

OPEN SCHOOL BC

Communications 12

Introduction Assignment

This assignment is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to conduct a close reading of an informational text, and to respond to the text effectively.

Student Name _____

Student No. _____ **Date** _____

Address _____ **Postal Code** _____

Based on the instructions provided by your school, complete the following *Communications 12* assignment independently and return it to your teacher.

There are two parts to this assignment:

Part A: Multiple Choice	4 marks
Part B: Short Answer Questions	10 marks
Part C: Paragraph Composition	6 marks

Contents:

16 pages

Assignment time:

2 hours

Before you start, read these important tips.

1. Read each question carefully before answering.
2. Answer all questions to the best of your ability.
3. Take your time. Check your work before handing in the assignment.
4. Write neatly and check your spelling.

not widely available until the early 1990s. How different is Asimov's story from the reality of schooling in the present day? What does 21st century schooling look like? One way to understand how today's schools have changed is to compare them with schools of the past.

Early Schools in BC

In some ways, schools have changed very little since their early days. The first school in British Columbia was the "Company School," created in 1849 for the children of officers working in Fort Victoria for the Hudson's Bay Company. Three years later, the "Colonial School" was established for regular employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1853, the first public school house was built in Victoria. Over the next 150 years, many more schools have been founded throughout the province.

In 1890, the *Course of Study for Common Schools* was the guide to classroom instruction. Teachers were expected to teach "...reading, writing, spelling, English grammar, composition and letter writing, mental and written arithmetic; geography, English and Canadian history; anatomy, physiology and hygiene."¹ Many of the subjects that students are expected to learn in school remain close to what they were when schools were first created in BC.

Distance Education

Most students attend school in a physical building. However, an increasing number of students are also enrolled in distance education courses, either on a full-time or a part-time basis. The earliest distance education services in the province were offered through the Correspondence Schools Branch of the Ministry of Education. The branch was founded in 1919. It was responsible for delivering distance education materials (via floatplane) to families living in remote regions throughout the province, one example being "lighthouse families." Later, the Correspondence Schools Branch would evolve into the Open Learning Agency. Open School BC was a division of the Open Learning Agency, and developed (and still develops) courses for students from kindergarten to grade 12. Now Open School BC is part of the BC Ministry of Education. The BC Learning Network is another organization involved in developing courses for K-12 distance education students in the province.

With the introduction and widespread use of the Internet, the ability for people to access information is greater than ever before in history. This is especially relevant to education, since now many courses that are part of

¹ *The Homeroom: British Columbia's history of education web site*
<http://www.viu.ca/homeroom/content/timeline/1840s/1890.htm>

the BC Ministry of Education's K-12 program can be taken online. In 1998, Open School BC developed 13 courses that were made available in both print and online formats. These were among the earliest examples of K-12 online courses delivered anywhere in the world!

The Internet has permanently changed the educational landscape forever. A huge number of students (kids and adults) now take distance education courses online. The use of the Internet in combination with mobile devices is often considered a key element of 21st century learning.

E-books Everywhere

Perhaps Isaac Asimov was predicting a future without books when he wrote "The Fun They Had." How far off is his prediction? Consider the following facts for the year 2011:

- In the United States and the United Kingdom, e-book sales have tripled and now represent 14% of the adult book market.
- In the United Kingdom, 13% of adults own an e-reader. For every 250 book purchases, the online vendor Amazon sells 115 e-books compared with 100 paperbacks and 35 hard covers.
- 23 out of 50 *USA Today* bestsellers in a recent weekly bestsellers list were e-books, compared with 27 print editions.

It is safe to assume that e-book sales will only increase over time. Publishers predict that the "enhanced e-book" of the future may include interactive features such as:

- Behind-the-scenes additional information and context.
- Fact checkers to ensure the reliability of sources.
- A video and/or animated component.
- Links to online book clubs (with access to discussion forums and other readers' preferred book lists).

E-books are already building interactivity into the reader experience. Animated books are especially popular with children and adults alike. The ability to not only *read* text, but to also *listen* to it and *watch* it at the same time reinforces the ways in which many children are exposed to reading at an early age.

Audio Books Abound!

In addition to e-books, audio books are now available for direct download instead of on CD-Rom. In fact, in 2011 only two out of a sample of 150 audio books reviewed could be purchased on a compact disc. Increasingly, commuters on the subway may download a copy of the “poem of the day” directly onto their mobile device, or listen to their favourite author while driving into town. Audio books are already tremendously popular with many people who cover huge distances in their cars.

Bye-bye Books?

Does all this mean that the traditional book will disappear? Not likely. Above all, readers who wish to immerse themselves in a literary world don’t want to be distracted. The Internet offers so many ways for a reader to be diverted that for some, the pleasure of the uninterrupted read will always be the greatest attraction of the trade paperback. For all of the advantages of book digitisation, nothing can replace the satisfaction that accompanies reading a good book in the bathtub or on the beach.

Personalized Learning

Back to learning: many education leaders use the expressions “21st century learning” and “personalized learning” interchangeably. What is personalized learning? The phrase seems to suggest some form of instruction that is tailored to the individual. Consider a most extreme example: students involved in personalized learning could be studying the subjects that interest them most, and learning about them in their own way and at their own pace. This could include spending less time or no time in a school setting. Given the current trends in electronic publishing, it’s possible that physical textbooks would never necessarily be involved in a student’s education.

In today’s schools, student instruction is managed through the use of a rigid class timetable, bells, and the expectation that everyone learns at more or less the same rate. Schools of the future will most likely include more flexibility in student timetables, as well as a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach between course subjects with an emphasis on project-based learning.

Personalized learning is not just concerned with *what* you learn, but equally importantly *how* you learn. Maybe you’re working on an online course on your laptop—at home, at the park or in the library. Maybe you’re walking downtown or going for a bike ride, while listening to a lecture through your cell phone or on your MP3 player. With personalized learning, technology is considered an important tool for learning, and some emphasis is placed on technological literacy and mastery.

Part of the vision of personalized learning is that compared with right now, more families would be involved in the school community or any other learning communities with which a student might be interacting. Technology would allow parents to be more connected with school activities and student progress. Technology would also allow for more regular and ongoing communication between parents, school administrators, and parents.

Critics of personalized learning have suggested that for some if not many students, developing the strategies and confidence to manage so much freedom, and to thrive in such an environment could prove difficult. The vision of personalized learning suggests that as students grow older, they will be given increasing independence and responsibility for their learning. But even if most students begin to cultivate self-discipline at an early age, what about the students who have difficulty managing self-discipline? Without the proper support of parents, teachers and school counsellors, it is possible that these students would struggle all the way through school. This is an issue that everyone involved in the education community must consider very carefully.

The Future of Education

From a bureaucratic perspective, there are many different elements involved in the education system, especially as it relates to personalized learning. Among the questions that need to be considered in terms of any changes to the system are:

- How do teaching and learning look different in the early, middle and high school years?
- What should students be expected to learn, and when?
- How should students be assessed (should teachers even give grades, and if so, letter grades, percentages, or should both be used)?
- How often should student progress reports be provided to parents?
- How can technology best be used to support personalized learning?
- What criteria should be considered for a student to graduate?
- What criteria should be used to fairly provide scholarships and awards to students in a personalized learning program?
- How can teachers be trained to best support personalized learning?

INTRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT

MARKS

It is highly likely that personalized or 21st century will look very different in different homes, different schools, and different regions of the province. Will “real books” still be around at the end of the 21st century? Will all of our schooling be done online? No one can say for sure. For now, all we can say with certainty is that Isaac Asimov’s prophecy of the mechanical teacher has not yet entirely come to pass.

Put the letter of the correct answer in the parentheses to the right. (4 marks)

1. Which description best captures the meaning of personalized learning as described in the text?
 - a. Learning without books, without teachers and without classrooms.
 - b. Allowing students and parents greater choice in what students learn, when they learn it, and how and where they learn it.
 - c. Ensuring that students achieve their full potential during their school years, in order to better prepare for lifelong learning.
 - d. Technology plays a central role in supporting teaching, learning, and the engagement of the entire family in student education. ()

2. According to the text, what is commonly associated with *21st century learning*?
 - a. An interdisciplinary approach to education, with a concentration on project-based learning
 - b. Fewer teachers in high school classrooms, with more students involved in apprenticeships or taking online courses
 - c. Education with a concentration on teaching critical thinking, problem-solving and interpersonal skills for the future
 - d. Schooling with a focus on information and media literacy, critical and creative thinking, collaboration and technology skills ()

3. What is identified in the text as a key element of *21st century learning*?
 - a. The use of printed textbooks
 - b. The use of e-books and e-readers
 - c. The use of audio books and MP3 players
 - d. The use of the Internet in combination with mobile devices ()

MARKS

4. How long has distance education been present in BC?
 - a. Since widespread use of the Internet began in the 1990s
 - b. Since 1919, with the creation of the Correspondence Schools Branch
 - c. Since 1998, when 13 online courses were created by Open School BC
 - d. Since 1950, with the introduction of the first televised course (“telecourse”) ()

MARKS

Part B: Short Answer Questions (10 marks)

In your own words and using complete sentences, provide an answer to each question. You will be evaluated on the focus, consistency and logic that you include in your answers.

1. What is the main difference highlighted in the text between schooling in the past and schooling in the future?

2. What is one advantage of the e-book compared with the traditional book?

3. How has the Internet changed education?

MARKS

4. What is one advantage of the traditional book compared with the e-book?

5. What conclusion is reached in the text about how personalized learning should be defined?

INTRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT

MARKS

Evaluation Guidelines

/4	Part A: Multiple Choice
/10	Part B: Short Answer Questions
/6	Part C: Paragraph Composition
<hr/>	
/20	Total