

What is an Era 3 education?*

Era 1 consisted primarily of an agricultural world.

Era 2 consisted of a predominantly industrial order.

Era 3 is the current, third major era -- an information rich, knowledge-based, service-oriented, socially and globally networked, technologically advanced, rapidly changing, complex, often confusing, and uncertain world.

Given that students will live and work in this changing, Era 3 world, the current emphasis on performing well on standardized tests, an early childhood emphasis on developing language arts and math skills, and fragmented, "coverage", and textbook based instruction in the upper grades are inadequate. This new Era 3 world, among other things, requires a renewed, outcomes-based mission, teaching and learning that includes rich understanding-based learning at all levels, a focus on five key skills, changes to the learning environment, new forms of assessment and accountability, choice and enrichment, and strong connections to the outside world.

Mission and Outcomes of Era 3 Schooling*

Mission: All students should develop a foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that prepare them for Lifelong Learning, Informed and Intelligent Citizenship, and Self-Understanding.

1. Lifelong Learning

- *Develop a core framework of essential ideas and related knowledge that encompasses ALL subject areas at all levels, K-12, (including science, social studies, literature, the arts, languages, health, etc.)*
- *Develop lifelong learning skills, attitudes and behaviors*
 - **Five Critical Skill Sets for an Era 3 World**
 - **Curiosity:** *Ask meaningful questions, pose complex problems*
 - **Information Literacy:** *Search for and process information and data*
 - **Thoughtfulness:** *Think deeply and flexibly*
 - **Application:** *Draw conclusions and apply learning*
 - **Communication:** *Communicate effectively*
 - **Positive Attitudes, Behaviors**
 - *Persistence*
 - *Manage impulsivity*
 - *Strive for excellence*
 - *Connect prior knowledge to new situations*
 - *Think and communicate with accuracy and precision*
 - *Work and learn independently and interdependently*
 - *Remain open to continuous learning*
 - *Take responsible risks*

2. Intelligent, Informed Citizenship

- *Understand the American political system and its value; develop a global perspective*
- *Research, analyze, discuss and resolve local, national, and international issues and dilemmas*
- *Practice active citizenship, and develop collaborative and leadership skills through service learning*
- *Participate in extracurricular activities that encourage civic engagement*

3. Self Development and Understanding

- *Understand and develop strengths and interests*
- *Develop plans and goals for the future*
- *Develop personal plans related to self-understanding and development, such as a wellness and fitness plan.*

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THE FIVE KEY SKILL SETS FOR AN ERA 3 WORLD*

1. Curiosity: *Ask questions, formulate problems and challenges*

It is a rare school or program that enables students to examine and develop profound questions, solve complex problems on a regular basis, or work from/develop challenges that are worthy of critical study.

Imagine studying the American Revolution by enabling students to brainstorm questions and choose (with the teacher's input) to examine some profound and critical questions, such as "Why revolution, not evolution?" "Did they really have to revolt?" or "Is war ever justified?"

2. Information Literacy: *Search for and Process information and data*

Information literacy enables students to learn a broad variety of skills appropriate for a world of information overload and instant access. These series of skills assure that students can search for information from many sources, sort and select for importance, evaluate information for reliability, read for understanding, analyze data, and summarize, categorize, and conceptualize information, ideas and data from texts.

3. Thoughtfulness: *Think deeply and flexibly*

Students are provided with the opportunity to extend their thinking – for example, to compare and contrast, interpret, apply, infer, analyze, synthesize, and think creatively.

4. Application: *Draw conclusions, apply learning*

Students draw conclusions, solve problems, make decisions, answer key questions. They are often asked to apply learning to new and novel situations, problems, and issues.

5. Communication: *Communicate effectively.*

Students communicate effectively in a number of ways, such as through writing a persuasive essay, demonstrating how to solve a math problem, or creating a powerpoint presentation in order to explain the results of a science experiment.

NINE MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ERA 3 EDUCATION*

- **An Era 3 Mission Statement** clearly describes the desired learning outcomes, and is understood and supported by all members of the educational community.
- **Rich core content and understandings** from literature, history and the social sciences, science and technology, the arts, health and physical education, and foreign language focus learning at all levels. Key inquiry, communication and mathematics skills are embedded in the curriculum in all subjects. Inter-disciplinary units, courses, programs, and projects are infused into the curriculum.
- **Five relevant key skill sets** are emphasized and developed over time: curiosity, information literacy, thoughtfulness, application and communication.
- **A success-oriented, motivating learning environment and school culture** support the implementation of the mission statement.
- **Multi-dimensional assessments** are used for accountability and are focused primarily around critical knowledge assessments, student performance, student writing, self-reflections. These are collected into individual portfolios, reviewed periodically, and used to assess overall skills and development over time.
- **Engaging student activity** utilizes multiple types of powerful instructional strategies (e.g. inquiry, project and problem based learning, graphic organizers, interpretive discussions) that promote student understanding, skill development, collaborative learning, and student motivation. **Formative Assessments** that provide on-going feedback to students are integrated into student activity.
- **Diverse student options** support student self-development through classroom choice, elective courses and programs, multiple enrichment activities, and strong support systems.
- **Authentic learning** enables students to make significant, multiple connections to the outside world. Authentic learning includes communication with outside experts and participation in the outside world of work, community organizations, learning institutions, colleges and universities. Students frequently apply their learning to authentic, real life, and novel situations.
- **On-going program renewal/professional development activities** enable schools and teachers to focus on implementing mission and outcomes, to continually update and enrich their school programs, to support teachers as they learn new strategies for helping students learn, and to solve multiple Era 3 challenges in creative ways.

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