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*Reproducible pages are in italics.*

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## INTRODUCTION

# Redefining Success in the 21st Century

*The only thing that interferes with my  
learning is my education.*

— ALBERT EINSTEIN

Several summers ago, I was asked to work with a school district putting together its framework for 21st century learning. The agenda included conversations about goals for students in global literacy, advanced understandings in technology and media, innovation, creativity, and collaborative problem solving.

As we worked through the robust objectives defined by such organizations as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills ([www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org)) and the International Society for Technology in Education ([www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org)), we realized that success in the 21st century requires the ability to:

- See the challenge and the solution from every angle
- Know what questions to ask and when to ask them
- Communicate one's vision passionately and persuasively
- Connect with others and create an enduring relationship
- Understand your strengths and the discipline needed to improve your weaknesses
- Stand out, stand up, and stand beside, knowing when each is required
- Dream, set audacious goals, and believe they can be accomplished
- Lead, serve, and honor others

As we examined these requirements, looks of concern and frustration spread across the faces in the room. One brave teacher spoke up: “Angela, I’m a kindergarten teacher. I’m really worried about the number of kids coming into my classroom

who don't even know how to spell their names. How on earth am I going to add teaching these 21st century skills to my plate?"

No teacher or leader in that room or elsewhere questions the importance of 21st century skills and competencies. To the contrary, these educators are advocates and believers in the urgency for schools to do whatever is necessary to prepare students for successful citizenship in the 21st century world and workforce. The participants' frustration stemmed from the lack of practical, real-world advice on how this implementation might look and feel in the classroom, something that few organizations had been able to communicate in a way that makes sense to those doing the day-to-day work with children. For implementation to happen, we need answers to questions like those Cathy, our kindergarten teacher, posed:

- How does it look with kids who are struggling to read or write their first name?
- How does it sound when I am talking to fifth graders?
- When does this implementation take place? During reading? In math class?
- If I take time away from my content to do this stuff, what will happen?
- And the most commonly asked question—Where on earth do we begin?

Being able to answer these critical questions for teachers was the impetus for *Classroom Habitudes* (Maiers, 2008), the first edition of this book. I wanted to dissect the research in a way that would show teachers how to use what they already teach—content knowledge and literacy and math skills—to help students think critically, collaborate with others, solve new problems, and adapt to change across new learning contexts. For *Classroom Habitudes* and this revised edition, I drew upon a number of sources that provided support for adapting instruction to meet the demands of learning in the 21st century (see American Association of School Librarians, 2007; Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2008; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory & the Metiri Group, 2003; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003; Rivero, 2010; Tapscott, 1998).

## The Seven Habitudes

Initially, I focused my attention and work around six key areas that emerged as being most critical in fostering the thinking, problem solving, innovation, and creativity skills identified in the research. I called this 21st century skill set the *habitudes*. The traits that constitute the *habitudes* are both habit and attitude: daily disciplined decisions that successful learners choose to make and a specific attitude that demonstrates a new mindset and way of thinking about the world and one's place in it. The six *habitudes* defined in the first edition of this book included:

1. Imagination

2. Curiosity
3. Self-awareness
4. Courage
5. Adaptability
6. Perseverance

Four years and hundreds of lessons later, I now know that students who possess these habitudes will become passionately fierce learners. They believe they can solve any problem and that no challenge is too great. Regardless of the context and circumstance, they approach problems with an attitude of optimism, persistence, confidence, and resolution to improve the situation. Students with these habitudes can and will change the world. Over time, I have become aware of another trait that sustains these behaviors. Passion is a powerful attribute that enhances the ability of individuals to pursue and achieve their goals. I have added passion as the seventh habitude of the skill set in this revised edition.

The 21st century world needs learners to *be* critical, to *be* creative, and to *be* strategic. The 21st century world demands citizens *do* their own thinking, rather than rely on someone else to think for them. The 21st century world expects leaders to *have* the endurance, fortitude, and courage to brave each new challenge with confidence and competence. These three concepts—to be, to do, and to have—are central to helping students become lifelong learners. The learning habits and attitudes that we teach our students will enable them to become effective contributors to this world. From my personal experience, I know that teaching the habitudes can and does change lives. I believe these seven habitudes represent essential behaviors for improving your students' performance in school and in the world beyond. Let's consider the definitions of the habitudes.

The *imagination* habitude is defined as follows:

Imagination is the ability to create new images out of thoughts, memories, and sensory information, and from those images to mold ideals, role models, heroes, loves, concepts, perceptions, and ideas on how to thrive and survive.

The *curiosity* habitude is defined as follows:

Curiosity is a mindset and a willingness to explore the internal and external worlds by asking questions, seeking answers, and engaging in a wide range of personal and interpersonal activities.

The *self-awareness* habitude is defined as follows:

Self-awareness is the ability to use a system of checks and balances to understand ourselves and to make conscious choices and deliberate decisions about the direction and quality of our lives.

The *perseverance* habitude is defined as follows:

Perseverance is the ability to sustain interest, effort, and commitment in any circumstance that life presents.

The *courage* habitude is defined as follows:

Courage is the ability to enter the unknown by confronting challenges, taking risks, and overcoming fears.

The *passion* habitude is defined as follows:

Passion is the ability to intentionally pursue actions that are personally and socially meaningful.

The *adaptability* habitude is defined as follows:

Adaptability is the ability to cope with change, to recognize its positive and negative aspects, and to manage one's actions to address the nature and scope of change.

Teaching these learning habits and attitudes fosters independence in our students. The habitude dispositions enable them to think critically, make informed decisions, share knowledge, and assume responsibilities.

## Why the Habitudes Matter to Students and Teachers

These seven habitudes constitute a life focus for today's students whose lives may be affected by circumstances and situations beyond anything we are currently able to predict or envision. From working with teachers and students, I have discovered that teaching the habitudes is far more than a fulfillment of newly adopted curriculum mandates. The habitudes provide the context in which teachers can communicate with conviction that they believe in the students and their ability to do great things, things that can change the world for the better. The habitudes foster a promise that:

- All children will be prepared to make lasting contributions to the society in which they live
- All children are capable of and can achieve greatness
- All children have the skill and wherewithal to lead lives that are intellectually engaged, productive, and meaningful
- All children have a gift ready to be unwrapped and shared with the world

The habitudes enable students to become critical, creative, and strategic learners. With these characteristics, students' ability to think for themselves is enhanced, and they will have experiences that foster endurance, fortitude, and courage—attributes that will sustain them as they advance through school and life.

In considering how students benefit from studying the habitudes, we also need to focus on ways in which the habitudes are integral to our lives as teachers. I often remind teachers: *We must be the learners and leaders we wish our students to be.* It is not unusual for teachers to query me about the habitudes and why they should take time to add this study to their already crowded schedules. The answers to seven frequently asked questions are found throughout this book, but a few summary answers follow:

1. **Are the habitudes lessons supported by research?** The sources in the reference list reveal the range of evidence that supports instruction in the habitudes. I have relied on guidelines from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills ([www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org)), a national organization that provides resources that support a vision for learning to ensure 21st century readiness for every student. These guidelines are developed in the *Framework for 21st Century Learning* ([www.p21.org/overview](http://www.p21.org/overview)), which provides the most clear and well-articulated vision for what 21st century learning encompasses.
2. **Which habitude is best to start with?** Once students are familiar with the concept of the habitudes and have consistent language to talk about these habits and learning dispositions, you can begin anywhere. Activities to develop awareness of the habitudes are described in chapter 1. Because habitude study is all about fostering independence in our students, many teachers opt to focus on self-awareness first. However, the order in which you teach the habitudes is up to you. The approach to teaching the habitudes is described in more detail in the sections that follow in this introduction.
3. **How can I teach the habitudes lessons if I have my students for only forty-five minutes?** Each lesson is intended to be a short and natural conversation with the students. The lessons can take place anytime throughout the day. For a more structured schedule on block time, consider allotting ten to fifteen minutes once a week to focus on a specific habitude you wish students to be aware of during their study. The lesson narratives presented in this book are models you can adapt to meet your teaching style and the needs of your students.
4. **How do I balance the habitudes study with the core curriculum?** I hear this every day from teachers. They believe in the need and urgency of teaching these 21st century skills but worry that the instruction takes time away from the content they are held accountable for. Although I would love to say the habitudes are the core curriculum, I understand the pressure of curriculum and assessment mandates. I urge you not to see habitudes and content as two separate agendas. Both are needed and serve one another in the interests of helping students become successful learners.

5. **What if the students have already heard the lessons?** This problem is exactly what we want. The habitudes framework supports and aims to achieve systemic implementation across every grade level and content area. Over time, you will notice how the students' growing familiarity with the habitudes fosters a growth mindset and contributes to improvements in their performance.
6. **What do I send home to parents when I begin the habitudes study?** Before our classroom activities included discussions around 21st century skills of innovation, creativity, and global collaboration, it was common practice to send our students home with a worksheet of skills to do or share with their families or caregivers. However, the habitudes are not a *to do* list, they are a *to be* list. Many adults may not be familiar with these concepts or may struggle to support the habitudes in conversations at home. I suggest an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the habitudes and describing the ones you will be teaching and how these lessons will help the students. Once the habitudes lessons are underway, you could let students take their habitudes notebooks home to share with their families. (See appendix A, page 129, for the description of the habitudes notebook.) You could also use the habitudes notebooks in conferences to show parents and caregivers examples of their child's work.
7. **Where can I get more lessons?** A collection of technology tools and web resources for additional lessons for each habitude are available at [go.solution-tree.com/instruction](http://go.solution-tree.com/instruction). Here you will be able to click the links straight from the website.

Learning about and applying the habitudes provide students with unique opportunities to become more fully informed about themselves as individuals and members of society. However, occasions may arise in which some students may view the activities and topics as personally intrusive. The special knowledge you have of your students will enable you to adapt the activities to deal with such situations. A classroom environment that fosters a climate of respect is a necessary element in teaching the habitudes. In such an environment, students are engaged, feel that they are being taken seriously, and know that they can take risks without negative consequences (Cohen, Cardillo, & Pickeral, 2011).

## How This Book Is Organized

*Classroom Habitudes* is more than a *how-to* guide for teaching 21st century skills and competencies. It is a *how-to-be* guide that provides a clear and explicit profile of the learner, worker, and citizen the world requires now and in the future.

*Classroom Habitudes* contains nine chapters; eight define the habitudes and describe activities for teaching them, and one offers some final thoughts about the concepts.

Each chapter is organized in service of the *to be* concept and provides guidance for you in modeling, demonstrating, and supporting students' practice as the learners and leaders I know they can become with your guidance. The appendices provide additional resources, directions for creating and using the habitudes notebook, and a tool for assessing students' understanding of the habitudes before and after their study.

The activities, tools, and strategies presented support the challenging work and improved academic understanding in all subject areas. The habitudes represent the encompassing behaviors, dispositions, and thinking required to operate successfully as a learner in all disciplines and subject areas. Consequently, there are no habitude lessons specific to math, fine arts, or any other subject areas.

## What's New in This Revised Edition

What more is there to say about the habitudes? I have learned so much from the teachers who have read the first edition or learned of the lessons on my blog. These educators have pushed my thinking, challenged the ideas, and offered invaluable insights that I would never have considered possible. I am awed at the energy, creativity, and intelligence they display as they apply the concepts in their own lives and their work with learners. This book is a reflection of what teachers have taught me and a representation of our collaboration and collective thinking. Working with and beside them has helped me see how capable we all are and how far we can go with just one simple conversation. This profound admiration and gratitude inspired me to take those conversations even further and deeper in this book. I have added six new elements.

1. **More lessons:** I have added more than twenty new lessons to be interspersed with those familiar and favorite conversations. You will still see the familiar favorites along with many additional materials and resources to support your work with students and colleagues.
2. **A new habitude:** *Passion* is a new habitude I have discovered. At first, I struggled with whether passion was an outcome of an individual or an organization having the habitudes, or if indeed it was a habit and mindset that must be practiced and nurtured. I am absolutely convinced the latter is true and that passion deserves singular attention. I hope that as you engage in passion-driven conversations with me and others, you will soon agree.
3. **More structure:** Teachers have loved the individual habitudes lessons but have asked me for a more comprehensive framework to structure them. In chapter 1, I describe the instructional framework, which consists of three parts: Name It, Claim It, and Sustain It.