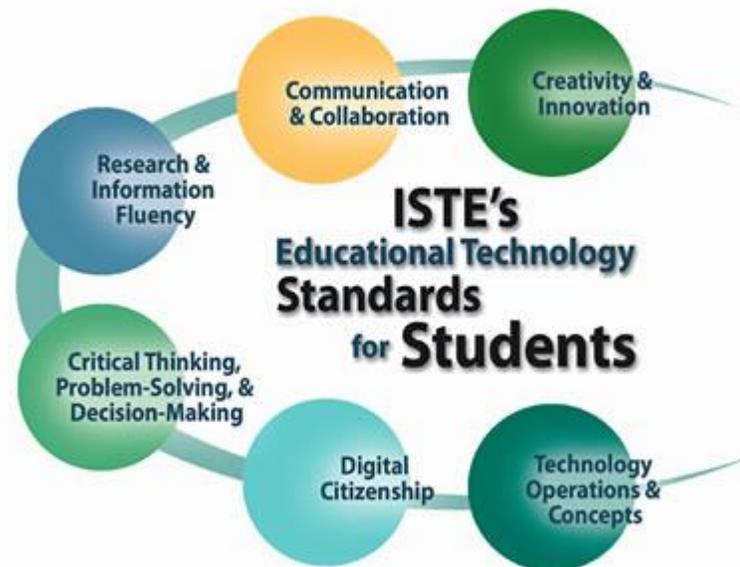


What exactly are 21st Century Skills and why do We Need to Teach Them?

By Marti Ingram



The main four 21st Century Skills are considered the Digital Literacies: **Creating, Communicating, Collaborating,** and **Critical Thinking**. These are the major areas of focus for most teachers, although they are supported immensely by the other 21st Century Skills: **Digital Citizenship** (behaving appropriately and intelligently online); **Technology Operations and Concepts** (knowing how to run and utilize effectively several different technology systems and tools); **Information Fluency** (knowing how to validate resources and search for expert opinions); and **Innovation** (using sourced and validated information to remix and create new ideas).

Simply put, 21st Century Skills are the **content knowledge** and **applied skills** that today's students need to master to thrive in a continually evolving workplace and society. Our students today live a world that has never NOT known an Internet, has never NOT used computers or SmartPhones or iPods, or has never NOT been able to connect instantly with people from around the world. That may be hard for some of us to wrap our brains around, but students today see the world as small, connected, and easily navigated. Information is merely a click away - it is our job to teach them how to navigate this world of continually growing information and data. How do they validate a website? How do they know that what they are reading is true? How can they determine who is an 'expert' and who is not? How can they protect themselves online which searching for answers and commentary? Students want information instantly, and can usually get it. The new job of a teacher is not to hammer rote memorization into students, but to teach students how to ask poignant, driving questions about what

they want to know, and **then** teach them the skills to navigate a sea of information in order to find their answers. We need to teach them how to summarize, remix, and articulate what they have learned to express their knowledge in a new way, and show them how to effectively and intelligently share their learning with a wider, global audience. No longer is it okay to just present information to the teacher or the immediate classroom: students live a world of global collaboration. They want comments and constructive criticism from Australia, London, and Shanghai. And they will get it - we need to teach them how to ask for it without betraying their personal information, and how to respond to one another without being belligerent, rude, or negative.

Their view is not unique: this is also how modern workplaces and companies operate. Business meetings are held intercontinentally via video conference and FaceTime, company employees are not expected to memorize details but ARE expected to be able to find details instantly, and collaboration and creation are done online regardless of the distance between collaborators. Our job is to prepare students to be successful in a world with these demands - and we can't even begin to hypothesize what new demands will be placed upon our students in five or ten years down the road. We have no choice but to embrace technology, not just to teach students *how* to use the tools, but to teach the students how to use technology AS a tool in order to master these 21st Century Skills and be successful in their very exciting futures.

I hope this document gives you a better idea of what the new "21st Century Skills" are and why they are so important. This is *why* the U21C project has been introduced in Crestomere School, and the reason we do what we do at this school. I look forward to seeing all of us grow and learn together – staff, students, parents, and community members all!