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George Lucas.Filmmaker and Founder of the George Lucas Educational Foundation

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I didn't enjoy school very much. Occasionally, I had a teacher who would inspire me. But as an adult, as I began working with computer technology to tell stories through film, I began to wonder, "Why couldn't we use these new technologies to help improve the learning process?"

Twenty years ago when we started The George Lucas Educational Foundation, we could see that digital technology was going to completely revolutionize the educational system, whether it liked it or not. Yet, in light of extraordinary advancements in how we use technology to communicate and learn, our schools and districts have been frustratingly slow to adapt.

Unfortunately, much of our system of education is locked in a time capsule that dates back to the Industrial Revolution, when learning became an exercise in pumping as much information into kids as possible. At the end of this education assembly line comes a diploma -- if the student can spit back the facts correctly. But in an era where technology can deliver most of the world's information on demand and knowledge is changing so rapidly, the model doesn't work. Why spend \$150 on textbooks that students use for only 15 weeks with information that soon becomes obsolete?

What we need today and in the future are citizens who can wield the tools of technology to solve complex problems. Which means we need students who can:

- find information
- rigorously analyze the quality and accuracy of information
- creatively and effectively use information to accomplish a goal

The good news is that in pockets across our country, schools and districts are unleashing contemporary technology -- combined with classic methods of inquiry-based learning that date back to Plato and Socrates -- to transform the learning process into a rigorous and more relevant experience.

Consider a few powerful examples. In Portland, Maine, middle and high school students have a 1-to-1 laptop program, strong school leadership, and project-based learning curricula that result in higher academic achievement. In Columbia, South Carolina, an elementary school uses computers to personalize student learning based on individual needs and abilities. And, here in the state of California, scores of high schools have restructured to offer career academies with rigorous curricula, enabling students to connect their learning to the "real world" and potential careers.

Are there enough of these schools and districts? No. Will the work of fixing our schools and re-inventing the learning process be long and arduous? Of course. But as we move on from debating what we ought to do and get busy building a better way, let's remember that the solutions -- and the tools and people who are implementing them -- are not far away. In fact, they are nearer than you think.

Through our Edutopia Web presence at edutopia.org and on popular social networks, our Foundation shines a spotlight on the most exciting classrooms where these innovations are taking place. By learning not only what but how these inspiring teachers and students are redefining learning, we hope others will consider how their work can promote change in their own schools.

Our Foundation staff is eager to know about your successes in improving schools especially through the power of technology integration. Together we can bring positive change to education.

We encourage you to share your ideas on Edutopia.org and join the effort to transform learning.