Facilities for 21st Century Learning

Implications for 21st Century Learning

Student-Centered Education

Current Thinking

Students have a wide variety of needs that evolve over time. Each child maintains his or her own unique set of emotional, physical, and social needs that directly influence how he or she responds to life and to education. Therefore, to prepare students appropriately, contemporary trends in education must recognize and respond to these evolving individualized needs so that each child develops necessary competencies while also receiving the personal support they need.

Beyond this, students in military families are often working through additional intense life situations as the result of circumstances. These circumstances may include long-term parental deployment, single-parent anxiety and depression, personal separation anxiety and depression, frequent short-term (potentially international) relocations, and additional circumstances unique to military life. Children, unlike their parents, are not positioned to legally act on their own behalf or make personal decisions that immediately address these issues and need additional resources to navigate. DoDEA helps provide additional resources to nurture these students through each stage of development.

The Department of Defense, including the United States military, is a resourceful institution that has developed the world’s most advanced technology, has trained the world’s greatest soldiers and leaders, is located around the world, and has developed a cadre of services to support military employees, active service members, and their families. The military schools benefit from DoDEA’s commitment to develop optimal learning environments for twenty-first century students.

To prepare students academically for the 21st century, a student-centered pedagogical approach serves to place the student in the center of learning. Student-centered instruction is innovative pedagogy which promotes inquiry based learning through the efficient use of tools and differentiation strategies.

Tenets of student centered learning include the following (Lea et al., 2003:322):

1. ‘the reliance on active rather than passive learning,
2. an emphasis on deep learning and understanding,
3. increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student,
4. an increased sense of autonomy in the learner
5. an interdependence between teacher and learner,
6. mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship, and a reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both teacher and learner.’

To ensure students are at the center of the teaching and learning focus, classroom instruction will align to student-centered approaches such as:

- Project-based Learning
- Collaborative Learning
- Inquiry-based Learning
- Blended Learning
- Curriculum Integration Approaches

These student-centered pedagogical approaches seek to engage and empower learners. These approaches along with the 21st Century Learner Outcomes or skills that build college and career readiness will prepare students for a successful future. The 21st Century Learner Outcomes or skills are:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Initiative and Entrepreneurship
- Effective Oral and Written Communication
- Collaboration across Networks and Leading by Influence,
- Agility and Adaptability
- Accessing and Analyzing Information
- Curiosity and Imagination

A student-centered approach to teaching and learning integrated with the 21st Century Learner Outcomes, the curriculum, and technology will provide a match to the collaborative facilities of the 21st century.

DoDEA Direction

Broad teaching and learning opportunities must be reintroduced both inside and outside the walls of DoDEA schools. In addition, K-12 teaching and learning should facilitate the intellectual curiosity and creativity that spurs the academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural growth of students as they learn. Both teachers and parents must understand and commit to 21st Century pedagogy to more fully utilize 21st Century buildings.