

# Mentor Minute

## Supporting teachers as they incorporate 21st Century skill building opportunities (Part 1 of 2)

21st Century Skills encompass a broad range of objectives. These skills can be broken-down into three types:

Learning Skills	Literacy Skills	Life Skills
Critical Thinking	Information Literacy	Flexibility
Creative Thinking	Media Literacy	Initiative
Collaborating	Technology Literacy	Social Skills
Communicating		Productivity
		Leadership

However, teachers are often unsure where to start when incorporating 21st Century concepts into daily classroom experiences. For this two-part *Mentor Minute*, ways to support teachers as they integrate both 21st Century learning skills and literacy skills will be highlighted in this issue while life skills will be explored further in the February issue.

To promote 21st Century skills, teachers should be encouraged to create optimal learning environments which emphasize inquiry, discovery, experimentation, and play. In-depth exploration of [NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#) will help guide teachers' understanding of how to develop these skills. As a teacher begins to consistently implement strategies from [NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#), learning will begin to move from teacher-directed to more child-led and 21st Century skills will naturally emerge. Some additional strategies that can help guide teachers include:

- Planning materials and learning experiences that provide opportunities for children to investigate and discover for themselves
- Providing a learning environment where children are free to try and fail
- Encouraging the use of materials and supplies in multiple areas in the room to promote problem-solving
- Encouraging and using open-ended questions by both teachers and children
- Providing multiple opportunities for children to reflect and document their learning in various ways
- Providing opportunities for team work and collaboration often in the classroom
- Exploring and developing Project Based Learning
- Planning authentic learning experiences (create a doctor's office, car repair shop, etc.) with children



Children work together and use materials in unique ways.



A child plans out and creates a structure using a blueprint. Then, explains the process to the teacher.

# Mentor Minute (cont.)

## 21st Century Skills in the preschool classroom



Children create their own graphs from items collected at home.



Then, they explain their graphs to their teacher and peers.



A small group searches for a video about the inter-workings of a washing machine.



Children take apart and explore an old iron.

### 21st Century Skills resource links:

- [Using Blocks to Develop 21st Century Skills article from NAEYC's \*Young Children\*, March 2015](#)
- [The 21st Century Skills Early Learning Framework by Partnership for 21st Century Learning](#)
- [Illinois Early Learning Project](#)
- [21st Century Learning Module by the EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte \(also found on our website\)](#)
- [Ramps and Pathways Developmentally Appropriate, Intellectually Rigorous, and Fun Physical Science by Betty Zan and Rosemary Geiken](#)

**Please click on each item listed above for more information**

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