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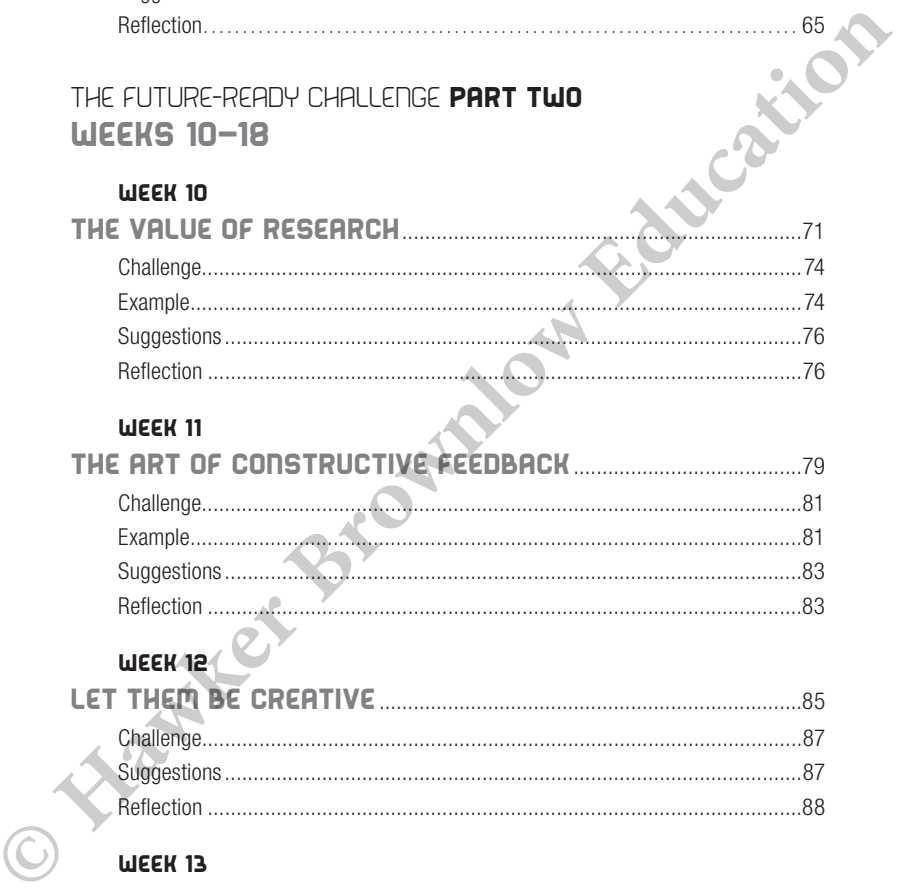
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# INTRODUCTION

Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

**P**erusing bookstores and libraries is one of my favorite pastimes. Often I find myself in strange or unusual parts of the collection. One day particularly comes to mind when I found myself in the “Self Help” section. I became very interested in the vast number of books written on the topics of how to lose weight, or how to stop smoking, or how to become a vegan. It occurred to me that many of these books were written around a “challenge” theme: The author challenges you to follow certain step-by-step instructions and then guarantees success.

Wow! That sounds so simple. If challenges work as an effective means to bring about change, perhaps we should apply the same approach to making meaningful changes in education.

With this step-by-step challenge in mind, I decided to create a 90-day (18-week) challenge designed to change the way we think about our digital age education.

Why 18 weeks? In 1960, a psychologist by the name of Maxwell Maltz determined that it takes 28 to 30 days to break a bad habit (Maltz, 1989). Modern psychologists have now posited that it takes 28 days to create new patterns in our lives, but it takes 90 days to create new habits.

As I thought about our educational calendar, the 18-week challenge seemed to fall nicely into our two-semester school year.

An 18-week challenge affords you the time needed to implement digital age skills into your curriculum. This challenge incorporates realistic changes that you can follow easily and without performing major reconstruction on your curriculum.

We all know that change can be hard, but when it's broken into easy-to-implement steps, the task becomes not only feasible but effortless! *The Future-Ready Challenge* focuses on changing the classroom, your teaching style, and the related procedures to increase opportunities for your students to engage in—and most importantly, adopt—digital age skills.

This sentiment is mirrored by the Future-Ready initiative of the Office of Educational Technology (part of the Office of the Secretary of Education) ([tech.ed.gov/FutureReady](http://tech.ed.gov/FutureReady)), which encourages school superintendents to sign a pledge that they are “committing to foster and lead a culture of digital learning in their district and to share what they have learned with other districts.” The Office of Educational Technology provides leadership for transforming education through the power of technology and collaborates with other education offices to support the effective use of technology in learning.

This type of educational reform will allow our children to be the creative, innovative collaborators and communicators we know they are and will need to be! We have the information and the statistics at our fingertips, yet possessing the information and being able to connect the dots, so to speak, are two very different things.

Throughout my career, I have preached the importance of equipping our children with digital age skills to many audiences, and I have watched them nod enthusiastically, agreeing with our nation's need for educational reform. Yet I also had many teachers

ask, “What can I do to implement change in my classroom?  
Where do I begin?”

*The Future-Ready Challenge* is about breaking the habits that have been ingrained into our educational system for close to 200 years!

## How the Future-Ready Challenge Works

Here’s how it works: Each week you will focus your efforts on implementing that week’s change for an entire week. Along with that week’s change, you will be given suggestions and advice for increasing your chances of success with that change, as well as a list of digital age skills you can incorporate into your lesson plan. A progress chart will help you stay on track.

*The Future-Ready Challenge* is designed to grow exponentially, meaning that you won’t abandon the previous week’s challenge when working on the current week’s challenge. Instead, you will implement all of the challenges you have learned, along with the new challenge. By the end, you will have implemented a semester’s worth of changes into your teaching system.

The most effective way of carrying out *The Future-Ready Challenge* is to work through the challenges with a partner or team. You may even take the challenge one step further and use it to create a competition among teams in your building or district. This tactic will help you stay motivated and inspired, and will result in a team-building experience, as well.

If you are undertaking *The Future-Ready Challenge* on your own, [www.robfulman.com](http://www.robfulman.com) has discussion and support groups where you can talk with other educators, trade ideas, share your experiences, and become inspired. Let’s get started!

## Preparing Today's Students to Become Tomorrow's Leaders

There is little doubt that our country needs a complete overhaul of its educational system. We are still following the format developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution! Our school system was deeply influenced by three already-created models: the factory, the prison, and the church. Following the church model, we encouraged a disciplined atmosphere; following the factory model, we taught our children the importance of standing in line and keeping everything uniform; and following the prison format, we taught discipline, compliance, and consistent policies and procedures.

The Committee of Ten was established in 1892 by the National Education Association to establish a standard curriculum. The Committee, composed mainly of educators and chaired by Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard University, made major recommendations reflective of the Industrial Revolution that have shaped our educational system for more than 120 years (Meyer, 1967).

Our society, of course, is worlds beyond the Industrial Revolution, yet our schools remain focused on these antiquated ideals. We are in the age of humanity and creativity, yet we still try to force our students to learn via a cookie-cutter approach that simply doesn't work!

Futurists are now getting into the educational scene because they realize if we don't start making changes now, we are going to start losing the next generation of kids who won't be prepared to meet tomorrow's challenges.

Consider this: Just 10 years ago, we didn't have augmented reality or nanobots. Who knows what technologies will be part of our