

Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement



U.S. Department of Education International Strategy Updated November 2018

The U.S. Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Why an International Focus?

Today more than ever, an effective domestic education agenda must aim to develop a globally and culturally competent citizenry. It is not enough to focus solely on reading, writing, mathematics and science skills. Today's world also requires critical thinking and creativity to solve complex problems, well-honed communication skills, the ability to speak world languages, and advanced mathematics, science and technical skills.¹ Equipping American students with these skills is critical to the following:

- Help individuals find meaningful employment.
- Foster an informed, engaged and active citizenry.
- Enhance the country's economic competitiveness.
- Strengthen our national security and diplomacy.
- Support relationships with peers around the world.

The U.S. Department of Education's updated international strategy reaffirms the Department's commitment to preparing today's students, and our country more broadly, for a hyper-connected world. It reflects ongoing work in implementing international education programs, participating in international benchmarking activities, and engaging allies and multilateral organizations in strategic dialogue.

The initial international strategy, upon which this updated strategy is based, was developed through extensive consultation within the Department, as well as with other U.S. government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Since the strategy was first established in 2012, it has been used to guide the Department's international activities and engagement.

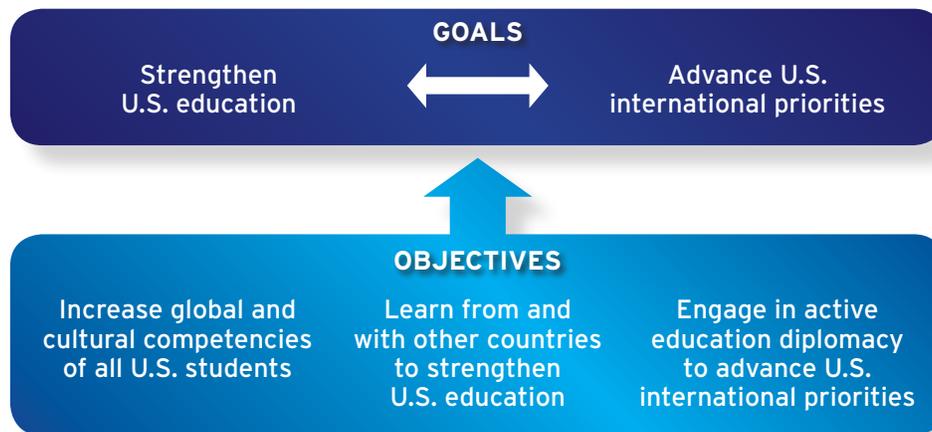
Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Department's international strategy is integrated with the Department's domestic agenda and designed to simultaneously attain two strategic goals: strengthen U.S. education and advance our nation's international priorities. As illustrated in Figure 1, three interrelated objectives—**increase students' global and cultural competencies**, **learn from and with other countries** and **engage in education diplomacy**—will advance the Department's larger strategic goals. The activities supporting these objectives are undertaken by program offices across the Department and, in some cases, in cooperation with other U.S. government agencies, including the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Departments of Labor and Commerce.

Underlying the strategy is the notion that advancing educational achievement and increasing economic viability, both domestically and internationally, are worthy pursuits. Thus, in implementing the international strategy, the Department will continue to build awareness of the importance of a world-class education for every student, international relations and cross-cultural exchange. The Secretary and other high-level Departmental officials will continue to address these issues in speeches, publications and other communications.

In implementing the international strategy, the Department will continue to focus on building awareness of the importance of a world-class education for every student.

Figure 1: Framework for the U.S. Department of Education International Strategy



Increase global and cultural competencies of all U.S. students

Global and cultural competencies comprise the knowledge and skills individuals need to be successful in today’s interconnected world and to fully engage in and act on issues of global significance. Our students need to be equipped with critical thinking, communications, socioemotional and language skills in order to work effectively with their counterparts in the United States and around the world. Understanding and appreciating our diverse country and other parts of the world, including different religions, cultures and points of view, are essential elements of global and cultural competence.

People who are globally and culturally competent are proficient in at least two languages; aware of the differences that exist between cultures; critical and creative thinkers, who can understand diverse perspectives; and able to operate at a professional level in intercultural and international contexts. These competencies are not isolated skills, but rather interrelated skills and areas of knowledge that are used together to enable individuals to understand the world and take action.

An increasing number of careers involve working across cultures, requiring language skills, regional knowledge and the ability to see things from different perspectives. In a survey of 2,100 U.S. employers, 93 percent of respondents said they value employees who can work effectively with customers, clients, and businesses from a range of different countries and cultures.² For example, a student in Tennessee may need to communicate with German counterparts about the latest auto industry technology. Or a young person in South Carolina may need to understand Korean business practices to successfully interact with her colleagues at a new manufacturing plant. Students gain this knowledge by studying the arts, civics, geography, history, and world languages and through socioemotional learning and hands-on learning. Opportunities for study and research abroad, as well as virtual exchange, can deepen this understanding and global perspective. (See [video](#) on Global and Cultural Competencies in Action next page.)

“Cultural intelligence is a broadly transferable skill that helps our students – and our country – to succeed, compete and collaborate in an increasingly interconnected world. And it’s impossible to truly understand a culture without first understanding its language. Students who are competent in two, three, four languages are better prepared for every turn in their careers and lives.”

–Secretary Betsy DeVos

To guide students on how to develop global and cultural competencies over time, the Department created the Framework for Developing Global and Cultural Competencies to Advance Equity, Excellence and Economic Competitiveness. This framework is the product of a working group with representatives from across the Department and discussions with the education community, building on existing research and providing a structure for the development of global and cultural competencies beginning in early childhood through postsecondary education. All of it is based on a foundation of discipline-specific knowledge. (See Figure 2.)

Global and Cultural Competencies in Action



Figure 2: Framework for Developing Global and Cultural Competencies to Advance Equity, Excellence and Economic Competitiveness

From	Early Learning	To	Careers	Globally and Culturally Competent Individuals	
	Early Learning	Elementary	Secondary	Postsecondary	
Collaboration and Communication	Emerging socio-emotional skill-building—focus on empathy, cooperation, and problem solving	Progressive socio-emotional skill-building—focus on empathy, perspective taking and conflict management	Strong socio-emotional and leadership skills—emphasis on multi-cultural understanding and working with diverse groups	Advanced socio-emotional and leadership skills, ability to effectively collaborate and communicate with people in cross-cultural settings	Proficient in at least two languages;
World and Heritage Languages	Developing language skills in English and other languages	Basic proficiency in at least one other language	Proficiency in at least one other language	Advanced proficiency – ability to work or study in at least one other language	Aware of differences that exist between cultures, open to diverse perspectives, and appreciative of insight gained through open cultural exchange;
Diverse Perspectives	Emerging global awareness through exposure to diverse cultures, histories, languages and perspectives	Deepening global awareness through continued exposure to diverse cultures, histories, languages and perspectives	Deepening local and global knowledge and understanding, including through classes, projects, study abroad and virtual exchange	Highly developed ability to analyze and reflect on issues from diverse perspectives	Critical and creative thinkers, who can apply understanding of diverse cultures, beliefs, economies, technology and forms of government in order to work effectively in cross-cultural settings to address societal, environmental or entrepreneurial challenges;
Civic and Global Engagement	Growing awareness of community and institutions	Age-appropriate civic engagement and learning	Demonstrated ability to engage in key civic and global issues	Demonstrated ability for meaningful engagement in a wide range of civic and global issues and to be successful in one's own discipline/specialty in a global context	Able to operate at a professional level in intercultural and international contexts and to continue to develop new skills and harness technology to support continued growth.
Foundation of Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Understanding					

<https://sites.ed.gov/international/global-and-cultural-competency/>

For many years, the Department has supported programs designed to increase expertise in world languages and area and international studies through the Department's Office of [International and Foreign Language Education \(IFLE\)](#). Currently, IFLE administers approximately \$72.0 million for domestic international education programs authorized under Title VI of the Higher Education Act and overseas international education programs authorized under the Fulbright-Hays Act. Collectively, these programs provide U.S. students, teachers, researchers and administrators with unique opportunities to gain proficiency in world languages and expertise about the regions where these languages are used, in preparation to meet our nation's ongoing global needs.

Consistent with the Framework's interrelated content-based knowledge and competencies, IFLE programs are intentionally interrelated and complementary in their purposes, including training a globally competent workforce able to engage with a multilingual and/or multicultural clientele at home and abroad; increasing teaching and research expertise on international business and global issues; and expanding access to international education and training, especially for traditionally underserved students.

The Framework also supports IFLE's program administration and monitoring initiatives, assisting the Department in gauging program relevance and the extent to which these programs are providing meaningful and productive academic and career opportunities. Program recipients not only need to acquire relevant global skills, but they also must have opportunities to put those skills into practice. To that end, IFLE has established competitive priorities for its Title VI and Fulbright-Hays grant competitions that encourage meaningful and sustained professional development and collaboration with minority-serving institutions and/or community colleges; the development and dissemination of language-learning materials for the K-16 education community; and work-based experiences, such as internships for international business students.

Learn from and with other countries to strengthen U.S. education

Discussing policies and practices to improve teaching and learning with other countries and applying these lessons in the United States as appropriate are critical elements in the Department's efforts to strengthen U.S. education. To that end, the Department supports benchmarking U.S. education against that of other countries. The goal is to identify areas of relative strength and weakness and use this information to guide our deeper learning. At the same time, we view this as a shared endeavor in which the United States not only learns from other countries but also shares U.S. experiences and lessons learned with other countries.

The United States contributes expertise and data to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) annual Education at a Glance (EAG) publication, which compares OECD countries on a variety of important education indicators, such as educational attainment, the financial and human resources invested in education, access to and participation in education, and the learning environment and organization of schools.

"There's a lot we as Americans can learn from other countries and how they set their students up for successful lives and careers. Simply copying other approaches will not be sufficient. But forward-thinking states and school districts should take note of effective, innovative practices found all over the world and consider how they can be applied at home."

—Secretary DeVos



Education at a Glance 2018

OECD INDICATORS



Education at a Glance 2018

Education at a Glance (EAG) is an annual report that allows countries, including the [United States](#), to track progress on a number of important education issues. It covers a wide array of topics including participation in early childhood programs, salaries and work hours for public school teachers, high school graduation rates, and educational attainment and employment outcomes. The EAG report provides the best available comparative data on education in OECD and selected non-OECD partner countries. The EAG is released every year in September.

The United States regularly participates in international education assessments and surveys as the first step in benchmarking education in the United States against other countries. These assessments and surveys include TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey), PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), PIAAC (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). In 2018, the United States participated in the new IELS (International Early Learning Study) and for the first time in the ICILS (International Computer and Information Literacy Study). The Department's [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#) implements these assessments in the United States. NCES also serves on the studies' international governing boards and collaborates with other countries to continually improve data quality. (See Figure 3.)

From these studies we learn not only how the United States compares to other countries in terms of student and adult performance, but we also learn what U.S. students know and can do in key subject areas (and about contexts for learning) as well as how an individual's skills relate to his or her experience at work and outside of work.

Figure 3: U.S. Participation in Selected International Assessments and Surveys

Study	Who and What	When	Next Data Release
TALIS Teaching and Learning International Survey	Teachers and principals, grades 7,8 and 9	Every 5 years. United States participated in 2013 and 2018	June 2019
PISA Program for International Student Assessment	15-year-old students, assessed in reading, mathematics and science literacy	Every 3 years since 2000	December 2019
PIAAC Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies	Adults, aged 16-65 years, assessed in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments	Every 10 years since 2011, with additional U.S. data collections in 2014 and 2017	December 2019
TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Fourth- and eighth-graders, assessed in mathematics and science; 12th-graders also assessed in 2015	Every 4 years since 1995	December 2020
PIRLS Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	Fourth-graders, assessed in reading literacy	Every 5 years since 2001	December 2022

Through partnerships with multilateral organizations and with individual countries, the Department is delving more deeply into what works in other countries and is learning more about innovative practices and how they could be applied in the United States. The Department is promoting active dialogue about education topics of mutual interest, including career and technical education, apprenticeships, teacher quality and individualized learning. Senior officials in the Department also engage in strategic travel overseas to visit schools and to meet with teachers, students, education policy makers and experts, and often host visits from education policy makers and experts from other countries. The Department will continue these and similar efforts aimed at understanding what works in high-performing countries.

Learning from Other Countries



During Secretary DeVos' first international trip as the U.S. Secretary of Education, she visited Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and saw how students in these countries pursue their education. [As the Secretary described in her blog after the trip](#), each country takes a holistic approach to education to prepare students for career and life success, with a variety of possible educational paths. Families choose the school and type of education that will best meet their child's educational needs.

Engage in active education diplomacy to advance U.S. international priorities

Education diplomacy is important for building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries. The Department supports diplomacy through almost all of its international activities. By building and fostering relationships with government officials, policy makers, researchers, educators, students and other professionals around the world, providing leadership on education issues, collaborating with other U.S. government agencies and learning with other countries, the Department is helping to further global stability and progress and, in turn, facilitate a world-class education at home and abroad. This soft diplomacy contributes to our national security, our credibility as a leader among nations and, ultimately, our national prosperity. The Department addresses this objective by engaging bilaterally with other countries, participating in multilateral organizations, and hosting visitors who come to the United States to learn about U.S. education and share information about their countries.

The Department addresses education-related issues with individual countries on a bilateral basis and with multilateral organizations—such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Organization of American States (OAS) and OECD—and multilateral forums—such as the Summit of the Americas and the G20, a leading forum of the world’s major economies that seeks to develop global policies to address today’s most pressing challenges. In these activities the Department works with its counterparts to share best practices and lessons learned in order to improve education here and abroad. The Department also participates in reviewing and developing declarations, resolutions and reports. Education diplomacy is an important component of U.S. engagement that builds goodwill and provides an avenue for regular and positive engagement with other countries.

“Our ability to communicate with and understand people and governments around the world is an essential part of diplomacy. The soft diplomacy of education and exchange helps us to create connections that support global stability and national prosperity. We can and must prepare for what’s ahead.”

–Secretary DeVos



*Education and Employment Ministerial Meeting
6 September, 2018 / Mendoza, Argentina*

G20 Ministerial Meetings

Argentina hosted the first-ever G20 Education Ministerial and Joint Education-Employment Ministerial, elevating the central role of education, skills and employment across the globe. The declarations adopted by the G20 countries are consistent with the Administration’s agenda regarding education being aligned with workforce skills and industry demands, the need for lifelong learning and flexible pathways. The outcomes of these meetings will be used in the G20 Leaders meeting to further elevate the importance of education and skills in the global agenda.

Also related to education diplomacy is the Department's work on issues related to academic and professional mobility. Among other things, the Department participates in the European Network of Information Centers (ENIC), which promotes the recognition of education qualifications between countries. As part of ENIC, the Department provides information about U.S. education to counterparts in other countries in an effort to facilitate the recognition of U.S. degrees abroad, offers guidance to U.S.-educated persons interested in working or pursuing further studies abroad, and responds to inquiries from individuals with non-U.S. degrees who wish to better understand how their degrees can be used to work or study in the United States.

The Department regularly hosts visitors in key fields as part of the [State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#).

This program helps to strengthen U.S. relations with other countries by providing emerging leaders with the opportunity to experience firsthand U.S. political, economic, social and cultural life and to build long-lasting connections between Americans and groups from other countries. The State Department estimates that 565 of these emerging leaders have become heads of government since IVLP began. In addition, the Department hosts high-level government officials who come to engage with the Secretary and other senior officials in order to learn about current initiatives in U.S. education and to share information about their countries' education systems and political conditions. On average, the Department hosts more than 1,200 visitors from more than 140 countries each year.

Since 2000, the Department has also collaborated with the State Department to celebrate the importance and benefits of international education in the United States and around the world through the annual International Education Week. (See [video](#) on International Education Week 2018 above.)

Taken together, these activities and interactions provide many important opportunities to learn from and share with other countries and to continue to foster strategic relationships.

Message for International Education Week 2018



Secretary DeVos

Endnotes

1. For further discussion on these topics, see:
Commission on Language Learning. 2017. [America's Languages: Investing in Languages for the 21st Century](#). Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences.
and
Klein, Joel, and Condoleezza Rice, eds. 2012. [U.S. Education Reform and National Security](#). New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations.
2. Damari, Rebecca, R., William P. Rivers, Richard D. Brecht, Philip Gardner, Catherine Pulupa, and John Robinson. 2017. "The Demand for Multilingual Human Capital in the U.S. Labor Market." *Foreign Language Annals* 50, no. 1 (Spring): 13-37.

Links

Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement: U.S. Education International Strategy 2012-2016:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/international/international-strategy-2012-16.pdf>

Global and Cultural Competencies in Action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-j6X1TyTGg&feature=youtu.be>

Framework for Developing Global and Cultural Competencies to Advance Equity, Excellence and Economic Competitiveness:

<https://sites.ed.gov/international/global-and-cultural-competency/>

International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE):

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oie/iegps/index.html>

Education at a Glance 2018:

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018/united-states_eag-2018-71-en

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/>

Learning from Other Countries:

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/06/28/betsy-devos-how-we-can-catch-up.html>

G-20 Ministerial:

https://www.g20.org/sites/default/files/media/g20_education_ministers_declaration_english.pdf

<https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/prepared-remarks-secretary-devos-meeting-g20-education-ministers>

State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP):

<https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/international-visitor-leadership-program-ivlp>

International Education Week:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ix4iMq8NKuc>



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