

Q: CAN WE TEACH INNOVATION?



RUDY RUZICKA

A:

YES, WE CAN!

But we have to change our teaching methodologies.

In a short six months last year, I dialogued with some 2,000 educational stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, museum and corporate professionals, engineering professors and others in our nation's educational circles. Everyone agreed that there seems to be little room in today's K-12 curriculum for creativity. Everything is taught to you, structured for you and teachers often feel

pressured to teach to the test. Students aren't encouraged enough to ask the "whys" and "hows." Even at the collegiate level, in the engineering schools, for example, students are not entering with an entrepreneurial mindset.

If we want to teach innovation, we have to change our methodologies, our tools of engagement and, last but not most important, our mindsets. We have to remind ourselves as educators that catalysts and change-agents in generations past have always asked, "What if?" They have always been risk-takers, the ones to think beyond the norm and question the status quo.

This generation, the iGeneration (for information-

age), learns by discovering and creating. They constantly multitask, like to stay virtually connected all the time and learn more from peers than from elders. They are intrinsically curious.

We must embrace these qualities and develop learning environments where we as educators are not just the "deliverer of content," but the "facilitators of learning." We have to walk the talk, take our own big risks and make room, consciously allow time, for creativity in our classrooms if we want to teach innovation.

If we do — and I know we can — we will empower this iGeneration to become Generation I, the powerful next generation of Innovators.

PAULA GANGOPADHYAY is chief learning officer, The Henry Ford, the lead author of The Henry Ford's Innovation 101 curriculum and project director for The Henry Ford's Innovation Education Incubator (IEI), which is gathering evidence to prove that innovation can be taught. She was recently appointed by President Barack Obama to serve on the National Museum and Library Services Board (NMLSB) for a four-year term. The NMLSB is an advisory body that includes 20 presidentially appointed members who have demonstrated expertise in, or a commitment to, library or museum services. The board advises the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on general policy and practices, and on selections for the National Medals for Museum and Library Service. IMLS awards nearly \$187 million in grants each year to museums and libraries nationwide.

