

Building Washington Youth's 21st Century Skills for Success



It's no longer enough for youth to just master academics like reading and math. Washington's students need a cadre of skills to be successful in college, career and life.

Habits of Mind: The 4-Cs of 21st Century Skills²

- ➔ **Collaboration:** works effectively with diverse groups and exercises flexibility in making compromises to achieve common goals.
- ➔ **Creativity:** generates and improves on original ideas and also works creatively with others.
- ➔ **Communication:** communicates effectively across multiple media and for various purposes.
- ➔ **Critical thinking:** analyzes, evaluates, and understands complex systems and applies strategies to solve problems.

WITH WASHINGTON'S ADOPTION OF THE COMMON CORE State Standards (CCSS), there is a real and present opportunity for afterschool and youth development (AYD) organizations to play a role in shaping 21st Century Skills and supporting academic progress for children and youth. Educators, business communities and AYD providers recognize the importance of developing these skills in supporting student's academic success.¹ As such, this issue brief can provide basic tips for AYD programs to share information with staff and parents about the CCSS.

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Higher Learning Expectations for all Washington Students

In efforts to improve college and career readiness of our children and youth, the National Governor's Association and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) facilitated the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a universal set of learning standards and expectations for educating youth, to be shared among states.³ These standards include academic expectations, as well as non-academic or 21st Century Skills, known as "Habits of Mind".

FAQs about the Common Core State Standards⁴

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will allow students to make meaningful connections between knowledge learned and the real world.
- Common Core learning standards provide benchmarks for teaching and learning throughout a child's K-12 education. Educators and families will have tools to guide students towards success.
- Common Core goes deeper into fewer topics and focuses on developing students' understanding of key concepts.
- The standards are consistent across states and will follow families who move from state to state or between school districts to keep on track with other students.
- Students from diverse backgrounds may have different starting points in their learning, but the endpoint will be the same for all students.

Afterschool and Youth Development Field Support for Common Core

As with any rollout of new education standards, there is a significant need for increasing awareness about the benefits of Common Core State Standards as reflected in a recent poll which revealed, 56% of Washingtonians had no recognition of CCSS.⁵ This limited knowledge creates an important role for the AYD field to help families better understand what CCSS means for their children and provide information about CCSS and how families can better support development of their children's 21st Century skills.

The National PTA (www.pta.org) and the Council of Great City Schools (www.cgcs.org) both have parent resources on Common Core available for download. Given the strong relationship that afterschool providers have with parents and families, programs are well positioned to help educate parents about the CCSS.⁶

4 Ways to Bring the 4-Cs of 21st Century Skills to Afterschool and Home⁷

1. **UNLOCK YOUR CHILD'S CREATIVE POTENTIAL** through community arts programs. Find out why the arts are critical: edutopia.org/arts-education-art-music-report.
2. **HELP YOUR CHILDREN MASTER COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT-RESOLUTION SKILLS** by practicing social and emotional learning at home. Borrow ideas from the Edutopia article, "Raise Your Student's Emotional-Intelligence Quotient," (edutopia.org/10-tips-creating-caring-school) and visit this social and emotional learning resource page: edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning.
3. **ENCOURAGE YOUR TEENS TO EXPAND THEIR KNOWLEDGE** beyond the classroom by volunteering with younger students, teaching adults about technology or investigating internships and mentorships. Find ideas at compassionatekids.com. Watch this Edutopia video: edutopia.org/stw-career-technical-education-community-partnerships.
4. **PRACTICE CRITICAL THINKING TO EXPAND YOUR CHILD'S GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING** of developing countries around the world. This will help your child to think critically about these issues and learn what it means to be open-minded and consider alternative ways of looking at solutions. Watch this Edutopia video for one example: edutopia.org/heifer-international-global-village-video.

¹The Common Core Standards: What do they mean for Afterschool and Youth Development Practitioners in Washington State?, The Forum for Youth Investment, DeVaney, Yohalem, and Werner, August 2013.

²A Parent's Guide to 21st Century Learning, Edutopia.org

³The Common Core Standards: What do they mean for Afterschool and Youth Development Practitioners in Washington State?, The Forum for Youth Investment, DeVaney, Yohalem, and Werner, August 2013.

⁴Connecting afterschool learning with Common Core Standards by Jen Rinehart, The Afterschool Alliance, April 30, 2014, website: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolsnack/ASnack.cfm?idBlog=5CCB0272-215A-A6B3-02FC4D08739A8639>

⁵Ready Washington polling, April 2014.

⁶Devaney, E. and Yohalem, N. (2012, July). Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary #17. The Common Core Standards: What do They Mean for Out-of-School Time? Washington DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

⁷A Parent's Guide to 21st Century Learning, Edutopia.org

School's Out Washington provides services and guidance for organizations to ensure all young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. School's Out Washington is dedicated to building community systems to support quality out-of-school time programs for Washington's 5-18 year olds through training, advocacy, and leadership.



School's Out Washington
801 23rd Ave. S., Suite A
Seattle, WA 98144

P: 206.323.2396
F: 206.323.7997
TOLL FREE: 888.419.9300