

Survey Finds Americans Concerned Young People Are Not Adequately Prepared For 21st Century Success

Respondents Strongly Favor Increased Emphasis on "Basics Plus" Approach to Education, Even in Light of Other Education Priorities.

AOL Time Warner Foundation Announces \$3 Million in New Foundation Grant Commitments for Programs to Build New Literacy Skills.

New York- AOL Time Warner today announced the release of a survey conducted by its Foundation demonstrating that Americans overwhelmingly believe today's students need to be taught an array of "21st Century Literacy" skills beyond reading, writing and math to be successful in an information century. As part of its overall commitment to the issue, AOL Time Warner also announced that it is dedicating the resources of the Foundation to building the 21st Century skills young people need to succeed in school, in work and in their communities.

AOL Time Warner Chairman and CEO Richard Parsons said, "AOL Time Warner is committed to making sure that young people have the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. Literacy today requires more than simply being able to read and write. It means understanding and expressing yourself through a wide variety of media, being comfortable with technology, and communicating with a wider array of people than ever before. The survey results we're releasing today underscore that most Americans recognize that we need to provide today's young people with a broad set of literacy skills, and I'm very pleased that we're putting our company's philanthropic resources behind this effort."

The AOL Time Warner Foundation will put its efforts behind supporting organizations that provide these new 21st Century Literacy skills. The Foundation will make \$3 million in new grants this year, including \$1 million in initial grants announced today and additional \$2 million to other 21st Century Literacy efforts later in 2003. In addition, the AOL Time Warner Foundation said that its survey will help support the work of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a public-private partnership working to help schools incorporate the teaching of these new literacy skills into their curriculum. The Foundation is a founding member of the Partnership.

Survey Shows Strong Commitment to Broad Literacy Skills

The national opinion survey found:

- 92% of respondents think that young people need different skills today than they did 10-20 years ago.
- 91% said it is "very" or "somewhat" important to "prepare young people with 21st Century Literacy skills."
- 90% think this is an important issue, even "given the current challenges that face the education system."
- 70% favor a "basics plus" education over a "back to basics" approach for young people.
- While almost 70% of Americans generally believe schools are preparing young people for life after graduation, only 19% think they are being prepared "very well."
- Only 42% think schools are doing a good job teaching young people the 21st Century literacy skills they need.
- 63% believe that it is "realistic to expect schools to integrate these new literacy skills into learning even when so many young people don't have adequate basic skills."
- Only 19% think American young people are better prepared for the 21st Century than youth in other developed countries.

The survey of 1,000 adults was conducted by the national research firms Lake, Snell, Perry and Associates and Market Strategies.

Mixed Findings on Specific 21st Century Skills, Clear Ideas on How to Ensure Young People Learning Necessary Skills

The AOLTW Foundation survey also showed that respondents were mixed over the specific skills that young people are getting, seeing teens as largely getting basic skills but not receiving a number of 21st Century skills:

- 74% think teens are learning basic skills, and 60% think they are being taught to use technology effectively. However, only 48% believe teens are learning communication skills, 37% think they are getting critical thinking and decision making skills, and only 28% believe young people are learning how to make a difference in their community.

In addition, respondents have clear ideas for solutions to ensure that young people are obtaining these skills, principally integrating the teaching of 21st Century Literacy skills into the classroom and in after-school settings:

- 94% favor "supporting programs that make 21st Century Literacy a vital component in learning."
- 64% said it would be effective to make these skills "part of the core curriculum taught in schools."
- 89% agree that there "should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school that provides opportunities for them to learn."
- 59% felt that "access to high quality after-school and summer programs that include these skills" would be effective in getting skills to young people.

Foundation Grants Focused on Building 21st Century Literacy Skills

The Foundation announced today recipients of an initial round of 21st Century Literacy Grants, amounting to approximately \$1 million, to support national and community after-school programs combining basic, media, communications and technology skills. These new commitments build on recent Foundation grants to 21st Century Literacy programs totaling over \$2.5 million, which have included investments in the New York City Principal Leadership Academy and the National Mentoring Partnership, the New Educator Support Team (NEST) in New York, and the Educational Technology Leadership Institute (ETLI) in Boston and Washington, DC.

The Foundation's initial 21st Century Literacy grant awards include:

1) \$600,000 in two-year grants to six community-based organizations working with young people to build a full range of 21st Century literacy skills by utilizing media, technology and civic engagement. The programs develop young people's writing, critical thinking and media skills by teaching them to research, report and produce video and audio programs on important public issues. The students in these programs often work alongside media professionals, writing and developing scripts, conducting interviews and producing and editing reports and documentaries.

The programs chosen for grants include:

- Appalshop, Kentucky: Appalshop is a community-based media arts and education center located in Central Appalachia. Through the Appalachian Media Institute program, young people in rural Kentucky learn filmmaking as a way to develop technical, critical and civic engagement skills. The students make video documentaries on issues of local concern, using these documentaries to advocate for change in their communities.
- WNYC Radio Rookies, New York: Through Radio Rookies young people from underserved communities throughout New York City learn to create radio news features on their lives and communities. Through the process they develop a full range of skills -- from writing, research and communication to editing and production.
- 911 Media Arts Center, Seattle: 911 Media's Young Producers Project offers a number of innovative media training programs in animation, filmmaking and digital media. AOL Time Warner Foundation funding will be used to support two of its pioneering programs: "Reel Grrls" for girls 14-18 and "Native Lens" to give 21st century learning opportunities to Native American youth.
- Youth Communication, New York: Youth Communication helps teenagers develop the attitudes and acquire the skills and information they need to succeed. Youth Communication participants develop literacy, communication and technology skills by producing two publications. New Youth

Connections and Foster Care Youth United, and designing web site areas in support of the publications.

- Educational Video Center, Inc, New York: EVC's signature program, the High School Documentary Workshop, helps youth develop research, interviewing, and writing skills, enabling them to produce in-depth documentaries focused around diverse social issues, such as teen pregnancy, over a twenty-week time period. Through the process of documentary production, young people develop the 21st century skills necessary to navigate today's world and to have an impact in their communities.
- The Global Action Project, New York: A program of the Global Action Project, Urban Voices enables students to present their views on issues overlooked by mainstream media by producing videos, designing web sites, and creating multimedia presentations. Students communicate these presentations through broadcast and on-line forums that draw in audiences of over 100,000.

2) \$350,000 in grants to national organizations to promote quality and effectiveness in after-school programs. These organizations include the Forum for Youth Investment, Education Development Center, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and the National Institute for Out of School Time. For example, the Foundation is working with EDC's YouthLearn initiative and EDC's Center for Children and Technology to survey evaluation practices used by youth media and technology programs to gauge and improve their effectiveness. EDC is an international nonprofit research, development, and technical assistance organization dedicated to advancing learning and healthy development of people of all ages. The Foundation is also partnering with the National Institute for Out of School Time (NIOST) to develop a report on best practices in serving teens in after-school programs. NIOST works with after-school programs throughout the country to improve their effectiveness in delivering services to young people.

3) 57 \$1,000 grants through the Foundation's summer program to build 21st century skills by supporting a writing, video or multimedia project focused on a social or community issue of concern to young people.

- The organizations receiving grants come from 23 states. Thirty-one of the organizations are located in AOL Time Warner's "Hub Cities" of New York, Washington, DC, Atlanta and Los Angeles. Projects range from a group of Washington, DC teens producing a Public Service Announcement campaign to prevent Sexually Transmitted Diseases to poems and plays about immigration from Seattle teenagers who have recently moved to the United States.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills to Release Readiness Guide This Month, Dovetailing with AOL Time Warner Foundation Work

Later this month, the Partnership will release its initial report and "Readiness Guide" designed to assist schools in evaluating their ability to teach 21st Century skills and give recommendations on how schools and school districts can build these skills in the classroom.

In addition to the AOL Time Warner Foundation, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills includes companies like Apple, Cisco, Dell, Microsoft and SAP, the U.S. Department of Education and organizations like Cable in the Classroom and the National Education Association.

Ken Kay, President of the Partnership, said, "The AOL Time Warner Foundation survey is significant in that it shows public support for the inclusion of 21st Century skills into learning and will help build momentum for an improved model of education for the new millennium. This is a great launching point for those who are seeking to address the gap in what students currently learn in school and the skills required of them to succeed in the workplace. The Partnership looks forward to continuing to work with the Foundation to provide the vision and tools necessary to implement 21st Century skills into learning."