Consortium confirm that challenge-based learning is extremely effective with 9th grade students, including those most at risk of dropping out. The report, entitled *Challenge-Based Learning: An Approach for Our Time*, followed six schools across the US as they implemented the practice in high school classes.

Challenge-based learning is not a curriculum. It is a strategy to engage kids in any class by giving them the opportunity to work on significant problems with real-world implications. More than 320 students and nearly 30 teachers in the schools, all of which had implemented a policy of providing full-featured notebook computers to every student, worked together to research, formulate strategies, and ultimately implement local solutions to problems of global significance. Students used their laptops for just-in-time research, to document their rationales, and to present the outcomes of their strategies. The outcomes of the three-week experiment, conducted last fall, were overwhelmingly positive.

The study revealed that both teachers and students found challenge-based learning significantly effective and engaging, even with the students most at risk of dropping out. Teachers noted that students learned more, and produced more than expected. Students reported learning skills that overlapped almost completely with the critical competencies identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

The project was organized by and built on work by Apple Education, where the concept was initially developed. (For more, see www.challengebasedlearning.org.) The teachers, students, and staff that participated agreed to allow their experiences to be exhaustively chronicled and researched. The students, primarily 9th and 10th graders, were chosen based on the desire to represent not only a variety of urban, suburban, and rural settings, but also private, public, and magnet schools, richly diverse schools and relatively homogeneous schools, and both affluent and low socio-economic status schools.

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Dr. Laurence Johnson, CEO of the New Media Consortium, and principal investigator for the study, noted, "One of the strengths of this work is that the participants agreed to have their experiences documented at every step of the way, giving us a clear picture, for the first time really, of how students and teachers can engage around these sorts of real-world challenges. The responses of the students have been nothing short of remarkable."

In addition to reporting on the outcomes of the experiment, the report extensively details teacher and student experiences throughout the project. Recommendations are provided for schools that wish to try the approach themselves.

The report traces the development of challenged-based learning over the last several decades, and makes a strong case for why it is needed in schools, especially in programs serving ninth graders. Studies from the National Center for Education Statistics show that more than 30% of students will drop out before the end of their first year of high school. Challenge-based learning is offered as a strategy to reverse that growing trend.

The 38-page research report is available free of charge and has been released with a Creative Commons license to facilitate its widespread use, easy duplication, and broad distribution.

The report is online at <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Challenge-Based-Learning.pdf>
[PDF, 38 pp, 672 kb].

For additional information, contact:

Dr. Larry Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, NMC

johnson@nmc.org; 512.445.4200

About the New Media Consortium

The New Media Consortium (NMC) is an internationally focused 501(c)3 not-for-profit consortium of nearly 300 learning-focused organizations dedicated to the exploration and use of new media and new technologies. NMC member institutions are found in almost every state in the United States, across Canada, and in Europe, Asia and Australia. Among the membership are an elite list of the most respected colleges and universities in the world, as well as highly regarded museums, research centers, foundations, and corporations.

The consortium serves as a catalyst for the development of new applications of technology to support learning and creative expression, and sponsors programs and activities designed to stimulate innovation, encourage collaboration, and recognize excellence among its member institutions. Through its many projects, its comprehensive website, and its series of international conferences, the NMC stimulates dialog and understanding through the exploration of promising ideas, technologies, and applications.

For more information on the NMC, see www.nmc.org.

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