



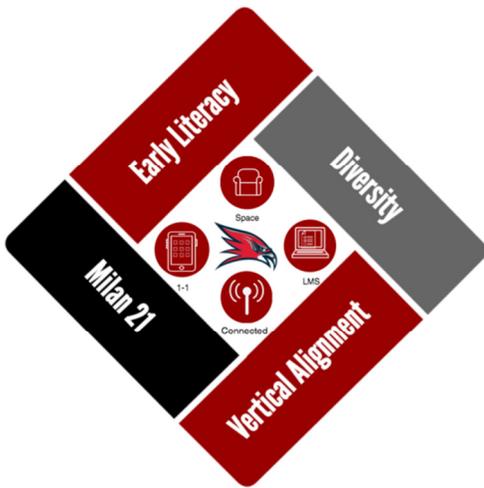
Milan Area Schools

Founded on Tradition – Focused on Excellence

Scoop from the Supt

by Bryan Girbach

Milan Area Schools chooses to take part in a rigorous, continuous improvement process. This process has many facets, including the recent parent satisfaction survey that was recently completed. All of the district's improvement work stems directly from the Board of Education's *District and Superintendent Priorities*:



- Create 21st Century Learners Through Authentic Experiences and Personalized Learning
- Improve Early Reading Proficiency
- Improve Vertical Alignment
- Improve the Understanding of the Diversity of the District

These priorities create the foundation for the improvement initiatives that are being implemented at the district, building, and classroom levels.

In this month's article, I want to focus on the *District Priority*: **Create 21st Century Learners Through Authentic Experiences and Personalized Learning**. Our district work in this area began in 2016, and we are now ready to introduce the initiative to the Milan Area School's community as Milan21.

MILAN★21
Empowering Excellence

The original work of the Milan21 team involved the creation of a Theory of Action. The Milan21 team felt that it was important for this Theory of Action to be in sync with our district vision, mission, and belief statements. The Theory of Action and our vision, mission, and belief statements are provided below. We feel the correlation between them is tangible.

Theory of Action

In order to empower students to achieve excellence in the modern world, MAS will provide every student with a rigorous and authentic educational environment that:

- Develops 21st century skills
- Fosters meaningful and diverse relationships
- Promotes personalized learning
- Embraces teamwork
- Cultivates learning in a highly digital world

Vision

Milan Area Schools: *Founded on Tradition - Focused on Excellence*

Mission

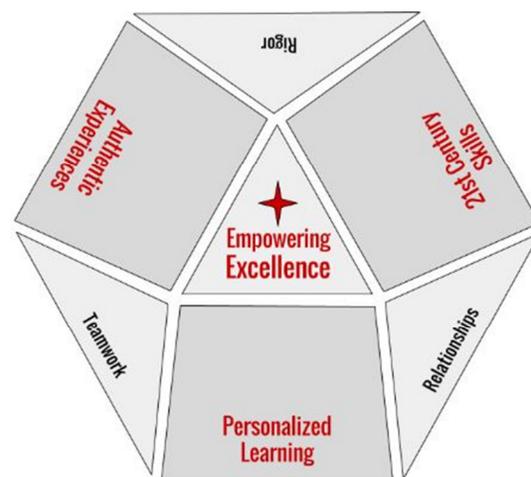
Milan Area Schools is a community committed to achieving academic excellence for all learners through research, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Belief Statements

We believe in...

- providing a safe and orderly environment that contributes to successful learning.
- implementing sound instructional strategies that are based on research, best practice, and evaluation.
- offering real world, 21st century experiences that make learning relevant.
- supporting quality teaching through continuous professional development.
- fostering a positive school culture through shared leadership and high expectations.
- allocating resources to enhance curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- honoring the traditions of our community by collaborating with all stakeholders to maximize student learning.

The next phase of the work included the creation of an instructional model that would guide all future teaching practices in the district. Our model centers on the integration of 21st Century Skills, Authentic Experiences, and Personalized Learning into every classroom. While there are numerous examples of these ideas being used daily in classrooms across the district, the purpose of the Milan21 initiative is to make them the future “culture of the district”. These tenets will become the norm in an environment that stays focused on Rigor, Relationships, and Teamwork.



The first phase of this 5 year implementation plan encompasses the layering of twelve 21st Century skills over our existing K-12 curriculum. In other words, these skills are not going to replace our current curriculum but will be used to help the students accomplish the current curriculum and become better prepared for their work environment of the future. In order to develop a consistent language regarding these skills, the district chose to collaborate with a group that had already done a tremendous amount of research-based work developing a framework of skills. We are proud to be working with P21 – Partnership for 21st Century Learning.

Below is a list of the specific skills and the three overarching groups they establish. Each group includes a rationale for the development of the skills in today's learners.

Learning and Innovation Skills

Learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today's world and those who are not. They include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication
- Collaboration

Information, Media and Technology Skills

Today, we live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. Effective citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as:

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications and Technology)

Literacy Life and Career Skills

Today's students need to develop thinking skills, content knowledge, and social and emotional competencies to navigate complex life and work environments. P21's essential Life and Career Skills include:

- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

Years three, four, and five of the Milan21 initiative will progress from the integration of 21st Century Skills into the implementation of Authentic Experiences and Personalized Learning in all of our classrooms. Again, it is important to highlight the fact that both of these concepts are visible in many classrooms across the district. The goal of making them "who we are and what we represent" is the work that we will accomplish through ongoing professional development and coaching. The majority of this professional development will be led by teacher experts in the district. Below are the working definitions of these two concepts:

Authentic Experiences

Instruction that puts learners at the center of the educational experience as they expand their knowledge through innovative application in real-world contexts and situations. Examples: Project Based, Simulation Based, Debate, Inquiry Based, Student Created, Collaboration, etc.

Personalized Learning

Personalized learning occurs when authentic educational experiences account for students' diverse needs, strengths and interests.

As the Milan21 initiative progresses, we will keep you informed about its development via additional newsletter articles, new webpages, and upcoming community presentations. For now, follow some examples of this work in action by following #Milan21 on Twitter.