

1. ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS: WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERMS LITERACY and SKILLS?

©Literacies for the Digital Age to Teach in the K-12 Classroom

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STANDARD DEFINITION OF LITERACY

- **literacy** ('litərəsɪ) — *n*
- 1. the ability to read and write
- 2. the ability to use language proficiently

literacy. (n.d.). *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition.*

Retrieved July 18, 2013, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/literacy>



COMMENT BY PRESIDENT BARRACK OBAMA

- "[L]iteracy is the most basic currency of the knowledge economy we're living in today. Only a few generations ago, it was okay to enter the workforce as a high school dropout who could only read at a third-grade level. Whether it was on a farm or in a factory, you could still hope to find a job that would allow you to pay the bills and raise your family."
- <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/twenty-first-century-literacy-deeper-learning-rebecca-alber> Deeper Learning: Defining Twenty-First Century Literacy January 21, 2013 | [Rebecca Alber](#)



UNESCO's POSITION ON LITERACY

- “Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one’s health, one’s income, and one’s relationship with the world.”
- “The uses of literacy for the exchange of knowledge are constantly evolving, along with advances in technology.”

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/>



THE EVOLVING DEFINITION OF LITERACY

- “The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) regards ‘literacy’, in an attempt to recognise the diversity of definitions attributed to the term, as being beyond simply “the set of technical skills of reading, writing and calculating . . . to a plural notion encompassing the manifold of meanings and dimensions of these undeniably vital competencies. Such a view, responding to recent economic, political and social transformations, including globalization, and the advancement of information and communication technologies, recognizes that there are many practices of literacy embedded in different cultural processes, personal circumstances and collective structures”.

<http://www.unric.org/en/literacy/27791-the-evolving-definition-of-literacy>



POSITION STATEMENT BY THE NCTE RE: 21ST CENTURY LITERACIES

Updated February 2013

- “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.

<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/21stcentdefinition>



POSITION STATEMENT BY THE NCTE RE: 21ST CENTURY LITERACIES

Updated February 2013

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.



STANDARD DEFINITION OF SKILL


- **skill (skl)*n.***
 - **1.** Proficiency, facility, or dexterity that is acquired or developed through training or experience.
 - **2. a.** An art, trade, or technique, particularly one requiring use of the hands or body.
 - **2. b.** A developed talent or ability: writing skills.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Skills>



EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL SKILLS

- craftsmanship, workmanship - skill in an occupation or trade
- horsemanship - skill in handling and riding horses
- literacy - the ability to read and write
- marksmanship - skill in shooting
- mastership - the skill of a master
- mixology - skill in preparing mixed drinks
- numeracy - skill with numbers and mathematics
- oarsmanship - skill as an oarsman
- salesmanship - skill in selling; skill in persuading people to buy;
- seamanship - skill in sailing
- showmanship - the ability to present in an attractive manner
- swordsmanship - skill in fencing



POSITION STATEMENT BY THE ASCD RE: 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

- “As educators in the 21st century, we are charged with educating students to be successful in a complex, interconnected world. This responsibility requires schools to prepare students for technological, cultural, economic, informational, and demographic changes.”
- “ASCD supports changes in teaching, learning, and leadership that adequately prepare students for the 21st century”
- <http://www.ascd.org/research-a-topic/21st-century-skills/resources.aspx>



POSITION STATEMENT BY THE ASCD RE: 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

<http://www.ascd.org/research-a-topic/21st-century-skills/resources.aspx>

Students are expected to prepare for challenges of the 21st Century in their ability to

- Acquire and apply core knowledge and critical-thinking skill sets that are essential in an information age.
- Demonstrate creativity, innovation, and flexibility when partnering with business and community members to advance common goals.
- Make decisions and solve problems ethically and collaboratively.
- Use technology to gather, analyze, and synthesize information for application in a global economy.
- Exhibit positive interpersonal relationships that value multiple languages, cultures, and all persons.
- Display leadership skills that inspire others to achieve, serve, and work together.



What Students Really Need to Learn: Skills without Literacies?

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar11/vol68/num06/What-Students-Really-Need-to-Learn.aspx>

- “Top-performing nations set their instructional sights on far more than basic reading and math skills.”
- “Students in the United States rank 17th in the world in reading, 23rd in science, and 31st in mathematics on the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
- “Our betters in math include Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland. Meanwhile, our economic competitors turn in performances that rank them at the top of global student achievement tests. We're far behind China, Singapore, Canada, Australia, and Japan—and we're increasingly aware of it.”
- “No nation that scores competitively on the PISA exam puts skills before content or focuses chiefly on reading and math. We must join our desire to compete with other nations with a willingness to learn from them.”



QUOTE: ALVIN TOFFLER

- “The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be the ones who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”



<http://www.slideshare.net/langwitches/21st-century-skills-literacies-fluency>



SOURCES

- <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/> Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. [.....](#)
- <http://www.unric.org/en/literacy/27793-a-tale-of-two-worlds> A tale of two worlds
- <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/twenty-first-century-literacy-deeper-learning-rebecca-alber> Deeper Learning: Defining Twenty-First Century Literacy January 21, 2013 | [Rebecca Alber](#)



SOURCES

- <http://www.slideshare.net/langwitches/21st-century-skills-literacies-fluency> 21st Century Skills, Literacies & Fluency by Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano, Educational Consultant
GloballyConnectedLearning.com Langwitches.org/blog
- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar11/vol68/num06/What-Students-Really-Need-to-Learn.aspx> What Students Really Need to Learn by *Lynne Munson* in Educational Leadership, March 2011 | Volume **68** | Number 6, Pages 10-14.