



PARTNERSHIP FOR  
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**U.S. STUDENTS NEED 21ST CENTURY SKILLS  
TO COMPETE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY**

*Americans Express Strong Support in National*

*Poll for Teaching More Than Basic Skills*

WASHINGTON, DC – Oct. 10, 2007 – A new, nationwide poll of registered voters reveals that Americans are deeply concerned that the United States is not preparing young people with the skills they need to compete in the global economy.

An overwhelming 80 percent of voters say that the kind of skills students need to learn to be prepared for the jobs of the 21st century is different from what they needed 20 years ago. Yet a majority of Americans say that schools need to do a better job of keeping up with changing educational needs.

The national poll was conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.

Among the other key findings:

- Eighty-eight percent of voters say they believe that schools can and should incorporate 21st century skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, computer and technology skills, and communication and self-direction skills into the curriculum.

- Sixty-six percent of voters say they believe that students need more than just the basics of reading, writing and math; schools also need to incorporate a broader range of skills.
- Fifty-three percent say they believe schools should place an equal emphasis on 21st century skills and basic skills.

“This is a powerful set of data from American voters that we need to expand what our schools are teaching to keep pace with the demands of our modern workforce,” said Bill McInturff, Public Opinion Strategies. “This poll also reveals the strong connection Americans make between our future economic success and our education system, a conversation that currently is not happening among our elected officials.”

“The loud and clear message from this poll is that Americans recognize the need for our schools to help our students regain their competitive advantage in a quickly changing world,” said Geoffrey Garin, Peter D. Hart Research Associates. “Right now, far more Americans perceive us as falling behind other countries in this regard than see us as taking the lead.”

The poll’s findings are particularly relevant given the current debates over the future direction of the federal No Child Left Behind law, which is up for reauthorization, as well as the focus that important domestic issues such as education will receive during the 2008 presidential election cycle. For years U.S. education policy has been focused on the important task of narrowing the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged and minority students, and improving underperforming schools. But stopping the conversation there denies U.S. students the expanded skills set they now need for success in the globally interconnected society and workforce of the 21st century, according to the Partnership. Providing all students with 21st century skills and making education relevant to today’s world are critical to closing both the achievement gap and the global competition gap.

“Americans know that a 21st century education must incorporate a different set of skills that reflect changing economic demands,” said John Box, chair of the Partnership and vice president of product development and support for JA Worldwide®. “And they strongly believe that schools can and must play a role in preparing students for the challenges they will face.”

The latest findings mirror a similar study in 2006 of employers by The Conference Board, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families and the Society for Human Resource Management. In that study, “Are They Really Ready to Work?” employers said that the future U.S. workforce is “woefully ill-prepared for the demands of today’s (and tomorrow’s) workforce” and they cited 21st century skills as “very important” to success at work.

“We now know that employers and the public are united in their understanding of what it takes to compete today,” said Partnership President Ken Kay. “These new polling results provide education leaders and policymakers the tremendous opportunity to make our education system more aligned with the needs of the 21st century workforce. The public strongly supports more rigorous expectations for students that integrate 21st century skills into core academic subjects. Educators want to equip students with these skills,

but they need the public policy, professional development, assessment and curricular tools to accomplish this.”

Kay said that the results validate the efforts of states such as Massachusetts, Maine, North Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wisconsin that are working to infuse 21st century skills into their standards, assessments and professional development. He urged education stakeholders nationwide to use these results as a call to action toward implementing a 21st century skills framework for learning in their states.

He also added that toward its commitment to helping education leaders implement 21st century teaching and learning, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills is developing an online, one-stop-shop for 21st century skills-related information, resources and community tools called Route 21. Set to debut on the web on November 7, Route 21 will showcase how 21st century skills can be supported through standards, professional development, assessments, and teaching and learning.

“We all recognize that U.S. education can and should be doing more to prepare our young people to succeed in the 21st century,” Kay said. “Skills such as problem solving, innovation and creativity have become critical in today’s global economy. Integrating 21st century skills into the teaching of core academic subjects is a win-win proposition for everyone involved. It’s now clear that U.S. voters understand this. And it’s up to every one of us to ensure our children receive them.”

Visit the Partnership for 21st Century Skill’s Web site for more information on the poll and 21st century skills, [www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org) .

About the survey: Public Opinion Strategies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted this national survey of 800 registered voters from September 10-12, 2007. The survey has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.46\%$ .

About the Partnership for 21st Century Skills: The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders and policymakers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child’s success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

Funding for this poll was made possible through the support of the following Partnership for 21st Century Skills’ board member companies: Blackboard Inc., KnowledgeWorks Foundation, National Education Association, Pearson and SAP.

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