9. iLRN Illuminators' Forum — episode #9: The Role of The Learning Sciences in the Immersive Learning community (March 20th, 2026) – with Eileen McGivney

Guest: Eileen McGivney, Northeastern University & 2025 iLRN Circle of Scholars member



iLRN ILLUMINATORS' FORUM

... the weekly scanning report of
iLRN IMMERSIVE FUTURES' *State of XR & Immersive Learning 2026* effort

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx6KLmBFGnw

Forum Host: Jonathon Richter
Special Guest: Eileen McGivney, a scholar of learning, media, and emerging technology whose work examines how educational innovation, digital environments, and cultural context shape meaningful learning experiences. She brings a timely perspective to immersive learning through her attention to research quality, educational design, and the broader conditions that influence learning across formal and informal settings.

This session is the ninth episode of our (mostly) weekly global scanning series for the 2026 iLRN *State of XR & Immersive Learning* report. Each week, we convene researchers, designers, and practitioners who are tracking developments across regions, sectors, and technologies. The aim is to build a shared and recent evidence base that helps the immersive learning community take a collective expert-focused snapshot of how the field is growing and changing worldwide.

Focus Areas: Learning Sciences · Research Quality · Emerging Educational Technology

This Friday, we turn directly to a central question for the field: what role should the Learning Sciences play in shaping immersive learning as an emerging multidisciplinary community of research, design, and practice?

As immersive learning expands across higher education, workforce training, cultural institutions, and industry, there is growing need to distinguish between novelty and meaningful contribution. This episode asks what it would look like for the field to remain grounded in evidence about how people learn, how environments shape attention and action, and how design decisions affect outcomes.

Our guest, Eileen McGivney, offers an important vantage point for this conversation. Her work helps illuminate how educational technologies become meaningful only when they are connected to sound pedagogical reasoning, thoughtful design, and a clearer understanding of the social and institutional conditions in which learning takes place. In that sense, this conversation helps move immersive learning beyond enthusiasm alone and toward a stronger foundation for quality, relevance, and cumulative knowledge-building.

We will explore:

- **The Learning Sciences as a foundation for immersive learning:**
  How theories of learning, motivation, cognition, and social interaction can help immersive learning mature as a field rather than remain a loose collection of tools, experiments, and isolated innovations.

- **What counts as meaningful evidence in immersive learning:**
  How researchers and practitioners can better assess quality, identify durable contributions, and avoid overstating claims about impact when technologies are evolving quickly.

- **Emerging educational technology trends and their implications:**
  Which adjacent developments in AI, digital platforms, and interactive media are reshaping the conditions for immersive learning, and what these shifts suggest for the next phase of the field.

- **Research, design, and community formation:**
  How the immersive learning community can strengthen its shared language, standards of quality, and collective capacity by staying attentive to the insights and methods of the Learning Sciences.

Together, these themes help clarify why the Learning Sciences are not peripheral to immersive learning, but one of its core foundations. They also help frame the kinds of questions that must guide iLRN's global scanning effort as we work toward the 2026 report and continue building the field with greater rigor and coherence.

All are welcome to join as we continue mapping the trends, signals, and scholarly conversations that will inform iLRN's 2026 report and the Athens conference.

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx6KLmBFGnw

The Role of The Learning Sciences in the Immersive Learning community with Special Guest Eileen McGivney

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