

21st Century Learning in Shaler Area Classrooms

By Kara E. Eckert – Assistant to the Superintendent

What is 21st Century Education?

21st Century Education encompasses learning that will prepare our students with the life and career readiness skills to be successful in a global society. Skills such as communication, creativity, independent thinking, collaboration and infusion of informational technology are just some of the skills addressed in this learning environment. It is important for our teachers to provide instructional opportunities for all of our students to exercise their ability to learn and connect to the content taught in an interactive and engaging manner. 21st Century Education is not only apparent in our classroom instruction, but within our curriculum, professional development for teachers and administrators, as well as intertwined with the real-world learning experiences for our students. As a Community of Learners, we will all be able to transform education to encompass a higher degree of learning experiences to ensure success in today's world for our students. For more information about 21st Century Learning, visit: www.p21.org

How is Shaler Area Elementary transforming classrooms to integrate 21st Century instructional strategies?

An exciting learning opportunity for the students at Shaler Area Elementary School is coming alive thanks to an \$80,000 grant from the Grable Foundation. One of the classrooms at the Elementary School on Scott Avenue will be transformed into a Dream Flight Adventures simulator. Through the grant, the school will receive iPads, a Promethean board, projector and other technology to operate this high-tech simulated learning experience. This program will be a first in Western Pennsylvania as we partner with Gary Gardiner (program founder), the Grable

Foundation, Spark, the Center for Creativity, and many others to create a fascinating 21st Century learning experience.

Dream Flight Adventures is a themed, interactive learning environment—a real-life “Magic School Bus”—that teaches teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. It's part simulator, part game, and part theater—and it creates an out-of-this-world experience! Its missions are aligned with the Common Core standards and designed with 21st Century curriculum components in mind. Each mission includes crucial STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Math) topics and integrates concepts relating to history, literature, and the humanities. The simulators are immersive interactive environments that throw students in the middle of epic stories.

During the simulations, students become active participants, not just passive observers. They must learn how to operate the technology controls,

and then they must apply that knowledge in pursuit of their mission. By virtue of the simulator's unique design, each mission—regardless of content—teaches over forty 21st Century skills. On top of this, each mission is packed with a variety of content unique to that adventure. Each player has individual responsibility for his or her station, which contains several important tasks. Then, players must work as a team to accomplish their mission. The experience creates a strong emotional impact, which helps imbue the concepts deeply in our students' memory, so the lessons they learn remain with them for their lifetimes. (Gary Gardiner, for more information, visit: www.DreamFlightAdventures.com)

The administrative team and the planning committee for Dream Flight Adventures are extremely excited to launch this innovative learning experience for the students of Shaler Area Elementary School.

21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems

