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Global-Ready Students

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Growing Global Competency Through Policy, Advocates, and Virtual Exchange

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The values behind the idea of global competency are not new. For decades, educational initiatives have acknowledged the importance of learning about other cultures and different ways of life. What has changed, though, is the imperative to ensure that multicultural experiences in the classroom translate into the kinds of skills and knowledge that will empower students as they enter our global society.

Some states have already taken the crucial first step of adopting global competency learning standards; for example, [Kentucky's Global Program Review](#), [Wisconsin's Global Education Achievement Certificate](#), and [North Carolina's State Board of Education Task Force on Global Education](#). But it's not enough if only some students can benefit from curricula that emphasize global readiness; all students should have access to global learning opportunities that set them up for success. Likewise, global learning cannot just be an add-on activity in an already overloaded curriculum, or another initiative that competes for scarce resources. Rather, it requires a systems-level approach that seeks to integrate global-competency education into mainstream pedagogy and curricula. To start this work, we must identify and support educator and parent allies and build upon existing tools.

Enlist and Develop Advocates

When developing advocates for global learning, first consider enlisting educators who have already integrated the values of global competency into their lives. Typically, these early adopters have had an extensive international experience. For example, they or someone in their family may have served in the military. They might be a former Peace Corps volunteer, a student who studied abroad, an immigrant who has had to learn to live in different countries, or anyone else with an experience that convinced them that global competency is a major part of any quality education.

Parents and families whose jobs, family history, or other personal experiences intersect with global education values can also become key allies in efforts to ingrain global competency more fully into the

U.S. education system. But although many families might be enthusiastic about helping their children engage with different cultures and communities, others may be more reluctant. Asia Society has a [robust list of resources](#) useful to [making the case for global education](#) to skeptical stakeholders.

For educators, targeted professional learning opportunities focused on global competencies will be critical to advancing both instructional practice and student outcomes. The importance of this kind of support is hard to overstate. This training not only ensures that educators have a thorough understanding of global competencies and their importance, but also prepares them to embrace global competency as an integrated approach to teaching and learning as opposed to an adjunct module or passing fad. Moreover, by providing profound global-learning experiences to educators, schools can begin building an appreciation for global competency directly into the educational system.

Amplify Virtual Exchange

Finally, the idea of virtual exchanges--using a range of technologies and instructional approaches to connect students with their peers around the world--has been around for about 25 years. Although not a new practice, virtual exchange is among the most effective tools at our disposal for expanding global competency education. It offers a viable, scalable, and cost-effective way to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop global competencies as part of a deeply ingrained mind and skill set. If complemented by a standards-aligned curriculum, the technology and pedagogy can be seamlessly adopted by most schools. By integrating virtual exchanges into existing curricula—and treating them as both a tool and an instructional approach—schools and districts can help their students develop global competencies throughout the course of their studies rather than only in activities that are cordoned off from the rest of their learning experiences.

Attaching the same importance to global competency development as we would any other set of essential skills—whether they be in reading or STEM—ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed in a world increasingly defined by its interconnectedness. As culture and information exchange accelerates on a global scale, we owe it to our students to make sure they have the skills they need to thrive.

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