The world in which today’s students will graduate is far different than the world in which we grew up. As never before, American education must prepare students for a world where the opportunities for success require the ability to compete and cooperate on a global scale. The globalization of economies, the rise of China and India, advances in science and communication technology, acceleration of international migration — and the fact that virtually every major health, environmental, and human security challenge Americans face can be solved only through international collaboration — will require our high school graduates to be far more knowledgeable about world regions, cultures, and global issues.

But we have not emphasized such skills in our schools. A 2007 report from the National Academy of Sciences warns, “The pervasive lack of knowledge of foreign cultures and languages threatens the security of the United States and as well its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry.”

INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Over the past few years, schools and communities across the country have begun to respond to this new reality and are seeking to redesign education to produce students who are both college ready and globally competent.

Consider this example: The Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago, an inner-city magnet school that is one of Chicago’s most ethnically diverse schools, has shown how integrating global content enhances academic excellence. Founded in 2000 and now one of the top schools in Illinois, the school’s mission is to prepare students for “leadership in their community, the nation, and the world.” Every student studies a world language for four years and experiences a home-stay exchange with a sister school in China, France, north Africa, Japan, Switzerland, Chile, Italy, or South Africa. Use of technology, in-

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* Vivien Stewart is vice president for education at the Asia Society. ©2008, Vivien Stewart.
cluding videoconferencing, connects Payton classrooms to their sister schools and to subject-matter experts around the world. An array of international visitors, students, and seminars further develops the international spirit of the school. The school is also the flagship of Chicago’s Chinese language program, the largest Chinese program in the country.

**Schools typically start in a small way on internationalizing their curriculum and gradually broaden their approaches.**

This school, one of the winners of the Goldman Sachs Prizes for Excellence in Education, run by the Asia Society, is clearly an outstanding school. But data collected on hundreds of schools that have applied for the prize — from more than 40 states and from rural and inner-city areas, as well as suburban and private schools — show that many schools are embarking on similar journeys. Our research shows that schools typically start in a small way and gradually broaden their approaches. Over time, globally oriented schools develop key common elements. These schools:

- **Create a global vision and culture** by revising their mission statements and graduate profiles and creating a school culture that supports internationally focused teaching and learning;
- **Develop an internationally oriented faculty** by recruiting teachers with international interests and encouraging teachers to take advantage of the many professional development and study/travel opportunities offered through universities and international organizations;
- **Integrate international content into all curriculum areas**, bringing a global dimension to science and language arts, as well as social studies and languages;
- **Emphasize the learning of world languages**, including less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese and Arabic;
- **Expand student experiences** through internationally oriented service learning, internships, and partnerships and exchanges with schools in other countries; and
- **Harness technology** to tap global information sources, create international collaborations, and offer international courses and languages online, especially to underserved communities.

**Going Global: Preparing Our Students for an Interconnected World,** a report of the Asia Society, provides key concepts and examples for each of these elements, drawn from more than 70 secondary schools in places as different as Vermont, West Virginia, North Carolina, Texas, Florida, Kansas, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma. The ways in which individual schools harness community resources to link the local to the global demonstrate that teaching and learning about the world is within reach of every type of school.

**STATES PREPARE FOR GLOBALIZATION**

Encouraging as these schools are, they will remain islands of excellence without state action to take these approaches to scale.

States are critical to creating internationally oriented school systems. States recognize that they are no longer competing with the state next door but with countries around the world. More than 25 states have participated in the States Network on International Education in the Schools, supported by the Longview Foundation. They are beginning to put in place a series of steps to raise awareness about the importance of global knowledge and skills; build leadership among education, business, and political leaders; and create policies and programs that will introduce these new skills. A 2008 report by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Asia Society, *Putting the World into World-Class Education,* reviews the developments that are happening around the country in such states as Ohio (see companion article) and proposes a set of recommendations to give all students access to a world-class, globally oriented education. The report recommends that each state take stock of their efforts and create a framework for systemic change beginning in the elementary grades and extending through high school. The framework should include:

- **Redefining high school graduation requirements to include global knowledge and skills.** Every state should include global competence in its overall recasting and modernizing of high school graduation requirements. Requirements should include world languages and assessment of international knowledge and skills across the curriculum. As they redesign middle and high schools to address issues of equity and global competence, states should consider creating internationally themed schools to act as models and professional development centers.
- **International benchmarking of state standards.** Across the globe, countries are increasing their high school and college graduation rates, increasing their achievement in math and science, and expand-
ing students’ global knowledge and skills. States need to learn about education practices in other high-performing countries and use the best of what has been observed to help us continue to grow and improve. States should review their statewide assessments to ensure that they measure not just content knowledge, but also the analytical, higher-order thinking and cross-cultural communication skills that students will need to face the challenges of a changing world.

• **Making world languages a core part of the curriculum in grades 3-12.** States need to create a long-term plan to expand their capacity in world languages and build on effective approaches to language learning, including starting early and creating longer sequences of study, using more immersion-like experiences, and harnessing technology (e.g., online language courses). High-quality alternative certification routes can speed up the production of language teachers from heritage communities and enable the development of programs in less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese and Arabic.

• **Increasing the capacity of educators to teach the world.** States need to work through their teacher certification mechanisms and with their institutions of higher education to internationalize teacher preparation programs. States should reexamine professional development for teachers in light of the new global context and encourage international experiences for both prospective and practicing educators.

• **Using technology to expand global opportunities.** State technology offices should encourage the use of information sources from around the world, help teachers engage in classroom-to-classroom collaborations to connect students with international peers, expand opportunities for students to take internationally oriented courses and world languages online, and promote student-created international projects on the web.

Public opinion polls show broad and growing awareness of the need to get our students globally ready. Although some schools, districts, and states are already making strides in this area, these efforts need to be expanded. Until now, few financial incentives have gone to help states and school districts internationalize their classrooms, and only a handful of initiatives have been put in place to demonstrate the power of “putting the world” into our students’ hands.

**THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE**

Graduating the next generation of students prepared for the challenges of a diverse globally interconnected world is a national challenge, not just a state or local one. Our new president and Congress, working with the nation’s governors, business, and education leaders, need to create a new national policy to ensure that we not only produce more high school and college graduates but that those graduates are globally competent citizens, ready to take their place in the world community. For 50 years, the federal government has played a critical role in fostering foreign language and area studies expertise at the postsecondary level, but in the 21st century, knowledge of the world is no longer a luxury for a small group of experts but a requirement for an educated person. As a new administration and Congress consider the reauthorization of federal funding for elementary and secondary education, a new federal-state partnership will be needed to make access to an internationally competitive world-class education and graduating globally competent citizens a national priority.

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**Gradsating globally competent citizens will require partnerships between federal, state, and local leaders in government, business, and education.**


5. Longview Foundation, *Report on Internationalizing Teacher Preparation* (Silver Spring, Md.).


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