Foreword

The term “student or learner centered” is fashionable in conversations and publications about schools and universities. The abundant use made of the term might lead one to believe that many, if not most, schools are student centered. While at a superficial level, it could be argued that schools are, by definition, student centered since the fundamental formal mission of any school is to educate students, it is abundantly clear that many schools that claim to be “student centered” do not actually put the student, as a person, at the center of the decision process regarding the content and process of learning. For those who believe that “student centered” should be more than a slogan, it is necessary to understand the student’s perspective on what is – or is not - done to, for, and with him or her in the school setting.

It is easy to understand why teachers and administrators give less serious consideration of the student’s perspective than we should. After all, we all were once students and we occupy space in close proximity with them. That along with the belief of some educators that the perspective of students is irrelevant since they know what is best for students’ leads to the conclusion that careful inquiry of students’ beliefs and opinions is not needed.

This book provides strong testimony on critical value of understanding students’ perspectives pertaining to their learning and this has become particularly important with regard to learning with digital media. In recent years, untested assertions and assumptions have been made about young people and their uses of technologies. The aptitudes, attitudes, expectations, and the learning styles of students who have grown up with technologies reflect the learning environments in which they were raised. These environments are strikingly different than they were when current teachers and administrators were growing up. Computers, mobile phones, the Internet, social networking, games and other forms of digital media are a familiar part of the lives of students. Many are dependent on technologies not just to keep in touch, but as a way of developing their identities, socializing and learning what matters to them.

There are few published empirical studies that enable us to hear students’ voices on the role that digital media plays in their lives as well as their sense of how it could have more impact on their learning. This book makes a major contribution by bringing together recent research on the views and expectations of students about the use of digital media for their schoolwork. The chapters draw on data collected directly from students located in different countries, different education levels, with various software applications and devices. The diversity of topics all focused on understanding students’ points of view, make this book extremely valuable for students, teachers, and policy-makers.
We cannot make best use of the learning opportunities of digital media for our students until we can see how they see digital media in their lives. The chapters of this book make a major contribution in giving us such insight.

James Bosco
Professor Emeritus Western Michigan University

James Bosco is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Educational Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Currently he is Principal Investigator for the MacArthur Foundation/Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) Project: Schools and Participatory Culture: Overcoming Organizational and Policy Barriers. His work has been focused on the implications of digital media for the transformation of primary and secondary schools. He has worked closely with schools throughout the United States as they contend with the challenges and opportunities digital media provides to energize learning environments. He has served as a consultant on educational technology matters with several major US corporations. Bosco chairs the CoSN International Committee that has established communication and cooperation between ICT leaders in the U.S and the rest of the world. He has written extensively on digital media and school reform and has been an invited speaker at Conferences in Ireland, Australia, Russia, and the U.K. as well as in the U.S.