



State Standards for the 21st Century

PARTNERSHIP FOR
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

THE CASE FOR 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION:

The success of US education in the 21st century depends upon student acquisition of 21st century skills because:

- 1 Education is changing.** We can no longer claim that the US educational results are unparalleled. Students around the world outperform American students on assessments that measure 21st century skills. Today's teachers need better tools to address this growing problem.
- 2 Competition is changing internationally.** Innovation and creativity no longer set US education apart. Innovators around the world rival Americans in breakthroughs that fuel economic competitiveness.
- 3 The workplace, jobs and skill demands are changing.** Today every student, whether he/she plans to go on to a 4-year college, trade school or entry-level job, requires 21st century skills to succeed. We need to ensure that all students are qualified to succeed in work and life in this new global economy.

21st century skills are the skills students need to succeed in work, school and life.

They include:

- Core subjects (as defined by NCLB)
- 21st century content: global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy and health and wellness awareness
- Learning and thinking skills: critical thinking and problem solving skills, communications skills, creativity and innovation skills, collaboration skills, contextual learning skills and information and media literacy skills
- Information and communications technology literacy
- Life skills: leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction and social responsibility

WHY ARE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

Standards that reflect content mastery alone do not enable accountability and measurement of 21st century skills. And without a system of measurement, it is impossible to integrate these skills effectively into classroom instruction or monitor whether students have mastered the skills necessary for success in life and work today.

WHAT ARE STANDARDS THAT INCORPORATE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS?

- Typically, 21st century skills standards are existing content standards that have been revised to include skills like critical thinking, problem solving and information and communications technology (ICT) literacy.
- Additionally, new standards for 21st century content areas such as global awareness, civic literacy, financial literacy and health awareness are needed.

WHAT DO 21ST CENTURY SKILLS STANDARDS LOOK LIKE?

In West Virginia, all 21st century skills gaps in standards and objectives were identified and addressed. Revisions to existing standards have been completed, and new standards have been proposed. For example, a proposed new standard for ICT literacy states: “The student will access, analyze manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in a variety of forms using appropriate technology skills and communicate that information in an appropriate oral, written and multimedia format.”

Questions you can consider about standards and 21st century skills:

- Are my state education leaders working to evaluate existing state standards and update them to include 21st century skills?

WHAT IS THE PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS?

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a coalition of corporations and organizations that serves as a catalyst to position 21st century skills at the center of US K-12 education by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, communities and government.