

# CURRICULUM

# 21

Essential Education  
for a Changing World



Edited by  
**HEIDI HAYES JACOBS**

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Edited by  
**HEIDI HAYES JACOBS**

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*In memory of Richard Strong*

*Fierce and stunning intelligence*

*Hearty laughter and warmth*

*Having read everything, he was a university*

*Fearless about the future*

*A commanding public learner*

*Richard was my teacher*



# CURRICULUM

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To encourage means to give courage. I thank the 10 authors who have contributed to this book by sharing their convictions and bold thinking. They are a virtual team spanning diverse places, but with a singular belief that growth is essential in education. I continue to learn from each of them.

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Perspective means to see meaningful relationships from a range of angles. On this one I am sincerely grateful to Vivian Goldstein, Jay McTighe, Giselle Martin-Kniep, and Brian Cory. ASCD has played

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Over many years, I have had the opportunity to meet many educators in many parts of the world. I have been fortunate to be a learner and I thank you. Ultimately this book is to help all of us prepare our learners for their future.

# INTRODUCTION

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Heidi Hayes Jacobs

What year are you preparing your students for? 1973? 1995?

Can you honestly say that your school's curriculum and the program you use are preparing your students for 2015 or 2020? Are you even preparing them for today?

Johnny might not even know that his classroom experiences are not providing him the tools to enter a global economy that changes exponentially. Maria's gap in knowledge about the last 50 years of history is not helping her make sense of the contemporary world she lives in. Is your curriculum replacing older methodologies with new tools for communicating and sharing? Or is the use of technology an "event"? Are your students learning world languages that will be dominant and influential when they are adults? Or are you primarily, and painfully, focused on the next state test based on textbooks from the 1950s? It is no wonder that we are behind other nations in international comparisons of academic achievement when our school structures are fundamentally based on an antiquated system established in the late 1800s.

The contention of this book is that we need to overhaul, update, and inject life into our curriculum and dramatically alter the format of what schools look like to match the times in which we live. Our responsibility is to prepare the learners in our care for their world and their future. There is rising concern about 21st century skills and tools for our learners, although it is noteworthy that as of the writing of this book, almost 10 percent of the 21st century has already passed.

Our questions will be straightforward: What do we cut? What do we keep? What do we create? Ironically, we will find many of our answers by looking to the past. For example, in Latin, *curriculum* means “a path to run in small steps.” We negotiate and choose that path, but ultimately it is the students who determine how they will, or if they can, take steps on the path with each class, each teacher, and each day. And if the path is going to 1973 and they know it, then their will and desire to engage are diminished.

To exemplify the imagination, courage, and practicality of 21st century learning, I have invited 10 educators to share their work with you. Certainly there are progressive and practical innovations going on in the United States and other nations that are well worth examining, and obviously the limitation of space afforded by print limits the number that can be included in this book. I have invited these colleagues to elaborate on particularly inventive and timely projects to stimulate like-minded practice.

**Stephen Wilmarth** has a fine grasp on two critical points that I ask the reader to consider in this book. First, he has articulated how technology is altering the very nature of pedagogy. In short, we cannot expect to “think the same” about teaching when the act of teaching is shifting dramatically as a result of technology tools and access to information. Second, he has created an enormously successful program for bringing together technology innovation, international exchange, and future-oriented work skills. Students in Connecticut work with students in China through his 21st century learning project.

Globalizing the curriculum is the driving force behind the brilliant work of **Vivien Stewart**, vice president of the Asia Society in charge of education. Not only does she pointedly reveal the necessity for a

thorough reconceptualizing of what global education should look like, but also she is acting on her vision with research and creativity. Her perspective and pragmatism make her one of the leading world authorities on this dynamic next chapter in curriculum design.

**Tim Tyson** is one of my school heroes. His remarkable work as a building principal at Mabry Middle School in Cobb County, Georgia, should inspire any 21st century leader to look at how school improvement efforts need to shift the culture to one that “makes learning irresistible,” as Tim did at Mabry. Winning the Intel and Scholastic School of Distinction award, the Mabry faculty and student population—with Tim’s leadership—show us how to replace the old with the best of the new.

**Frank W. Baker** is a highly experienced television journalist who has been developing curriculum tools for teaching media literacy for the past 10 years. It is shocking to me that the one medium that is without doubt the most potent in terms of its effects on children and youth—television—is not mentioned formally in state standards. How can we help learners become critical consumers of media if we do not work with them on media literacy? This is not just the purview of the family, for we educators certainly do not restrict ourselves to print literacy. Frank’s approach is tested and solid.

**David Niguidula** is the pioneering developer of the digital student portfolio, which is revolutionizing how we access learning and how students view their learning. The state of Rhode Island now requires that each learner develop a digital portfolio showing readiness to graduate. Each learner becomes the navigator of her own work. The ultimate accountability is for learners to take responsibility for their work. The portfolio includes a full array of assessment types. Not only will traditional testing scores and results be linked, but classroom projects, writing collections, and digital film clips of performances are part of the picture compiled by the learner. For me, David represents the best of the diligent scientist-teacher. His work is beginning to revolutionize assessment.

**Jaimie Cloud** has devoted her career to building curriculum that supports sustainability and global understanding. The Cloud Institute

for Sustainability Education, based in New York City, has produced powerful and user-friendly curriculum for adaptation in any classroom. Her travels and work in underdeveloped countries and with her innovative team infuse this curriculum project with reality and passion.

**Alan November** has always been ahead of his time. My first encounter with him was around 1992 at a national conference on curriculum integration where he was touting the advent of technology. It is hard to remember that terms like *Internet* or *BlackBerry* did not come up in regular conversations at that time. Alan could see the train coming, and he wanted to ride in the engine. He still does. With humor and insight, he shares his views on how schools need to be reengineered.

Beginning with his classroom experience as a high school physics teacher in South Carolina, **Bill Sheskey** starts from the point of view of the tech-savvy student. With extraordinary energy and creativity, Bill has developed straightforward strategies to help fellow teachers employ digital tools with students, who often know more than the adults. Bill is asking us to follow the lead of the students, and he suggests that many of the resources that can help classroom teachers are readily available as open-source software and tools. Our students are familiar with many of those very tools and might be our instructors if we give them the lead.

What mental dispositions and attitudes will help us enter new times that bring new challenges? Our quest requires that our most human, psychological, and spiritual aspects be considered as we look into the future. With their thoughtful and productive models as revealed in the *Habits of Mind*, **Bena Kallick** and **Arthur Costa** coach us with years of cumulative wisdom. They advise us not only on traits to engender in our learners, but also on traits we should cultivate in ourselves as curriculum designers.

Our goal as authors is to stimulate specific dialogue, specific debate, and specific actions for your consideration at all levels—the school setting, the district board, and the state office of education. We share our various perspectives with sincerity and experience. Our purpose is direct. We invite your engagement in Curriculum 21. We believe that educators at the local, community, state, national, and global levels need open discussion and that their actions need to be anchored in a candid response

to contemporary challenges. Is the curricular practice and organization of your school program designed to address the best interests of your learners, or is it running on habit? Is your state education department deliberately engaged in long-term strategic planning for learners, or is it committed to old-style gatekeeping? Are global organizations and corporations merely agreeing to broad generalities, or are they finding specific solutions to address worldwide educative concerns?

To assist educators who are serious in their quest for a new kind of school and curriculum, in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I propose a model for upgrading curriculum. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for the reasons to make significant changes in our education system. Chapter 2 provides specific steps for short-term revision of assessments and skills in order to directly engage learners with 21st century products and proficiencies. The review process is based on specific phases, considerations for each phase, and corresponding actions. Upgrading content is the focus of Chapter 3, as each subject area is examined to find potential provocations and points for reconsideration and replacement.

Chapter 4 provides a set of considerations to use when planning for long-term versions of a new school. Specifically, I look at four program structures that need to be seriously altered and altered in sync with one another: schedules, the grouping patterns of learners, the configurations of professional personnel, and the use of space (both physical and virtual). The goal is to move the process along realistically and proactively among those groups of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members ready and willing to grow. I share new choices and alternatives that will be familiar to some, knowing that readers bring their own ideas to the discussion. It is a new age that requires some new directions and strategic collaborations.

The premise here is that a new curricular approach should begin with specific rethinking and examination of choices based on the tensions between critical points from our past practice and new challenges for the future. Examining this debate is the primary purpose of this book. You will be making choices for the generation you are charged to nurture. You are making these choices now. We invite you and your leadership teams to consider these tensions within each discipline; in interdisciplinary



connections; in applications for new career possibilities in the future workforce; in the portals between the school, the community, and the globe; in the individual child's sense of physical and mental well-being; and in the sustainability of our planet. We encourage an active target for a curriculum that marries pertinent ideas and purposeful practice—a curriculum that addresses what is essential for our learners. The new generation of thoughtful leaders in education will carry this torch to new levels. It is to them, ultimately, that we direct this book.