



Standards: A 21st Century Skills Implementation Guide



Produced by



**PARTNERSHIP FOR
21ST CENTURY SKILLS**

To succeed in college, career and life in the 21st century, students must be supported in mastering both content and skills. This Implementation Guide presents state leaders, policymakers and/or district and school leaders with assessment tactics and examples to assist in statewide 21st century skills initiatives. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has issued five brief, user-friendly guides, one for each of the P21 support systems:



1. Standards
2. Assessment
3. Professional Development
4. Curriculum & Instruction
5. Learning Environments

It is worth noting that these support systems are not merely ends, but means to a greater goal—to help children develop the cognitive, academic, emotional and physical competencies they need to succeed in 21st century life.

The Partnership recognizes that taking an aligned, comprehensive approach across all five support systems is a significant challenge for all educators. The Implementation Guides have been developed to help support this difficult work. While not every recommendation and example will apply to every state, we hope the resources will help jumpstart efforts to produce more capable, successful 21st century students and citizens.

All 21st century skills initiatives must focus on:

1: Core Academic Subject Mastery

It is important to note that no 21st century skills implementation can be successful without developing core academic subject knowledge and understanding among all students. Students who can think critically and communicate effectively *must build on a base of core academic subject knowledge*. For this reason, core academic subjects are a bedrock component of the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning. All 21st century skills can and should be taught in the context of core academic subjects.

2: 21st Century Skills Outcomes

In addition to core subject mastery, the Partnership asks every state, district and school the following question: are schools helping students become...

- Critical thinkers?
- Problem solvers?
- Good communicators?
- Good collaborators?
- Information and technology literate?
- Flexible and adaptable?
- Innovative and creative?
- Globally competent?
- Financially literate?

To learn more about the Partnership's state initiatives, the Framework or the Implementation Guides, please visit www.21stcenturyskills.org.

Rationale

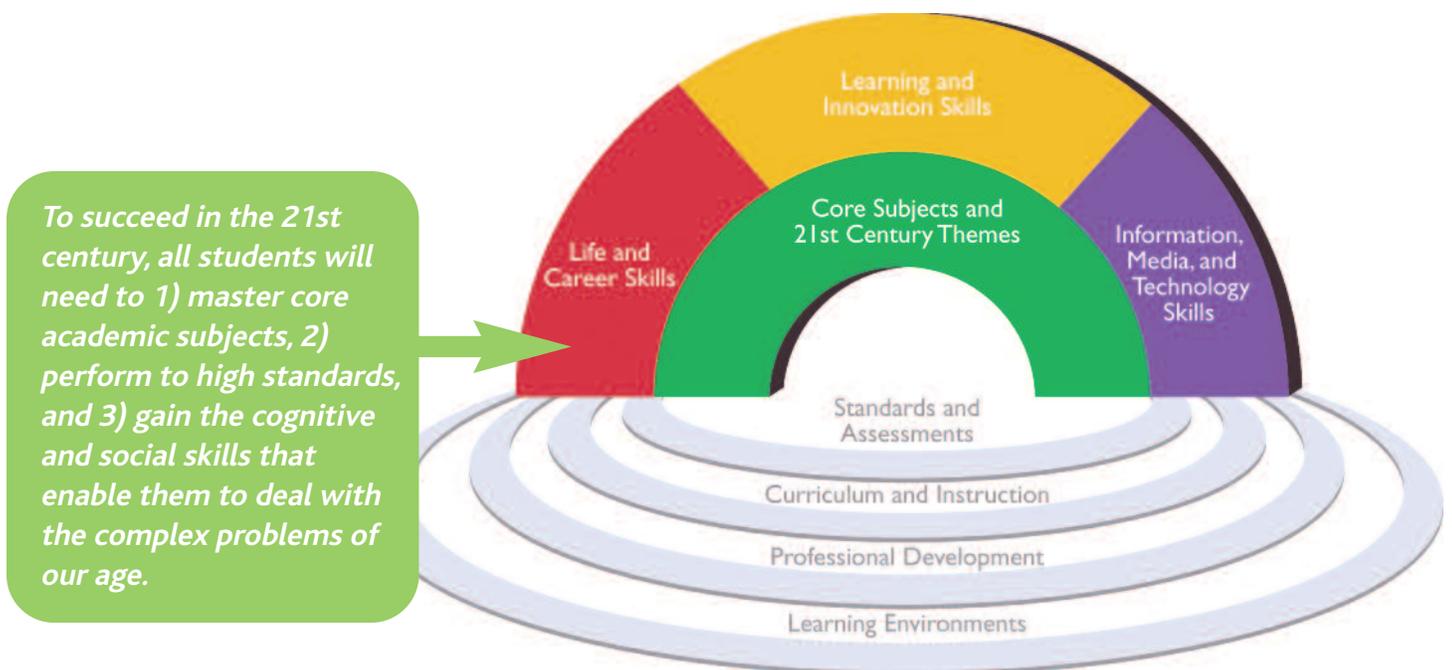
Standards drive the critical elements of the American educational system—the curricula that schools follow, the textbooks students read, and the tests they take. Similarly, standards establish the levels of performance that students, teachers, and schools are expected to meet. Over the past two decades, state agencies and educational groups have paid considerable attention to describing what students need to know but without adequately addressing the more complex thinking and technical skills that will govern 21st century life.

We must measure what we value in order to achieve it. And so we call on states to look hard at current standards and ask, *do these standards really represent what our future citizens should know and be able to do?*

While standards typically define essential academic content knowledge, they should also define the skills that contribute to success in modern life, such as life skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media and technology skills.

Vision

To succeed in the 21st century, all students require a solid foundation in core academic subject mastery. In addition, all students must gain the cognitive and social skills that enable them to deal with the complex problems of our age. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework emphasizes learning and innovation skills, information, media and technology skills and life and career skills, as well as core subjects and 21st century themes.



Guiding Recommendations, Promising Directions

The following action steps can be taken to move states, districts and schools towards ensuring that our nation's students will be prepared for success in the 21st century.

Guiding Recommendations	Promising Directions
<p>#1: Integrate 21st century skills into core academic subject standards. Each subject area should be treated differently, with an eye for thoughtful and authentic ways to incorporate skills like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, information literacy and technology literacy into the standard.</p>	<p>P21 Partner States have developed, or are in the process of developing, 21st century skills standards in core academic subjects. These states include West Virginia, North Carolina, Wisconsin and New Jersey.</p>
<p>#2: Integrate 21st century themes into core subject area standards, where appropriate. Global awareness, financial literacy, health literacy and civic literacy are all requirements in the 21st century and should be intentionally integrated into state standards wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iowa has integrated 21st century skills such as financial literacy, technology literacy, civic literacy and more into state standards and the core curriculum. http://www.corecurriculum.iowa.gov/ • Wisconsin's Financial Literacy Standards set forth the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to understand and make informed decisions for themselves and their families, laying the foundation for financially literate and responsible citizens. http://dpi.state.wi.us/standards/ • ASCD's Healthy School Communities effort serves as a community-building resource for schools and communities that work together to create healthy environments that support learning and teaching. It also provides a space for networking and sharing of resources, ideas, and practices that encourage the ongoing promotion of a coordinated approach to school health programming and policy within school communities. www.healthyschoolcommunities.org • National Health Education Standards (NHES) published by the American Cancer Society emphasizes skill acquisition as one of the foundations for its work. These standards focus on ensuring that students understand concepts such as health promotion and disease prevention, and factors that influence health behaviors.
<p>#3: Make standards inch-wide and mile-deep. Rather than presenting a long list of facts, standards should communicate the essential understandings, or habits of mind, within each subject area. Typical state standards attempt to cover a content area so comprehensively, the essential concepts that produce deep mastery can become lost.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Common Core State Standards Initiative has identified the need for core academic standards to be "fewer, clearer, and higher, to best drive effective policy and practice." http://www.corestandards.org • AASL's Standards for the 21st Century Learner has put forth standards that help educators understand and integrate key 21st century skills across the curriculum, requiring students to 1) inquire, think critically and gain knowledge; 2) draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations and create new knowledge; 3) share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of society; and 4) pursue personal and aesthetic growth. http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/standards.cfm

Guiding Recommendations	Promising Directions
<p>#4: Incorporate 21st century technology literacy and tools where appropriate into standards. Technology increasingly plays a significant role in mastering subject area content knowledge. In the 21st century, a student's ability to conduct relevant science inquiry, mathematical processes and multi-disciplinary projects relies on technology literacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P21 Partner States have integrated (or are in the process of integrating) technology literacy skills into their standards; these include West Virginia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Iowa and Wisconsin. • ISTE National Education Technology Standards for students, teachers and administrators are strongly aligned with 21st century skills. http://www.iste.org
<p>#5: Make standards observable and measurable. To be effective, standards that integrate 21st century skills must allow discrete measurement of these skills; assessment systems must be aligned with any revised state standards that incorporate 21st century skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P21 Partner States: Partner states that have been revising standards in ways to ensure observable, measurable outcomes include West Virginia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Iowa and Wisconsin. • American Diploma Project (Achieve): Achieve has long been a leader in the push to ensure state standards are observable and measurable. http://www.achieve.org/ADPNetwork
<p>#6: Make standards useful and accessible. If the 21st century standards are to be effective, they should reflect realistic practices of today's world. To that end:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic, corporate and other community constituencies should be involved in developing a framework for standards. • States should create curriculum and instruction guides and professional development strategies fully aligned with the standards. • Attention should be given to the format and delivery of the standard document itself. Such documents should be readable, highlight the presence and relevance of 21st century skills, and ultimately, be presented via interactive, web-based formats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Virginia's Teach 21 Web site: Teach 21 is a comprehensive Web resource designed by teachers working collaboratively with the West Virginia Department of Education. The site assists colleagues in planning and delivering effective 21st century instruction in West Virginia classrooms. The site links West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives for every grade and subject to sample lesson plans, formative assessments and a variety of teacher tools. http://wvde.state.wv.us/teach21 • 21st Century Skills Maps: While they are not standards documents, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has worked with the national content groups to create a series of awareness-raising tools that illustrate the intersection between the core academic subjects and 21st century skills. To date, maps have been published in social studies, English language arts, science and geography. http://www.21stcenturyskills.org
<p>#7: Ensure standards are an integrated component of curriculum, assessment and professional development. To be successful, any efforts around standards must flow through the entire education continuum and become fully integrated to every part of the teaching and learning cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Carolina has developed 21st century skills-aligned teacher standards that the State Board of Education adopted in 2007. http://www.ncptsc.org/Standards.htm • West Virginia has aligned professional development with 21st century skills across three levels: the state department of education, district and school leadership, and practitioners. Under the state's direction, the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards (WVCPTS) revised professional teaching standards to assure alignment with the state's 21st century teaching and learning initiative, and developed a reference document that articulates what a 21st century teacher should know and be able to do. https://sites.google.com/a/wvde.k12.wv.us/wv-task-force-on-professional-teaching-standards/

Resources

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has compiled the following list of resources to provide you with background knowledge, models and best practices in the area of standards, as well as a list of key expert contacts.

Achieve, Inc.'s American Diploma Project www.achieve.org

American Association for the Advancement of Science www.aaas.org

American Library Association/American Association of School Libraries
www.ala.org

AASL, Information Literacy Standards
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslissues/aaslinfolit/informationliteracy1.cfm>

International Reading Association www.reading.org

ASCD Healthy School Communities www.healthyschoolcommunities.org
Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools www.civicmissionofschools.org
International Society for Technology in Education www.iste.org

ISTE NETS, National Education Technology Standards <http://www.iste.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=NETS>

National Council for Geographic Education www.ncge.org

National Center for History in the Schools nchs.ucla.edu

National Council for the Social Studies www.ncss.org

National Council of Teachers of English www.ncte.org

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics www.nctm.org
Individuals:

Valerie Greenhill, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Partnership for 21st Century Skills,
<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>

Janis Jensen, World Languages Coordinator, New Jersey State Department of Education,
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>

Jorea Marple, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Curriculum and Instructional Services, State of West Virginia,
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/dci/>

Robert J. Marzano, author of Making Standards Useful, <http://www.marzanoandassociates.com/>

Paul Sandrock, Department of Public Instruction, State of Wisconsin, <http://dpi.wi.gov/>

A complete updated list of available references, including reports, state initiatives, white papers and more are available at www.21stcenturyskills.org.

Free White Paper on 21st Century Skills Standards

Download "21st Century Skills Standards" from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills website at http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/21st_century_skills_standards.pdf.

About the Partnership for 21st Century Skills

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emerged as the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

To learn more about 21st century learning and state actions to date, visit www.21stcenturyskills.org.

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