Introducing EDgility

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We're Bill, IT systems, and Paul, education. Together we've been pulling an agile mindset into education for about three years. We started with one class and have spread, with the help of educational agilists like John Miller (Agile Classrooms) and Willy Wijnands (eduscrum) into other areas: student-run activities, teacher professional development, and whole school curriculum planning. The Fall 2016 Scrum Alliance conference in Munich was a great eye opener.

Teacher are for the most part excited. Often they'll tell us they're "doing agile." We're happy about that, but we don't know quite how to react when we hear folks are "doing agile."

Here's Bill's current take on the thinking behind an agile mindset in education, based on a recent five-week class he taught, Introduction to Engineering.

EDgility (Education with an Agile Mindset) has 2 critical aspects:

- **ED**, which I think of as exploration. Kids get time to tinker. The curriculum is primarily about deliberate practice in the learning zone and secondarily being in the performance zone, when students show their learning in a non-threatening way that cultivates pride. Eduardo Briceño describes these two zones in a TEDx from November 2016.

- (A)**gility**, which I think of as feedback and adjustment - inspect and adapt - from *peers*. Students self-assess and help each other. Students working together know more than students working alone. Students need to have opportunities to practice learning together.

Combined into EDgility, we see the rise of self-regulation. The role of the student changes from passive to active, from recipient to creator. The teacher's role changes, too. It is no longer disseminating info, controlling student focus, or critiquing student work. Instead, the teacher helps students get unstuck, ensures a joyful exploration of the topic, and creates a meaningful environment, allowing students to be open to feedback and adjustment. One of my environmental feedback loops was to monitor the start of class to see if the students started working without my intervention.

It's not just from sage on the stage to coach, but rather to a monitor of the gradual release of responsibility.

Our students are far too over-reliant on hand-fed info and ideas and, unfortunately, we as teachers need to accept a fair share of the blame. Let's make students primarily responsible for feedback instead of relying on the teacher's critique.

When we let kids focus on their interests, their ways of getting things done, we witness student creativity and emergent design that makes being a teacher a whole new experience. Student collaboration arises because they want to make a better product. Working outside of the class arises because why wouldn't you keep working on what interests you? Novel solutions arise, the next better question arises ...

So in EDgility we look to set conditions that require students to use what they know now to try to see what they could know out there, just over the horizon. New knowledge they reach with a bit of collaboration, a bit of inspiration, and a good measure of organizing their work.

Creating useful changes to what you currently know is a productive definition of education: ED. Getting students to work with and adopt suggestions from other students is a useful aspect of agility. The teacher adjusts the environment, the projects, and the interventions in order to facilitate exploration and adaptation. Agile education: EDgility.

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