

Powerful Learning for the 21st Century

Funded by Power Results – Enhancing Education Through Technology
Colorado Department of Education

Final Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Education leaders and stakeholders from across Colorado agree on key elements of a vision for 21st century learning.¹ These elements describe learning that ensures students:

- Possess critical thinking and learning skills,
- Can acquire and use information effectively and creatively,
- Obtain essential work and life skills,
- Have the ability to shape their learning experiences, and
- Can adapt in a rapidly changing global society.

The Council on 21st Century Learning's 2008-09 project, [Powerful Learning in the 21st Century \(PL21\)](#), sought to assist districts and educators in implementing this vision. The project work proceeded on three fronts. First, C21L worked with three partners — Colorado Springs School District 11, Colorado Online Learning, and Eagle County Schools — to support their efforts to facilitate 21st century learning practices in their organizations. Second, C21L documented promising practices occurring in Colorado schools so that they can be shared widely. Third, C21L developed a model to guide districts, schools, and other learning organizations in their pursuit of teaching and learning that fosters student acquisition of essential skills for life in the 21st century. The implementation, artifacts and outcomes of the project are described in this report.

Project Highlights

► Professional Development Resources

- Ten assets for 21st century learning that support building-based professional learning communities or teams

► Promising Practices in 21st Century Learning DVD

- Featured as "Video of the Day" on *e-School News Today* in October 2009.
- Educators from three Colorado school districts discussing instructional strategies that support 21st century learning.

► Case Studies: 3 Approaches to Fostering 21st Century Learning

- Colorado Online Learning: Creating Powerful Virtual Learning
- Eagle County Schools: ICT Planning with a 21st Century Learning Perspective
- Colorado Springs School District 11: Promising Practices in Middle Schools

► 21st Century Learning Change Model

- The processes, perspectives and steps toward 21st century learning that every educator and education organization need to consider.

¹ Council on 21st Century Learning, 2007. *21st Century Learning: Creating a Vision for Colorado*. Navigator Conference Proceedings, Report to Colorado Department of Education, p. 13.

PL21 Project Overview

The Council on 21st Century Learning (C21L), in partnership with Colorado Springs School District 11 (CSSD), carried out the Powerful Learning for the 21st Century project, through funding provided by the U.S. Department of Education Title II, Part D – Enhancing Education Through Technology program. C21L was awarded a grant in the amount of \$294,972 for this work through the Colorado Department of Education Power Results competitive grant process. The project design called for working with districts and schools to realize Colorado’s statewide vision for 21st century learning.²

The project design was complex, with activities proceeding on three fronts: Partners in Learning, Assets for 21st Century Learning, and Model for 21st Century Teaching and Learning. The activities and intended outcomes for each project area are outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Project Overview

Area	Activity	Outcome
1. Partners in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical assistance• Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case studies• Promising practices• Action research
2. Assets for 21st Century Learning	Data collection, research, outreach, regional workshops, documentation, web publishing	Web-based tools for curriculum, instruction, and professional development
3. Model of Powerful Learning for the 21st Century	Data collection and analysis, rubrics for 21 st century learning	Model and resources for 21 st century learning

Interest in and support for 21st century learning are strong in Colorado, as C21L learned in its 2007 Navigator work to build a consensus and a vision for the state. However, translating that vision to reality in the central office, schools and classrooms can be a daunting challenge. For that reason, C21L chose to work with **partners** interested in making headway on this front, and to support their efforts with technical assistance and professional development. At the same time, classroom teachers eager to innovate and bring new learning experiences to their students need concrete examples on which to model their efforts. C21L worked to identify promising practices and develop **assets** or tools to support educators interested in making these changes. The work with partners and asset development helped to specify a **model** for change that can point the way for educators, schools and districts seeking to transform teaching and learning in ways that support today’s learner. This report describes the activities and outcomes for each area.

² In 2007, C21L and CSSD hosted the Navigator Project, a statewide gathering of educators who developed a consensus-based vision for 21st century learning. See <http://www.c21l.org/conference.html>

Area A: Partners in Learning

The Work: C21L partnered with Eagle County Schools, Colorado Springs School District, and Colorado Online Learning to build learning communities creating pathways to 21st century learning. At the outset, C21L met with leaders from partner organizations to define priorities for 21st century learning practices. Each partner focused on activities that fit their unique needs and context. For both school district partners, the focus of the work shifted slightly from the focus described in the grant application as explained below.

Figure 2: Partners in Learning

Organization	Project Description	Activity
<p>Colorado Online Learning</p> <p><i>Focus: Professional development for teachers and site coordinators</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide extended professional development opportunities for site coordinators in 50 school districts • Provide professional development and support for COL teachers and staff in creating model courses in each subject area embedded with 21st century skills standards • Build a cadre of practitioners to identify and create exemplars of 21st century instructional practices based on NACOL³ standards and research-based practices 	<p>Completed three regional professional development days with 36 district site coordinators. Professional development session (1.5 days) completed for online teachers revising courses for 21st century learning. The cadre of five seasoned online teachers created sample lessons and units. They posted them online with narrative about their goals and process, followed by online discussion and feedback.</p>
<p>Colorado Springs District 11</p> <p><i>Original Focus: Galileo Middle School</i></p> <p><i>New Focus: All middle schools in the district</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district decided to shift the focus from Galileo exclusively to include all middle schools in the district. • Identify promising practices in the district that can serve as a basis for scaling up 21st century teaching and learning. • Provide professional development and support for district teams to develop goals and strategies for 21st century teaching and learning. 	<p>C21L developed a classroom observation protocol based on the district's ACHIEVE model for student success. Observations were conducted in five middle schools, with more scheduled for January and February. Promising practices were videotaped in February and March. District leaders considering C21L-led professional development to study and extend promising practices.</p>
<p>Eagle County School District</p> <p><i>Original Focus: June Creek Elementary</i></p> <p><i>New Focus: High School Task Force on 21st Century Learning and ICT/ 21st Century Planning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate 21st century skills, teaching and learning practices into standards-based instruction • Integrate technologies into classroom practices — with an emphasis on communication • Build a learning culture at all levels of the school community – with an emphasis on collaborative staff planning 	<p>C21L provided professional development to June Creek Elementary staff on three occasions. Later, C21L worked with district leaders on the Information Communication Technology (ICT) planning cycle, and the development of a task force designed to create high school curriculum infused with 21st century learning principles.</p>

Overall, the partnerships were a success. Each partnership presented its own set of opportunities and constraints. A brief case study of each partnership follows.

³ NACOL — the North American Council for Online Learning has published standards for high-quality practice in online learning; www.nacol.org/nationalstandards/