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## **Seven Skills Students Need for Their Future**

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There are two major trends in the world that pose a fundamental challenge--and many opportunities--to our educational system. One is the world is shifting from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy. The other is the rising generation--brought up on the Internet--is very differently motivated to learn. These two forces, argues Dr. Tony Wagner, co-director of Harvard's Change Leadership Group, compel us to re-conceptualize education in this country. In his thoughtful analysis of future industry needs and education readiness studies Dr. Wagner has identified what he calls a "global achievement gap," which is the leap between what even our best schools are teaching, and the must-have skills of the future:

- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and adaptability
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Effective oral and written communication
- Accessing and analyzing information
- Curiosity and imagination

Dr. Wagner points out that in today's digital age, the "Net generation" is, among other things, accustomed to instant gratification and use of the web for extending friendships, interest-driven, self-directed learning; and are constantly connected, creating, and multitasking in a multimedia world—everywhere except in school.

In order to motivate and teach this generation, the school system must be reinvented to be accountable for what matters most. That means to do the work--teaching, learning, and assessing--in new ways. Students must acquire knowledge, but "we need to use content to teach core competencies," he states.

This presentation is based on Dr. Wagner's book: *From The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach The New Survival Skills Our Children Need—And What We Can Do About It* (Basic Books, 2008). The program was made possible through the generous and visionary support of the MetLife Foundation.

### **Discussion question**

At one point in his remarks, Dr. Wagner states that "we have no idea how to teach or assess these skills." It is difficult to do systemically, but good teachers exercise these skills in the classroom all the time. What are your approaches for student skill development? And how can we bring it to scale so all students can succeed in a global knowledge economy?