



## **From the Editor: Preparing Students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

by Amanda Hankel, editor

In this issue of the *Primary and Secondary Education Brief*, we explore 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in K-12 education. How do we define 21<sup>st</sup> century learning? How do we implement it into our schools?

The topic of 21<sup>st</sup> century education and skills is not a new one for most K-12 educators—it's likely a topic a high priority for most schools and districts. But generally speaking, the conversations around 21<sup>st</sup> century learning have been focused on integrating technology into classrooms to help prepare students for the future as workers in a global economy that relies heavily on technology.

Undoubtedly, technology is an integral part of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and most definitely has a place in the classroom. ([In fact, the entire July issue of the \*Education Brief\* was dedicated to this subject.](#)) Students today are already spending countless hours outside of school using various forms of technology, such as computers, mobile devices, smartphones and video games. It just makes sense that the technology they use outside of the classroom—and that they will use in nearly any job in the future—is also used in it.

But in this issue, we learn that the idea of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning has a much broader meaning than just integrating technology into lesson plans. It's about using digital literacy to foster collaboration, creativity and critical thinking skills that will allow students to be successful.

In our [feature article](#), read how Asa Clark Middle School in Pewaukee, WI, transformed teaching and learning to provide a student-centered learning environment for self-paced, data-driven achievement. The article features an exclusive interview with principal Randy Daul and associate principal Lisa Rettler, who discuss how the school enhanced its use of technology and created an environment in which collaboration, data-driven decision making and continuous improvement processes guided student learning. Daul and Rettler will present on the school's



efforts at the 2012 National Quality in Education Conference, taking place Nov. 11-12 in Louisville, KY.

This issue also features two videos offering new ideas about what 21<sup>st</sup> century learning involves. The first, [“Rethinking Learning: The 21st Century Learner.”](#) discusses how learning today must involve formal and informal learning environments working together, using technology. But learning must also focus on a range of skills students will need for the future, including civic engagement and socialization. The second video, [“21st Century Learning and Language.”](#) was developed by students at Miami University in Oxford, OH, and covers how foreign language education is an important piece in preparing students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Also in this issue, don't miss:

- An article in which [11 experts weigh in on the definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.](#)
- The story of a teacher who used [with research scientists in Antarctica.](#)
- A [framework from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#) that you can use as a tool to implement 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in your classroom.
- An article about why 21st century learning might actually call for a complete [rethinking of the very structure of schooling as we know it today.](#)

Finally, it's important to note that several sessions at NQEC in November will feature topic associated with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. [Check out the full program and register to attend.](#)

The idea behind 21<sup>st</sup> century learning is that education today must prepare students to be successful in the future. Undoubtedly, this means students must not only being digitally literate—making technology in education increasingly important—but they must also be able to collaborate with others, think critically, be creative and innovative, and act as socially responsible citizens. This makes the definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning a constantly changing and evolving one—just like the world in which students will one day live and work.



*How do you define 21<sup>st</sup> century learning? How should it be implemented in K-12 education today? Tell me about it at [ahankel@asq.org](mailto:ahankel@asq.org).*