



The Making of a 21st-Century Teacher

A modern-day declaration of where things stand for educators in a social-media saturated world yet to fully hit our schools.

Today's teacher has to possess many more skills than a teacher of our previous century. The teachers of today have to be highly-qualified educators, parental figures, master communicators, engaging presenters, expert trainers, sages, technophiles, data analysts, sales people and much more.

As an educator, I have had to be not only the teacher at the front of the classroom, but the guide on the side as well. I've had times when I have felt like I am performing on stage and times when I am training my peers on how to do something new. I have had to be that parental figure that is often a shoulder to lie on, a friend to laugh with, or a safe haven to share concerns with. I've had to be a master communicator with my students *and* their parents. Teachers often have to reach out using additional means of contact other than the standard phone—often relying on email, Twitter and Facebook to spread the word. We've had to be engaging presenters of content using whatever resources are available in order to make our content come alive. We are relied upon to share our knowledge with others through training and group workshops. In



today's world of *No Child Left Behind*, we have had to become sages of the content we teach, proving to all that we are worthy to impart our expertise on others. With today's ever changing technology, we're required to be technophiles who are able to relate to what our students are growing up with in an effort to remain relevant and current. We've had to learn to become the data analyst who can mine and properly use that data to inform our decisions.

Interestingly, much of this has been done without the use of any 21st century equipment. Today's educators are being asked to do more

with less. We are often presenting and teaching using equipment several years old. In a corporate setting, such technology would have been replaced for newer models many years ago. Given equipment, we get very little training on how to use it and even less follow-up support. Often, today's educators are arriving at a job with more knowledge of 21st century equipment and how to use it than the people who are in charge of ensuring the equipment is available.

All that said, educators today have yet an additional duty: that of sales people. We have to advocate for the equipment we want to use. We have to know how the equipment works and to know the tools available to use them. We also need to ensure our success and the success of our students as well because of their use. We're required to articulate this need, and to justify its purchase—quite often to those who grew up never using it and have very little experience with it, let alone any idea of how it can be integrated successfully into our lesson plans. Additionally, we have to alleviate worry

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that our students could be harmed because of their use.

Thus, one of the most important skills we can possess as educators today is the ability to spread the word—to be advocates of change. We have to train and persuade those with purchasing power of the need to invest and divert important limited resources towards the purchase and upgrade of more current and appropriate hardware and software. We need to establish a clear form of discourse where educators and administrators alike are discussing what is truly needed. We have to sell administrators and school committee members on the need for support, equipment and hardware. We need to justify its existence to them. We need to use the equipment provided—and to show results.

Our collaboration in professional learning networks is essential; we need to get everyone talking. We cannot simply possess these

skills, go into our classroom and close the door, but we need to create the true 21st century classroom—where students engage and interact with others in their school and around the world. In essence, we need to rise above our challenges and become so much more. I am a 21st century educator with 21st century skills, but what I do means nothing if I can't get everyone else doing it as well.

Greg Limperis is a Middle School Technology Facilitator in Lawrence, Mass., who founded the very popular Technology Integration in Education professional learning network, reaching thousands of educators worldwide. He has shared with others what he knows and they have joined him in sharing their insights as well. Join them in bringing about change using your 21st century skills.

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