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Preface

THIS BOOK BEGINS with a metaphor: classrooms without borders. The book is an investigation of the what, the why and the how of 21st century classrooms that take advantage of the Internet to expand when, where and how students can communicate and collaborate, not only in their classrooms, but also outside or beyond the borders with students around the globe. Importantly, the metaphor announces a new promise and a new practice for high-quality instruction that “pours and stores” no more.

The book is intended to provide all educators, including parents as the first educators, with a deeper understanding of two key 21st century skills: communication and collaboration. These two skills, part of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills’ “4C’s”, promise to help teachers expand their students’ abilities to interact and innovate in the ever-expanding global society. All who recognise the challenges that a global community represents will find this book a practical guide for designing instruction and assessing skills that will enable today’s students to thrive in tomorrow’s academic and work worlds. It will suggest the practical tools and techniques that allow teachers to transform their instruction from the obsolete pour-and-store methods of the 20th century by adopting those methods already proving to encourage students to learn from doing in 21st century classrooms.

The information in this book is divided into 14 chapters. Each chapter is designed to help the reader gain command of information about two crucial 21st century skills: communication and collaboration. The chapters are designed to move teachers’ minds from an exploration of the information about the chapter’s topic to an exploration of how to make best use of this information in the classroom. Educational leaders at all levels will find the information valuable as they think about the what, why and how of integrating these two skills into every school day.

Chapter 1 explores what it is in the global world of the 21st century that makes collaboration and communication important as crucial skills

to be purposefully developed. It introduces the key challenges and issues involved with the changes in curriculum, instruction and assessment when teachers and schools elect to make the changes from the factory models of instruction to technology-infused models that will most enhance the development of students' collaborations inside and outside the school walls.

Chapter 2 defines the key terms *cooperation*, *collaboration* and *communication*. The chapter provides insights into the connections among the three in the 21st century classroom. The chapter examines the research with a focus on the key instructional tool: cooperative learning. It shows how teachers can use this proven instructional strategy to promote the highest levels of collaboration, to enhance communication, and to produce higher yields of achievement and lifelong team skills for all students.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed look at those Internet tools that extend the promise of a classroom without borders. By dividing the array of e-tools into three categories, the chapter enables you to distinguish and prioritise the uses of collaborative e-tools that promote different types of communication skills in the classroom.

Chapter 4 presents the different ways that teachers can use Internet-based collaborative tools to scale classroom walls and take students around the world in their search for informative global learning experiences.

Chapter 5 presents an all-important "how to" for redesigning existing and for creating new lessons and projects that include 21st century skill development. By adapting the backward-design planning model championed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in *Understanding by Design* (2005), teachers will discover how to take a short cut to standards-aligned lessons and projects that address both process and content outcomes.

Chapter 6 helps teachers understand the practical connection between 21st century skills, the standards, and next generation assessment tools. It shows an easy way for teachers to read a standard (examples are drawn from state and national organisations and the Common Core standards in the US, although these examples can be applied worldwide) in order to create enriched learning experiences that include 21st century skills. By distinguishing the content element of a standard (what the students will learn) from the process element (the thinking skill to develop), the chapter shows how to transform a standard statement into outcomes that address both in a single project or lesson.

Chapter 7 attends to the practical skills for deliberate or intentional development of collaboration via cooperative learning. In this chapter teachers will review the advantages of cooperative learning for enriching lessons and projects. Nine productive tactics light the pathway to what

research has shown is one of the surest ways to higher achievement by all students. In addition, the chapter leads readers from the use of cooperative learning as a tool for enriching the learning in lessons and projects to the creation of a brightly lit cooperative community that thrives within a collaborative culture.

Chapter 8 takes special note of what is important about the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills in collaborative classrooms. The chapter not only defines the meaning of these terms, but also argues for their purposeful or deliberate instruction as preparation for students' lifelong learning in the 21st century.

Chapter 9 focuses on how to develop sharper minds in all students in a collaborative classroom. The chapter places emphasis on how teachers can ensure that students deepen their thinking skills within the context of power lessons and enriched learning projects.

Chapter 10 introduces the power lesson, a lesson that is designed not only to improve student achievement, but also to develop students' 21st century skills. The power lesson is shown to be a crucial tool for enriching students' learning experiences with technology and with the full array of high-yield instructional strategies.

Chapter 11 introduces the first of three models of enriched learning projects, the investigation model. After defining the model, the chapter provides a sample project using the topic of global climate change. With the model, teachers are encouraged to replicate its key components or to use these components as a springboard to their own innovative projects.

Chapter 12 presents the second model of enriched learning projects, the problem-based project. After distinguishing its characteristics, the chapter presents a sample problem project focused on violence.

Chapter 13 explores the innovative project model. After defining the components that distinguish it from the other models, the chapter presents a project sample that explores innovative solutions to poverty.

Chapter 14 presents a summative framework for teachers to organise their own projects. It reviews guidelines for ensuring that the projects advance collaboration and communication and provides practical tips as reminders to include the key elements that most enrich student learning.

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

The Greeks loved both the literal and symbolic value of the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. The end of this book asks you to take

the ideas you have gathered and put them in a plan that will start you on a new pathway to 21st century instruction. By making your selection of the ideas in this book that give you new insights into preparing students for 21st century collaboration and communication, you can make better sense of which ideas will work best for you and your students. Whether you select to improve collaboration and communication within the four walls of your classroom or you intend to take your students' hearts and minds beyond the borders, the ideas that you select to add to and refine your instructional repertoire will certainly result in new benefits for your students as lifelong learners in the 21st century.