

# Highlights From *21st Century Learning in the Midwest*

Judy K. Stewart, Ph.D.  
President, Taylor Education Consulting, Inc.

May 19, 2008

# Focus and Methodology

- The leap from NCLB proficiency to 21st century readiness requires high school redesign.
- Reviews were conducted of 24 state websites and the District of Columbia's website.
- State-level policy informants in the Midwest were interviewed. Each state was profiled.
- Additional commentary from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and West Virginia was provided.

# Midwest as a Hub

- A review of the seven states' department of education websites reveals:
  - Clearly defined standards and skills for 21st century learning
  - Evidence of supports or plans for teacher and/or administrator professional development
  - Implementation of or discussion about alignment of fiscal support to teacher licensure and student graduation requirements
  - In some cases, 21st century pilot initiatives

# Midwest as a Hub

- A broader scan of 17 states' and the District of Columbia's websites shows a much wider response range.
  - From scant mention of 21st century skills to an online, teacher-designed and directed professional development resource aimed at integrating 21st century content, assessments, and instructional strategies into classrooms

# Where States Find Guidance

- States have adequate guidance in defining the core standards, skills, and capacities students need to fully participate in a 21st century global economy:
  - Partnership for 21st Century Skills (and its 2007 *Framework for 21st Century Learning*)
  - Achieve, Inc. (and its American Diploma Project and Mathematics benchmarks)
  - Learning Point Associates (and its 2003 publication, *enGauge: 21st Century Skills*)
  - ETS (and its 2002 publication, *Digital Transformation, A Framework for ICT Literacy*)

# Where States Find Guidance

- Identifying effective designs to help state leaders move from guidance to implementation, however, may prove more elusive.

# Commentary From President, Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- Perceived “sticking points,” in some instances, to moving forward with a 21st century readiness agenda
  - NCLB
  - Classroom application
- Preoccupation with NCLB hindering progress

# Commentary From President, Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- Ask, “On your current NCLB trajectory, are students developing 21st century skills, and are they getting prepared for 21st century jobs?” If the answer is, “No,” then a complementary 21st century learning initiative is needed.



# Commentary From President, Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- People have trouble envisioning what 21st century learning looks like in the classroom.
- People need to see models of how content and skill can be jointly taught and assessed.
- Showcase examples for educational leaders and schools.

# *Are They Really Ready to Work?* (A 2006 Partnership publication)

- Essential skills for new workers
  - Professionalism
  - Teamwork
  - Oral communication
  - Ethics and social responsibility
  - Reading comprehension
- Slightly less than 24% of employers surveyed rated new entrants with four-year college degrees as having “excellent” basic knowledge and applied skills.

# *Are They Really Ready to Work?* (A 2006 Partnership publication)

- 42% said entry workers with only a high school degree were “deficient” with “significant weaknesses” in written communications, professionalism, and critical thinking.
- Projecting ahead five years, the most important work skills are as follows:
  - Knowing a foreign language
  - Critical thinking
  - Creativity/innovation
  - Making good choices in health and wellness

# Where to Invest?

- Many states desire a better set of tools to talk about the issues.
  - Develop metrics to measure 21st century student outcomes (e.g., globally aware, effective communicators, effective problem solvers).
  - Document what formative assessment of 21st century content and skills looks like in practice.
  - Conduct ongoing surveys of the business community's expectations, needs, and perceptions of entry workers' readiness.
  - Align support systems of assessment, professional development, and standards to produce 21st century outcomes for students.

# Keys to Midwest States' Progress

- Coherent vision
- Alliance building
- Explicit legislation
- Support for research

# References

- Achieve, Inc. (2007). *Mathematics benchmarks: Grades K–12*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 9, 2008, from <http://www.achieve.org/node/966>
- ETS. (2002). *Digital transformation: A framework for ICT literacy*. Princeton, NJ: Author. Retrieved May 9, 2008, from <http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/ICTREPORT.pdf>
- North Central Regional Educational Laboratory and the Metiri Group. (2003). *enGauge® 21st century skills: Literacy in the digital age*. Naperville, IL: Author. (Currently available through Learning Point Associates).
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2007). *Framework for 21st century learning*. Tucson, AZ: Author. Retrieved May 9, 2008, from [http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/frameworkflyer\\_072307.pdf](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/frameworkflyer_072307.pdf)

**Judy K. Stewart, Ph.D. (consultant)**

**P:** 757-679-8856

**E-Mail:** judy@tayloreducate.com

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200  
Naperville, IL 60563-1486

**General Information:** 800-356-2735