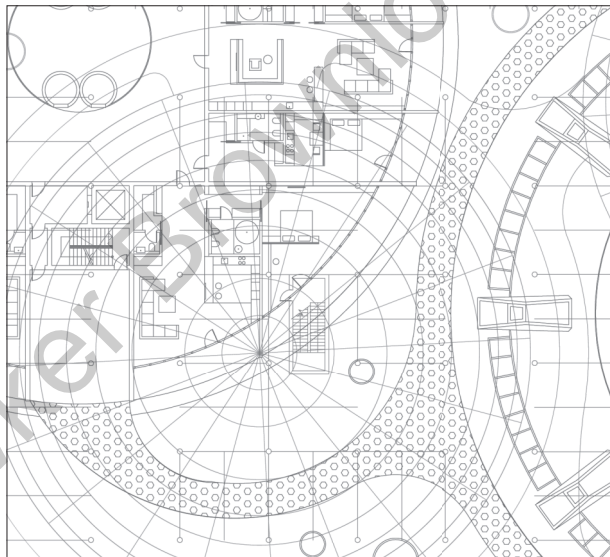


LEADING Modern Learning

A Blueprint for Vision-Driven Schools



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Foreword by Yong Zhao

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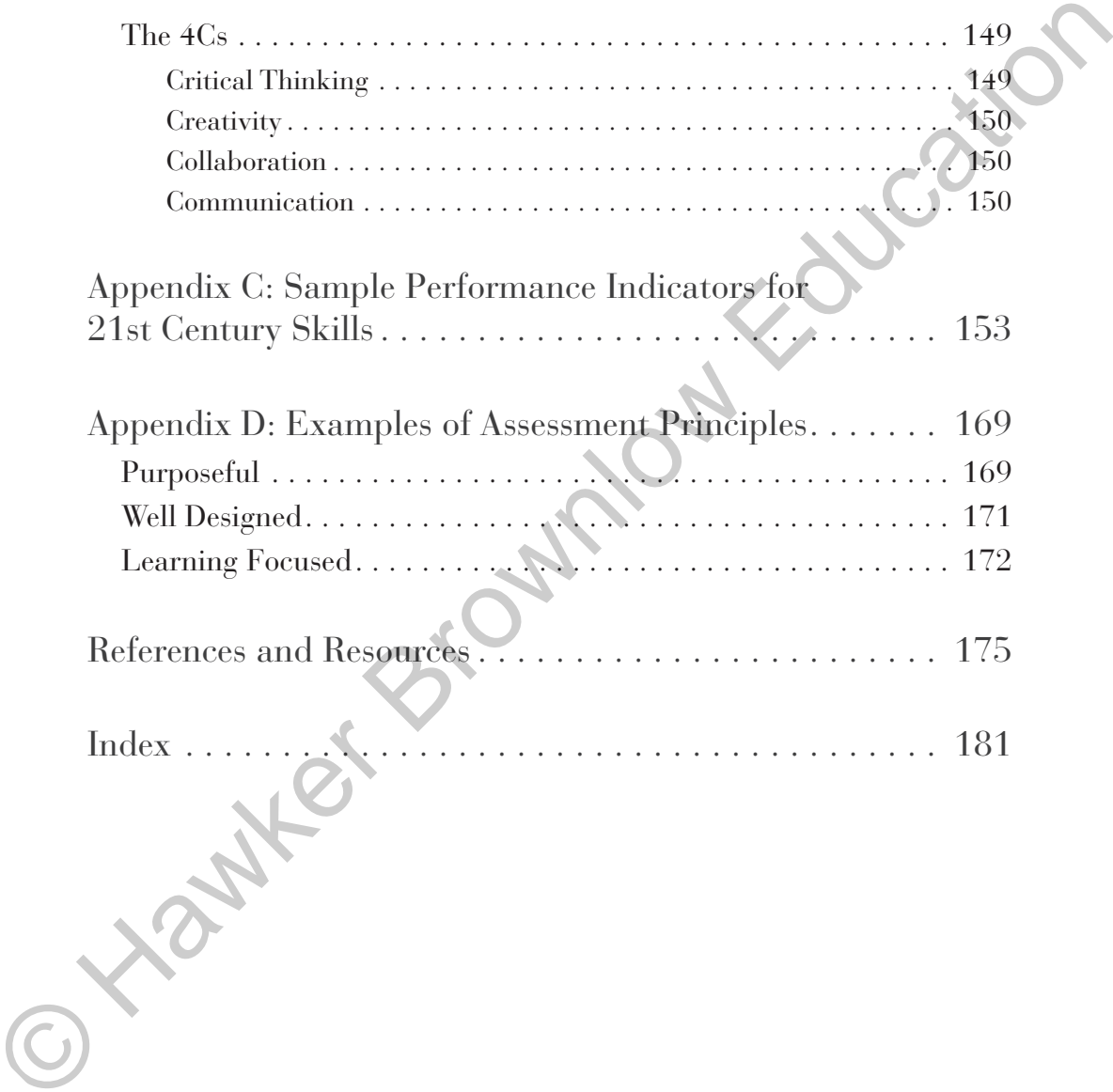
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Introduction



Many researchers and authors, both within the field of education and beyond, have made the case for educational change to prepare today's students for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter tomorrow. Indeed, the press for 21st century schools has flourished for years under various names. We will not rehash the arguments, nor try to make the case. Rather, we begin with the simple premise that education needs to undertake major reform to meet the needs of our students, our countries, and our planet in the years to come. If you do not agree with this basic premise, we doubt this book is for you. However, if you agree that the world is changing and that educational institutions are obligated to acknowledge and address the future, read on.

In fact, the term *21st century learning* has itself become something of a cliché. And, as with many clichés, it can sometimes be dismissed as “been there, done that,” thereby losing some of its original potential as an agent of change. We use the term *modern learning* interchangeably with *21st century learning* to highlight the fact that we are not simply writing about implementing a trend but outlining ways in which education can remain relevant and learning can remain vital and connected with the future.

This book examines a central question: How might we determine and enact needed educational changes in a systemic and lasting way? Our contribution focuses on process. We offer a blueprint of practical and proven approaches to redesign your educational environment, whether a district, school, or single department. The methods we suggest have all been used in a variety of contexts. While you may have heard of them and even used some, it is our contention that

these approaches are unlikely to lead to substantial change on their own. While each can add value, their transformative power will be realized collectively.

About This Book

We have organized this book into seven chapters framed by guiding questions. The first three chapters take us from vision to mission to action and introduce two frameworks—Input-Output-Impact® (IOI) and backward design—that we employ throughout the book. The next four chapters look at four critical components of any comprehensive educational system, namely curriculum, assessment, instruction, and reporting.

There is a logic to the arrangement of these chapters, and you should consider the book as describing a series of linked steps. While you may want to concentrate on certain chapters that most directly align with your interests, the premise outlined in the first few chapters is central to the alignment of all the components discussed in subsequent chapters. In fact, one of the goals of this book is to encourage a systemic approach to school change and improvement.

We recommend that district and school teams read this book together so that the work of different team members can be better linked and mutually supporting. Each chapter is framed by a guiding question to focus readers' attention and stimulate thinking and discussion.

Following is a brief overview of each chapter.

Chapter 1: The Power of Visioning

How do we develop a bold and compelling vision for modern learning?

While we cannot predict the future, we can examine the various trends and drivers of change that lead to an informed vision of a preferred future. We describe tangible strategies and practical protocols for engaging school communities in establishing a clear and compelling vision for modern learning.

Chapter 2: From Vision to Mission

How do we concretize our vision for modern learning into an actionable mission?

An educational mission declares an educational institution's values and specifies what it purports to achieve in terms of students' accomplishments. We describe

the qualities of a futures-oriented educational mission and introduce the Input-Output-Impact framework (Curtis, 2015) to help us distinguish means from ends and always keep the end in mind.

Chapter 3: From Mission to Action

How do we collaboratively plan backward from desired results to purposeful actions?

Many powerful visions and missions are undone by the inability to translate great intentions into purposeful actions. The ideas of *Schooling by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007) provide a systemic framework for planning backward from a vision of a preferred future for your institution to a series of actions to realize it. In this chapter, we present a three-stage backward design process with a corresponding template to guide your strategic actions.

Chapter 4: Curriculum for Modern Learning

What are the building blocks for 21st century curricula, and how do we develop them?

A key element in achieving your mission is the development of a curriculum blueprint. The curriculum we propose emphasizes the development of conceptual understandings and the capabilities to transfer learning, which are key outcomes of 21st century schooling.

Chapter 5: An Assessment System for Modern Learning

How do we assess both disciplinary and transdisciplinary achievements?

Too often, 21st century skills fall through the cracks of conventional testing of academic content. Indeed, one of the most frequently missing elements of a school's reform effort is a rich and comprehensive assessment system that captures evidence of modern learning, not simply content acquisition. We show a process for grafting 21st century outcomes onto performance assessments to ensure that *everything* we proclaim to value is appropriately assessed.

Chapter 6: Instruction for Modern Learning

How do we align instruction practices, resources, and tools with our goals for modern learning?

Teaching is a means to an end. Clarity influences the nature and practice of the learning experiences needed to reach the end goals from your mission. In chapter 6, we explore the value of an established set of learning principles to guide the selection of teaching strategies and learning resources, and we describe the Acquisition, Meaning Making, Transfer (AMT) framework.

Chapter 7: A Reporting System for Modern Learning

How do we communicate student achievement and growth of modern learning?

Traditional grading practices and report cards are inadequate for reporting on 21st century learning. We explore an alternative grading system and a digital LearningBoard platform that better communicate student growth and achievement of our mission for modern learning.

In addition, in the appendices (page 147), we have included lists of recommended resources organized around key categories.

In this book, we seek to support meaningful reform through practical methods, and we are confident that the strategies and tools outlined here are replicable and scalable in varied school settings and contexts. We believe that these steps can be applied in multiple contexts, both large and small. Individually, they are achievable implementation steps for your 21st century vision. Collectively, they will make your vision come to life.