



# FRAMEWORK FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

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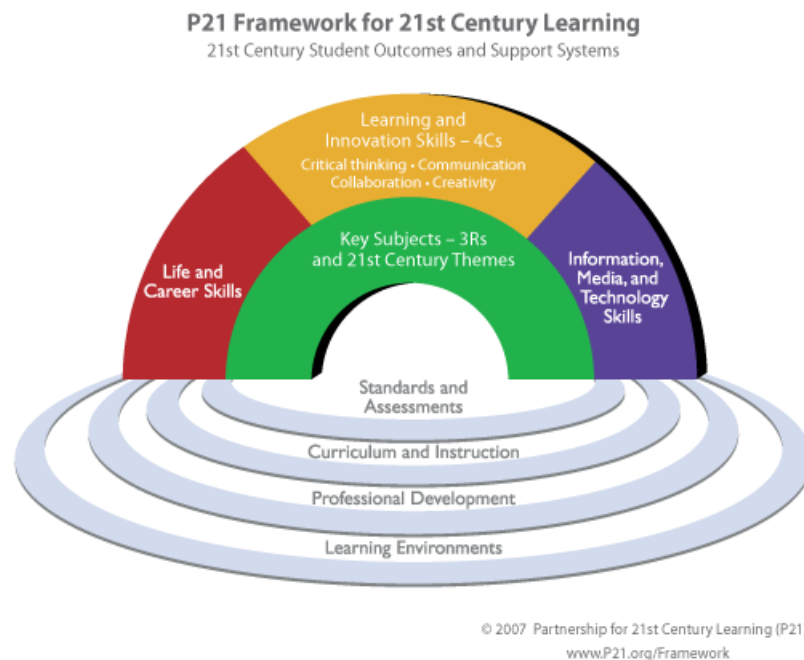
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P21's **Framework for 21st Century Learning** was developed with input from teachers, education experts, and business leaders to define and illustrate the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in work, life and citizenship, as well as the support systems necessary for 21st century learning outcomes. It has been used by thousands of educators and hundreds of schools in the U.S. and abroad to put 21st century skills at the center of learning.

The P21 Framework represents both 21st century **student outcomes** (as represented by the arches of the rainbow) and **support systems** (as represented by the pools at the bottom).



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While the graphic represents each element distinctly for descriptive purposes, P21 views all the components as fully interconnected in the process of 21st century teaching and learning.

The elements described below are the critical systems necessary to ensure 21st century readiness for every student. 21st century standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, professional development and learning environments must be aligned to produce 21st century outcomes for today's students.

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## 21st Century Student Outcomes

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

### 1. Content Knowledge and 21st Century Themes

Mastery of fundamental subjects and 21st century themes is essential for students in the 21st century.

Disciplines 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 beyond a focus on basic competency to promoting understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21st century interdisciplinary themes into curriculum:

[Global awareness](#)

[Financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy](#)

[Civic literacy](#)

[Health literacy](#)

[Environmental literacy](#)

**2. Learning and Innovation Skills:** Learning and innovation skills increasingly are being recognized as the skills that separate students who are prepared for increasingly 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](#)

[Critical Thinking and Problem Solving](#)

[Communication and Collaboration](#)

**3. Information, Media and Technology Skills:** Today we live in a technology and media-suffused environment with: 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 create, evaluate, and effectively utilize information, media, and technology.

[Information Literacy](#)

[Media Literacy](#)

[ICT Literacy](#)

**4. Life and Career Skills:** Today's students need to develop thinking skills, content knowledge, and social and emotional competencies to navigate complex life and work environments. P21's essential Life and Career Skills include::

Flexibility & Adaptability

Initiative & Self Direction

Social & Cross-Cultural Skills

Productivity & Accountability

Leadership & Responsibility

## 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.

### 1. 21st Century Standards

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

Build understanding across and among academic 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

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

Support a balance of assessments, including high-quality standardized testing along with effective classroom formative and summative assessments

Emphasize useful feedback on student performance that is embedded into everyday learning

Require a balance of technology-enhanced, formative and summative assessments that measure student mastery of 21st century skills

Enable development of portfolios of student work that demonstrate mastery of 21st century skills to educators and prospective employers

Enable a balanced portfolio of measures to assess the educational system's effectiveness at reaching high levels of student competency in 21st century skills

Additional resources:

[21st Century Skills Assessment white paper](#)

[Professional Development: A 21st Century Skills Implementation Guide](#)

## **3. 21st Century Curriculum and Instruction**

Teaches 21st century skills discretely in the context of key 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

#### **4. 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 scaleable and sustainable model of professional development

#### **5. 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

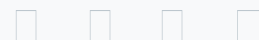
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