

21 by 21. FAQs

What is 21 by 21?

21 by 21 is a field-tested, youth readiness taxonomy. This taxonomy organizes youth development and education opportunities around the specific academic, social emotional, civic and career competencies that employers, educators, and youth agree are critical to have in order to successfully transition into college, work, and adult life.

What is it not?

21 by 21 is not a prescriptive program. It is a conceptual structure that orients and organizes thinking, discourse, content, and learning opportunities in a way that is accessible, memorable, and meaningful for young people, and that promotes rigor and demonstrates relevance to their current and future life circumstances.

What does 21 by 21 address?

Today most youth enter adulthood and the job market either without a high school or post-secondary credential, or with such credentials but still lacking the basic skills and knowledge that employers expect from their employees. Never before have so many jobs required the levels of education and skill that today's job market demands. The conflict between an emergent workforce that is underprepared and current workforce needs threatens our economic stability, community vibrancy, and individual success. In many U.S. cities, this threat is pervasive – roughly half of their youth leave high school without a degree, and only one-quarter of those who enroll in community college persist to graduation.

If we are going to succeed in meeting young people where they are and getting them ready for adult life, then schooling must be anchored in youth readiness. In the U.S., youth spend more time in school than anywhere else. This is where youth should learn and master the academic, social emotional, civic and career competencies that adult life demands. 21 by 21 is one attempt to orient and organize youth programming, teaching and learning around the specific competencies that set youth up for success in post-secondary and workplace environments.






















How is this different than all of the other reforms and initiatives out there?

This is not an initiative. It is a practical process that organizes, synthesizes, and simplifies existing work, like the Common Core State Standards and 21st Century Skills, into a structure and language that youth and the everyday people that support them can understand and engage with. At the leadership and community level, it is an organizing strategy for creating a shared vision around youth readiness, establishing common language and metrics, and providing a clear roadmap for broad youth-focused work.

What are some ways that 21 by 21 can be used in practice?

- Driving multi-system and sector conversations, planning, and initiatives around youth readiness
- Focusing collective impact efforts on the education pipeline with a shared vision for youth readiness
- Cultivating broad community support for school redesign, competency-based education, and expanded learning
- Organizing curriculum and instructional delivery around youth readiness and competency-based teaching and learning

What can you do, if you are ready for life?

 Read	 Communicate	 Write	 Think Critically
 Understand the Environment	 Observe & Engage Life	 Use Knowledge of Chemicals & Matter	 Investigate Scientifically
 Compute	 Use Math in Life	 Understand Shapes & Measurements	 Analyze Data
 Participate Civically	 Learn & Learn from History	 Act Pragmatically	 Stay Informed
 Work Hard	 Self-Regulate	 Stay Socially Aware & Responsible	 Stay Healthy
 Use Technology Purposefully			

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How can 21 by 21 play out at the community level?

21 by 21 offers communities a structured process for determining and seeking youth readiness for all. It is a pre-populated set of competencies (with attributable skills and knowledge, called attainments) that government, business, education, and civic leaders can respond to, agree on, and modify for the local context. 21 by 21 can be used to align, analyze, and offer community- and school-based programming in ways that maximize opportunities for youth to gain and retain the information and skills that are critical to their future success.

How can 21 by 21 play out in schools and classrooms?

Applied as an educational taxonomy, 21 by 21 can be used by districts and schools to organize curriculum and instruction around youth readiness. This structured process synthesizes a range of content and standards, such as the Common Core State Standards and 21st Century Learning Skills, into a simplified and competency-based version that is accessible, memorable, and meaningful for youth and the everyday people that support them. Additionally, 21 by 21 challenges educators to stretch teaching, learning, and assessment around opportunities for youth to develop and then demonstrate mastery of critical information and skills. With a focus on performance, the use of time, space, and place become flexible resources intended to accommodate youth learning where it is best supported.

How can industry engage with 21 by 21?

In the U.S., schools exist to prepare youth for participation in cultural, social, economic, and political life. Right now there are growing disconnects between what schools do, how students learn, and what society expects of its adult citizens. Large-scale school reform requires the broader involvement and investment of businesses – those who represent communities' social and economic vitality, and who are comprised of individuals who are community members, parents and students (current or former) – to push for a cultural reconstruction of the purpose and means of schooling and to help codify what youth really need to know in order to successfully transition into adulthood.

Are these Readiness Competencies in their final version?

In their current form, the 21 Readiness Competencies encompass most, if not all of the basic capabilities that position young people for a successful transition into adulthood. And, this is not their final form. This version is designed for community response, vetting, and validation. Over the next year we hope to engage networks of leaders, communities, and everyday people (including youth) in the use of 21 by 21 as an organizing strategy, seeking their feedback and insights along the way.

How do Readiness Competencies breakdown?

Competencies are organized by domain: academic, social emotional, and civic and career. Each domain aligns to appropriate sources, like the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, or 21st Century Learning Skills. Each Readiness Competency is broken down into a set of attainments. Attainments are the specific information and skills that youth must master in order to eventually possess any given competency. Attainments are ordered from foundational information and skills to collegiate-level information and skills. For more information, see “21 by 21. The Taxonomy.”

What are the origins of 21 by 21?

21 by 21 was born out of the Shearwater lab school experience in St. Louis, Missouri. A team of educators leading a charter school for overage and under-credited youth developed this concept in response to their need to better support and motivate students who were often years behind developmentally. This concept was trialed and refined within the school for three years. In the spring of 2013, Shearwater leadership voted to close the school based on their acknowledgement that they needed talent, resources, and policies that were more aligned to and supportive of competency-based and youth readiness educational approaches.

The school closing marked the end of the field test, but not the end of the work. The Forum for Youth Investment is now home to 21 by 21. From here, the taxonomy can be refined and vetted under the advisement of national education, youth development, and policy experts.