Twenty-One Trends for the 21st Century:  
Out of the Trenches and into the Future  
A book by Gary Marx  
Published by Education Week Press, Editorial Projects in Education,  
www.edweek.org/go/21Trends

In this new book, author, international speaker, education leader, and futurist Gary Marx presents individual chapters about an array of massive trends that have profound implications for everyone, including our students, schools, colleges and universities, communities, states/provinces, and nations. He also suggests ways to address them. Those trends include:

Demographic Sphere:
- **Generations:** Millennials will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices and will profoundly impact leadership and lifestyles.
  GIs, Silents, Boomers, Xers → Millennials, Generation E
- **Diversity:** In a series of tipping points, majorities will become minorities, creating ongoing challenges for social cohesion.
  Majority/Minority → Minority/Minority  
  Diversity = Division ↔ Diversity = Enrichment  
  Exclusion ↔ Inclusion
  (Worldwide: Growing numbers of people and nations will discover that if we manage our diversity well, it will enrich us. If we don’t manage our diversity well, it will divide us.)
- **Aging:** In developed nations, the old will generally outnumber the young. In developing or less-developed nations, the young will generally outnumber the old.
  Younger → Older  
  Older → Younger

Technology Sphere:
- **Technology:** Ubiquitous, interactive technologies will shape how we live, how we learn, how we see ourselves, and how we relate to the world.
  Macro → Micro → Nano → Subatomic  
  Atoms → Bits  
  Megabytes → Gigabytes → Terabytes → Petabytes → Exabytes → Zettabytes (ZB)
- **Identity and Privacy:** Identity and privacy issues will lead to an array of new and often urgent concerns and a demand that they be resolved.
  Knowing Who You Are ↔ Discovering Who Someone Thinks You Are.
  What’s Private? ↔ What’s Not?

Economic Sphere:
- **Economy:** An economy for a new era will demand restoration and reinvention of physical, social, technological, educational, and policy infrastructure.
  Industrial Age Mentality → Global Knowledge/Information Age Reality
  Social and Intellectual Capital → 21st Century Products and Services
- **Jobs and Careers:** Pressure will grow for society to prepare people for jobs and careers that may not currently exist.
  Career Preparation ↔ Employability and Career Adaptability

Energy and Environmental Sphere:
- **Energy:** The need to develop new sources of affordable and accessible energy will lead to intensified scientific invention and political tension.
  Energy Affordability, Accessibility, Efficiency ↔ Invention, Investment, and Political Tension.
- **Environmental/Planetary Security:** Common opportunities and threats will intensify a worldwide demand for planetary security.
  Personal Security/Self Interest ↔ Planetary Security,
  Common Threats ↔ Common Opportunities
- **Sustainability:** Sustainability will depend on adaptability and resilience in a fast-changing, at-risk world.
  Short-Term Advantage ↔ Long-Term Survival
  Wants of the Present ↔ Needs in the Future
International/Global Sphere:

- **International/Global**: International learning, including relationships, cultural understanding, languages, and diplomatic skills, will become basic.
  
  Isolationist Independence ↔ Interdependence
  
  (Sub-trend: To earn respect in an interdependent world, nations will be expected to demonstrate their reliability and tolerance.)

Education and Learning Sphere:

- **Personalization**: In a world of diverse talents and aspirations, we will increasingly discover and accept that one size does not fit all.
  
  Standardization → Personalization
  
- **Ingenuity**: Releasing ingenuity and stimulating creativity will become primary responsibilities of education and society.
  
  Information Acquisition → Knowledge Creation and Breakthrough Thinking
  
- **Depth, Breadth, and Purposes of Education**: The breadth, depth, and purposes of education will constantly be clarified to meet the needs of a fast-changing world.
  
  Narrowness → Breadth and Depth

Public and Personal Leadership Sphere:

- **Polarization**: Polarization and narrowness will, of necessity, bend toward reasoned discussion, evidence, and consideration of varying points of view.
  
  Narrowness ↔ Open Mindedness  Self Interest ↔ Common Good
  
- **Authority**: A spotlight will fall on how people gain authority and use it.
  
  Absolute Authority → Collaboration  Vertical ↔ Horizontal
  
  Power to Impose ↔ Power to Engage
  
- **Ethics**: Scientific discoveries and societal realities will force widespread ethical choices.
  
  Pragmatic/Expedient → Ethical
  
- **Continuous Improvement**: The status quo will yield to continuous improvement and reasoned progress.
  
  Quick Fixes/Status Quo → Continuous Improvement

Well-Being Sphere:

- **Poverty**: Understanding will grow that sustained poverty is expensive, debilitating, and unsettling.
  
  Sustained Poverty ↔ Opportunity and Hope
  
- **Scarcity vs. Abundance**: Scarcity will help us rethink our view of abundance.
  
  Less ↔ More  What’s Missing? ↔ What’s Possible?
  
- **Personal Meaning and Work-Life Balance**: More of us will seek personal meaning in our lives in response to an intense, high tech, always on, fast-moving society.
  
  Personal Accomplishment ↔ Personal Meaning

These trends were identified by author Gary Marx, president, Center for Public Outreach, Vienna, Virginia, 703-938-8725, gmarxcpo@aol.com. Web Site: GaryMarxCPO.com.

His book, *Twenty-One Trends for the 21st Century: Out of the Trenches and into the Future*, includes observations from a distinguished international Futures Council 21. Copies are available from:

**Education Week Press**--www.edweek.org/go/21Trends (print and electronic)


Gary Marx, CAE, APR, is president of the Center for Public Outreach, an organization he founded in 1998, which provides counsel internationally on future-oriented leadership, communication, education, community, and democracy. He is an international keynote speaker, workshop leader, author, and consultant.

Marx served for nearly 20 years as a senior executive for the American Association of School Administrators. His responsibilities ranged from serving as executive director of the association’s Leadership for Learning Foundation to providing direction for all communication programs and conceiving of and leading numerous strategic initiatives.

During his professional career, Marx has combined his knowledge and expertise in education and communication to become an international leader in both. He has been called "an intellectual entrepreneur, who constantly pursues ideas," and "a deep generalist."

His latest book, published by Education Week Press in 2014, is Twenty-One Trends for the 21st Century: Out of the Trenches and into the Future (print and digital). Other recent books include Sixteen Trends...Their Profound Impact on Our Future, published by the Educational Research Service (ERS) and Education Week Press, and Future Focused Leadership...Preparing Schools, Students, and Communities for Tomorrow’s Realities, published by ASCD. As a futurist, Marx has also directed studies such as Preparing Students for the 21st Century (1996), Preparing Schools and School Systems for the 21st Century (1999), and Ten Trends...Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future (2000). All became influential publications.

Marx is a frequent speaker, workshop leader, and advisor on futures issues for school systems; colleges and universities; civic, community, career, and technology educators; business, professional, community, and government leaders; and state, national, regional, and international organizations, including the World Future Society and World Affairs Council. His presentations, books, articles, and counsel on trends and other issues stimulate thinking about how organizations and individuals can stay ahead of the curve as they plan for the future while staying strategically flexible in a fast-changing world. In addition to his keynotes, Marx frequently leads “Community Conversations” for education systems and communities to help them think about their futures and expand vision, ownership, and support. He believes all educators are leaders by virtue of the important role they play in society.

Marx, who has visited 81 countries, has done energizing, future-focused presentations in all 50 U.S. states and on six continents, including North America, Asia, Africa, Australia, South America, and Europe. He has provided counsel to organizations worldwide.

In recognition of his career-spanning contributions to education and leadership, Marx was presented the coveted Presidents’ Award by the National School Public Relations Association and the Distinguished Service Award by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Both recognize his lifetime achievement. He served as 2014 president of the Horace Mann League. Marx is one of a few people in the nation to be accredited by the American Society of Association Executives, the Public Relations Society of America, and the National School Public Relations Association.