

# Marc Prensky



## Speaking Topics

for:  
education, corporate and general audiences  
(scroll down for additional details)

*“Prensky consistently produces executive-level ‘ahas’ about young people, their technology, and their changing relationship to school and work”.*

For corporate audiences:

- **“Use Me or Lose Me”**  
Deriving Maximum Value from Today’s Younger Workers

For educator (and general) audiences:

- **Teaching Digital Natives:**  
Partnering for Real Learning  
(Based on Marc Prensky’s upcoming book from Corwin)
- **Digital Wisdom**  
Beyond Natives and Immigrants
- **Why YouTube Matters**  
Teaching in the Students’ World
- **Homo Sapiens Digital**  
Technology is Their Birthright
- **"Engage Me or Enrage Me"**  
Educating Today's "Digital Native" Learners
- **Twenty-first Century Teaching**  
How All Teachers Can Do It

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- **“Don’t Bother Me Mom – I’m Learning”**  
How computer and video games are preparing your kids for twenty-first century success – and how you can help (based on Marc Prensky’s Book)
- **"Overcoming Our Digital Immigrant Accents"**  
Understanding the implications of emerging Digital Native behaviors for education, training and learning
- **Using Games for Instruction**  
Where, When and How
- **“Give Them 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tools”**  
New approaches to learning can bring engagement back to our students
- **Education and Learning in the Twenty-first Century**  
How, why, and what we need to do differently
- **Turning on the Lights: Why schools must compete, and how to do it.**  
Keeping Up With “After-School”

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## Selected Talk Descriptions

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For corporate audiences:

### **“Use Me or Lose Me”**

Deriving Maximum Value from Today’s Younger Workers

After years of debating the limitations of hierarchically-run organizations and the merits of democratization, the end of command-and-control management may finally be here, thanks to the people 25 and younger in our midst. Unprecedented changes in electronics and communications over the past 30 years have led to fresh patterns of thinking in these young “digital natives” — a new generation of people who are collectively harnessing both new technology and new behavioral skills — often to effect dramatic change within the organizations that employ them. Unfortunately, many Digital Immigrant leaders — including many of those who claim to be “plugged in” — don’t get the fact that digital natives bring unique capabilities to large organizations. In this talk Prensky highlights these changes and discusses their implications for today’s and tomorrow’s organizational leaders. If consulted, these young employees can be an enormous force for positive change and success in their companies. If ignored, they spend their brain cycles on the job plotting (in ways managers can’t control) how to make their own work lives, not their companies, better.

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For educator (and general) audiences:

### **Teaching Digital Natives:**

Partnering for Real Learning

Based on Prensky’s upcoming book (Corwin, March 2010) this talk unites three strands of current educational discussion which have rarely been considered together. First, that our students are

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changing—largely as a result of their outside-of-school experiences with technology. Second, that the pedagogy we have been using in our schools, basically “tell and test,” has become less and less effective with today’s students; a better pedagogy is both needed and available. Third, that the digital technology, now coming into our classrooms, if used properly, can make a difference.

Ironically, a generation raised on the expectation of interactivity is ripe for the “skill-based” and “doing-based” teaching methods that past experts have always suggested as the best for learning, but that were rejected by the education establishment as hard to implement. The happy thread tying these together is that the same digital technology which caused the changes in our students provides the means to finally implement the most effective ways of learning.

## **Digital Wisdom** **Beyond Natives and Immigrants**

What comes after Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives, when we all will have been born in the digital age? Prensky suggests that it is Digital Wisdom. Digital Wisdom is the ability to combine the things that the human brain does best (such as reasoning and balancing), with machines and other enhancements for the things the brain is less good at (such as remembering, or calculating). Such combination is necessary, Prensky argues, in order to achieve the highest state of wisdom in the digital age. With numerous examples, and illustrations of both the “digitally wise” and the “digitally dumb”, this is an original and frame-breaking talk.

## **Why You Tube Matters :** **Teaching in the *Student’s* World**

Communication of ideas, experiences and skills, which has been largely text-based for the past several hundred years, is going through a change as powerful as that enabled by the invention of the printing press. From humble beginnings, You Tube (and its sister short video sites) have, in a matter of years, grown to millions of examples. With the entry of many high-end thinkers, speakers and writers into the medium, video is, for many purposes, a better source of information than is text. Will short video ever replace text? Prensky considers this and other scenarios to show why You Tube is a phenomenon that all educators must pay close attention to.

## **"Engage Me or Enrage Me" :** **Educating Today's "Digital Native" Learners**

All educators are struggling to find ways to engage and connect students with learning. Marc Prensky is the leading expert on how today’s students (whom he refers to as Digital Natives) learn even when it isn’t apparent to digital immigrants. Join Prensky as he explains and demonstrates not only how today’s students have changed, but how educators can deal with the changes and learn from them. The key, says Prensky, is not curriculum, certification, or testing, but rather engagement. Today’s students are in need of more engaging approaches, more understanding and 21st century skills. The learning that motivates them the most is where students are already involved the most -- in their games.

## **“Don’t Bother Me Mom – I’m Learning”** **How computer and video games are preparing your kids for 21<sup>st</sup> century success – and how you can help**

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Based on the new book by Marc Prensky (Paragon House 2006) the talk presents the case – profoundly counter-cultural but true nevertheless – that video and computer game playing, within limits, is actually very beneficial to today's "Digital Native" kids, who are using the games to prepare themselves for life in the 21st century. The reason kids are so attracted to these games, Prensky says, is that they are learning about important "future" things, from collaboration, to prudent risk taking, to strategy formulation and execution, to complex moral and ethical decisions. Prensky's arguments are backed up by university PhD's studying not just game violence, but games in their totality, as well as studies of gamers who have become successful corporate workers, entrepreneurs, leaders, doctors, lawyers, scientists and other professionals.

Because most adults (including most critics) can't play the modern complex games themselves (and discount the opinions of the kids who do play them) they rely on secondhand sources of information, most of whom are sadly misinformed about both the putative harm and the true benefits of game-playing. This talk is the antidote to those misinformed, bombastic sources. Full of common sense and practical information, it provides parents with a large number of techniques approaches they can use – both over time and right away – to improve both their understanding of games and their relationships with their kids.

## **"Overcoming our Digital Immigrant Accents" :** **Understanding the implications of emerging Digital Native behaviors for education, training and learning**

Many. If not most of today's problems in education stem from a simple fact: Our students are no longer the ones our system and teachers were designed to teach! Based on the paper "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, which has been circulated and reprinted around the world, Prensky explains not only how today's students have changed, but how we, as educators and parents can deal with the changes and learn from them. Prensky's talk is full of practical, useful examples for teachers and parents to increase their connections to their students and kids. "After your talk I went home and hugged my daughter," is a typical reaction to this keynote.

## **"Give Us 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tools!"** **New approaches to learning can bring engagement back to our students**

Today's educators – teachers and administrators – are struggling to find ways to get more engagement into their classrooms. In a message that was delivered, at their invitation, to the US Department of Education, Prensky argues that this generation is not in need of more content, but of more understanding, engagement, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. To best help our kids learn we need, says Prensky, to provide them with 21<sup>st</sup> century tools: individual computers, cell phones used for learning, and software tools that engage kids as they teach both the curriculum and the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that most teachers do not even have. Prensky shows, through numerous examples, where we are in this quest, and how educators can participate and benefit.

## **"Education and Learning in the Twenty-first Century"** **How, why, and what we need to do differently**

The reason we are having problems with education in the twenty-first century is that everything is changing exponentially – especially the students. They are no longer "little us'es", as they were in the past, and so for them to learn, we can't do education the same old way. Despite our training and preferences as teachers and educators, we have to change. In this talk Prensky describes several key areas where change in attitudes and behaviors on the part of educators is necessary, including understanding our students, dealing with exponential change, achieving mutual respect, and sharing our successes

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## “Turning On The Lights”

Why school must compete, and how to do it

Based on an article by Marc Prensky to be published later this year in *Educational Leadership Magazine*, the talk introduces a new metaphor for understanding education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

In the past, right up through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, our kids grew up, intellectually, in the dark. They didn't read or travel much, so they knew very little about the world – until, of course, they went to school. School's job was to enlighten young people – to pull back the curtain, “turn on the lights” and show them about the world. Education was a noble profession, and teaching a noble calling, because those were the people who showed kids the light.

Unfortunately for this approach, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our kids grow up *in the light*. They are connected by all their media – television, cell phones, the Internet, to the entire world, and they are aware of what is happening. Not that they understand everything – they are still children – but they know something about almost everything. If educators wanted to continue to be “noble,” they would use this change as a new starting point, and build on it, honing, refining and enlarging the capabilities that today's students generally have.

But what do we so often do instead? Systematically, as we bring kids into our schools, educators *turn off* their kids' lights by making them shut down all their personal connections to the world – TV, cell phone, laptop, whatever. So, in effect, we pull the kids out of the light, back into the darkness. And instead of being the “noble people” who show kids the light, educators and teachers become, in the minds of the students, the evil jailors who imprison them in the dark.

And that is not a situation that will work for 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

Prensky's talk builds on the Dark/Light metaphor, and discusses several ways that we can – and must – act to “turn on the lights” for our students, if we expect our schools to help them prepare for their 21<sup>st</sup> century lives.

## Workshops

**(Workshops can be anywhere from 2 hours to several days and are tailored to your audience.)**

Recent selected topics include:

## Interviews with Digital Natives

How often do we ask our students to tell us what's on their minds about their classes, learning and technology? To accompany, and give “ground truth” to each of his presentations, Marc Prensky invites 4-8 students, from different grade levels, to answer questions from him and the audience. The idea is to set up a model for the kinds of student/faculty/administrator conversations that should be going on in every school, every day. The results are always eye-opening for both sides: “It was the best part of the conference” said one administrator. “I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it” commented a student.

In this workshop, you arrange for 2-8 articulate students from a variety of schools and levels of your choice (hopefully with a mix of M-F) to show up. I interview them and then open the questions to the floor. The results are usually eye-opening and memorable. This workshop, often

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combined with a keynote, is constantly voted one of the best sessions people attend. [Note: It helps if the students attend my keynote before.]

## Creating Learning That Digital Natives Will Love

To meet the needs and expectations of our Digital Native learners, we have to begin with their interests, not ours. In this workshop we will delve into those interests in detail, focusing especially on the design principles that cause their computer and video games to engage them to such a great extent. Using these principles as a base, we will together design several learning games that fit both the curriculum and the Digital Natives' style.

## "Course Modding": Applying the Rules of Engagement

How would we change existing lessons or courses if we were to apply the lessons from gaming and game development? We will work together to see how we can modify ("mod") existing courses and curricula to provide engagement for those who currently "tune out."

## Tools for Educational Game Making

Do you and / or your students want to make educational games yourselves? What are the tools available? What do they cost? How hard are they to use? We will discuss and evaluate all the possible ways of getting started in this area.

## Using Mobile Phones (and other unexpected technology) for Learning

While we are busy banning our kids from using their mobile phones in class, phones, much of the rest of the world is already using them for education. What are they doing, and can we (and should we) do it too? What are all the possibilities for mobile phones and education? What other tools does it make sense for us to be using? What effect will this have on education? On teachers?

## ■ About Marc Prensky

*Marc Prensky is an internationally acclaimed thought leader, speaker, writer, consultant, and designer in the critical areas of education and learning. He has delivered his unique message about the coming effects of today's digital youth on education, business, and the military to CEOs and other senior executives, military flag officers, senior education executives, and thousands of teachers and parents, always with eye-opening results.*

*Marc is the author of *Digital Game-Based Learning* (McGraw-Hill, 2001) *Don't Bother Me Mom – I'm Learning* (Paragon House 2006), and the founder and CEO of Games2train, whose clients include IBM, Microsoft, Pfizer, the US Department of Defense, and the Florida Virtual Schools. Marc has been featured in articles in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*, has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, PBS, and the BBC, and was named as one of training's top 10 "visionaries" by *Training* magazine. He holds graduate degrees from Yale (Teaching) and Harvard (MBA).*

Marc's writings can be found at [www.marcprensky.com/writing/](http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/).