

What is 21st Century Learning and Citizenship All About?

Education for a Changing World - A Parents' Guide for 21st Century Learning and Citizenship



Why should my family think about 21st century learning?

Today's students will graduate into a world where the demands of our professional, personal and public lives grow more complicated every year.

An innovation and creativity-driven economy: They will enter a job market that rewards creativity, flexible thinking, on-the-job learning and comfort with technology.

A more globally-connected world: Their classmates and co-workers may live in the same zip code or across the globe.

Information overflow: We get dizzying amounts of information every day. It can be hard to figure out what is reliable and how to use it.

An expanded civic life: citizens are active in physical communities, online and through social media, getting involved in local politics as well as global initiatives.

Instead of slowing down, these trends are gaining momentum. As a result, our students need to be more globally aware, better able to navigate the digital world and more engaged as 21st century citizens.

Parents, families and schools play a key role by supporting the development of 21st Century Skills and 21st century citizenship. Providing your child with a 21st century education will give them opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and mindsets they need to be successful in college, career and life.

Key Words and Glossary

21st Century Skills

21st Century Skills are the building blocks to 21st century learning and citizenship. They are essential for success in today's world and include the 4Cs of critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration and creativity and innovation. These skills are developed while students study core subjects.

21st Century Citizenship

Children who are civically literate, globally competent and digitally literate are better prepared for 21st century citizenship.

Civic Literacy

Civic literacy is our knowledge of government, community and the role that we can play as citizens in our neighborhoods and country.

Global Awareness

As defined by the Asia Society and the Council of Chief State School Officers, a globally aware and competent student can: investigate the world, weigh perspectives, communicate ideas, take action and apply expertise to different academic subjects.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy helps students understand their rights and responsibilities online, recognize the benefits and risks, realize the personal and ethical implications of their actions in the digital space, and empowers them to be smart and effective participants in the digital world.

What do kids today need to succeed in college, career and life?

Students must not only be prepared for future education and work, but for their role in the world around them. Each one is equally important to ensuring and shaping a child's successful future.

Preparing children for 21st century learning and citizenship is a team effort. As parents, we support 21st century learning at school while we help to inspire and expand our children's horizons at home. By doing this, we help our children become:

Informed about and ready to respond to local, national and global issues;

Knowledgeable in core academic subjects as well as more complex areas such as the environment, finance, the economy, health and business; and

Able to participate safely, intelligently, productively and responsibly in the digital world.

What are the building blocks for 21st century learning and citizenship?

21st Century Skills are a set of academic building blocks—abilities and ways of thinking—that can help kids thrive as 21st century citizens. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning identifies these skills (or the 4Cs as they are often called) as:

Critical thinking and problem solving,

Communication,

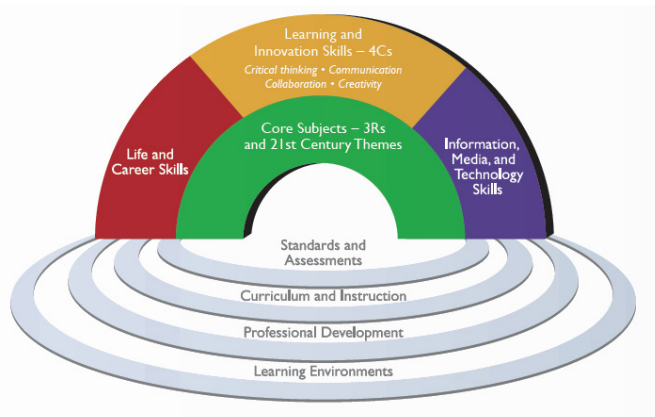
Collaboration and

Creativity and innovation.

As today's students face higher expectations in both school and the workforce, 21st Century Skills help to prepare students for what they will need to know and be able to do in school and college, at work and throughout all aspects of personal and civic life. Students can build these skills by applying them as they learn regular school subjects. And we know that pointing out these skills will actually increase students' grasp of what they're learning, as well their overall engagement in their own education.

P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning

www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework



What can these new ways of learning look like in and beyond the classroom?

Lesson on Persuasive Writing and Communication: Students use a document-sharing to collaborate on their research project on how to confront and stop bullying and create an online poster showcasing their findings. Class blogs allow students to present their projects and get feedback from the entire class.

Language Class: Students connect to pen pals around the world, such as writing in French to students in Senegal and use the time to work on their language skills. Once a month, the students connect with the classroom abroad via videoconference.

Social Studies or Civics/

Government Class: Students learn about historical events such as the 1948 election and the infamous "Dewey Defeats Truman" newspaper headline that announced incorrect results about the presidential contest. To connect classroom learning with other skills, teachers ask students to work in pairs to analyze the role of traditional and social media in recent elections around the world, including those in Egypt and Afghanistan.

Afterschool Program: Students take part in exciting opportunities at their local Boys and Girls Club or 4H where they can learn coding to develop and program websites. Community programs frequently work with small businesses in the surrounding area to help support their web presence.

At Home: Students share what they learned that day. Parents connect class discussions, such as the one on elections, with activities that are going on in their local community. The family makes a plan to volunteer and help register people to vote before the upcoming local elections.

What does a 21st century education look like?

A 21st century classroom looks, sounds and feels different than what you might remember from your own education.

Students often work in teams, tackling projects that deal with real local and global problems in health, the environment, business and more.

Teachers help students to ask tough questions and work through problems – but might not provide all of the answers.

Students get to apply their knowledge, and prove what they know by presenting to their classmates, school or even their community.

In a 21st century education, learning can take place both inside and outside of the classroom. Students make use of new and emerging technologies and online resources—both through self-directed exploration outside of school and guided by a teacher in school.

Readiness for the 21st century must include college, career, AND citizenship. Each one is equally important to ensuring and shaping a child's successful future. We need to support our kids as they learn how to succeed, lead and thrive in the 21st century. Our children need high quality education that inspires them and prepares them for the real-life challenges of today's world.

See our [parent tip sheet](#) for more ideas on how to connect your child's education today, and his or her future tomorrow. (www.p21.org/citizenship/tips)

Real World Example:

Genesee Community Charter School Rochester, NY

Who's Teaching 21st Century Skills:

Genesee Community Charter School in Rochester, New York values the development of a green mindset and asked students to take part in the school's goal of becoming a Green Ribbon School.

How it Works: Teachers work to actively integrate community practices into their lessons and involve the students in broader school activities.

21st Century Skills in Action: As an expansion project for the school was underway, school officials asked students to collaborate on sustainability plans to include in its energy efficiency profile. Students researched the history of urban development, what sustains civilization and about compost, bioreactors and other green schools. As students wrapped on the project, they compiled their themes and findings into a publication that was recast in scripts for a capstone lecture titled: "Growing a Green Mindset."

[See other real world examples here!](#)

(www.p21.org/citizenship/examples)

P21 would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support of this project:



About P21 and National PTA:

P21 recognizes that all learners need educational experiences in school and beyond, from cradle to career, to build knowledge and skills for success in a globally and digitally interconnected world. Representing over 5 million members of the global workforce, P21 unites business, government and education leaders from the U.S. and abroad to advance evidence-based education policy and practice and to make innovative teaching and learning a reality for all. For more information connect with us at www.p21.org and [@P21Learning](https://twitter.com/P21Learning). **National PTA** served as a family engagement adviser on this project. The overall purpose of National PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. www.PTA.org