



Strategic Plan for International Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States finds itself today at the heart of a paradigm shift from its role as the only super power to a world in which more countries are gaining prosperity and influence. We will be sharing responsibility for addressing complex issues in trade, health, the environment and security with multiple players.

Our state, too, is at a critical moment in history, a moment when our role as a manufacturing giant in basic industry is shifting to an economy based on innovative new products in sectors that were not imagined even a decade ago. Decisions are being made that will determine whether Ohio prospers or stagnates in the 21st century. Education plays a critical role in those decisions.

In 2006, with support from the Longview Foundation, the Ohio Department of Education convened the International Education Advisory Committee, a group of educators, business leaders, foundation representatives, policy makers and community organizations who believe that Ohio must plan strategically and take action to prepare students to succeed in the world of the 21st century. The group adopted the following mission statement:

To provide Ohioans with the necessary knowledge, abilities and opportunities to thrive in a global society.

After gathering input from stakeholders at a statewide summit in April 2007, the IEAC began work on a strategic plan by defining international education as a comprehensive approach that includes the following components:

- **Global Context:** Students see and experience relationships between themselves, their communities, and the world. Issues are not seen as existing in a vacuum, but within a complex, dynamic web.
- **Global Content:** Students learn about the geography, history, economics and culture of other world regions. They can communicate in more than one language. Standards are internationally benchmarked and assessments are aligned.
- **Global Thinkers:** Students think critically and creatively across disciplines, manage complexity, embrace technology, and value diversity. They can work effectively in cross-cultural environments using information from sources around the world
- **Global Systems:** Ohio's education system is benchmarked against the highest performing systems in the world. Ohio educators are connected to communities of practice that extend around the globe and bring innovative ideas and practices to our schools.

The IEAC formulated four goals to implement its mission statement.

1. Ohio citizens will understand the **global context** and diversity of relationships between themselves, their communities and the world.

2. Ohio educators will deliver **global content** as a component of a world-class education and create systems to support it.
3. Students will become **global thinkers** with 21st century skills so they can think critically and creatively across disciplines, manage complexity, embrace technology and value diversity.
4. Ohio citizens will achieve greater economic prosperity and improved quality of life.

Goal #1

Ohio citizens will understand the global context and diversity of relationships between themselves, their communities and the world.

In the 21st century, advances in technology, immigration, global trade, military priorities and government policies have changed Ohio lifestyles and work environments. International issues in trade, health care, the environment and security affect Ohio citizens and their actions in-turn affect citizens in other countries. The world is interdependent; people can no longer thrive in isolation or be self-sustaining.

For Ohio to succeed in the 21st century, Ohioans must be productive workers and engaged citizens. Ohioans are a more diverse group than ever before. They interact daily with neighbors and co-workers from varied cultural backgrounds. Many Ohioans are marketing products to customers around the globe and collaborating with colleagues in multiple countries either face-to-face or through technology. In order to be successful in these situations they must understand the culture and values of people they come in contact with. Ohio needs citizens who realize the complex diversity of the world and understand their place in the modern global context. It will take a joint effort of many sectors to help students understand this dynamic global landscape.

The IEAC report envisions a state where:

- Ohio citizens will know how the state fits into global systems: economic, health, environmental and political. They see the value of international education and support it in the schools.
- Community organizations and cultural institutions will offer international programs and resources for students and teachers.
- Businesses will provide internships, training, speakers and field trips to help community members and students understand the international market in which they do business.

Goal #2

Ohio educators will deliver global content as a component of a world-class education and create systems to support it.

Despite nearly 24-hour news coverage, young Americans have weak knowledge of world geography. Areas considered “hot spots” in the news also fail to register with 18-24 year olds. For example, “Only 17% of American students polled could find Afghanistan on a map despite the U.S. led war there.” (Roper Public Affairs Final Report 2006 p.8) Seven out of ten students could locate China on a map but when asked economic or political questions about China, Americans held many misconceptions Nearly 75% of the students thought English was the most widely spoken language in the world. Only 18% know that it is Mandarin. . (National Geographic, 2006)

“When students are asked, nine out of ten want to know more about the world; they believe it will be important to their futures.” (International Education. 2001) High school students attending the Martin Essex School for the Gifted at The Ohio State University in June 2008 suggested that schools:

- Promote a culturally receptive mindset.
- Provide more information about current events and issues in other countries.
- Emphasize cultures, world religions, geography and global studies in world literature and history.
- Invite guest speakers to schools and use technology such as video conferencing to increase contact with other cultures.
- Introduce foreign languages in the early grades and teach about cultures while learning a language.
- Organize school trips and provide more information about foreign exchange programs.

The Council of Chief State School Officers, in 2006, agreed that well-equipped graduates need global skills including world history, international politics, economics, geography, and cultural studies. They recommend that these skills be embedded across the curriculum.

International comparisons show that U.S. students are not performing as well as students in other countries, particularly in mathematics and science. During the last decade, studies show American skills are stagnating. In numerous areas of competency, America struggles to be in the global top ten. (Kirkegaard, 2007) New technology has made the employment marketplace global, and students will be competing for jobs with the best and brightest around the world, not just in their local area. "The threat to the U.S. does not come from foreign companies, but from American workers who are unable to compete with workers in other countries." (Colvin, 2005).

Ohio was the first state to internationally benchmark its educational system with systems around the world. This is a first step in assuring that Ohio students receive a world class education. In 2008 the Ohio Department of Education is doing an in-depth analysis of standards and educational practices in Ohio compared to high performing countries around the world in order to prepare for revision of academic content standards.

The IEAC report envisions a state where:

- All students will learn content and skills on par with the best performing countries.
- Teachers in all content areas will infuse global information, contexts and content into instruction.
- All students will learn to communicate in a world language to a high level of proficiency.
- All students will understand world geography, cultures and issues.
- Students will participate in co-curricular activities and service learning projects with an international focus to expand the learning day.
- International content will be required in teacher preparation programs and professional development of practicing educators.
- Educators in Ohio will share best practices and learn with colleagues around the globe

Goal # 3

Students will become global thinkers with 21st century skills so that they can think critically and creatively across disciplines, manage complexity, embrace technology and value diversity.

Most citizens realize that the skills that students will need in the 21st century are different than the skills required for the industrial economy of the past. Schools today are still built and organized on old models and are slow to change.

Students will require skills and knowledge in their adult lives that don't currently exist. They will need to adapt by being self-directed adult learners who know where to find information, how to judge its value and apply it to their needs. They are unlikely to think in terms of the separate disciplines of geometry, chemistry and language but in real world contexts with practical problems to be solved using efficient tools. They will work collaboratively with others in a world where no one person is likely to have all the complex skills needed to address an issue. An education where students are passive recipients of knowledge will not adequately prepare them for the reality of their future.

The IEAC report envisions a state where:

- Students are self-directed learners who think critically and creatively in preparation for careers in the global economy.
- Educators use technology to make international connections and maximize learning.

Goal # 4:

Ohio citizens will achieve greater economic prosperity and improved quality of life.

Historically education has paid dividends both for the individual and for the community. Businesses locate and expand in regions where there is a competent workforce with educational, cultural and recreational opportunities that provide a quality lifestyle for employees. Leadership and partnerships are needed to create the conditions which will foster this prosperity and quality of life in communities throughout Ohio.

The IEAC report envisions a state where:

- State education leaders communicate the importance of Ohio's international connections and school systems develop an international focus.
- Organizations and individuals across Ohio with an interest in international education are networked regionally and across the state to maximize their impact.

Conclusion

The IEAC report contains action steps, metrics and target dates for implementation. The plan also specifies which action steps could be funded from existing public and private sources and which may require new funding.

The Ohio economy needs to create and attract jobs that require high skill levels and global competence. Education is a key strategy in this workforce development. But the economy is not the only reason that international education is important. Having an international focus helps Ohioans to be better citizens and to share their democratic ideals with citizens of other countries. It will equip students with the tools they need to address issues of national security, international health, environmental sustainability and world peace effectively. It's the right thing to do. The time to act is now.

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