

Meet the Newbies?

An Inside Scoop on Generation Alpha

What do we know about Generation Alpha and why does it matter to you? This article serves to answer this question by providing general information about Generation Alpha, such as characteristics that encompass the current knowledge of what is known of the group, potential educational hurdles they may face, and overall challenges to traditional U.S. Education. The incoming generation, known as Generation Alpha, is named after the Greek description of "the start of something new, not a return to the old" (Iberdrola, n.d.) set to create impactful strides in our society, especially in institutions of higher education. Generation Alpha's name was carefully chosen due to "the way of understanding how global events and technological, economic, and social changes interact to define the way a set of people see the world" (Iberdrola, n.d.).

But what makes this incoming generation so different from your Millennials and Generation Z students? Generation Alpha consists of those born between 2010 and 2024. They are the first generation to have grown up in a world that fully encapsulates technology. Generation Alpha's appearance is said to have "coincided with the launch of the first iPad by Apple" (Iberdrola, n.d.). Seems ironic, but as you may have noticed, they are seen to be attached and growing up with each other. This group is also described as the "best-educated generation ever...the wealthiest, and the generation more likely than any in the past century to spend some or all of their childhood in living arrangements without both of their biological parents" (Pinsker, 2020). Family dynamics for the incoming generation have been shown to be unique; as Demographer and Professor of Sociology at Florida State University, Elwood Carlson, states, "When you look at a child in this generation, you never know what kind of family life they have experienced" (*What Do We Call the Generation after Gen-Z?*, 2019). Generation Alpha is set to

be the most diverse generation, whose families will represent more countries worldwide, including diversity in income. Carlson states that the incoming generation is noted to face the most economic inequality for reasons consisting of income inequity growing in North American Society and the concentration of births occurring in low-income families.

So how can we make sure Alpha students succeed once they enter college?

Newsflash, there are changes that need to be made! With the multitude of changes in overall living quality and lifestyles that Generation Alpha will face, in comparison to Generation Z and Millennials, it is essential that we are able to determine how to properly ensure they are receiving an equitable education that fits their needs and learning styles. Generation Alpha has been shown to develop characteristics such as hyper-connectivity, independence, and visual learning. Alpha children are connected more than ever due to their technologically based way of living. They also prefer to learn visually, especially due to their technological involvement. However, Alpha students have increasingly shown negative consequences that are impacting the classroom. Students are demonstrating reduced concentration and attention spans, "As they are used to using several screens at once and quickly scanning information" (Iberdrola, n.d.). Alpha students are rarely socializing due to their days spent online, at home, rather than socializing in traditional ways. Students are also focusing more on online games rather than physical toys, which may stunt their development of creativity and imagination. With the listed educational and developmental hurdles Alpha students have or will face, the question arises as to how we can reach students academically. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students were forced to learn virtually. According to Heather Dretsch, a professor at N.C. State University, "Virtual schooling and lockdowns forced Gen Alpha to spend even more time on screens – and it also reinforced that strong connection between Gen Alpha and their parents" (*Meet the Mini Millennials: Generation Alpha*, 2021). Alpha students were able to develop hobbies, such as baking and

cooking, during the time of the pandemic's lockdown, which helped strengthen their relationships.

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact has significantly impacted U.S. traditional classrooms and is only increasing as our society continues to be more technology-driven. "According to the findings, Generation Alpha expects visual, aural, and kinesthetic methods to be used in classroom management, and they are more prone to distractions, which are crucial factors to take into consideration in creating a teaching-learning environment." ("Generation Alpha: Understanding the next Cohort of University Students," 2021). Connect with Providence College's IT department to learn more about web accessibility support systems in place: <https://it.providence.edu/information-technology/accessibility/>. While there will be incoming changes to the lives of Alpha students, institutions of higher education must prepare and continue to have diverse members of faculty and staff to represent the incoming generation. This will allow students to have experiential learning incorporating their current and future needs and a community-based learning model.

References:

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