

Why 2025?

A Vision for Our Future

What is 2025?

2025 envisions this year's pre-K children approximately 18 years from now, equipped with a Master's degree and prepared to enter the workforce. It is also a time in the future when the economic competition we face as communities and a nation will be exponentially more intense than it is today.

2025 aims to honor the development of our 2002 district Strategic Plan, *Designing the Classroom of the Future*, and to move the Differentiated Instruction, Equity and Equality of Education and *Early Childhood Education* components of the plan forward. 2025 expands and enhances the elements described in the strategic plan by emphasizing a more individualized approach to helping individual students reach their full potential, including pre-K students.

For many decades our country has focused on closing the achievement gap. And while we must continue to lift our lowest performing students, research tells us we need to stretch the students in the vast middle while also challenging the student in the top 10% to perform beyond the advanced learning experiences we currently offer. It is my contention that we can focus on all of our students by stretching and challenging each individual child through the customization and personalization of instruction for a portion of the school day.

What does the 21st century student look like?

Imagine what learning would be like if today's students were more actively engaged in the learning process through the use of interactive technologies in the classroom.

Imagine what learning would be like if schooling were about spending a significant amount of instructional time solving real world environmental and social problems through the use of interdisciplinary, interactive curriculum software.

Imagine what learning would be like if our students were part of an international network of learners interacting with one another and debating about current issues through the use of podcasting, video conferencing, and video streaming.

Imagine designing engaging lessons that incorporate the skills-sets necessary for 21st century success by integrating technological tools embraced by this generation.

Imagine what learning would be like if our 4th through 12th grade level students had multiple program models that enabled them to participate in accelerated learning experiences, allowing them to be stretched and challenged to their fullest potential.

What do businesses want in terms of their workforce in 2025?

The product of education in 2025 must be a critical thinker with the skills to compete in a global perspective and a grasp of what it means to be a good citizen, environmentally aware and involved in the community.

Imagine our students becoming critical thinkers – collaborative, analytical problem-solvers who work in teams; inventors and creators; highly effective multi-lingual communicators with exemplary presentation skills. Imagine instilling in them the passion for lifelong learning.

Will an entire generation of children fail to make the grade in the 21st century economy?

The research of two internationally known educational experts, Alan November and Ian Jukes, indicates that the United States is not producing children who are globally competitive. Both researchers fear our country will ultimately lose its competitive edge in the global economy.

Additionally, Susan Patrick, President and CEO for North American Council for Online Learning, states that the world has made the shift to digital. She provides a simplistic context for us to consider as we engage in the work of creating new teaching models that will be more responsive to the 21st century learner. Ms. Patrick's context to provoke our thinking is as follows:

Today's tools are different. They are fully functional, mobile, wireless, online and connected. **Today's communication is different.** Communication involves critical thinking, self-direction, self-responsibility, and modern tools. **Information is different.** Information is digital, just in time, any time, with any place access. **Students are different.** Students today are online researching for school projects, communicating with friends, blogging, downloading files, creating art and music, and using cell phones to create podcasts. **Learning is different.** The Internet allows for increasing engagement with student-centered learning environments, multi-sensory stimulation, hypermedia, collaborative work, information exchange, publication and creation, inquiry-based learning and self-direction. **Working is different.** Professional geographers rely on data sets and global positioning satellite technologies. Mathematicians use modeling, manipulatives and simulations to work through problems. **Teaching must be different.**

If teaching is to be different, we must include a commitment to professional development for our teachers who are on the front line. We cannot expect professional educators to keep up with societal evolution simply by interacting with the children. We have to commit to providing them with the technological tools and training they need to deliver instruction differently.

What is successful 21st century professional development?

It is necessary, although difficult, to admit that across the United States instruction in today's classrooms still resembles a stand and deliver instructional methodology.

In order to transition our classrooms into an environment in which students own the learning, teachers must have access to information regarding proven and effective pedagogies. According to the National Education Technology Plan, every teacher should be given the opportunity to take online learning courses. Teachers should also have the opportunity to participate in e-learning training. Within our school system, we have resident experts who are effectively utilizing the technology tools available to them to engage the 21st century learners in their classrooms. We must tap into this expertise, develop a cadre of teacher leaders who can train, coach, mentor, and team-teach other teachers who are less comfortable with today's tools.

Ideally, there would be a curriculum technology integration specialist assigned to each school for a minimum of three years to provide on-site support to teachers as they learn to integrate 21st century tools into lesson design and delivery.

Gifted children, children in the vast middles who are meeting grade level expectations, and children who currently find themselves caught in the achievement gap need opportunities to move ahead at their own pace. Research-based programs that provide content rich curriculum, meet state content standards, and offer an individualized learning approach scalable for different learning styles are available for review and implementation.

As a community, we can design and develop customized acceleration models to meet the needs of the diverse learners we serve.

Overcoming the Fear of Change to Ensure the Success of Students

Real change calls for flexibility in our thinking and agility in our methods so that we can proactively adapt to trends as they emerge, rather than reacting to them and risk losing a child who becomes disengaged.

As with any change initiative in education, traditional barriers exist. Those who resist change focus on problems – a lack of adequate financial resources for innovation, technology tools, and utilization strategies for curriculum-technology integration – without searching for solutions. One example of a solution that addresses the financial commitments implicated with change can be found at www.edutopia.org, which provides a list of links to grants for innovative programs in the classroom.

Change initiatives, such as 2025, ask us to step out of our comfort zone, requiring us to explore the endless opportunities available to us and provide our students with the tools and skills necessary to become global citizens.

Reference Document and Websites

- Ashby, Nicole. "Meeting a Critical Need: Foreign Languages, Academic Rigor Help Prepare Virginia Students for Global Marketplace." *The Achiever*. U.S. Department of Education vol. 5, no.4 (2006): 1, 3.
- Bennet, Albert, Ph.D., National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability. "All Students Reaching the Top: High Quality Teaching and Instruction in the Classroom." Naperville, IL, Learning Point Associates. 2004.
- Colangelo, Nicholas; Assouline, Susan G., Miraca; and Gross, U. M. "A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students." West Conshohocken, PA: John Templeton Foundation. 2004.
- Draayer, Donald. "Adding Chinese to Our Language Offerings." *School Administrator* Nov. 2006: 48.
- Early Advantage. Accessed Fall 2006. www.earlyadvantage.com
- ESRI: GPS and Mapping Software. Accessed Fall 2006. <<http://www.esri.com>>
- Friedman, Thomas L. The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century. New York: Farrar, Straus, Reese, and Giroux. 2005.
- Goral, Tim. "There's a Hole in the Bucket." *Converge Magazine* vol. 1, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 37.
- Greifner, Laura. "Panel Says 21st Century Skills Demand Drastic Change." *Education Week* Vol. 25, Issue 30 (2006): 14
- Language Tree. Accessed Fall 2006. www.language-tree.com
- Legler, Ray, Ph.D., ed. "Perspectives on the GAPS: Fostering the Academic Success of Minority and Low-Income Students." Naperville, IL, Learning Point Associates. 2004.
- Marcot, Kathleen W. "Using Technology to Increase Access to Accelerated Learning Opportunities in Four States." U.S. Department of Education Advanced Placement Incentive Program, 2004.
- National Center on Education and the Economy. "Tough Choice or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce." Washington, D.C.: National Center on Education and the Economy. 2006.
- Prensky, Marc. "Listen to the Natives." *Educational Leadership* vol. 63, no. 4 (Dec 2005/Jan 2006): 8-13.
- Rice, Jeffrey, MD. "A New Model for 21st Century Education." *Threshold Magazine*, Winter 2007.
- Springboard Schools. "Making Walk-Throughs More Productive." *The Springboard* vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 5.
- Sullo, Robert A. Activating the Desire to Learn. New York: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. 2007.