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Gretchen Roe: 00:00:05.413

Hi, everyone. It's Gretchen Roe, and I want to welcome you to this episode of the Demme Learning Show. I am so excited to get to spend an hour with my dear friend Kathleen Ouellette. Kathleen and I go back a year or two. We were children when we were homeschooling our children, but we're not anymore, and it was my very great pleasure to find Kathleen again a year ago and to find out what she's doing now. And so today on this episode of the Demme Learning Show, we're going to talk about virtual reality and how it would serve to supplement your home school in a very positive way. Kathleen, welcome. I'm going to let you introduce yourself, and then we'll get into the meat of our conversation.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:00:50.074

Well, thank you, Gretchen. That was very sweet. Yes, we go back maybe a couple of years. And when our youngest were-- we were actually pregnant at the same time.

Gretchen Roe: 00:01:02.933

Yes, we were. And now we're graduating them. How can that possibly be?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:01:09.326

I don't know. In a blink of an eye. In a blink of an eye, it happened. But God is good. We are so blessed to have both of our youngest graduating and going on to the next stages of their life. But yes, my name is Kathleen Ouellette. I am a prior homeschooling mom, six children. My husband is prior military, retired military. So we bounced up and down the East Coast a couple of times. He's a Navy helicopter pilot. And now we live in St. Louis, Missouri. And I've been teaching all kinds of kids for 30 years in the special needs and deaf ed and regular ed and early childhood, and I'm certified birth all the way through adults, so.

Gretchen Roe: 00:02:03.436

So I want you to tell us a little bit about you, and then we're going to talk about how you landed where you are now. But your background is so fascinating to me, to have the wide diversity of the experience that you have. I think it will help parents fit themselves in the frame for this conversation today.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:02:25.288

Yeah, yeah. Thank you. I do have a very diverse background. I have certification in birth to three, which is a specialty area for deaf education. You can go in, and you can work with the families and work with moms and teach them sign language, teach the baby sign language, and teach them about the development of the child and work with them, helping them see the different stages and just embracing the different experiences that their children are going to be interacting with. So I love that I have a very strong focus in that because it helped me as a mom, for sure, when I became a mom. And then I just blossomed from there to K12 and adults. My bachelor's degree is in deaf education, and my master's degree is in curriculum development, and then my second master's is in special education.

Gretchen Roe: 00:03:32.574

So well-educated, well-honed, and I think that makes you perfect for what you're doing now with VictoryXR. So can you tell us a little bit about that?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:03:42.062

Yeah, yeah. And so that all-- you wonder sometimes in life when you find yourself in a stage where you're just like, "Well, is this where I'm supposed to be?" Or maybe you're coming to the end of a phase, and it's like, "Okay. What am I going to do next?" But you find that everything that you've ever done in life is prepared you for what you're going to do next. It's so wonderful how it all seems to just flow together eventually. And that's really what I find myself doing now. I find myself in as an educator who retired from teaching and moving into technology. And yes, there is a learning curve, especially with virtual reality, but it's doable. And it's not something that you can do this, you can learn new things, and you can stay excited about learning and get excited about learning. Again, after teaching for 30 years in various forms and in various capacities, you can get excited about education again when it comes to virtual reality and incorporating that into your homeschooling program.

Gretchen Roe: 00:05:00.122

So tell us a little bit about what that looks like. You had to sort of educate me as we used to-- as my youngest used to say when he was very little about how this really works because this is a paradigm with which I was not familiar until you and I stumbled across to each other again a year and a half ago.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:05:20.746

Yeah. Yes. Virtual reality, the metaverse, it's in a lot. It's in the news. It's in conversations. People are talking about it. There's a lot of negative things about the metaverse that you'll hear. You'll hear, "Oh, they want you to live there." No. You have to eat. And that doesn't happen in the metaverse. And you need to take the dog for a walk. And you need to have a job. And yes, you can work in virtual reality. But you're not going to live in this space. What are you going to do with it though? How are you going to utilize the metaverse? It was created. It's available. And you can go into all kinds of reasons as to why it's available and why it was created. But our company focuses on the fact that the metaverse can be used for good in that you can keep people together, you can help people come together, and you can nurture curiosities. And that's really what our entire company is based on is nurturing individuals' curiosities and focusing on students, having them come first. It's not about a teacher standing up and being able to just, "I know all of this and just listen to me and take notes and then regurgitate." It's about, what can you provide for your children? What can you provide to them, for them around their curiosities in an equitable way, in a sustainable way. And you don't have to-- if you want to go to the Great Wall of China, you can do that. You go into a virtual reality field trip bubble, and you're there, you're on top of the Great Wall of China, or if you want to go to Antarctica.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:07:18.941

These are places that people generally don't travel to on a regular basis, nor can they, a family of 8 afford to go to. So the ability to provide that for our children, the experience, yes, you can watch a 2D video. That's fine. But the ability to just look around you and be in that space and experience those things, interact with others that are experiencing and exploring the same things that you're curious about, it's priceless. It's priceless.

Gretchen Roe: 00:07:54.014

No, I think I mentioned when we had our planning session last week. I did not have any paradigm here for for this until I had the opportunity to visit the metaverse through the auspices of my eldest son's employment. And to sit on the top of Machu Picchu, and such a real visible vibrant, I don't like heights kind of, you've got to be kidding me kind of way. Was amazing to me to stand on the very edge of Victoria Falls and almost had the sensation of feeling the mist coming up toward you. Was very remarkable. And when you and I first talked about this now, almost a year ago, I said to you, "Well, if you could do virtual dissection and you didn't have to have the smell of formaldehyde at your dining room table, is that something that's possible?" So can you talk a little bit about that?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:08:57.330

Absolutely. Yeah. There's a lot of things that are possible in the metaverse that don't involve smells or grossness. [laughter] And they also don't involve the parent being the one that has to know and learn all of this in order to teach it to the child. And it allows the parent to take just a small step back in that they still know what their child is doing. They still know what their child is learning. But they're allowing their child's curiosities to lead their journey in their inquiry. So they get to explore it. They get to experience it. And there's no cleanup. There's no mess and there's no smell. So yes, if you want to go in a virtual reality with VictoryXR, you can certainly go in and dissect a pig, you can dissect a frog, you can dissect a cat, dissect a squid, or a starfish. We have those available. We also do have a human cadaver. Those are reserved for the university levels because there are just there are just things around that, doctors, nurses, it's a great way for them to learn. So this isn't some kind of learning that is like, "Oh, okay, well, this is great for just doctors and nurses too." And because there is a lot of conversation going on about how the metaverse can be used to train doctors and nurses and even forklift workers, huge injury ratio in that field. But now they can go in and they can learn through simulators. How to drive a forklift, how not to bump into things. If you bump it into something, that's going to, it's going to domino effect all of these shelving.

Gretchen Roe: 00:10:55.469

You've all seen that video at one point in time where somebody backs a forklift in and knocks down the entire Costco warehouse. So I get it.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:11:02.905

Yes. Yeah. And so people also get injured. And it has prevented so many injuries by building and allowing access to these simulators. It's amazing. And so we do also have lots of opportunities outside of dissections. You can learn trades too.

Gretchen Roe: 00:11:25.697

Sure. Can we talk a little bit more about that? Because I have thought about this nonstop since our conversation last week. And this to me is super fascinating. So can you sort of re-convey our conversation to help parents see how a child could explore a trade in the metaverse and then decide if that was something that they wanted to explore in the real world?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:11:49.244

Yeah. Yeah. And in a very economical way too. As we were discussing last week when you have a child who's about to venture on into the world and they're like, "I don't know if I want to go to college. I don't know if that's really for me you know. I've done all this studying. I love learning. I want to continue to learn, but I want to be in the trades. I want to be able to be in a field where I feel like I'm giving back or I'm creating or I'm being an artist of some kind, or maybe they want to be a healthcare provider. Maybe they want to be a nursing assistant or a healthcare assistant or a carpenter or a welder. Or maybe they want to go into technology, which is robotics and-- I can't think of the other ones.

Gretchen Roe: 00:12:41.486

We had talked about drones.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:12:43.695

Yeah, drones. Yes. Robotics and drones. Yes. Thank you. So it could be robotics. It could be drones. It could be all of the others that I mentioned as well. We have partnered with a company called Certify-ED. And that company owns the curriculum because they have relationships with the organizations that issue certifications in these fields. So they have the curriculum, they've created it. We partnered with them. We created the virtual reality simulators that go along very nicely and support the learning that you do within that curriculum that's offered to you. So you'll listen, you'll watch in lots of different videos, and you'll learn the curriculum that you need to learn. And you'll learn about OSHA, you'll learn about-- or whatever the things are that you need to learn. The foundations. You'll learn about all those foundations. But then you'll also learn techniques and you'll be able to learn the vocabulary around different things. And you'll learn how to drive a \$4,000 drone without spending \$4,000 for a drone and navigating it through different things like forests and how am I going to find an individual. What are the different ways that you can use drones for? Go into fires, you can go into find lost individuals that have wandered off of the Appalachian trail. And you can-- how about building a shed? You might not have a circular saw. You might not have-- These are tools that are expensive. And accumulating all those tools can be expensive.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:14:41.750

Well, now you can go into virtual reality and you can learn about the names of the tools, learn about the OSHA regulations, learn about what the tools are used for, how to use them best, and then you get to practice with them. And at the end, you are building a shed. So yes, it's all done in virtual reality, but these are experiences. These are opportunities that we're providing to children who are kind of those, "I just think I need to do something else than school."

Gretchen Roe: 00:15:13.276

Sure. And I think in this day and age when the trades are so desperate to find kids, to be able to allow kids to explore different kinds of trades in this kind of virtual environment. To me, it's pretty amazing. I mean, lumber's expensive nowadays.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:15:31.591

Oh my gosh, yes.

Gretchen Roe: 00:15:32.538

[crosstalk] [inaudible].

And holy cow, learning the difference between a miter saw blade at 45-degree angles and at 90-degree angles is huge. And so being able to do that in a virtual environment would be enormous. So how can parents avail themselves of something like this? Where would they go, first of all? What's the website you would send them to?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:15:58.440

Yeah. So first, I would send them to VictoryXR [inaudible] dot com. And VictoryXR is the name of our company, and we are the ones that are developing education for the metaverse. We are the leaders in education in the metaverse. We partner with a lot of different universities, and who are-- have had the insight to bring this to their students. So, when you are talking about a homeschooler coming into this playing field, it's going to marry nicely with where the future of technology is going and what is being offered currently in educational institutions, in higher educational institutions, and high schoolers are coming on board. So the technology is here, it's here to stay. So that's what I would say to a lot of people is, you're not getting into something that's going to go away and you're not getting-- it's just going to get better. And you're not going into something, or investing in something that is not going to be used or going to be irrelevant because colleges and universities are seeing the impact that this is having on their students as far as retention, engagement, and grades. [laughter] So, all of which have gone up when students are able to interact with virtual reality.

Gretchen Roe: 00:17:29.699

They can actually use a VR headset for something other than playing Beat Saber.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:17:34.992

Yeah, exactly. [laughter] Yeah. Yeah, it's education, so. And once you go into victoryxr.com, you'll see a whole bunch of different options. If you click on the home school page, that's me. So they can always contact me directly and ask questions. I'm always open to talking to other parents about this amazing technology that allows their students to just have so many different opportunities available to them and so many different learning avenues. I mean there's just-- there's so much to it. The different products that we carry aren't just around the CTA, the continuing, or the career and technical education, or the dissections, it's also, we have three main products for homeschoolers. One is called Labs, one is called Direct, and one is called Web. And a lot of people are like, "Oh gosh, I have to pay attention which one am I going to

get." Well, fortunately, we have bundled them together, so you get the benefit of all with one purchase. And the benefit of Labs is that you can have other students join you in that arena. And so basically you put on your headset, you set up a room, you send out the room to other people, you invite them in. You choose who's going to come in that room with you. You can also choose an open room, but more than likely people are just going to be like, "No, I just want my friends to come in with me and homeschool with me, and let's study the human biology together, or let's go to Thomas Edison's lab, and then we can have a conversation." Or, yeah, my mom wants me to write a paper about all the inventions that Thomas Edison did or maybe George Washington Carver did. Then, okay, let's go in there, go in there together, or go in there by yourself and learn, explore, be curious, and just do that together.

Gretchen Roe: 00:19:54.598

I think it's interesting that I think would help parents be able to fit themselves in the frame, talking about you choose who joins you in this room. And I think that's important for parents to understand because I think all of us in this day and age have a little bit of trepidation about our kids being loose on the web. So what kind of parameters-- parents can put those parameters around things so that their children are in a safe environment, but you talked a little bit about this last week and I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit on that?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:20:32.359

Yeah. There are a lot of different-- if you have one of these [laughter], you're concerned. If you have a computer, you're concerned. If you have technology in general, can be very concerning for parents. Do they always know where their children are searching? Do they know what they're going to see? Do they know what's going to pop up in those searches? Do they know who they're reaching out to, who they're texting, who they're having conversations with, who they're meeting up with via the phone, via the computer, and now, via the metaverse? So absolutely, 100% I get it. I'm a parent. I totally get the-- the scary nature of the metaverse. But what I also know is that when I first came on board, I-- it was one of the first things that I asked because very, very sincerely spoke to the owner of the company and said-- his name is Steve Grubbs. He's an amazing individual. You should have him on here [laughter]. He has amazing background and-- and he has a heart of gold, and I really feel-- I said to him, "I really feel like I don't want to offer anything to homeschooling families that is going to harm them in any way, shape, or form." And he was like, "We are-- We're on board with you. 100%. And this is what we're offering. And this is what-- this is what the different headset companies are working on." So they have now built into headsets the ability to-- well, it's not the ability. You have to have an email. You have to have a sign-up. You have to log in to your own account, right?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:22:29.726

On a lot of different technology, you need an account somewhere. Same thing for headsets. Who owns that? Who is going to own that login? I'm going to own that login, or is JR going to own that login? That makes a big difference because anything that goes on in that headset is going to go to that email. So whatever JR is working on, if he wants to go in somewhere, if he wants to go to a chat, or if he wants to go-- okay, maybe not everything because everything you visit isn't going to go to the email. Things that you purchase definitely will go to that email. Mom

will say, "Uh-uh," nix that, right? Well, what about going into different places? Okay. So once a week, Mom or Dad or Grandma or Uncle Joe, put on the headset and looks at the big screen in front of them. The latest places that you've been to will come up first, and there are 9 of them. So you're going to have to go to a-- the kid's going to have to really go to a lot of different places to be sneaky about where they've been to recently [laughter] if they want to cover anything up. But they also will be able to see things that are free on the web that have been downloaded into the headset. So if they wanted to go to a different room that-- where they could meet complete strangers and exchange telephone numbers or emails, and then meet on the outside of the metaverse. That way they'll know there's a way to know. Just like there's a way of knowing what your child has looked at most recently. You go into your history tab on your computer. There's a way of knowing. And so it's just about being alert and aware. And it's also about something that we talked about last week. It's having those meaningful, deep, conversations with your children.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:24:31.438

It's not about scaring them. "Oh, you're going to meet awful people in the metaverse." Well, yeah, you could if you go to the other places. But if you're going into an educational setting, and you're using this for the purposes that we've built it for and how you have to access it, you're going to know who you're meeting. And 9 times out of 10, you're going to know who you're meeting. And there's some security with that. But having those conversations with our children, you don't want to scare them, but you do need to make them aware that you know what they could do. And if you know what they could do, and you share that with them, then it's like, "Oh, she's going to be looking for this."

Gretchen Roe: 00:25:20.439

[laughter] Absolutely.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:25:21.067

Okay. Mom is more intelligent, more alert. Dad is more aware of what's going on in the metaverse and technology than I knew as a kid. So it just plants that seed that I'm aware, I'm alert and I care. And that's really the conversation that you need to have with them.

Gretchen Roe: 00:25:43.055

Well, I also think that - and I think we said this last week - when we had those kinds of intentional conversations with our kids, we're allowing them to bridge that gap between being home with us and sitting at the kitchen table and being out in the universe as a whole. And being able to help them plan accordingly, what will their responses be? How will they respond? What are the appropriate ways to respond? Makes a huge amount of intentional difference for kids. And I think if we can make that happen, particularly when we're in the auspices of our own home, it's a much easier transition than out into the general world. I just, ironically, had a conversation with a friend's daughter since we met last Thursday who is looking to go into the healthcare field. And she said, "Oh." She said, "So interesting, Ms. Gretchen, that you should be talking about this." She said, "My first two classes to become a medical assistant will be virtual classes." She said, "I'll learn to take virtual blood pressure. I'll learn to draw virtual blood. I'll learn to do these kinds of things." She said, "And for me, it's to my benefit because I think I want

to do this," but she said, "Who knows the first time I stick somebody with a needle, I made some side I don't want to do it anymore." So I thought that's a child who's forward-thinking. It isn't that what we want all of our kids to be. We want them to develop those thinking skills as part of the intentionality of growing up and--

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:27:29.543

And decision-making skills. Deciding, being able. And isn't it much nicer to have them make mistakes with us around? Rather than getting to college and being exposed for the first time to all kinds of technology and being like, "What the hell, this is like a candy store. Oh my gosh, I didn't know this existed." They don't know how to rein it in. They don't know how to focus. They don't know how to say yes and no, and yes and no, and what to say yes and no to, because in college, in business, in life in general, lots of different positions in the world utilize technology.

Gretchen Roe: 00:28:16.484

You said to me - before I turn my attention to the questions that parents ask - you said something that I think is really important, and I'd like us to redefine this again. You said this is not a class; this is a platform. So can you define those differences for me?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:28:33.366

Yeah. Victory XR labs is a location, it's a platform, it's a place in the metaverse, for students to go in and learn from simulations, learn from simulators, learn from built-in learning opportunities already there for them. You can go in, and they can see a see-through cadaver and they can pull out a heart. And they can put it into a pod, and then they'll learn something about that. It'll either be an auditory-- they can choose auditory or reading something about that heart. And then they can put it back in. And then there's puzzles and there's different games. It's all about gamification of learning as well. We know that when you involve kinesthetics in with your learning, you're going to retain it a lot longer than you just by sitting down and listening to something or watching something. So if you involve your body, and you involve your actions in your learning, there's a lot-- a lot more retention happens. So a greater retention rate. And so labs is focused on that. That is that platform. Our other platform is direct, and that is all asynchronous. So if parents are concerned about their children perhaps meeting up with somebody in the metaverse or inviting someone, or not really understanding how the whole-- they're going to go in and learn pre-formulated learning simulations. They're going to learn from educators that-- well, they're going to learn from the education that we have built into this environment. Now we have direct. That's totally asynchronous.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:30:26.808

There's a hundred different lessons. And within each lesson, you've got two or three or four different lessons within that lesson. So you've got a topic of genetics, DNA, or you've got weather, or you can talk about the food in food world, or you can talk about mechanics. You can talk about Indians, and you can talk about Davy Crockett, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington Carver, or Booker T. Washington. And you'll be able to go to the different places where these individuals lived, and journey, and learn about them through lots of different experiences and lots of different ways too. There's videos, there's hands-on, there's games. All of it involves

learning. All of it involves education. There's teacher support pages that go along with every single one too, so that parents can pick and choose and say, oh, okay, you know what? My kids are really interested in this. So I'm going to pick these four lessons. I'm going to put this in their headset and then upload it into the headset and then they can do this on their own time and learn. And then, you know what? This pretty much-- if I put these together with this, the supplements, this that we've talked about, and then they can write a paper, and you know what? I have a curriculum. It's amazing. And they did it around what their child was curious about. And then Web is literally on the web. It's just, if you want to dissect a frog on the web, you can dissect a frog on the web. It's not as immersive, obviously. It's not as fun or entertaining, but you do have an age restriction when it comes to being in virtual reality and that's something that we haven't talked about yet, and that is your ocular nerve isn't fully formed until you're 9 years old. So children under the age of 9 should not be in headset for longer than 15 minutes at a time.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:32:22.032

So that is something that our company is very aware of and alert to and a lot of our headset companies as well. All of our partners, they all are aware of it as well. So that's why the age restriction is on there for ages 12 and up. Because we want to make sure that your ocular nervous fully formed, you're not going to damage yourself. By having this headset on, and it's so close to your eyes, the screens are so, so close.

Gretchen Roe: 00:32:54.434

I'm somebody who works in the world of special needs most of the time. And I have intentional conversations about vision and what a vital role it plays in education. I'm delighted to hear that you all are aware of that and are being intentional about helping parents navigate through that successfully. And I think you said something really interesting, that it really is, as the parent, my role to figure out, what do I want my student to learn. And that's where we get to collaborate together. That collaboration to me would be really exciting. Of course, now this is coming along 30 days before my youngest graduates, but to be able to collaborate on what would you like to learn about this? How would you like to learn about that? And develop those kinds of curricula in an affirmative way to me seems really exciting.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:33:47.945

Yeah, yeah. And that motivates the children to want to learn more too. If you focus on what their intentions are, and yes, they're going to have to learn certain things along the way. I mean, it's just some states require certain things to be taught. Some states require different curriculums to be addressed or different topics to be addressed. Others are like, you know what? You're the homeschooling family. Do you think. I respect that. Our company respects that. That's why we don't take over the classroom for you. It's yours. It's a platform. It's not a class. It's not something where you're going to go in and sign up for some other teachers. Some other individual to come in and teach your child. That's not what it's about. It's about offering an opportunity for your child to come into this space and explore their curiosities as many times as they want to. And if they want to do a chemistry lab, that's awesome. Just go in and do the chemistry lab. If they break a beaker, yes, it will fall to the ground. It will break, but you know what? You get a new one. And you're not out any money. And if they want to dissect the frog

over and over and over again, okay, dissect the frog over and over and over again. It doesn't cost you anything else. And mom doesn't have to clean it up, and grandma doesn't have to come over and go, oh, why is the gut in the fridge? So you don't have to worry about it.

Gretchen Roe: 00:35:26.815

That reminds me back in the day when my kids were growing up, my friends would come over to their house and say, "Don't open the freezer because bugs are going to fall out of it. Because my husband, the little entomologist that he was, loved to have all kinds of things for the kids to examine. So he would find [inaudible] and it would end up in the freezer. And we'd be like, "Oh, okay. Sorry about that." [laughter]

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:35:51.262

Yeah. Yep. Been there done that. [laughter]

Gretchen Roe: 00:35:58.118

Well, I can't believe I want to turn my attention to some of the questions that some parents have asked about this. So if I was a parent who was seeking to incorporate virtual reality into my homeschool, what could I expect? To incorporate a class and see how it goes, and then expand that learning capacity, or would you say-- would you suggest that I structure multiple endeavors simultaneously?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:36:31.108

That's a very good question. And I would say that you don't want to overdo when you are starting out with anything. Oh, I have this great curriculum. Oh, we're going to dive into it all at once, and the kids-- and you spend \$500 on this. And you open up the first book and you're reading it to your children, and they're like [inaudible] oh, my gosh. What did I just do? They might not like it. Although I have not heard that about virtual reality very much, I will say. And if you get queasy, if you get seasick, you might have a little bit of an issue in virtual reality. That's where the web comes in. Because you can still have some of the same offerings, and we're building more all the time. So that you'll be able to have more and more offerings on the web utilizing that for some children too-- again, the younger ones, they can do the web. While Susie and Becky are doing in-headset together, and they're learning chemistry, or maybe they're learning cell diffusion. So that is a way for that to happen. You can use it in a lot of different ways too. You can use it as a supplement, you could use it to teach the lessons, you could use it to help inspire different curiosities as well. If your kids aren't interested in something, you could take them in to headset, offer a headset opportunity for them.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:38:28.365

Whether it's through the direct or whether it's through our labs or whether it's on the Internet through the web. Just offer it to them and see how they feel about it. And if they want to explore it more, then you can dive into other curriculums, bring those in, supplement. I mean, the one thing that you can't do in the metaverse is write. I mean, you can, you can type things, and you can use Post-it notes, and you can post different reactions and different statements. And I taught a whole lesson on how to write a 5 paragraph essay in the metaverse. But you're not

going to sit down and write that 5 paragraph essay in the metaverse. So you still need to be able to, when you come out of an experience, when you come out of one of these places. Again, not classes, but an experience. So when you come out of an experience or a location or-- yeah, one of the educational experiences in direct, then you can have them write about it. Have them support what they've interacted with on paper. And then you're crossing your curricular attention too, which I love to do. I loved being able to talk about one thing, but then also bring in math around that and bring in science around that topic and bring in-- I was so focused on unit studies is how my kids were raised, on unit studies. I developed so many units studies and we just had a blast, but every single subject was focused on that one topic.

Gretchen Roe: 00:40:12.061

That's great. What I find fascinating about this is the potential to be able to enter your child's world because technology for kids in this day and age is ubiquitous. I'm still at the age where sometimes technology fails me and I'm going, "Now I know how-- you should know how to do this." I mean, I have a college degree. So why is this not working? But it almost seems as though this younger generation is-- they're so used to it, being able to enter into their world a little bit. So this is kind of like-- I remember sitting next to one of my kids who was very absorbed in Minecraft, and him showing me this world he had built. And in all honesty, he could have flipped that upside down and it would have made just as much sense to me. But to be able to have this kind of environment where I would have the opportunity to understand, but also guide his further development and understanding to me is a very exciting opportunity here, so. Tell me some of the things that you have heard from some of the kids who have participated. Tell me some of the explorations that you've heard kids craft.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:41:27.393

Oh, gosh. Well, kids go in and they-- I can just say that their reactions to the experiences because the kids crafting things in here is going to happen. It hasn't been built yet. We're in the process of doing that. So we're in the process of building something that's going to be amazing. And children are going to have a lot more flexibility with their curiosity. They're going to be able to select from different things that they can bring in and explore on their own. And so I don't want to talk too much about it until it's actually out, but anything that we come out with over the next year, if parents out there are interested and curious about purchasing any of these bundles, anything that we develop over this next year will-- you'll have access to it. It just goes into your bundle. It's good for a year. Your subscription is good for a year. So we are constantly building and creating. So it's going to be a lot. In a year from now, it's going to be just mind-blowing. Amazing. Right now, it already is, but the technology is just soaring. So but the students love it. They think it's fun. They think it's cool. They're like, "Oh, I actually was flying in an airplane today. And then I had to learn about the whole engineering concept behind the airplane. And then you know what? I really liked engineering. So then I went and I learned about Ferris wheels." And, "Oh, I really liked that. So then I went to another lesson that they had.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:43:25.968

And I learned about the engineering because it said engineering. So then I went to the Great Wall of China. Well, that wasn't like something that I could go, but it's like to be on a ride or

anything. But I went to the Great Wall of China today. And I learned that engineering is incorporated with the Ferris wheel. It's incorporated with flight technology. It's incorporated with building a wall. I didn't realize that engineering could be so many different things. I just thought engineering was building a building."

Gretchen Roe: 00:44:02.946

Sure. I'm thinking about one of my friend's children who is just now graduating college, and he took his love of amusement park rides and tailored his engineering degree that he is going to be a roller coaster designer.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:44:27.173

That's fantastic.

Gretchen Roe: 00:44:28.577

To me, can you imagine being able to explore something like that? Gee, I think I'd really like to design roller coasters. I think you and I laughed about this. Giving kids the opportunity to explore in the virtual world what they think they might want to do in the adult world is an enormous benefit because what if you think you really want to, as you said last Thursday, be a welder, and then you get in there and go, "Oh, this really is not what I thought it was. This is not really what I want to do."

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:44:57.569

Yeah. Yeah. And what a gift, right? What a gift you're giving to your children, the opportunity to have that information available to them earlier than a failure.

Gretchen Roe: 00:45:14.435

So one of our parents had asked, "So what does this mean for developments in education?" And I know Kathleen, we talked about using drone technology now as you had said in search and rescue and unfortunately, in warfare and in studying migratory species and things like that, using virtual reality. So before you go to college and major in pre-med, you can see if maybe your idea of being a surgeon is really what you want to do in those kinds of things. What are some other ways that parents who have kids still at home could use this in an affirmative way to explore their children's professed desires? And one of the ways I'm thinking of is we brought this up about marine biology last week. So can you help maybe have a parent fit themselves in the frame for what that might look like?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:46:18.082

What does this mean for the development of education? It means that technology is going to be more predominant in education. It means that we need to be alert and aware to how the technology is being implemented to make sure that the technology is being used for good. Of course, in every scenario, you can always use technology for bad. Let's focus on the good. Let's focus on how we can use this to our benefit and to the benefit of society in general. And that is really in the development of education, it's something that is going to be at the forefront, for sure. I mean, it already is becoming that way. We have over a hundred university partners. So

it's happening. [laughter] And it's something that, as far as education goes, and the development of it, it is something that everyone needs to be alert and aware to because there are different ways to implement it. And going back to your question, Gretchen, as far as exploring a different field prior to getting into college or trying to going into college and having a failure, right? It's like, "Oh, gosh, I got into nursing school, but to University of Tennessee. And I'm in their nursing program. Oh, it's so exciting." Okay, that's great. Day three, "I can't hurt people. I can't reset a bone. I didn't realize that I was going to have-- I might have to do that. So I can't do this. Everything that they've worked for has been getting into that goal and then all of a sudden, they fail.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:48:15.156

And that's what I say when I say failure, it's like, okay, now that goal has been squashed. So what are they going to do? If we bring in virtual reality early on and we allow our children the opportunity to explore different crafts, different fields, different topics in different ways then we're giving them the gift of insight to the world around them and we're also-- one of the things that is also available in the direct is job shadowing. So if they wanted to do a job shadow of a project manager, go into headset and see what it's like. For a pipe fitter, go into headset and see what it's like. For an HVAC person, go into headset and see what their day's like. An ironworker, a mason, we have all of those available and they're under the job shadowing. So allowing children that opportunity to explore those different things in all kinds of different ways, okay, you might want to go there too if you have-- or maybe you know someone maybe they can call. Maybe you could call a facility and they would have somebody come and speak to the homeschool co-op or to their pod or just to the individual. Just ask and answer questions, interview people. But wouldn't it be fun to be able to job shadow? And in some of those situations, you're not going to be able to job shadow because it's not safe and it's against OSHA regulations. So now you can. Now you can. You can do that. And you don't have to-- it doesn't have to be on a 2D screen where you're just watching something. You can go in and you can look around and you can look at the building that they're working on and then you can see what they're welding right in front of you. It brings it into a different perspective.

Gretchen Roe: 00:50:13.350

It's fascinating to me because the application here, for me, is if you have that child who's like, "I don't know what I want to do." What a marvelous environment to get them to explore what they might want to do. I think of a friend of mine of my eldest daughter who went off to college absolutely certain she wanted to major in marine biology until she got into her 300-level courses and went, "I don't like this at all." She was two and a half years into that gig and then had to say, "Now I need to step back and think of what I want to do." And particularly, I think, in this financial environment, we need to guide our kids so that they're not just going off to the college experience to have a college experience but [inaudible] in the decisions that they make.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:51:05.869

Yes. When you're paying \$48,000 a year or more for a college education for your child, you don't want-- you want to try to eliminate as many [oopses?] as possible. They're going to be [oopses?] and that is part of college, exploring, and a lot of colleges and universities are getting

smart about that and they're having kids come in and their freshman year they're saying, "Okay, are you interested in this? Okay, we're going to plunk you in one of those classes right now, your freshman year. And then we're going to see if you like it. If you don't like it, guess what? It's okay because you've got three and a half years to go. So you haven't made that commitment yet."

Gretchen Roe: 00:51:50.935

I was talking about this conversation with one of my son's classmate's mother. Can we connect all those dots? Yes. So this mom said that her daughter had the opportunity to tour a couple of colleges virtually And she was able to take a list of 10 and narrow it down to 3 that she really wanted to see because 2 of those had virtual tours. And I think that, to me, is--

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:52:19.733

A lot of them have virtual reality tours now-- well, some of them have virtual reality tours now. One of them, in particular, we partnered with New Mexico State University. And we built digital twins. So we built a digital twin in the metaverse of our university partners so students that are distance learners can go into a headset and meet on campus in a lab or they can meet in their quad or they can meet in whatever or a classroom, whatever. But they're meeting there, even though one is in South Africa, one is in Ethiopia, one is in France, one's in Sweden, one's in the United States. Okay. You can meet anybody physically present in the metaverse, virtually physically present in the metaverse, so.

Gretchen Roe: 00:53:24.009

[inaudible] believe this conversation is all the way at the top of the hour again. What would you say is a good takeaway or two or maybe three for a parent to have now that we've sort of given them a little bit of a vision? What do they need to do next? What would you recommend your advice be to them going forward? How do they explore further?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:53:49.805

Well, first, go to the website. Do your research. Ask questions to others. Go on to Facebook groups and ask, "Has anybody utilized virtual reality?" There is a difference between virtual learning and virtual reality learning. So that's first and foremost. Two, something to be aware of, virtual learning is when you're learning on your computer via Zoom or via some other platform, that way. But virtual reality, you actually are going into a sixth depth of field environment. And you're in that space. And you can be present alone or you can be present with others. You could have an educator in there with you or you can just let your own curiosities lead you. And that is probably the best thing ever for kids to be able to do is allow their curiosities to blossom and grow and flourish in this space. And I would also say keeping in touch with one another, too, is huge when you're a military family and you're moving around and your kiddos have developed these relationships with other kiddos their age and they're used to learning every Friday in a coop together and then all of a sudden, "Oh, you know what? We got to go here or we got to go here or we got to go there. Let's stay connected." You know what?

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:55:40.385

On Friday now, I'm going to go to my coop in my new state and meet new people, but on

Wednesday afternoons or on Tuesday mornings, I'm going to go in a headset and I'm going to meet so and so in a headset that I used to go to school with, I used to go to coop with. And we're going to just have fun. We're just going to play. Honestly, 100% is that my biggest takeaway for all of this and what I'm so excited about the metaverses and so excited about virtual reality, we have the opportunity to bring fun and gaming, body usage, kinesiology, kinesthetics into learning again. When you have a child and you are-- when a baby is born-- I say this all the time, but it is so true. When a baby is born, you have this child, and how do they learn? They beat a wooden spoon against a bowl. They beat a wooden spoon against a metal bowl, against a plastic bowl. They learn the difference. They hear the difference. They see the difference. They feel the difference when it flips over. And then they put it on their heads. Well, what does it sound like when I beat it now? They're learning through experience. They're learning through fun and engagement. And then all of a sudden, at the age of four or five, we're putting them in a desk. And we're asking them to listen to lectures. And we're asking them not to move, not to engage, not to explore or experience.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:57:11.792

I'm against that. I think kids need to have that experiential, exploratory learning opportunities all the way through high school. I think we take it away from the brain way too early. That's how the brain is born to learn. Why are we taking it away so early? Why do we do that? It's because we're still on the 200-year-old method of education. And it needs to go. We need to look at how the brain learns again. We need to explore that and study that more, bring that back into this scenario, bring that back into focus, and really attend to the child again. And not so much how much does the teacher know? That is also waning because of the availability of the Internet. You can ask the Internet anything. Google it, Siri it, whatever. Don't say anything. [laughter] So you can ask questions. And that's the great thing. You want to be asking questions. You want to ask them the right way. You want to ask them to the right people. And you want the right answers. I get that. We all want that for our children. But we want to do it in a fun way that our kids are not bored of learning, they want to learn more, they want to stay learners, they want to love learning so much that they want to continue to learn throughout their lives and not ever look at anything like, "Oh, I have to learn something new to do this job?" No. "I get to learn something new to do this job? That's cool."

Gretchen Roe: 00:58:52.156

Yep. And you just hit on one of the most important things, I think, in academics. And that is, it's not that we have to. It's that we get to. And that makes all the difference in the world. I want to thank you so much for joining me today. This is Gretchen Roe for the Demme Learning Show. Thank, all of you, for joining us today, those of you who joined us live and those of you who will watch this recording. You can find the show notes and watch the recording at DemmeLearning.com/Show or on our YouTube channel. Be sure to review, follow, subscribe wherever you may be hearing this. And we look forward to your joining us again very soon. Kathleen, thanks again for your time.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:59:31.515

Thank you.

Gretchen Roe: 00:59:32.073

I look forward to talking to you soon. Take care.

Kathleen Ouellette: 00:59:34.183

Thank you.

[music]