NCTE National Council of Teachers of English

A Professional Association of Educators in English Studies, Literacy, and Language Arts

NCTE Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment

Updated February 2013
Adopted by the NCTE Executive Committee November 19, 2008

Context for NCTE's 21st Century Literacies Framework

In the 1990s, the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association established national standards for English language arts learners that anticipated the more sophisticated literacy skills and abilities required for full participation in a global, 21st century community. The selected standards, listed in the appendix, served as a clarion call for changes underway today in literacy education.

The **NCTE definition of 21st century literacies** makes it clear that the continued evolution of curriculum, assessment, and teaching practice itself is necessary:

Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the 21st century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups. Active, successful participants in this 21st century global society must be able to

- *Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology;*

- *Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;*

- *Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;*

- *Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;*

- *Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts;*

- *Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.*

Elements of the Framework

Applied to students of English language arts, the literacy demands of the 21st century have implications for how teachers plan, support, and assess student learning. Teachers benefit from reflecting on questions associated with 21st century literacy demands.

Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology
Students in the 21st century should have experience with and develop skills around technological tools used

in the classroom and the world around them. Through this they will learn about technology and learn through technology. In addition, they must be able to select the most appropriate tools to address particular needs.

- Do students use technology as a tool for communication, research, and creation of new works?

- Do students evaluate and use digital tools and resources that match the work they are doing?

- Do students find relevant and reliable sources that meet their needs?

- Do students take risks and try new things with tools available to them?

- Do students, independently and collaboratively, solve problems as they arise in their work?

- Do students use a variety of tools correctly and efficiently?

Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought.
Students in the 21st century need interpersonal skills in order to work collaboratively in both face-to-face and virtual environments to use and develop problem-solving skills. When learning experiences are grounded in well-informed teaching practices, the use of technology allows a wider range of voices to be heard, exposing students to opinions and norms outside of their own. Understanding the ways in which connections support learning and being intentional about creating connections and networks are important for 21st century learners.

- Do students work in a group in ways that allow them to create new knowledge or to solve problems that can't be created or solved individually?

- Do students work in groups to create new sources that can't be created or solved by individuals?

- Do students work in groups of members with diverse perspectives and areas of expertise?

- Do students build on one another's thinking to gain new understanding?

- Do students learn to share disagreements and new ways of thinking in ways that positively impact the work?

- Do students gain new understandings by being part of a group or team?

- Are students open to and intentional about learning from and with others?

Design and share information for global communities that have a variety of purposes
Students in the 21st century must be aware of the global nature of our world and be able to select, organize, and design information to be shared, understood, and distributed beyond their classrooms.

- Do students use inquiry to ask questions and solve problems?

- Do students critically analyze a variety of information from a variety of sources?

- Do students take responsibility for communicating their ideas in a variety of ways?

- Do students choose tools to share information that match their need and audience?

- Do students share and publish their work in a variety of ways?

- Do students solve real problems and share results with real audiences?

- Do students publish in ways that meet the needs of a particular, authentic audience?

- Do students consciously make connections between their work and that of the greater community?

Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneously presented information
Students in the 21st century must be able to take information from multiple places and in a variety of different formats, determine its reliability, and create new knowledge from that information.

- Do students create new ideas using knowledge gained?

- Do students locate information from a variety of sources?

- Do students analyze the credibility of information and its appropriateness in meeting their needs?

- Do students synthesize information from a variety of sources?

- Do students manage new information to help them solve problems?

- Do students use information to make decisions as informed citizens?

- Do students strive to see limitations and overlaps between multiple streams of information?

Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts
Students in the 21st century must be critical consumers and creators of multimedia texts.

- Do students use tools to communicate original perspectives and to make new thinking visible?

- Do students communicate information and ideas in a variety of forms and for various purposes?

- Do students communicate information and ideas to different audiences?

- Do students articulate thoughts and ideas so that others can understand and act on them?

- Do students analyze and evaluate the multimedia sources that they use?

- Do students evaluate multimedia sources for the effects of visuals, sounds, hyperlinks, and other features on the text's meaning or emotional impact?

- Do students evaluate their own multimedia works?

- Do students consider their own design choices as much as their choices about text?

Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by complex environments
Students in the 21st century must understand and adhere to legal and ethical practices as they use

resources and create information.

- Do students share information in ways that consider all sources?

- Do students practice the safe and legal use of technology?

- Do students create products that are both informative and ethical?

Implications of the Framework for Assessments

Assessments need to take into consideration both traditional components and elements that may be different for 21st century student work.

Traditional elements of assessment of 21st century student learning
The traditional elements for assessing 21st century student work include relevance and reliability of information used in the work; significance of new information or understandings communicated throughout the process and in the final product; effectiveness of the work in achieving its purpose; impact of the work on the audience; creativity or aesthetics demonstrated in the final product; creativity, initiative, and effectiveness demonstrated in solving problems; efficiency and effectiveness of the student's process; and the student's legal and ethical process and behavior.

Newer elements of assessment of 21st century student learning
Assessment of 21st century products of learning may be different because of technological tools. Some elements to consider include

- extent of students' access to 21st century tools both in and out of school;

- range and depth of information readily accessible to students;

- facility of students with technology tools;

- extent to which tools can make artists, musicians, and designers of students not traditionally considered talented in those fields;

- extent to which images and sound may amplify text;

- extent to which students understand the power of their connections;

- extent to which student products can emulate those of professionals;

- extent to which students receive feedback from experts in the field;

- potential interaction with and impact on a global audience;

- students' selection of tools or media that most effectively communicate the intention of the product;

- students' level of ethical and legal practice as they remix products;

- level of ethics and safety exhibited in students' online behavior; and

- extent to which students recognize the impact of their own digital footprint.

Assessment practices of 21st century student learning may need flexibility and responsiveness to situations such as

- students' greater proficiency with tools or formats than the teacher, which may generate outcomes not anticipated in an assessment rubric;

- technology glitches beyond students' control that negatively impact the quality of the final products;

- scope of collaboration, in the classroom and globally, leading to a greater need for processes that assess progress and achievement of individuals and groups;

- support and celebration of the increasing diversity in students' talents, imagination, perspectives, cultures, and lived experiences;

- recognition that the processes of learning and doing are as important as the quality of the final product;

- students' self-evaluation and reflection on process and product integrated into the learning process and contributing to students' continued growth;

- ability of students, parents, and teachers to examine growth over time in authentic ways.

Appendix:

Selected NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts Pertaining to 21st Century Literacies

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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