

# The Crossroad and the Silk Road: Designing schools for the citizens of tomorrow

Presentation by:

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“My musical journeys have reminded me that the interactions brought about by globalization don't just destroy culture; they can create new culture and invigorate and spread traditions that have existed for ages.”

– YO-YO MA

One hundred years ago the goal of the public school in America, it could be argued, was to provide a basic practical education for a nation of recent immigrants. Yet those schools, in their curricula and buildings, also instilled civic values. As a result, the melting pot transformed into the citizenry of the young and growing democracy. Clearly the public school of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries helped to shape the new American citizen, educated about civic values and able to contribute to the well-being of the new society.

So, if those years gave us new “Americans,” what is the mission of the 21st century school?

The marks of a 21st-century education-creativity, critical thinking, communication, and character - the means to acquire these skills, more active, student-centered and collaborative learning, and the "flattening" of the world on issues ranging from the economic and political to the environmental, have changed our expectation for learning and the learning environment. For example, we know that learning occurs not only in the traditional, formal settings of a school-classrooms and labs-but also outside of the classroom, from "informal" settings to interaction with peers.

If the near exclusive focus of school design in the 19th and 20th Centuries had been on the classroom and the lab, we now look to design the entire campus as a system of settings to learn. Circulation transforms into "extended learning spaces," media centers and cafeterias into "learning commons" and the outdoors from the sole domain of recess and physical education to places where the humanities, sciences and physical activity intermingle and converge with social and emotional learning to help educate the whole person. Learning also transcends the campus, blurring traditional boundaries and creating schools "without walls."

The mission of a 21st Century school is to prepare people to readily work on an international stage, tackle complex global issues, recognize their local impact and become citizens of the world.

It is our mission to provide the setting for this education.