

KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS

Take a deeper dive into Common Core. Here's what the experts say.

CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is highlighted in almost every discussion of key competencies for the 21st Century. Critical thinking includes inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as making correct analyses, inferences and evaluations. These competencies are important for deeply understanding academic content, and they also relate to later career performance. Research suggests that for a company to compete in the global economy, it needs workers who will think about how to continuously improve its products, processes, or services. In another study, executives say the heart of this continuous improvement process, knowing the right questions to ask, is a function of critical thinking.

Studies also tie critical thinking to other important societal outcomes. For example, one study says that citizens who think critically are likelier to be self-sufficient and therefore less of a drain on state resources. Meanwhile, others suggest that such citizens are better equipped to give back to society, including through social entrepreneurship aimed at benefiting others.

Reason Effectively

- Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation

Use Systems Thinking

- Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems

Make Judgments and Decisions

- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis
- Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes

Solve Problems

- Solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways
- Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions

21ST CENTURY SKILLS

A term intended to encompass the broad move toward deeper and more relevant learning, used by a variety of organizations. The "Partnership for 21st Century Skills" is a national organization that advocates for the integration of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and communication into the core academic subjects, using the "four Cs" as guidance: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. About 20 states have adopted its goals and principles. For more information, go to: www.p21.org

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards is an initiative that seeks to bring diverse state curricula and standards into alignment with each other by following the principles of standards-based education reform. It is sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Developed by education experts from 45 states, these K-12 learning standards go into key concepts in math and English/language arts. They require a practical, real-life application of knowledge that prepares students for success in college, work and life. They were developed around the principle that understanding is more important than memorization, and provide the national education community with consistent learning expectations for all students. Find additional information at:

www.corestandards.org/