

Tracing 21st century literacies in college and career readiness standards: A multi-scalar analysis

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21st century literacies

“The standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person who is prepared for success in the **21st century**.”

As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be literate in the **21st century**.”

“A particular standard was included in the document only when the best available evidence indicated that its mastery was essential for college and career readiness in a **21st century**, globally competitive society.”



Statement: Definition of 21st century literacies

(adopted 2008; amended 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. 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.



How do different states conceptualize and enact beliefs about 21st century literacies in standards implementation - at different scales?



Policy Attributes Theory

Five dimensions that shape how policies are mobilized across state, district, classroom scales:

- Specificity
- Authority
- **Consistency**
- Power
- Stability

(Porter, 1994; Porter, Floden, Freeman, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1988)

New Literacy Studies

All literacy practices are ideological, linked to cultural and power structures in society.

- Focus on cultural practices across multiple contexts
- Literacy not a discrete set of skills
- Literacies are multiple, multimodal, and situated

(Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 1999; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 1984; New London Group, 1996)

A question of alignment?

“With a few notable exceptions, there appears to be increasing divergence among ... young people’s everyday literacy practices, state-mandated literacy curricula and assessment, and the rhetoric of 21st-century literacies.”

(Burnett & Merchant, 2015, p. 271)

“Future alignment research also needs to examine how implementing the CCSS will be consistent with 21st-century cultures of learning constituted by collaboration, interactivity, connectivity, and multimodal communication mediated by use of new literacy/digital tools.”

(Beach, 2011, p. 181)

Policy Attributes Theory + New Literacy Studies

New ways of approaching issue of alignment
(consistency):

- Not just a matter of whether policies are aligned...
- Questions arise as to how, why, to what ends, and for whom policies are aligned (power and ideology are foregrounded)
- Alignment is understood to be enacted differently at different scales
- Key concepts (standards, policies, 21st century literacies) are framed as emergent in practice, not solidified or hardened





- Partnered with 5 states--CA, KY, MA, OH, and TX--to compare and contrast approaches to college-and-career readiness (CCR) standards implementation
- States are diverse geographically and in terms of policies and characteristics
- In each partner state, data was collected through state and district administrator interviews
 - State officials responsible for overseeing CCR implementation (state curriculum directors or directors of assessment)
 - Selected officials and content experts in each of 3 districts (rural, suburban, and urban)



Data collection

- State- and district-level interviews in 3 states: KY, OH, and TX
- Kentucky: 5 state interviews; 9 district interviews
- Ohio: 5 state interviews; 11 district interviews
- Texas: 6 state interviews; 8 district interviews

Data analysis

- State and district interview data was analyzed using deductive and inductive codes - 5 policy attributes and 19 inductive codes (Saldana, 2009; Erickson, 1986)
- Traced and organized emergent patterns in the discourse of “21st century literacies” across state and district scales (59 excerpts)

Depth & Rigor

The importance of 21st century literacies in CCR standards is the emphasis on depth and rigor of the learning.

- Aim of developing higher-order and critical thinking
- Move away from memorization and “rote” learning
 - “...more rigorous because they are not a recall” (KY state official)
- **Emphasis on synthesis, discussion, and application**
 - “...when people talk about 21st century literacies...they’re talking about...being able to...go deeper and discuss and apply what they’re doing and seeing how those things work out” (OH state official)



Depth & Rigor

“Anybody can find any information that they want...at a click...all you have to do is Google it, but it’s what you do with it, how you synthesize and how you use that information to...solve a problem or...develop new ideas or move forward with it to develop something else...those are the different types of skills, reasoning that we want to build into **helping to prepare kids that are just not full of facts** but they really fill the skills to be able to function and...really be good problem solvers and be able to reason...”

(KY state official)



Skills for Success

State officials linked 21st century literacies with improving skills for success beyond school.

- Increased emphasis on collaboration
- Orientation toward students' futures beyond the in-school context
 - “Are they the things that kids need to know in order to be successful once they exit the public schools?” (TX state official)
- 21st century literacies skills as significant outside of academic content
 - “And so it’s building the skills no matter what the content is...” (KY state official)



Skills for Success

“There’s two aspects of..21st century learning that tend to be discussed. One is a lot of times when people talk about 21st century...they’re talking more about **the soft skills**, about...being able to...go deeper and...discuss and apply...what they’re doing and..seeing how those things work out. But also the...other aspect is...what are **those key essential knowledges and skills that a student would need**. So it’s a combination and a crossover I think between the two of those aspects”

(OH state official)



Imagined Futures

Imagined Futures versus “Traditional” Approaches

- Attempting to prepare students for what they will need as 21st century citizens amidst shifting populations, technologies, and policies
 - Difficulty of imagining what kinds of literacies will be important in the future
- Moving away from past approaches due to considerable changes both current and future
 - “...losing a traditional approach to instruction” (TX state official)
 - “Because we’re doing things today in 2016 that no one thought we would be doing in 1976, or for that matter ‘86 or ‘96 and in some cases 2006” (TX state official)



Production Orientation

“Kids really do have to be able to communicate effectively, use multiple forms of information, make inferences, have good argumentation...” (OH district official)

“You’re seeing a lot of that in the standards...students being engaged, talking to one another, being able to present orally, write effectively,...We want to select resources that provide all those opportunities.” (TX state official)

- **Project-based learning**
- **Student portfolios**
- **Competency-based assessments**
- **Teaching “how/why”**
- **Deep content knowledge**
- **Collaboration**
- **Professional Development**



Real-world Application

“Problem solving and critical thinking - those are always going to be skills that we’re gonna need. Those are the skills that we can’t teach robots to do. Those are gonna be the skills [for] the jobs in the future.” (OH district official)

“We’re designing different pathways for kids to be able to...have a productive career (KY district official)

- **1:1 Tech programs**
- **“Innovation” Programs**
- **Internships**
- **Makerspaces**
- **“Soft skills**
- **Dual-credits**
- **Certificate programs**
- **Coding / tech instruction**



“We know that employers, college, the military... they want folks to be able to critically think, to be able to problem-solve, to be able to collaborate and communicate effectively, and be creative. What I see is the College and Career readiness standards... that’s what they help prepare kids to be able to do.”

“We want to do this 21st century learning, all of this cool stuff...and then what are they testing? They’re testing end of course exams...English I, English II. And so, they’re segmenting themselves by testing because testing is what we get graded on. So it’s a nightmare because of that.”



state

depth & rigor

skills for success



district

production orientation

real-world application



Project-based
“Hands on”
Portfolios
Competencies

Teaching how/why
Collaboration
Not “rote”
Content depth

1:1 technologies
CompSci. programs
Coding
Dual-Credits

Internships
Certifications
Work programs
Makerspaces

Alignment

Convergence / divergence varies based on **definitions** and **purposes** for 21st century literacies

Scale

Makes legible dis/continuities as ideas are **operationalized in and across** dimensions.

- **Classroom-level surveys**
- **Missing perspectives (ELLs, SWDs)**

Conclusions

Next Steps

Thank you!