

Passing the Baton: The Next Generation of Students

O wonder!

How many godly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,

That has such people in't.

The Tempest, William Shakespeare

The “best years of their lives” are ending as the Next Greatest Generation finishes college and enters the workforce. Born between 1979 and 1995 the Millennials are 19 to 35 years old; with the tail-end of this cohort being of college age. 84 million strong, their sheer size has earned them the nickname the Next Greatest Generation. Larger than the Boomers this cohort has grown up connected. They have come to expect instantaneity of service and information in real-time. Twitter and Facebook have been integral parts of their lives - to the extent that one study found that over half of them would rather give up their sense of smell than give up their technology!

They have been the primary occupant of the college classroom for the last 17 years, and are poised to become the “largest consumer buying group” according to Paige Francis, vice president of global brand management for Aloft. Because of their size and spending potential, much has been written about the Millennials. But they are moving on – and post-secondary institutions are preparing for Gen Z.

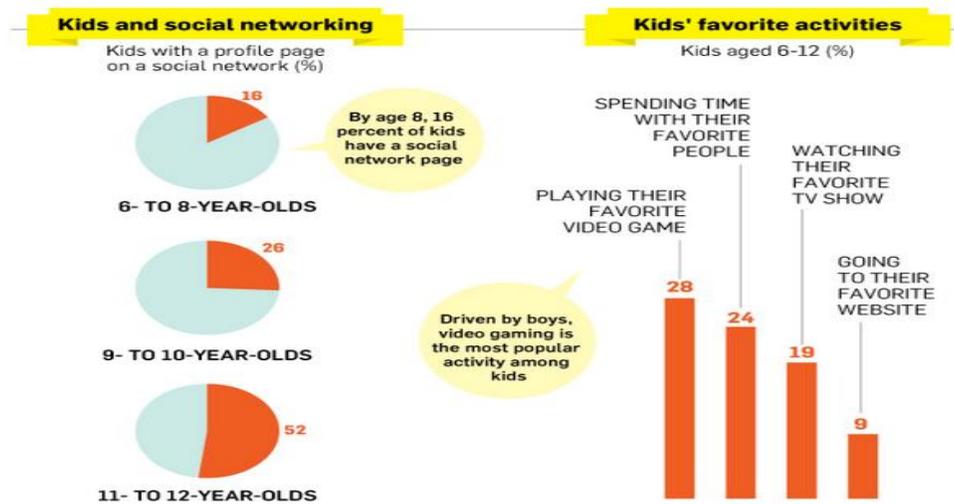


From: Mccrindle Blog. *How to Speak Gen Z: the alphabet of Generation Z on flip cards.*
<http://www.mccrindle.com.au/BlogRetrieve.aspx?> (October 23, 2012).

Generation Z is comprised of those born after 1995; 2012 might be the end date – but that is not official. Various labels have been applied to this cohort including the New Silent Generation, the Homeland Generation, Gen 9/11, the Zoog generation, and

Generation Alpha. Size wise they are on a par with Gen Y. It is likely that this group will be the most diverse ever, and will probably be the most technologically savvy group yet. In the same way that earlier generations grew up with stuffed animals/dolls, blankets, and board games, they have grown up with technology. On a typical day in 2005 – when the leading edge of this generation was 10 years old - approximately 20% of 3-4 year olds, and 27% of 5-6 year olds spent 50 minutes per day at a keyboard. More recently a study found that Gen Zers spend 41% of their time outside the classroom on the computer or a mobile device (<http://www.businessinsider.com/generation-z-spending-habits-2014-60>). Another report indicates that Gen Z is the second-largest demographic owning iPhones at 24 percent (ranking a few points below Millennials at 29 percent). According to a Pew Research study in 2012, middle and high school teachers indicate that students were very likely to use Google (or other online search engines) when conducting research; after Google were Wikipedia and YouTube. By the way - accessing a research librarian and printed books were near the bottom of the list.

More than likely their reliance on technology will have a number of implications – both presumed and real. Among the advantages often cited are: easy access to information, improved communication, efficiency and productivity. For sure information is readily available - at their fingertips no less! Presumably videoconferencing, text messaging, and social networking have fostered communication. While it is sometimes debated whether increased technology simplifies life, it is hard for them to imagine what it was like before the digital era – a case in point is the typewriter.



From: J. Walter Thompson Company. Data point: Gen Z immersed in technology.
<http://www.jwtintelligence.com/2012/09/data-point-gen-immersed-technology/#axzz3FqqlchPG>.
 (September 21, 2012).

A number of disadvantages have also been supposed. For example some suggest that Gen Z prefers digital entertainment to social interaction and that a significant amount of socializing is done online. This situation could lead to increased loneliness. Among the other disadvantages sometimes cited are decreased competency, decreased creativity, and a dependency on technology. They have come to depend on technology for many daily activities and may feel jittery when “offline.” Another plausible disadvantage is job loss. An example in the hospitality industry is the use of self-service check-in kiosks in hotels.

The workplace they will be entering is diverse in many ways. It includes three- possibly four - other generations. Some of those in the Silent Generation continue to work into their seventies (and beyond). Likewise many Boomers will stay in the workforce well beyond the traditional retirement age of 65. Gen Xers, the cohort immediately preceding Gen Y, are between 36 and 49 years of age at this point in time as well as the Millennials. To the extent that recruiting, training, motivating, communicating, managing, and retaining are more effective when they can be personalized to these cohorts; managing the hospitality workplace will be both exciting and challenging.

Managing the classroom environs will also be challenging. “Supervision” or “organization” of the learning may be more fitting ways to describe *Our Brave New Classroom*. Perhaps organizing the learning is more appropriate terminology as online instruction becomes integrated with traditional approaches. It seems likely that Gen Zers will be more tech savvy than their instructors - and the skills they will need may be different. Finding information quickly, judging the quality of information, and behaving responsibly online will be important (see Pew Research, Part IV: Teaching Research Skills in Today’s Digital Environment). It doesn’t seem far-fetched to suggest that this cohort will major in the internet rather than a traditional discipline like HTML!