

# **An Innovation Roadmap: *Criteria for Innovative Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***



## What is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School?

Twenty-First Century Schools are first and foremost effective organizations. They are schools where innovation and continuous improvement are core values. Twenty-first century schools have strong leaders who create learning environments where the best educators want to stay. And they are schools that use metrics because they know what gets measured gets done.

However, what differentiates these schools is an urgency to prepare students for 21<sup>st</sup> century professions. They understand that our current assessment systems are critical but insufficient; and that in many cases are measuring skills that are becoming rapidly obsolete. The jobs of the future will be complex, require innovative and creative thinking. Jobs that are not, will be done by a computer.

*If someone can figure out the algorithm for a routine job, chances are that it is economic to automate it. Many good well-paying, middle-class jobs involve routine work of this kind and are rapidly being automated.*

- Tough Choices or Tough Times: NCEE 2009

Data now show that routine, cognitive but middle-income jobs (i.e., basic accounting or basic financial services) are rapidly disappearing or upskilling. Meanwhile, non-routine creative and analytical jobs in design, marketing, research, and engineering are on the rise. To prepare students for the future, we must engage them in rigorous learning that prepares them to ask good questions and not just simply give right answers. For this we will need to rethink and innovate our assessment systems and our expectations of student performance.<sup>1</sup>

## Definition of Terms in the Rubric

The Rubric for School Innovation provides a guide for thinking about different stages in the development of an innovative school. This tool offers a set of guiding questions and indicators of effectiveness and innovation, especially innovation made possible by technology.

Innovative	Emerging	Traditional	Underdeveloped
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school that goes beyond standard measures of success.</li> <li>• Highly innovative and redefines the traditional definition of school.</li> <li>• Evaluates how successfully it is preparing students with core academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school that is effective by standard measures of success and is working to go beyond.</li> <li>• Innovating within and beyond traditional definitions of school.</li> <li>• Working to prepare students with core academic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school that is effective by standard measures of success.</li> <li>• Innovates to improve within traditional definitions of school.</li> <li>• Poised to move forward.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A school that is still striving to succeed by standard measures of success.</li> <li>• Unable to make or sustain school improvements.</li> </ul>

**Core Academic Skills:** Topics, skills, and content areas that are currently tested by the state with an emphasis on assessment that is multiple choice and not performance-based. The expectation is content mastery and basic reading and computational skills.

**Higher Order 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills:** “It is an emphasis on what students can do with knowledge, rather than what units of knowledge they have.”<sup>2</sup> Higher-order skills have always been emphasized in learner-centered instruction, but are becoming more essential, relevant and complex because of the technology. Students should develop a deeper understanding of academic content and contemporary issues through:

- Creative and innovative thinking
- Research and information fluency
- Complex communication and collaboration
- Problem-solving, critical-thinking; while
- Learning to self-regulate their progress and productivity

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<sup>1</sup> Innovating Beyond the Bubble: The Education Sector 2009

<sup>2</sup> Measuring 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: The Education Sector 2008