

There are three skills universally encouraged by Tony Wagner, p21.org, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners and iste.org. They are technological literacy, collaboration and problem solving. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners provide comprehensive descriptions of the skills they deem necessary for students to master in order to find success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Upon reflection, it becomes evident that students have access to some amazing tools and bring personal enthusiasm and curiosity which bodes well for the future. However, no student of mine is close to becoming the poster child for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners, and maybe that is just fine.

The graphic created by P21 Framework is very helpful in providing a visual of the teamwork needed by students and teachers for continued success. My own students excel in global awareness, sensitivity and curiosity. Perhaps this is because of our large foreign student population. Also, students demonstrate an ability to collaborate with diverse groups of learners to achieve common goals.

It is my prayer that my high school students spend their four years becoming more discerning and reasoned in their thoughts, and occasionally I'm rewarded with glimpses of just that! Often students begrudge change and ambiguity. Though with all the changes high school can bring, who can fault them the desire for consistency?

However, I am slightly troubled by what I perceive to be an ever growing list of attributes students are required to possess before their contributions are considered valid. Forgive me if this soap-box moment is misplaced; I will confess I'm far from

through with formulating my argument. It's just something that's been on my heart as I watch students wrestle with the expectations placed upon them by teachers, parents and now P21. When reading through the definition of outcomes for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student, I couldn't help but notice how the "student" being described was all things to all people: collaborative but independent, innovative and a strong communicator. There was a bullet point under "creativity and innovation" which mentioned that failure isn't bad and innovation might take a long time to create the desired result. Does one bullet point communicate this truth when the rest of the article heaps the demands? Life is demanding; I fully understand this. The attributes praised in this article appear to be the recipe for a perfect citizen. But when I ask myself what students really need from me; it's to be assured that they are loved by God, saved by him before they prove anything to anyone.