

21st Century Skills in Wisconsin

2008

PARTNERSHIP FOR
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster is leading Wisconsin's 21st century skills initiative through a commitment, New Wisconsin Promise, to ensure that every student graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the 21st century global society.



"In Wisconsin, we expect our public schools to instill in our students a love of knowledge and learning, the ability to think critically and employ analytical and technical skills, a sense of pride in accomplishment, the skills to interact with and within other cultures, and an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy."

Wisconsin's goal is to infuse 21st century skills throughout the state's PK-16 system of education. Through rigorous and relevant educational opportunities in every school, students will be engaged in motivating activities, including service learning, creative projects and contributions to their community.

KEY 21ST CENTURY SKILLS INITIATIVES

1 Standards Review Process: Partnership for 21st Century Skills and American Diploma Project

Since Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards were approved in 1998, numerous changes have occurred, from student, parent, and community expectations to careers and the workplace to delivery systems. Wisconsin's goal in reviewing its standards is to ensure that state standards were still targeted to successfully prepare students for work, education, and citizenship in the 21st century.

The critique and guidance from both Achieve's American Diploma Project (ADP) and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) shaped a review of Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for high school English language arts and mathematics. A leadership team representing PK-16 educational institutions and organizations framed the policy questions. Design teams of educators in English language arts and mathematics revisited Wisconsin's standards in those subject areas and developed recommendations for increasing both the rigor and the relevance of Wisconsin's high school standards, as well as recommendations related to the impact of revisions to the standards on their implementation. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) sought input from Wisconsin's educational community, business leaders, parents, postsecondary faculty, high school graduates, and other interested parties through online surveying and focus group discussions. The design teams created a blueprint for revising the standards and outlined the best approaches to deal with key issues central to successful implementation. These findings were presented to State Superintendent Burmaster in June 2008.

The combination of ADP and P21 viewpoints helped the design teams simultaneously examine the sequence and depth of content as well as real world applications.

2 Summit on 21st Century Skills

After adopting the Partnership for 21st Century Skills' Framework for 21st Century Learning in January 2007, state business and education leaders convened a Summit on 21st Century Skills to ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century workforce. Through small group discussions, leaders of business and commerce, community organizations, and government agencies defined their expectations for Wisconsin's PK-16 education system.

3 Global Literacy

Wisconsin's citizens need to be globally literate to understand the linkage of economies, peoples and cultures around the world, and to function comfortably and effectively in other languages and cultures. The State Superintendent and Governor convened the Statewide International Education Council in 2002. The Council has led Wisconsin's efforts to bring international perspectives and skills to PK-16 education and has published recommendations stating five key goals:

- Global literacy for all students
- World languages for all students
- Global training for all teachers
- Intercultural experiences for all citizens
- International linkages for Wisconsin businesses and government

4 High School Task Force

The Wisconsin's High School Task Force produced a series of recommendations to ensure Wisconsin's high school students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education, the workplace, and as citizens of our 21st century global society.

The State Superintendent convened a High School Task Force chaired by a high school principal and a business leader. Task force members included educators from high schools, technical colleges, colleges and universities, as well as state legislators and representatives of community organizations, business associations, parent organizations and advocacy groups.

TARGETED EDUCATION INITIATIVES

1 Wisconsin Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Initiative

The WI DPI convened a cross-agency team to identify effective strategies to achieve 21st century ICT literacy, thinking and learning skills and life skills objectives in four areas: developing high quality teachers, engaging students for successful learning, broadly defining STEM content, and increasing public awareness and support.

2 Youth Apprenticeship

Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship program is a rigorous two-year elective program combining academic and technical instruction with mentored, on-the-job learning. As a foundational part of a statewide School-to-Work initiative, high school students develop life and career skills, self-direction, accountability and responsibility.

3 Agriculture-Science Equivalent Credit Process

In 2008, State Superintendent Burmaster approved a process for local districts to award science credit through agriculture courses, piloting a formal certification that could be used for other subject areas. DPI worked with University of Wisconsin institutions and other campuses to ensure that this certification will be widely accepted for the purposes of admission to colleges and technical institutions. This equivalency process is continuing in career and technical education programs, such as engineering classes.

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.