Who was Marshall McLuhan and what were his beliefs? Marshall McLuhan was born in Canada in 1911 and died in 1981. He was a highly religious man. McLuhan was educated at the university of Manitoba in Canada and then at Cambridge in England. He became a professor of English and was appointed head of the Center for Culture and Technology. His focus was on technology and the medium that massaged our brains. He looked at the future as highly perceivable and placed the main significance of a message in its medium and not its content therefore the phrase “the medium is the message.”

McLuhan viewed tools and inventions as extensions of us. Tools became extensions of our hands and transportation became extensions of our feet. If this is true then media became an extension of our mind and “Christ, after all is the ultimate extension of man” (page 262). In a Playboy interview, McLuhan said: “My work is designed for the pragmatic purpose of trying to understand our technological environment and its psychic and social consequences. But my books constitute the process rather than the completed product of discovery; my purpose is to employ facts as tentative probes, as means of insight, of pattern recognition... I want to map new terrain rather than chart old landmarks...” (page 236). McLuhan was not trying to promote media but instead was trying to make society see the overpowering effects of the media and possible be held more responsible for these effects.

The idea of subconscious effects of the medium and its powers of hypnosis would be McLuhan’s outstanding points to make. Technology in itself is not good or bad but instead it is how we use it that gives it value. What medium has authority is your choice. Community styles are changed by the technology we use to interact. Our natural response to media is not to trust what
we learn unless it comes from the technology that we have given authority. We only give the media the authority that it deserves. I believe an example of this would be: During hurricane Lili the news reporter was talking about the clean up process from the previous hurricane, Isadore. She said New Orleans had cleaned out the storm drains and the sweirs lines. When she had finished the report she turned to the reporter next to her and asked what were sweirs lines. His comment was he did not know but she had said it with such conviction that it must exist and it must have been cleaned out. Later in the story they realized that the teleprompt should have read storm drains and sewage lines. The media of television has its place in authority of news and therefore this cleanup process must have happened. The media of television is the supplier of information but the technology of television is the message. McLuhan states, “The next medium, whatever it is - it may be the extension of consciousness - will include television as its content, not a its environment, and will transform television into an art form.” (page 296).

McLuhan said “Before the invention of the phonetic alphabet, man lived in a tribal culture where all the senses were balanced and simultaneous. This was a closed world, dependent on the spoken word for information, so tribal man was more spontaneous.” “Literacy propelled man for the tribe, and replaced communal interplay with visual values and a fragmented consciousness.” Through technology we have become a “Global Village.” Playboy asked, “Are you talking about global telepathy?” McLuhan answered, “Precisely. Already, computers offer the potential of instantaneous translation of any code or language into any other code or language. If a data feedback is possible through the computer, why not a feed-forward of thought whereby a world consciousness links into a world computer.”(page 262).
To McLuhan, what is a problem in education is students experience life and that educates them for adaptation to the changing world around them but schools remain set in the traditions of a prior times. McLuhan said, "The youth of today are not permitted to approach the traditional heritage of mankind through the door of technological awareness. This only possible door for them is slammed in their faces by a rear-view mirror society.... We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future." McLuhan makes the point that the changing world for adults with neither its electric-speed information nor the out-of-date educational system is a fitting educational setting for the child growing up today. He says there is too much to learn by traditional methods. He emphasizes the significance of involvement in instructional practices. “The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive 'outside' world created by new informational media. Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery - to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms.” (McLuhan, 1967). Education continues to entertain but information is education.

I agree with McLuhan, that education needs to change with the world around us. We do tend to teach in an old-fashion set pattern instead of growing and changing with the world around us. Even when we do try new technology we must be careful of the authority that we give it. We know the Internet is not always truthful but the students still use it as a source of information. Change is hard, truth is subjective and education is an everyday all the time process.