



Research Brief

Millennials & Schools of the Future

Question: What should schools of the future look like?

Summary of Findings:

Who are the Millennials? What interests, skills and background do they bring into school? How can schools meet the needs of the Millennials while realistically educating and preparing them for the world beyond high school?

The generation born between 1980 through 2000 is most commonly known as the Millennials. According to studies done, 94% use the Internet for research, 78% believe the Internet helps with getting school work done, 70% use instant messaging to stay in touch with friends, 41% use email and instant messaging to contact teachers and peers, and 56% prefer the Internet over the telephone (*Boomers, Gen-Xers & Millennials: Understanding the new student*). Research states that the Millennials: have been more protected than any other generation (i.e. wearing head gear when riding bikes and skating, using car seats and sitting in the back seat, etc.); have had their parents quite actively involved in their lives (in fact parents of this generation are often referred to as “hoverers”); were born with high levels of technology available that it is a way of life (i.e. more than two million American 6-17 year olds have their own web sites, *The Millennials*); are highly scheduled into numerous activities, which is why most are excellent multitaskers; are more conservative than their parents (who are most likely Baby Boomers); and are most often in favor of environmental reforms, gay rights and affirmative action. They work well collaboratively and in teams; need challenging hands-on learning and projects that utilize technology; and are confident, practical, optimistic, goal oriented, civic minded, patriotic and inclusive.

“The current teaching system evolved from the economic demand for narrowly trained minds during the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries but is an inadequate preparation for the information-rich internet age” (*21st century schools: Beyond the three R's*). The School of the Future in Philadelphia, PA opened in the Fall '06. It is staffed, funded and operated by the public school system (<http://www.microsoft.com/education/schooloffuture.msp>). When designing this school, parents, students, community, business (i.e. Microsoft) and teachers worked together to provide a school that could help its students be prepared for the demands of the world outside of high school. In addition to providing a varied technologically rich and interactive environment, it required that the teachers were trained and receptive to the requirements of the new curriculum and ways of learning. The facility is “Green,” which means it is environmentally friendly and ecologically sound. The furniture is moveable so the environment can effectively meet the needs of the curriculum and students. Research is



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embedded throughout the curriculum and the assignments are project-based. Teachers can use a program designed by Microsoft to individually assess students at any time in order to help them move on an appropriate path.

“Globalization is flattening the world and challenging the United States as never before. Students here and in other advanced countries must move up the value chain and lead a new era of global cooperation as twenty-first century learners” (*New skills for a new century*). An environment that would best help meet the needs of the Millennials and those of an increasingly smaller global community should:

- challenge them with realistic in-depth and complex issues to solve, where the curriculum is meaningfully integrated. Project-based learning was recommended as a means to do this.
- support and encourage an environment where teachers and students work together to learn about diverse issues
- make available leaders for them to follow, as well as train the students in the art of leadership
- allow them ample opportunities to work collaboratively and in groups
- provide an atmosphere where fun is an integral part of the work
- present an environment where mutual respect is honestly practiced
- implement a flexible schedule that has timelines, where the work is chunked into small amounts and give feedback in a timely manner
- permit them to multitask
- provide ample access to current technology such as the internet, streaming media and video connections



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Online Resources:

- **21st Century schools: Beyond the three R's**
A brief review of some of the needs of current students is provided in this article.
<http://www.cnn.com/2006/EDUCATION/11/14/life.education.reut/index.html>
- **Boomers, Gen-Xers & Millennials: Understanding the new student**
Characteristics of Millennials and what colleges need to do to attract and retain them are presented.
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0342.pdf>
- **Building the School of the Future**
This is Microsoft's homepage about building the School of the Future in Philadelphia, PA. It includes its philosophy, the process, and a description of the actual school.
<http://www.microsoft.com/education/schooloffuture.msp>
- **Generation X and the Millennials: What you need to know about mentoring new generations.**
This is a brief composite list of the characteristics of Gen-Xers and Millennials.
<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/mgt08044.html>
- **Managing Millennials**
An overview of what the Millennials need in the work environment in order to be a productive and satisfied is provided in this article.
<http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm>
- **Managing Millennials: Eleven tips for managing Millennials**
This is a succinct piece about what Millennials need to be satisfied in the work place.
<http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementtips/a/millennials.htm>



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- **Marketing to Millennials**
The generational patterns of marketing are described in this piece.
http://yelnick.typepad.com/technik/2006/11/marekting_to_mi.html
- **Misreading Millennials**
A description of the political leanings of the Millennials is provided in this piece.
<http://www.reason.com/news/show/28956.html>
- **New skills for a new century**
Skills that are needed to be successful beyond high school are reported in this article.
http://www.edutopia.org/magazine/ed1article.php?id=Art_1546&issue=jun_06
- **School of the future: Explore the process**
This blog describes the process used and issues that arose in the design and implementation of the School of the Future in Philadelphia, PA.
<http://www.microsoft.com/Education/SchoolofFutureProcess.aspx#E2B>
- **'School of the Future' opens doors**
This is a descriptive article about the philosophy of and structure of the School of the Future in Philadelphia, PA.
<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showstory.cfm?ArticleID=6579>
- **Start using the education competencies**
The education wheel of 37 competencies that Philadelphia, PA used to hire staff for its School of the Future is available from this site at no charge.
<http://www.microsoft.com/education/competencies/default.aspx>
- **The Millennials**
This article provides a thorough description of the Millennials.
<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=331342>
- **The Millennials come of age**
A description of the characteristics of Millennials is provided in this article.
http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2006-06-28-generation-next_x.htm



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Schools:

- Marin School of Arts and Technology Novato, CA
Home page.
http://www.envisionschools.org/page.php?page_id=47
- New Technology High School Napa, CA
Home page
http://www.nths.nvusd.k12.ca.us/School/about/about_default.asp
- School of the Future New York, NY
Home page. This school is part of the Essential Schools Coalition
<http://www.sof.edu/>
- School of the Future Philadelphia, PA
Home page
<http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/sof/concept.html>

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