What is 21st Century Learning?

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Heidi Hayes Jacobs, author and Columbia University professor frequently stresses that students travel back in time from their 21st century homes and lives to 20th century classrooms. If we reflect on our own experiences as students, it is clear that not much has changed on many classroom environments across the country. But what is a 21st century classroom and why is it important?

Building upon the work of Partnership for 21st Century Education (P21.org) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a 21st century classroom includes the following characteristics:

Students have ample opportunities to Create, Collaborate, Communicate, Critically Think, Persevere, Develop Academic Mindsets, Build Content Knowledge, and Become Global Citizens - often with the purposeful integration of technology allowing them to achieve their goals and experience learning in ways previously inconceivable.

Teachers activate learning, challenging students to solve complex problems, that are authentic, and have multiple solutions through an inquiry based approach. Learning extends well-beyond traditional texts, and demands application, analysis, creation, and evaluation rather than memorization. Students are expected to explain, justify, reflect and revise their solutions, writing, and work.

Students demonstrate their learning through authentic assessments, portfolios, and ongoing formative assessments making the acquisition of requisite skills and knowledge visible. As such, students are engaged in their learning and own their progress.

In sum, 21st century classrooms allow our students to become critical thinkers and informed citizens, who are able to apply their skills in a competitive, global marketplace.