

ACT III

Understanding grows when it is shared.
sharing perspective

Teaching Others to See

THE SPARK

A teacher friend mentioned that her gifted students would soon be reading *The Van Gogh Café*.

My imagination immediately began asking a different question: What if learning became something students could actually experience?

I drew from how “flat” learning had often felt during my own grade-school years and proposed an interdisciplinary Van Gogh Café project.

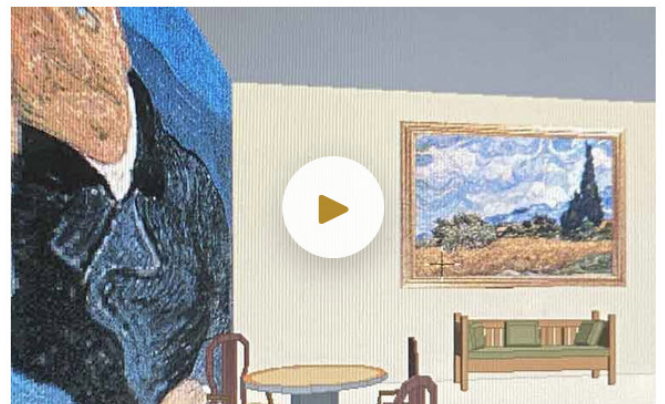
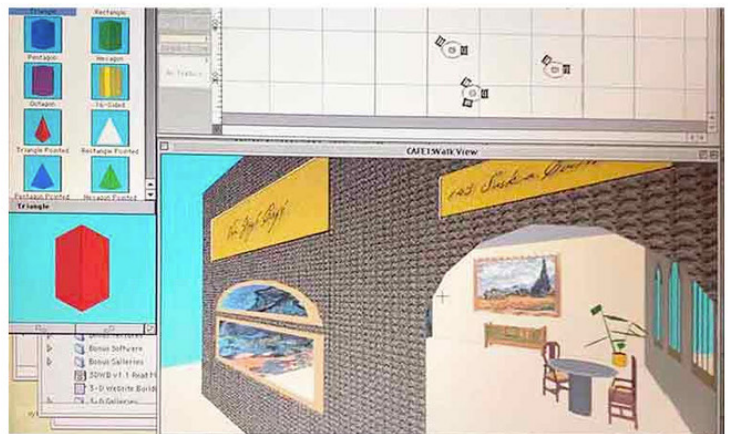
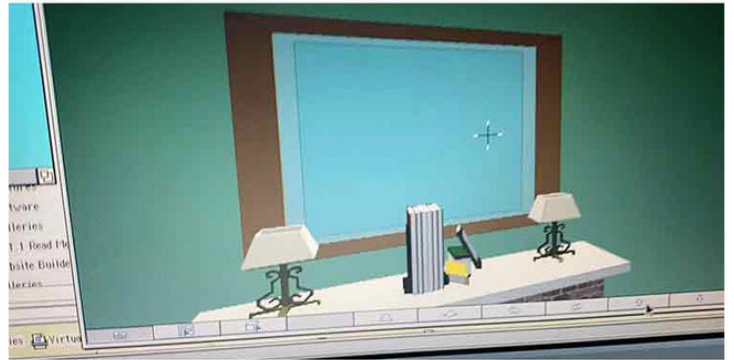
Before long, I was serving as a school technology consultant for gifted students in grades three through five, between the ages of 8 and 11.

The experience not only expanded students’ vision and understanding, it also invigorated the district’s view of technology as a critical teaching tool.

Sometimes innovation begins with nothing more than asking, “What if learning felt different?”

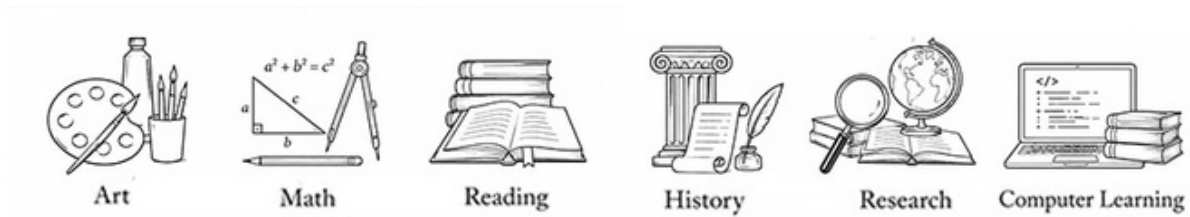
How do children experience learning instead of memorizing it?

Eventually, the same questions that shaped my creative and technical work found their way into a classroom.



I wanted students to experience learning as something dimensional—something they could research, write, design, build, and move through.

Technology wasn't the lesson, it was the bridge.



By combining 3D environments with curriculum the work became more than an assignment. It became a way for students to imagine possibilities they had not yet been invited to see.

They each chose an artist, had to make a painting in that artist's style, researched the food, architecture, and history of the artist's time, and then learned how to design their 3D cafe in Virtus, to align with their artist. Once built, I incorporated their writings, recipes, and artworks inside their cafes.

Years later, post-graduation, many students shared how that experience expanded their sense of what was possible for their own futures.

But one student, Ariel, changed my understanding of what that kind of opportunity could mean. When she entered the program, she was extraordinarily shy and introverted, often hesitant to engage. As the program unfolded, something began to shift. She came out of her shell socially. Her curiosity bloomed. She began to participate, explore, and see possibilities in herself that had not been as visible before.

Watching that transformation changed me, too. It reinforced something I would carry into every leadership role that followed: the most meaningful measure of what we build is not simply what we accomplish ourselves, but what becomes possible for others because we helped create the conditions for them to grow.

Jack Welch would articulate a similar principle: before becoming a leader, success is about growing yourself; once you become a leader, success becomes about growing others. Ariel had already taught me what that looked like in practice.

WHAT STAYED WITH ME

Leadership is measured by what continues growing after you have stepped away.