Incorporating 21ˢᵗ Century Skills

21ˢᵗ century Skills are the keys to improving our nation's competitiveness in a knowledge-driven, global economy. As more of our economic competitors move to foster 21ˢᵗ century Skills development within their educational systems, the United States faces a critical challenge to keep pace in preparing our students to meet the demands of the global community and educate tomorrow's workforce. Throughout this experience, please be cognizant of the importance of these skills in each young person's development.

Basic Knowledge / Skills

- English language (spoken)
- Government/economics
- Reading comprehension
- Humanities/arts
- Writing in English (grammar, spelling, etc.)
- Foreign languages
- Mathematics and science history
- Geography

Applied Skills

PYN focuses and assesses these particular 21ˢᵗ century skills (*see example activity below):

- **Flexibility and Adaptability**: Adjusting to various roles and responsibilities, adapting and responding appropriately to change, working effectively when there is ambiguity and incorporating feedback to improve job performance and alter behavior.

- **Initiative and Self-direction**: Setting goals, planning effectively to meet goals, going beyond minimum job requirements and seeking to solve the problems that emerge.

- **Productivity and Accountability**: Working hard, completing assigned tasks on time and in a high-quality manner, maintaining good attendance and punctuality and taking responsibility for one's own work as well as that of the team.

- **Teamwork and Collaboration**: Active listening, respecting others, understanding multiple viewpoints, appreciating diversity and contributing positively to group work.

Additional skills as adapted from the "Partnership for 21ˢᵗ century skills" are:

- **Critical Thinking / Problem solving—**Exercise sound reasoning and analytical thinking; use knowledge, facts and data to solve workplace problems, apply math and science concepts to problem solving.

- **Oral Communications**—Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively; have public speaking skills.

- **Written Communications**—Write memos, letters and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

- **Diversity**—Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles and viewpoints.

- **Information Technology Application**—Select and use appropriate technology to accomplish a given task; apply computing skills to problem solving.

- **Leadership**—Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals; use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others.

- **Creativity / Innovation**—Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; communicate new ideas to others; integrate knowledge across different disciplines.

- **Lifelong Learning / Self-Direction**—Be able to continuously acquire new knowledge and skills; monitor one's own learning needs; be able to learn from one's mistakes.

Professionalism / Work Ethic

- Demonstrate personal accountability and positive work habits (e.g. punctuality, working productively with others and exhibit time and workload management).
- Ethics / Social Responsibility—Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior; act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind.

*Example Activity
What does it mean to NOT be work ready?

Goal: We will all be working together for the next six weeks. Workplaces often ask employees to work on collaborative projects. This activity will help build connections between team members so that you can put together strong, innovative projects.

Directions:
1. Have the interns work in a group to prepare a short skit of someone who is NOT ready for work. They'll have 10 minutes to create the skit.

2. Perform the skit.

3. Debrief – Hold a discussion about the overall teamwork process, what a professional does/should look like, etc.

*This activity requires interns to incorporate 21st century skills to successfully complete the task. By working in a group they develop their teamwork/collaboration abilities. Working

in teams also requires the interns to display some flexibility and adaptability to ensure that all points-of-views are heard and incorporated into their presentation. Having them discuss what it is to be unprofessional allows the interns to create a self-generated definition of professionalism and how to demonstrate that quality in the workplace. By giving a specific timeframe to complete the assignment, interns must also demonstrate productivity/accountability and initiative/self-direction by setting goals, planning effectively and working hard to complete the assigned task on time.

Adapted from the Partnership for 21st century skills (http://p21.org/index.php). Please contact us at workready@pyninc.org with any questions or concerns.