

IOWA CORE CURRICULUM: 21ST CENTURY SKILLS:

Each Iowa student must graduate with the 21st century skills necessary for a productive and satisfying life in a global knowledge-based environment. Descriptions of the new global reality are plentiful, and the need for new, 21st century skills in an increasingly complex environment is well documented. In one form or another, authors cite (1) the globalization of economics; (2) the explosion of scientific and technological knowledge; (3) the increasingly international dimensions of the issues we face, (i.e. global warming and pandemic diseases); and (4) changing demographics as the major trends that have resulted in a future world much different from the one that many of us faced when we graduated from high school (Friedman, 2005 and Stewart, 2007). The trends are very clear that each Iowa student will need essential 21st century skills to lead satisfying lives in this current reality.

As Ken Kay, president of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, stated, the 21st century skills set “is the ticket to economic upward mobility in the new economy” (Gewertz, 2007). Our world economy has evolved from an industrial era to an information era and is now on the way to the creativity era, while at the same time our schools are stagnant in the industrial model. The 21st century skills are key elements in supporting our youth not only in surviving but excelling in the new global environment.

"It is a world in which comfort with ideas and abstractions is the passport to a good job, in which creativity and innovation are the keys to the good life, in which high levels of education – a very different kind of education than most of us have had – are going to be the only security there is."

-New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 2006

Descriptions of what constitute essential 21st century skills are plentiful as well. In the 2007 legislative session, the Iowa Legislature established the Iowa 21st century skills framework as

- (1) employability skills
- (2) financial literacy
- (3) health literacy
- (4) technology literacy
- (5) civic literacy

The development of the Iowa 21st century essential concepts and skills was a collaborative process engaging the expertise of p – 16 educators, business, and industry representatives. Sources used for this work included the Framework for 21st Century Learning, from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, enGauge, and the 1991 SCANS report, What Work Requires of Schools. The committee surveyed the literature and endeavored to bring together the common elements of these frameworks. The members outlined the concepts, dispositions and habits of mind believed essential for success in the 21st century.