10. iLRN Illuminator's Forum #10 with author Rob Theriault

iLRN ILLUMINATORS' FORUM

... a scanning report contributing to the
iLRN IMMERSIVE FUTURES' State of XR & Immersive Learning 2026 effort

https://youtu.be/t7tB5JWwL6s

Forum Host: Jonathon Richter

> Special Guest: Rob Theriault, educator, simulation specialist, and author of *The Future of Education is Experiential*. Drawing upon decades of experience in healthcare education, simulation-based learning, educational technology, and innovation, Rob's work explores how experiential approaches can help learners develop knowledge, skills, judgment, and confidence in an increasingly complex world.



This session is the tenth episode of our (mostly) weekly global scanning series supporting the 2026 iLRN *State of XR & Immersive Learning* report. Each week, we bring together researchers, educators, designers, and practitioners to explore emerging developments across immersive learning, extended reality, artificial intelligence, simulation, and related fields.

This week's conversation centers on Rob Theriault's new book, *The Future of Education is Experiential*.

The title itself raises an important question. If education is becoming increasingly experiential, what does that actually mean in practice? How should educators, instructional designers, researchers, and learning leaders think about experience as a foundation for learning? And how might emerging technologies support—or distract from—that goal?

Rather than focusing on technology for its own sake, Rob's book places human experience at the center of the conversation. It argues that meaningful learning occurs through participation, practice, reflection, problem-solving, and engagement with authentic challenges. While immersive technologies, simulation, artificial intelligence, and digital environments may provide powerful new tools, the book invites us to ask a more fundamental question: what kinds of experiences best support learning?

In this discussion, we will explore key themes, findings, and questions emerging from the book while situating them within broader developments occurring across immersive learning and educational innovation.

We will explore:

• Why experiential learning matters now

How changing expectations in education, workforce development, and professional training are creating demand for more active, authentic, and learner-centered approaches. What challenges is experiential learning attempting to address, and why is it gaining renewed attention?

• The relationship between immersive technologies and experiential learning

How XR, simulation, AI, and interactive environments can support experiential learning goals. Where do these technologies create meaningful value, and where do educators risk becoming distracted by novelty rather than learning outcomes?

• Designing experiences that matter

What distinguishes a meaningful learning experience from an engaging activity? How can educators and designers create environments that support reflection, transfer, capability development, and long-term growth?

• From individual experiences to communities of practice

How experiential learning extends beyond individual lessons and courses into professional communities, workplaces, and lifelong learning ecosystems. What can immersive learning practitioners learn from one another as the field continues to mature?

• Looking toward the future

What trends and signals suggest that experiential learning may play an increasingly important role in the future of education? How might emerging technologies, changing learner expectations, and new forms of participation shape the next generation of learning environments?

As iLRN prepares to open its 2026 conference under the theme *From Plato's Cave to Open Immersive Societies*, this conversation offers an opportunity to examine one of the foundational ideas driving many current innovations in immersive learning: that meaningful learning is ultimately rooted not in technology, but in experience.

Join us as we discuss Rob Theriault's new book, examine its implications for immersive learning, and explore what the future of experiential education may hold.

Jump to this episode on the iLRN YouTube Channel with the following link:

https://youtu.be/t7tB5JWwL6s

The Future of Education is Experiential with Special Guest Rob Theriault

---

Revision #4
Created 9 June 2026 20:11:16 by Jonathon Richter
Updated 23 June 2026 02:09:11 by Michael Hamaoka