

Chapter 1. Introduction and Background

- The current education model in the United States, a relic of the Industrial Age, is increasingly out of touch with the needs of society and the students it serves.
- The traditional model of education—where a teacher imparts knowledge to students through lecture and students recite memorized facts and solve fundamental math and science problems to illustrate comprehension of the information—is no longer appropriate given the context of today’s society.
- The Internet and efficient global communications have fundamentally changed how individuals access information. Today’s generation of students is growing up in an environment where information is available anywhere and anytime on any topic imaginable. They find the methods used by schools in stark contrast with how they learn and interact outside of the classroom.
- In today’s Knowledge Age, there is an emphasis on service and the creation and use of information. Students need to be able to synthesize, analyze, and create information to participate effectively in this era.
- While the advent of the Internet has greatly increased the urgency for a restructured education system, the Internet along with other technological advances and changes to society also provide unprecedented opportunities to move beyond the Industrial Age model of schooling.

Chapter 2. Redefining the Role and Development of Educators

- Learning teams are a crucial component of creating a 21st century learning environment. This is where educators work collaboratively to foster reflective teaching practices as they work together to hone lesson plans, exchange insights about students’ strengths and weaknesses, draw from the expertise each brings to the classroom, provide feedback from fellow educators, and ensure that the needs of the students are met.
- Educators must be able to effectively integrate technology into the learning environment. For this to occur, educators need ongoing support and professional development that provides instruction on how to use technology as part of the curriculum and how to teach students to do the same.
- We are in a transition period during which the picture of “schooling” in the minds of future educators may still be of a 20th century-style classroom, because that is what they’ve been exposed to. Therefore, it is even more important to redraw the picture for these future educators so they are equipped to enter into this century’s learning environment. The structure of the certification program and the manner in which the content is delivered provides the foundation for what future educators will use as their example of learning.

- Current teacher evaluation systems are archaic and ineffective in challenging educators to continually change and adapt to the transforming environment. Evaluations need to be built around clear professional practice standards that encompass curriculum, culture (classroom, family, and community), individualized instruction, and establishing learning relationships (teacher to student and student to teacher). Peer assessments, as part of collaborative and reflective teaching processes, should be included in educator evaluations

Chapter 3. Recommendations

- The focus for student learning must shift from the lower half of Bloom's taxonomy of learning (remembering, understanding, applying) to the upper half, which includes analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Students should be expected to develop these skills in preparation for careers in today's—and tomorrow's—workforce.
- Learning teams must be essential components of the next generation learning culture.
- Educators need to be given the flexibility to use various forms of technology in the learning environment.
- State boards of education need to work with higher education institutions and accrediting entities to reexamine preparation programs to ensure that future educators are entering the workforce with 21st century skills and have the ability to transfer those skills to today's learning environment.
- State educator licensing boards need to redefine licensure and certification to include the demonstration of 21st century skills and broaden the role of professionals and paraprofessionals in the learning environment.
- Beginning educators need to be placed in learning teams as a means of ongoing learning, support, and growth in the profession.
- States and districts need to consistently invest time and resources in developing 21st century skills in their current workforce through intentional, practical professional development that promotes collaboration, reflective practices, and the integration of technology.
- Educator evaluations need to be built around clear professional practice standards that encompass curriculum, culture (classroom, family, and community), individualized instruction, the learning relationship of teacher to student and student to teacher, the expectation of mastery for all, and creating the culture of trust/respect/responsibility.
- It is important for states to look within their own borders to identify best practices of educators, schools, districts, and higher education institutions.