


# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

## Tips for Teachers

- **Read the research.** Investigate what experts have to say about the differences in practice and brain function between yesterday's and today's learners. You may be surprised at the amount of hard data supporting the necessity for new and innovative approaches to learning for today's students. You may also be surprised at the differences between yesterday's and today learners.
- **Learn their language.** Ever get the feeling you're missing something? That's because you probably are. Kids today have invented their own shorthand for staying in constant communication: BRB (be right back); POS (parent over shoulder); BTDT (been there, done that); NP (no problem); MIRL (meet in real life); TTYL (talk to you later) and many more acronyms form the basics of their instant communication.
- **Take a guided tour of their spaces and tools.** Sit down with your student and ask them to take you on tour of the digital tools that are part of their everyday life. Let them show you their Facebook or MySpace profile, any chat rooms they visit and regular tools and Web sites they use to complete homework assignments and stay in touch with friends. If they are videogame users, have them show you how the game works and what the challenges are that keep them coming back for more.
- **Let kids make decisions.** Kids today are active shapers of their daily lives in a way unprecedented in earlier generations. iTunes and Netflix are just two examples of ways traditional marketing and distribution models have given way to a world of individual choice for this generation. Acknowledge the digital know-how and decision-making sophistication of your students, and seek ways to incorporate their opinions and expertise into the learning process.
- **Involve them in the curriculum design.** Incorporating technologies, such as Web 2.0 interactive sites and multimedia tools, will add relevancy to your curriculum for students. Form a committee of students to brainstorm ways to integrate such resources into classroom activities.
- **Invite students to publish for a broader audience.** Student work gains authenticity and importance when it becomes a resource available for the world beyond the classroom walls. Have your kids post their work where parents and community (if not the world beyond) can benefit from it.
- **Walk through a Web site vetting process.** Take your students (or have them take you) through a few Web sites and show them the steps for evaluating the authenticity of content.
- **Incorporate a global audience.** Initiate a project with a peer classroom in a foreign country. Integrate interaction based around cultural interests and everyday life experiences of students.
- **Take the learning up a notch.** In an age when finding information is no longer a challenge, more time is available for dealing with the information gathered. Take advantage of opportunities to have students apply such higher order thinking and skills as comparison, problem-solving, analysis, and synthesis. These are the "real world" work skills that will make students valuable employees in the digital workplace.
- **Focus on creation rather than consumption.** Students today are savvy creators of Web sites, blogs, social networking profiles, photo galleries and cell phone and YouTube-style videos. Take advantage of their hunger to create and innovate by allowing them to collaborate to develop their own materials and learning resources.



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