HERESA Tarlos, a professor of geography at Orange Coast College in Southern California, teaches her students a foreign language at the same time she teaches them geography. Tarlos, who was educated in Europe and the U.S., is fluent in five languages. Every time she presents a new term to her students, she incorporates the German word for it. She also assigns panels of eight to 10 students to research how geography is taught in other countries, such as Argentina, France, and Thailand. And every two years, she takes a group of American students abroad for summer school in Europe to cities such as Rome, Florence, and Paris. “This is my contribution to global education,” Tarlos said.

Nancy Kaplan, an English teacher at International School in Staten Island, New York, works with her students to publish an international newspaper that is written by students around the world. “Any time I meet anybody from another country, that’s how I build my international reporter base,” Kaplan said. “You just have to keep the connections going. You put it in the hands of the students. They know how to connect with technology, and I think the teacher’s job is just to help them focus that connection and continue it.”

These were just two examples of global education that were shared during the panel discussion that kicked off the 2007 PDK Summit on Global Education in Vancouver, British Columbia, on October 18.

“This wasn’t about a panel and an audience,” said panelist Vivien Stewart, the Asia Society’s vice president of education. “This was about a group. The people in the audience have as many good ideas as the people on the panel.”

Lloyd Axworthy, president of the University of Winnipeg and past director of the Liu Center for the Study of Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, agreed. Axworthy moderated the discussion among five global education experts and accepted questions and comments from the audience. “There’s an opportuni-
ty for your organization to actually do a real inventory of best practices,” Axworthy told the Kappans in the audience. “Just the sheer sharing of it could add an enormous amount of real fiber to what could be done. What I’m hearing, very briefly, is that there are a lot of pretty interesting, exciting things going on, not only what our panel is proposing, but also what you yourself are involved in.”

Stewart agreed, noting that the conversation about global education has evolved. “I think the question has changed from whether we should teach about the world to how to teach about the world, given everything else that we have to do,” she said.

Panelist Karen Kodama, an international education administrator at the Seattle Public Schools, was until recently the principal of John Stanford International School, a K-5 bilingual immersion public school in Seattle. She found room for global issues in the curriculum by superimposing a global perspective on other subjects. “There’s not enough time in the day to teach everything you think you need to teach,” Kodama said. “You really need to prioritize to see how you can begin to integrate. We wanted to teach a world language. We don’t have enough time in the day to add another subject, so why can’t you just overlay it on top of subjects?”

At John Stanford, that’s exactly what they did. Students began to spend half their day studying math, science, culture, and literacy in their chosen world language, either Japanese or Spanish. Parents and community leaders liked the approach and asked why international education wasn’t available in other parts of the city and to students from kindergarten to 12th grade. Now, Kodama is looking at ways for the district to expand its international education program to make those things happen. “We wouldn’t have to call it international education if we had this type of education for all our children, because aren’t we all just preparing our children to be successful, not only in college and work but for the world?” Kodama asked.

Students become global citizens by engaging with other students, according to Wyn Morgan of Bedfordshire, United Kingdom. Morgan works for a charity called Global Communities that connects students in schools in different countries to work together on a variety of projects. “One of the ways of getting people to be globally aware is to actually work with somebody,” Morgan said. “You can’t play a piano by asking simply to have a look at it. You’ve actually got to lift the lid and play the keys. How can you get somebody to be a global citizen if they don’t actually interact with somebody in another place?”

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is one way to link students and teachers in different countries. In small-group discussions, conference participants suggested that teleconferencing, virtual field trips, and global projects could help students learn about other regions and cultures.

Technology can also enhance students’ international trips, Kaplan said. Students can blog and do collaborative work via the Internet before and after the face-to-face meetings. They can also use Skype, a software program that allows users to make telephone calls through their computers to other Skype users for free.

Technology can also serve as an icebreaker between students. When a child soldier from Sierra Leone met a U.S. teenager, Kaplan said, their first conversations were about video gaming. “Since then, this child has been working with my students to report for the international newspaper,” Kaplan said. “I think it’s the job of the teacher to focus that initial social interaction on something that could fit into our curriculum, into some kind of meaningful experience.”

Technology is accelerating the pace of change so that the future is no longer as predictable as it used to be when change happened more slowly, argued panelist James Mahoney, executive director of Battelle for Kids. Educators are trying to prepare students for the future, but the problems, tools, and jobs that will exist then aren’t even imaginable now. “I think someday school won’t be a place,” Mahoney said. “School will be what is taking place. We’re trying to figure out how to sort through these incredible changes, but we know that we are all connected economically and in a whole different set of ways.”

Using new media is probably one of the greatest ways to internationalize education, said panelist Shari Albright, chief academic officer of the International Studies Schools Network at the Asia Society. The problem is updating the infrastructure in schools so that all students have equitable access to new media. Another challenge is providing educators with professional development so they can use the tools effectively. “The professional learning imperative that challenge then creates
for us as educators is daunting for some and very exciting for others,” she said. “I think we have to get our heads around what that new learning for educators means.”

Stewart said her vision is to have children in global classrooms with students in other countries. “You figure out the time difference, obviously, but I think that’s a much more powerful motivator to learn about the world than saying, ‘Thou shalt learn geography because it’s good for you,’” she said. “You can learn about culture that way. You have a motivation to be internationally oriented, and you also get some sense of this international comparison that actually students in other countries may work harder than you do. Perhaps that’s a motivation.”

Also up for discussion was the way in which technology can affect students’ work. “Technology is about linking, a connection, about making the work authentic,” said panelist Yong Zhao, a distinguished professor at Michigan State University and the founding director of the U.S.-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence. “When students have an audience beyond their teachers, that makes the work authentic.”

Michigan State University is offering Chinese courses online and using Second Life, a virtual world, as part of the course. “We have a Chinese island,” Zhao said. “You can get in there, get a virtual drink from China and a virtual green tea, or watch TV there and talk with Chinese people. We are trying to immerse you in those cultural experiences in a virtual environment.”

Although technology can give rise to many experiences and make them accessible to students, Stewart spoke up on behalf of face-to-face interactions. “In our schools, we have seen the power of international exchanges, of international travel, of shared service and learning initiatives,” she said. “With technology offering us so much potential, there is still incredible power in that human-to-human connection that we are able to provide.”

**WHAT TO TEACH?**

Students need to learn technology skills, but it’s also important for them to learn how to be adaptable, creative, and innovative, according to Kodama. “We have to teach those types of things to our children to be prepared not just for one thing, but to be prepared to work in this new world, because it’s going to be different than when they’re initially educated,” she said. “Being more innovative, thinking outside the box, are things that we need to teach our children.”

Educators should also focus on teaching more than just math and science skills, because diversity can be a strength, Zhao said. “When we think about preparing our students for the future, when we think about other people’s talents, we need to find our own niche,” he said. “What kinds of things can we do that others cannot do? Not necessarily for competition, but also for

I am someone who is extremely against testing, so that’s why I left China. I skipped out of China because China was really heavily into testing. I understand the current ideas that say we have to accept testing. But could we just be dreamers for a while, just have a daydream? Could we imagine, as educators, what does testing really mean? When we know something is so meaningless anyway, why do we still stick with it? That’s the question. Everyone knows it’s useless, and we still stick with it.

Why do we accept this situation? Because testing, in essence, defines that there is a body of knowledge. This is geography, and you’re supposed to master this, and the other thing is not geography. And we know that is not true. Testing in many ways has been showing that it doesn’t predict your future. We know that.

Today, what I think technology does, what globalization does, is liberate all individuals to potentially fulfill and realize their own potential to develop unique talents that can be used and can contribute to the society for a long time. So I think the first thing I would really ask the schools or educators is to recognize that fact. You could perhaps redefine what knowledge is if you move away from standardized testing. But until then, we are going to be in a model where you have to teach a certain body of knowledge so that you can pass the test. That’s why schools have become so irrelevant to kids’ lives. I just want us to remember our own lives. We suffered from school, and we want to pass on the suffering to other kids. I think we shouldn’t be doing that. I hope we can all get united and seriously consider why we can’t change. Just ask the question. If we know it’s so bad, why can’t we change?

— Yong Zhao, Michigan State University, East Lansing.
collaboration, for diversity, because, as we know, different education systems, different cultures, do have strengths in preparing different kinds of talents.”

Conference participants met in small groups to discuss the issues of competitiveness and creativity. One group came to this conclusion: our real competitiveness is our creativity. How do we maintain this? Group members offered suggestions for how to give teachers the support and tools they need to develop students’ creativity, including creating mindful and reflective teachers by developing their capacity for leadership and offering time for collegial conferencing about best practices.

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

Gene Sperling, director of the Center on Universal Education, expanded the globalization conversation with a keynote address about universal education, or educating all the children of the world. He described the state of education in poor countries as “a silent crisis,” because television cameras don’t show children dying from a lack of education — even though it actually happens every day. The children of mothers with at least five years of education have a higher survival rate, Sperling said, and teenage girls who attend school are less likely to become infected with HIV/AIDS than their counterparts who are not in school.

“There is no question that education is lifesaving,” he said. However, Sperling continued, even when countries have developed plans to educate all children and have received some international funding to implement them, barriers to education still remain. Sometimes parents have to pay a fee for their children to attend public school. If so, they send their oldest boys and their strongest, smartest kids. In poor countries, the distance a girl has to travel to attend school can make it impossible for her to attend, because relatives fear she’ll be molested on the way.

Parents are also dealing with multiple challenges, such as finding firewood and water and taking care of relatives with HIV/AIDS, Sperling said. It’s hard for them to decide to make the effort to send their children to school. “It’s very clear for the little girl in South Asia or Africa. It’s clear that it’s good for them, and it’s good for their country’s growth to go to school,” Sperling said. “It’s not clear it’s best for parents in extreme poverty.”

His remarks resonated with many in the audience, including Stacy Reeves. A professor of education at William Carey University in Mississippi, Reeves has traveled to Kenya three times to work with orphans. “Sperling has an in-depth understanding of global education issues and how the global impacts the local educational environment,” she said. “What happens in Kenya seriously changes what happens in Mississippi.”

During her trips to Kenya, Reeves works at the Limuru Children’s Center. It has just added beds to take in the most desperate, needy children who have no parents and no other relatives who can take them in. Many have lost one or both parents to AIDS or AIDS-related diseases. “It changes my life to go there,” Reeves said. “It makes me realize the value of education even more. It helps me see that we have so much in the U.S. and that we waste so much. It’s a shame we don’t do more to help the kids of the world.”

The United States spends the same amount on all the poor children in all the poor countries as it costs to build 20 to 25 high schools in the U.S., Sperling said. By contrast, the United Kingdom gives three times more, although its economy is just one-fifth to one-sixth the size of the U.S. economy. “I just don’t think the U.S. leaders have caught up with the passion of their people,” Sperling said.

In small-group discussions, attendees suggested that PDK resources could be marshaled for such projects as teacher education, student transportation, grants for teacher travel, communicating needs to U.S. educators so they can contribute, and developing a system for delivery of donated items. Another idea put forward was that PDK could encourage school districts to donate used textbooks and other resources to underdeveloped countries.

Axworthy had additional ideas, suggesting that PDK could establish a Teachers Without Borders movement that would make use of teachers’ experience and allow them to help students in war-torn areas, as well as aid-
ing children in urban settings. “It really is making a fundamental paradigm shift,” he said. “We are part of a global network, dedicated to sharing education with those who do not have it.”

**TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

After participants brainstormed and shared ideas, the talk turned to how to offer global education to all students. “If we’re going to do it, we have to begin looking at the way we teach teachers,” Axworthy said.

Only one American university, the University of Wisconsin, requires all teachers to take some kind of international qualification, Stewart said. “I spoke to the deans of the land grant schools of education, and I thought for the first time they were beginning to recognize that these are issues they have to deal with, more coming out of the pressure on universities to internationalize than coming out of the demand from schools,” she said. “I would say the lack of preparation of teachers, the lack of language teachers, is sort of a major barrier to making this real in more places.”

In small-group discussions on a range of topics — curriculum, world peace, language acquisition, technology — conference participants listed teacher preparation and professional development for teachers already in the work force as important elements.

In discussions about teacher preparation, participants made many suggestions for improvement, among them, having preservice teachers get out of the classroom to experience different perspectives, acquire a second language as a way to learn the different perspectives and nuances of a culture, and take part in intercontinental action research projects. Faculty members and future teachers should also spend extended periods of time in other countries or cultures in order to experience cross-cultural interactions. Additional suggestions for globalizing the teacher education curriculum included establishing partnerships with businesses and chambers of commerce, creating meaningful field experiences in diverse settings, and adding service learning to the curriculum.

Making such changes will help prepare current and future teachers to incorporate global education in their classrooms, thereby preparing students for work and citizenship in a global society.

“As the population changes, young people need to be able to understand world trends and how those affect our own local issues — and also how local issues impact the world,” said Anthony Jackson, chief executive officer of the International Studies Schools Network.

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**FALLOUT FROM GLOBAL BRAINSTORMING**

In small-group discussions, conference participants tackled the challenge of global education. Listed below are a few of their suggestions for how to prepare students to succeed in a global society.

- Acknowledge different learning styles.
- Celebrate and respect diversity.
- Instill a desire for continual, lifelong learning.
- Build partnerships with organizations such as Rotary and UNICEF.
- Develop students’ skills in other languages at an early age.
- Develop proficiency in one other language.
- Develop a teacher education corps to work in other countries and communities.
- Model empathy and intercultural understanding.
- Create a heightened sense of cultural awareness.
- Provide cross-cultural experiences for students and teachers.
- Prepare students to live and work in a digital world.
- Overlay globalization on every course.
- Expand the diversity of the teacher education pool.
- Set standards for cultural competency to be integrated into curricula.
- Help students understand geography.
- Use popular media to highlight positive features of linguistic and cultural diversity, at home and abroad.
- Integrate language learning and intercultural communication into business, technology, science, and arts programs.
- Model open-mindedness.
- Teach students to be strong communicators who can connect with others around the world.
- Prepare students to use technology effectively and responsibly.
- Make international awareness and understanding a focus.
- Promote international sister-school projects.
- Use video conferencing to cross borders. — EY

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