

EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 21ST CENTURY CHILD

By Mrs Ama Atta Sagoe

Mr Chairman, Rv Dr Mills-Owoo, Distinguished invited guests, Parents, Staff and pupils, I am highly honored and humbled to join you for this special 25th anniversary of this great school.



The theme for this occasion “Effective Development of the 21st Century Child” echoes the

desire of the school authorities to ensure you are prepared for the future.

Effective simply means being successful in achieving a desired result.

Development is to bring about change that allows people to achieve their potential

21st Century started January 1st 2001 and it will end on 31st December 2100 and it is seen as a time of freedom and technological advancement.

We are therefore, going to look at what change is required to bring out the potential in our children for a time of freedom and technological advancement.

Research indicate that children require an understanding of History, Civics, Geography, Mathematics and Science to comprehend unforeseen events, have the ability to speak, write and read English well, master a foreign language (for Ghana its French) engage in creativity, love learning to continue to develop their minds when formal education ends.

It is in line with the above that the Ministry of Education has come out with the Standard Based Curriculum which seeks to incorporate all of the above in our curriculum.

The new curriculum is a shift from teachers transferring what they know to teaching children how to learn on their own. Children are now being taught to learn on their own, set goals for themselves, and involve them in the learning process to raise their level of thinking.

Development of the 21st Century Skills begins as early as 18 months. By this stage, there would be a change in size, abilities, language, interaction, response to feelings among others.

Research has also come up with 4 key skills needed for the effective development of the 21st century child.

1. Critical Thinking
2. Collaboration
3. Communication
4. Creativity

These four key skills are needed for school and life after school. How do we build these skills in our children. To succeed at these skills, there are roles for teachers and parents.

Ten (10) strategies are essential to help make the 21st century child effective in life

1. Child Centered - learning needs to focus on the interest of the child
2. Whole child focus - learning should provide opportunities to help develop skills beyond language, literacy and Mathematics. We need to offer feedback and encouragement on regular basis to reinforce skill development social, emotional and self-esteem.
3. Play based - encourage play (don't limit the kids to computer and phone games) encourage outdoor play
4. Cooperative - provide opportunity for interaction, cooperation, problem solving, and innovation
5. Blend hands on with theory, allow kids to explore, and test what has been learnt. Practical, discussions etc.
6. Flexible – be willing to change direction based on the child's interest.

7. Differentiated – Use different approaches and consider the pace of the child. Some kids are active and some are calmer. Need to meet different needs of your class
8. Evaluation / assessment – observation is key. Use outcomes to adjust activities and give feedback.
9. Consistent – create routines and expectations to help the child build confidence to explore the environment. Consistency helps with planning and organizing self-regulation.
10. Combination of learning strategies. Offer learning experiences to help children to develop eg. Reading a story and discussing the characters.

To be prepared and to be effective in the 21st Century, children need to be taught to ask questions.

Children need the above skills to pursue goals to completion, build ethical and moral character, social skills to relate well with others and the ability to use technology wisely. Wisely, because children can use technology for the wrong reasons and parents and teachers need to guide children and steer them in the right direction.

Activities required for an effective development of the child.

1. Debate – encourages critical thinking
2. Team projects – to learn how to work together and encourage peer learning
3. Research work, group discussions and presentations

We are to teach them to be active in a world where data is constantly changing, preparing them to be adaptable, adaptive, flexible and to survive in a world where learning never ends.

The role of the Teacher

1. Teachers need to constantly learn and upgrade their skills
2. Teachers need to adopt strategies that differentiate the children based on their abilities and level of learning as each child is unique.
3. Incorporate technology in teaching eg. Download education videos
4. Forster relationship with your students
5. Discuss lifelong learning with them

The role of the Parent

1. Teach your child the value for self, value for others, emotional independence, self-discipline and above all tell them the truth
2. The need to balance family and career
3. Don't be afraid to say no to your child to avoid the sense of entitlement that so many of our children exhibit
4. Don't be pressured to have the best-behaved child, most intelligent child, every child is unique. Too much pressure ruins parent child relationship
5. Carve your own parental style and do not compare with others

In conclusion, success in the 21st Century requires knowing how to learn. Children must develop strong critical thinking skills in order to be successful. An effective 21st Century learner needs skills that equips them to enjoy a high quality of life, work and relationships by being resilient, creative and confident learner who understands the value of collaboration, effort to results and need to be continually growing and learning.

I leave you with a quote by Benjamin Franklin "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." Congratulations and happy 25th Anniversary. God bless you all.