## Addressing 21st Century Skills

According to Ohio’s Leadership Development Framework (OLAC, 2013, p.22), within the instruction and learning process it is important that schools ensure that all students combine mastery of the core curriculum with attainment of 21st century skills such as:

* critical thinking and problem solving
* creativity and innovation
* communication and collaboration;
* information and communication technology literacy;
* life skills (e. g., ethics, productivity, self-directed learning);
* 21st century content (e. g., global awareness, economic literacy).

To reinforce the importance of 21st century skills, curriculum strategies have been embedded within the Model Curriculum in Ohio’s New Learning Standards in reading, math, social studies and science. Career Connection Learning Strategies help educators connect student learning to future work. The Career Connections Framework provides an overview for school districts to develop comprehensive plans. A school district Career Connections plan includes strategies across grades PK-12 that prepare all students for their future successes. The guides offer grade-level strategies to educators, families and community members for connecting learning with careers and may be found at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Career-Tech/Career-Connections>.

Ohio’s policies are in line with the assertions of numerous researchers who call for a broad view of curriculum design, one that helps educators understand curriculum as part of a comprehensive assessment and instruction model that improves the quality of teaching and prepares all students with 21st century skills (Ainsworth, 2011; Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006).

Increasing globalization, a large and growing immigrant population, and high dropout rates have convinced many in the United States that the country is in the middle of an economic and societal shift that will dramatically change people’s lives (Hardy, 2007). The skills and competencies set forth in “What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000” reflect the perspective that effective workers are those who can effectively use:

* resources - allocating time, money, materials;
* interpersonal skills - working on teams; teaching others; leading; negotiating; working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds);
* information -acquiring and evaluating data; organizing and maintaining files; interpreting and communicating; using computers to process information;
* systems -understanding social, organizational, and technological systems; monitoring and correcting performance;
* technology -selecting equipment and tools; applying technology to specific tasks; troubleshooting.

Some of the evidence of the need for students to experience a curriculum rich in 21st

century skills comes from international assessments, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). TIMSS and PIRLS 2011 represent the first time the two international assessments, both of which are designed to show achievement growth or decline over time, were conducted concurrently. East Asian countries led achievement in math, science, and reading; and more countries showed increases than decreases over the past decade. The United States was one of only three countries to improve on all international benchmarks. However, there are still substantial gaps between the US and top performing countries.

District and building leadership teams, and teacher-based teams, can assist in ensuring that district curricula include the knowledge and skills outlined in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills materials so that all students are well prepared for the challenges of an increasingly globalized, highly technical, collaborative world. For additional information, go to <http://www.p21.org/>.

**References**

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