

Essential Capacities for the 21st Century
Schools of the Future Committee
NAIS Commission on Accreditation

1. Analytical and Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving

- Identify, manage, and address complex problems
- Detect bias, and distinguish between reliable and unsound information
- Control information overload
- Formulate meaningful questions
- Analyze and create ideas and knowledge
- Use trial and error; devise and test solutions to problems
- Imagine alternatives
- Develop cross-disciplinary knowledge and perspectives
- Engage in sustained reasoning
- Synthesize and adapt
- Solve new problems that don't have rule-based solutions
- Use knowledge and creativity to solve complex "real-world" problems

2. Complex Communication—Oral and Written

- Understand and express ideas in two or more languages
- Communicate clearly to diverse audiences
- Listen attentively
- Speak effectively
- Write clearly and concisely—for a variety of audiences
- Explain information and compellingly persuade others of its implications

3. Leadership and Teamwork

- Initiate new ideas
- Lead through influence
- Build trust, resolve conflicts, and provide support for others
- Facilitate group discussions, forge consensus, and negotiate outcomes
- Teach, coach and counsel others
- Enlist help
- Collaborate sensitively and productively with people of varied backgrounds
- Coordinate tasks, manage groups, and delegate responsibilities
- Implement decisions and meet goals
- Share the credit

4. Digital and Quantitative Literacy

- Understand, use, and apply digital technologies
- Create digital knowledge and media
- Use multimedia resources to communicate ideas effectively in a variety of formats
- Master and use higher-level mathematics

- Understand traditional and emerging topics in math, science, and technology—environmental sciences, robotics, fractals, cellular automata, nanotechnology, and biotechnology

5. Global Perspective

- Develop open-mindedness, particularly regarding the values, traditions of others
- Study and understand non-western history, politics, religion, and culture
- Develop facility with one or more international languages
- Use technology to connect with people and events globally
- Develop social and intellectual skills to navigate effectively across cultures
- Use 21st century skills to understand and address global issues
- Learn from, and work collaboratively with, individuals from diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue
- Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and achieve success

6. Adaptability, Initiative, and Risk-Taking

- Develop flexibility, agility, and adaptability
- Bring a sense of courage to unfamiliar situations
- Explore and experiment
- Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities
- View failure as an opportunity to learn, and acknowledge that innovation involves small successes and frequent mistakes
- Cultivate an independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas, and strategies
- Develop entrepreneurial literacy
- Use creativity and innovation to produce things that are unique and that have value and meaning

7. Integrity and Ethical Decision-Making

- Sustain an empathetic and compassionate outlook
- Foster integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect
- Exhibit moral courage in confronting unjust situations
- Act responsibly, with the interests and well-being of the larger community in mind
- Develop a fundamental understanding of emerging ethical issues and dilemmas regarding new media and technologies
- Make reasoned and ethical decisions in response to complex problems