

WHY NOW? WHY US?

A WIDENING GAP

NCLD defines 21st century skills as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for a student to engage in educational transfer—taking knowledge from one setting or context and applying it to a separate, unique discipline or scenario. The 21st century skills and dispositions associated with our definition include critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, self-advocacy skills, self-determination, and growth mindsets. This definition is informed primarily by the National Research Council’s seminal report, *Education for Life and Work*.

WHY NOW?

The four most sought-after traits by employers are communication skills, problem solving skills, ability to work on a team, and initiative.



WHY US?

Less than half (46%) of working-age adults with learning disabilities were employed, compared to 71% of adults without learning disabilities. Adults with learning disabilities were twice as likely to have dropped out of the labor force completely as compared to their peers without learning disabilities.

College faculty believe that students lack key skills and dispositions, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and intellectual openness.



Skills like critical thinking and positive problem solving have been related to more positive life satisfaction.

Students with disabilities are less likely to attend, persist in, and complete postsecondary education. And if they enter the labor force, they make \$4 less per hour than their peers.



Individuals with disabilities who demonstrate a greater capacity for self-determination are more likely to persist in college and do better in the labor force.

PERSPECTIVES FROM NCLD'S YOUNG LEADERSHIP ADULT COUNCIL



"I believe that I have formed the 21st century skills of cultivating a growth mindset and being able to communicate with my fellow peers. I wish I had developed a growth mindset earlier in my educational career, because it would have helped me be more open to receiving help and accommodations and more open to change and new experiences. I would tell my younger peers to seek out resources such as workbooks, online curriculum, and books that would help cultivate a growth mindset. Having a growth mindset will help you not only academically but also in your personal life and in your future career."

—*Savannah Treviño-Casias*



"I have been fortunate to develop skills to help me understand how I learn and how to advocate for myself. These skills will enable me to capitalize on my strengths and also speak about them as I apply for jobs. I have also developed a sense of grit and determination that allows me to face adversity and expect to overcome it. I would have liked to have been able to develop better executive functioning skills like note taking and personal organization. Because of my memory, I have developed an idea of just toughing it out without really taking the time to solidify these skills."

—*Ben Gurewitz*

Recognizing this imperative, NCLD embarked on a project to identify what strategies support 21st century learning for students with disabilities—and what opportunities empower those strategies.

Want to learn more about ways to support 21st century learning for students with disabilities?

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- › [Charting the Course: Charter School Flexibility to Promote 21st Century Skills for Students With Disabilities](#)
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