

## P21 Framework Definitions

To help practitioners integrate skills into the teaching of core academic subjects, the Partnership has developed a unified, collective vision for learning known as the Framework for 21st Century Learning. This Framework describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies.

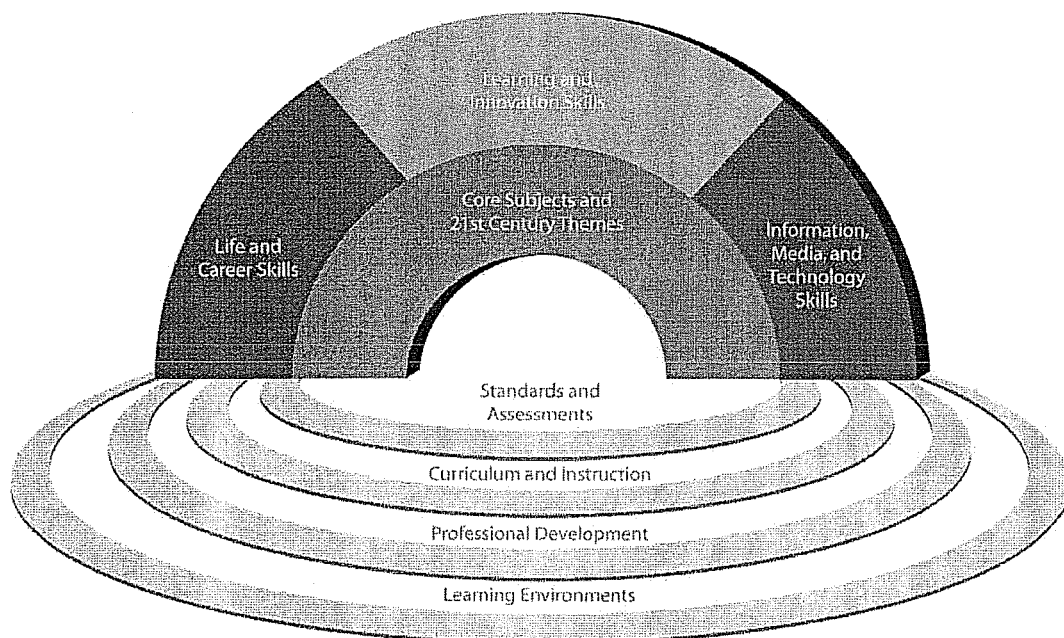
Every 21st century skills implementation requires the development of core academic subject knowledge and understanding among all students. Those who can think critically and communicate effectively must build on a base of core academic subject knowledge.

Within the context of core knowledge instruction, **students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration.**

When a school or district builds on this foundation, combining the entire Framework with the necessary support systems—standards, assessments, curriculum and instruction, professional development and learning environments—students are more engaged in the learning process and graduate better prepared to thrive in today's global economy.

**While the graphic represents each element distinctly for descriptive purposes, the Partnership views all the components as fully interconnected in the process of 21st century teaching and learning.**

21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems



## 21st CENTURY STUDENT OUTCOMES

The elements described in this section as “21st century student outcomes” (represented by the rainbow) are the knowledge, skills and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century.

### **CORE SUBJECTS AND 21st CENTURY THEMES**

Mastery of **core subjects and 21st century themes** is essential for all students in the 21st century. Core subjects include:

- English, reading or language arts
- World languages
- Arts
- Mathematics
- Economics
- Science
- Geography
- History
- Government and Civics

In addition to these subjects, we believe schools must move to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also promote understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving **21st century interdisciplinary themes** into core subjects:

#### **Global Awareness**

- Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues
- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts
- Understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages

#### **Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy**

- Knowing how to make appropriate personal economic choices
- Understanding the role of the economy in society
- Using entrepreneurial skills to enhance workplace productivity and career options

#### **Civic Literacy**

- Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes
- Exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels
- Understanding the local and global implications of civic decisions

### **Health Literacy**

- Obtaining, interpreting and understanding basic health information and services and using such information and services in ways that enhance health
- Understanding preventive physical and mental health measures, including proper diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance and stress reduction
- Using available information to make appropriate health-related decisions
- Establishing and monitoring personal and family health goals
- Understanding national and international public health and safety issues

### **Environmental Literacy**

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water and ecosystems
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world (e.g., population growth, population development, resource consumption rate, etc.)
- Investigate and analyze environmental issues, and make accurate conclusions about effective solutions
- Take individual and collective action towards addressing environmental challenges (e.g., participating in global actions, designing solutions that inspire action on environmental issues)

## **LEARNING AND INNOVATION SKILLS**

Learning and innovation skills increasingly are being recognized as those that separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those who are not. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future.

## **CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

### ***Think Creatively***

- Use a wide range of idea creation techniques (such as brainstorming)
- Create new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts)
- Elaborate, refine, analyze and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts

### ***Work Creatively with Others***

- Develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work
- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas
- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes

### ***Implement Innovations***

- Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur

## **CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

### ***Reason Effectively***

- Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation

### ***Use Systems Thinking***

- Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems

### ***Make Judgments and Decisions***

- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis
- Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes

### ***Solve Problems***

- Solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways
- Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions

## **COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION**

### ***Communicate Clearly***

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade)
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priori as well as assess their impact
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (including multi-lingual)

### ***Collaborate with Others***

- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member

## **INFORMATION, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS**

People in the 21st century live in a technology and media-suffused environment, marked by various characteristics, including: 1) access to an abundance of information, 2) rapid changes in technology tools, and 3) the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. To be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media and technology.

### **INFORMATION LITERACY**

#### ***Access and Evaluate Information***

- Access information efficiently (time) and effectively (sources)
- Evaluate information critically and competently

#### ***Use and Manage Information***

- Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand
- Manage the flow of information from a wide variety of sources
- Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information

### **MEDIA LITERACY**

#### ***Analyze Media***

- Understand both how and why media messages are constructed, and for what purposes
- Examine how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors
- Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of media

#### ***Create Media Products***

- Understand and utilize the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions
- Understand and effectively utilize the most appropriate expressions and interpretations in diverse, multi-cultural environments

### **ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) LITERACY**

#### ***Apply Technology Effectively***

- Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information
- Use digital technologies (computers, PDAs, media players, GPS, etc.), communication/networking tools and social networks appropriately to access,

manage, integrate, evaluate and create information to successfully function in a knowledge economy

- Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information technologies

## **LIFE AND CAREER SKILLS**

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills.

### **FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY**

#### ***Adapt to Change***

- Adapt to varied roles, jobs responsibilities, schedules and contexts
- Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities

#### ***Be Flexible***

- Incorporate feedback effectively
- Deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
- Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions, particularly in multi-cultural environments

### **INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION**

#### ***Manage Goals and Time***

- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria
- Balance tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) goals
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently

#### ***Work Independently***

- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight

#### ***Be Self-directed Learners***

- Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise
- Demonstrate initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level
- Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process
- Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress

### **SOCIAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS**

#### ***Interact Effectively with Others***

- Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner

#### ***Work Effectively in Diverse Teams***

- Respect cultural differences and work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values
- Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work

## **PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### ***Manage Projects***

- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressures
- Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result

### ***Produce Results***

- Demonstrate additional attributes associated with producing high quality products including the abilities to:
  - Work positively and ethically
  - Manage time and projects effectively
  - Multi-task
  - Participate actively, as well as be reliable and punctual
  - Present oneself professionally and with proper etiquette
  - Collaborate and cooperate effectively with teams
  - Respect and appreciate team diversity
  - Be accountable for results

## **LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY**

### ***Guide and Lead Others***

- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal
- Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal
- Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness
- Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power

### ***Be Responsible to Others***

- Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind

## **21st CENTURY SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

The elements described below are the critical systems necessary to ensure student mastery of 21st century skills. 21st century standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, professional development and learning environments must be aligned to produce a support system that produces 21st century outcomes for today's students.

### **21st Century Standards**

- Focus on 21st century skills, content knowledge and expertise

- Build understanding across and among core subjects as well as 21st century interdisciplinary themes
- Emphasize deep understanding rather than shallow knowledge
- Engage students with the real world data, tools and experts they will encounter in college, on the job, and in life; students learn best when actively engaged in solving meaningful problems
- Allow for multiple measures of mastery

### **Assessment of 21st Century Skills**

- Supports a balance of assessments, including high-quality standardized testing along with effective formative and summative classroom assessments
- Emphasizes useful feedback on student performance that is embedded into everyday learning
- Requires a balance of technology-enhanced, formative and summative assessments that measure student mastery of 21st century skills
- Enables development of portfolios of student work that demonstrate mastery of 21st century skills to educators and prospective employers
- Enables a balanced portfolio of measures to assess the educational system's effectiveness in reaching high levels of student competency in 21st century skills

### **21st Century Curriculum and Instruction**

- Teaches 21st century skills discretely in the context of core subjects and 21st century interdisciplinary themes
- Focuses on providing opportunities for applying 21st century skills across content areas and for a competency-based approach to learning
- Enables innovative learning methods that integrate the use of supportive technologies, inquiry- and problem-based approaches and higher order thinking skills
- Encourages the integration of community resources beyond school walls

### **21st Century Professional Development**

- Highlights ways teachers can seize opportunities for integrating 21st century skills, tools and teaching strategies into their classroom practice — and help them identify what activities they can replace/de-emphasize
- Balances direct instruction with project-oriented teaching methods
- Illustrates how a deeper understanding of subject matter can actually enhance problem-solving, critical thinking, and other 21st century skills
- Enables 21st century professional learning communities for teachers that model the kinds of classroom learning that best promotes 21st century skills for students
- Cultivates teachers' ability to identify students' particular learning styles, intelligences, strengths and weaknesses
- Helps teachers develop their abilities to use various strategies (such as formative assessments) to reach diverse students and create environments that support differentiated teaching and learning
- Supports the continuous evaluation of students' 21st century skills development



- Encourages knowledge sharing among communities of practitioners, using face-to-face, virtual and blended communications
- Uses a scalable and sustainable model of professional development

### **21st Century Learning Environments**

- Create learning practices, human support and physical environments that will support the teaching and learning of 21st century skill outcomes
- Support professional learning communities that enable educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 21st century skills into classroom practice
- Enable students to learn in relevant, real world 21st century contexts (e.g., through project-based or other applied work)
- Allow equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies and resources
- Provide 21st century architectural and interior designs for group, team and individual learning
- Support expanded community and international involvement in learning, both face-to-face and online

## **About the Partnership for 21st Century Skills**

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a national organization that advocates for the integration of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication into the teaching of core academic subjects such as English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics.

The Partnership and our member organizations provide tools and resources that help facilitate and drive this necessary change.

Learn more and get involved at <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>.

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