Today's children are growing up in a world very different from the one even   years ago. Seismic changes in the labor market mean that we are living and working in a knowledge-based economy—one that demands advanced literacy and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills, whether for application in the private or public sector. Today, information moves through media at lightning speeds and is accessible in ways that are unprecedented; technology has eliminated many jobs while changing and creating others, especially those involving mathematical and conceptual reasoning skills. One characteristic of these fast-growing segment of jobs is that the employee needs to be able to solve unstructured problems while working with others in teams. At the same time, migration and immigration rates around the world bring diversity to schools and neighborhoods. The exponential growth in interactions and information sharing from around the world means there is much to process, communicate, analyze and respond to in the everyday, across all settings. For a great majority of jobs, conceptual reasoning and technical writing skills are integral parts to the daily routine.

To prepare students for the changes in the way we live and work, and to be sure that our education system keeps pace with what it means to be mathematically literate and what it means to collaboratively problem solve, we need a different approach to daily teaching and learning. We need content-rich standards that will serve as a platform for advancing children's 21st-century mathematical skills —their abstract reasoning, their collaboration skills, their ability to learn from peers and through technology, and their flexibility as a learner in a dynamic learning environment. Students need to b