

21 Things That Will Be Obsolete by 2020

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1. DESKS

The 21st century does not fit neatly into rows. Neither should your students. Allow the network-based concepts of flow, collaboration, and dynamism help you rearrange your room for authentic 21st century learning.

2. LANGUAGE LABS

Foreign language acquisition is only a smartphone away. Get rid of those clunky desktops and monitors and do something fun with that room.

3. COMPUTERS

Ok, so this is a trick answer. More precisely this one should read: 'Our concept of what a computer is'. Because computing is going mobile and over the next decade we're going to see the full fury of individualized computing via handhelds come to the fore. Can't wait.

4. HOMEWORK

The 21st century is a 24/7 environment. And the next decade is going to see the traditional temporal boundaries between home and school disappear. And despite whatever Secretary Duncan might say, we don't need kids to 'go to school' more; we need them to 'learn' more. And this will be done 24/7 and on the move (see #3).

5. THE ROLE OF STANDARDIZED TESTS IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

The AP Exam is on its last legs. The SAT isn't far behind. Over the next ten years, we will see Digital Portfolios replace test scores as the #1 factor in college admissions.

6. DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AS A SIGN OF DISTINGUISHED TEACHER

The 21st century is customizable. In ten years, the teacher who hasn't yet figured out how to use tech to personalize learning will be the teacher out of a job. Differentiation won't make you 'distinguished'; it'll just be a natural part of your work.

7. FEAR OF WIKIPEDIA

Wikipedia is the greatest democratizing force in the world right now. If you are afraid of letting your students peruse it, it's time you get over yourself.

8. PAPERBACKS

Books were nice. In ten years' time, all reading will be via digital means. And yes, I know, you like the 'feel' of paper. Well, in ten years' time you'll hardly tell the difference as 'paper' itself becomes digitized.

9. ATTENDANCE OFFICES

Bio scans. 'Nuff said.

10. LOCKERS

A coat-check, maybe.

11. I.T. DEPARTMENTS

Ok, so this is another trick answer. More subtly put: IT Departments as we currently know them. Cloud

computing and a decade's worth of increased wifi and satellite access will make some of the traditional roles of IT — software, security, and connectivity — a thing of the past. What will IT professionals do with all their free time? Innovate. Look to tech departments to instigate real change in the function of schools over the next twenty years.

12. CENTRALIZED INSTITUTIONS

School buildings are going to become 'homebases' of learning, not the institutions where all learning happens. Buildings will get smaller and greener, student and teacher schedules will change to allow less people on campus at any one time, and more teachers and students will be going out into their communities to engage in experiential learning.

13. ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BY GRADE

Education over the next ten years will become more individualized, leaving the bulk of grade-based learning in the past. Students will form peer groups by interest and these interest groups will petition for specialized learning. The structure of K-12 will be fundamentally altered.

14. EDUCATION SCHOOLS THAT FAIL TO INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY

This is actually one that could occur over the next five years. Education Schools have to realize that if they are to remain relevant, they are going to have to demand that 21st century tech integration be modeled by the very professors who are supposed to be preparing our teachers.

15. PAID/OUTSOURCED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

No one knows your school as well as you. With the power of a PLN (professional learning networks) in their back pockets, teachers will rise up to replace peripatetic professional development gurus as the source of schoolwide professional development programs. This is already happening.

16. CURRENT CURRICULAR NORMS

There is no reason why every student needs to take however many credits in the same course of study as every other student. The root of curricular change will be the shift in middle schools to a role as foundational content providers and high schools as places for specialized learning.

17. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE NIGHT

Ongoing parent-teacher relations in virtual reality will make parent-teacher conference nights seem quaint. Over the next ten years, parents and teachers will become closer than ever as a result of virtual communication opportunities. And parents will drive schools to become ever more tech integrated.

18. TYPICAL CAFETERIA FOOD

Nutrition information + handhelds + cost comparison = the end of \$3.00 bowls of microwaved mac and cheese. At least, I so hope so.

19. OUTSOURCED GRAPHIC DESIGN AND WEB DESIGN

You need a website/brochure/promo/etc.? Well, for goodness sake just let your kids do it. By the end of the decade — in the best of schools — they will be.

20. HIGH SCHOOL ALGEBRA 1

Within the decade, it will either become the norm to teach this course in middle school or we'll have finally woken up to the fact that there's no reason to give algebra weight over statistics and I.T. in high school for non-math majors (and they will have all taken it in middle school anyway).

21. PAPER

In ten years' time, schools will decrease their paper consumption by no less than 90%. And the printing industry and the copier industry and the paper industry itself will either adjust or perish.