



Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement



U.S. Department of Education International Strategy Updated March 2022

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 we find ourselves at a decisive moment when we must reimagine and rebuild the future of education and provide all learners with the opportunity to grow and thrive. As we do this, it is vital to prepare students to engage with the world. 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 increasingly requires critical thinking and creativity to solve complex problems, well-honed communication skills, the ability to speak other languages, and advanced mathematics, science, and technical skills.¹ Such competencies will prepare students, and our nation, for a world in which the following are the reality:

- **A diverse U.S. society.** The United States is a multicultural society. It is essential that we be able to communicate and work with neighbors, coworkers, and friends with different cultural traditions and perspectives. Such interpersonal skills and an appreciation for diverse viewpoints facilitate civil discourse and a cohesive society.
- **Global challenges and opportunities.** Students need to have the substantive knowledge and understanding to address matters that cut across borders (e.g., public health, climate change, natural disasters, and international trade). To do so effectively, they must be able to communicate and work collaboratively with international peers.
- **Economic competitiveness and jobs.** Students today are competing for jobs with peers around the world, and those jobs require advanced knowledge and skills. To be successful in such an environment, students must have the capacity to understand and interact with the world, including skills in world languages and an appreciation for other countries and cultures.
- **National security and diplomacy.** Civic and global awareness are necessary to understand our nation's history and policies, as well as our relations with other countries. In addition, foreign language skills and area expertise are essential for careers in international affairs, national defense, intelligence, homeland security and law enforcement.

"If it wasn't already clear before the pandemic, it should be clear now that, in today's interconnected world, many of our biggest challenges are global in nature. To address them, we must work together — not just within the United States, but also with others around the world."

—Secretary Miguel Cardona

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. Underlying the strategy is the notion that advancing educational achievement and increasing economic viability, both domestically and internationally, are worthy pursuits. It reflects ongoing work in implementing international education programs, participating in international benchmarking activities, and engaging in strategic dialogue with other countries and multilateral organizations.

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 it was first established in 2012, the strategy and its updates have been used to guide the Department's international activities and engagement.

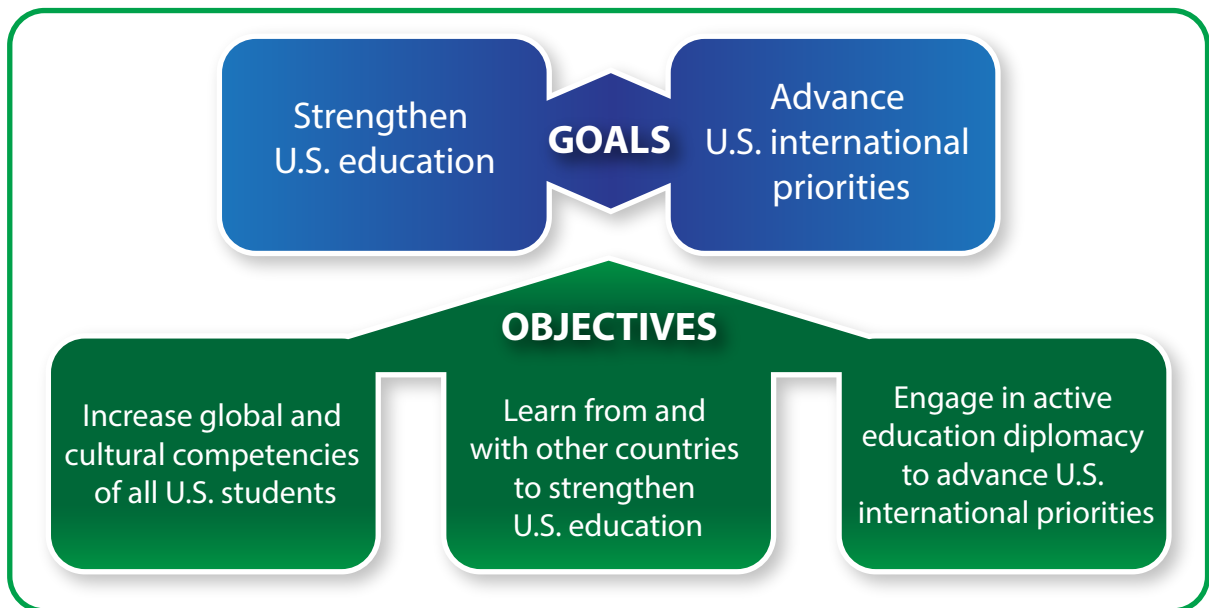
Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Department's international strategy is integrated with the Department's domestic agenda and is 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. These agencies include, for example, the Departments of State, Labor, Commerce, and Homeland Security, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



A student nurse meets with Secretary Cardona at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.

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



A Renewed Commitment to International Education

At several key points in U.S. history, the nation has benefitted from strong U.S. government leadership in actively promoting international education and exchange. Over the past two decades alone, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, economic challenges, cybersecurity threats, migration crises, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought into stark relief that it is vital to reinforce our people-to-people relationships around the globe and to strengthen the infrastructure and pathways that help prepare Americans in all sectors to engage with the world.

On July 26, 2021, the Secretaries of Education and State issued video statements reaffirming the U.S. commitment to international education. In their messages, they announced the release of a [Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education](#) – the first such public affirmation in over 20 years to emphasize the importance of international education in improving Americans' lives and promoting U.S. global leadership. The Departments of Commerce and Homeland Security, and USAID have also been involved and support the statement and principles.

The Departments of State and Education

have committed to undertaking actions to support a renewed focus on international education, with ten key principles of support. Highlighted examples of the principles include:

- A coordinated national approach to international education, including international students on our campuses, study abroad for Americans, and the internationalization of U.S. campuses and classrooms.
- A welcoming environment for international students coming to the United States, encouraging a diversity of participants, disciplines, and types of schools and higher education institutions where they can choose to study, teach, or contribute to research.
- Encouragement for U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators who reflect the diversity of the U.S. population to pursue overseas study, internships, research, and other international experiences.
- Promotion of expanded access to international education, including using technology where in-person experiences are not feasible, to connect U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators with their peers abroad.
- Partnerships of the U.S. government with higher education institutions, schools, state and local governments, the business community, and others to support international education.

These principles and the others reflected in the Joint Statement will help us to welcome international students to the United States and to develop the global and cultural competencies Americans need to navigate successfully the ever-changing global landscape.



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

Global and cultural competencies comprise the knowledge and skills that all 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, but rather interrelated skills and areas of knowledge that are used together to enable individuals to understand the world and take action.

In a 2018 survey of 1,200 U.S. upper-level managers and human resources professionals, nine out of ten reported a reliance on U.S.-based employees with world language skills.² The need for global and cultural competencies cuts across professions. For example, a researcher at the CDC must be able to communicate effectively with counterparts throughout the international health community on pandemic mitigation strategies. Or, a student in an apprenticeship program in a South Carolina career and technical college may take a global business course to understand Korean business practices to successfully interact with co-workers at a new manufacturing plant.

Students gain cultural knowledge by studying the arts, civics, geography, history, and world languages and through socioemotional learning and hands-on learning. Opportunities for study, work experiences and research abroad, as well as virtual exchange, can deepen this understanding and global perspective.

(Click image at right for video in which recipients of programs funded by the Departments of Education and State discuss the benefits of global and cultural competencies and international study.)

"International education is vital. It promotes mutual understanding and connection. It helps Americans from all walks of life better understand our world and engage with their neighbors who have different views and backgrounds. It enhances students' global and cultural competency, gives insight and context for local, national, and global events, develops critical thinking, and fosters respect for diverse perspectives."

—Secretary Cardona

Global and Cultural Competencies in Action



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. It builds on existing research and provides a structure for the development of global and cultural competencies beginning in early childhood and continuing through postsecondary education. The entire framework is based on a foundation of discipline-specific knowledge and understanding. (See Figure 2.)

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
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
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
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
Foundation of Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Understanding				
<p>Proficient in at least two languages;</p> <p>Aware of differences that exist between cultures, open to diverse perspectives, and appreciative of insight gained through open cultural exchange;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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.</p>				

The [International and Foreign Language Education \(IFLE\)](#) division in the Office of Postsecondary Education administers programs designed to build a strong international education infrastructure across the U.S. education system. Through twelve overseas and domestic programs established by the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 (F-H), and Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965, U.S. colleges and universities leverage these funding opportunities for comprehensive internationalization of their campuses and to provide postsecondary educators, teachers, and students with international studies, modern foreign language training, global business expertise, and overseas research and cultural experiences. For over sixty years, these programs have helped to strengthen and increase U.S. global competitiveness, meeting national needs, and ensuring our capacity to respond to events that impact the local, national, and international landscapes.

As diversity is integral to international education and global competitiveness, IFLE has included priorities in program competitions to increase the number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and community colleges that apply to and participate in F-H and Title VI programs. IFLE's goal of greater institutional and student diversity is consistent with the Framework and the Joint Statement.

The FY 2021 federal investment of \$77 million in Title VI and F-H programs sustains the pipeline of experts with international skills, research, and advanced language proficiency in less commonly taught languages. One example of the successes achieved by grantees across IFLE's programs is the Centers for International Business Education (CIBE) MSI consortium of ten business schools at Title VI CIBE grantee institutions. The consortium collaborates to provide training, mentoring, and professional development to faculty and students at MSIs. Another example of the critical role that IFLE programs play in responding to domestic and international crises is the assistance that Indiana University provided in response to a request for assistance with Afghan evacuee and relocation efforts from the Departments of State and Defense. Indiana University's Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR), a Title VI Language Resource Center, created a list of speakers of Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Hindi, and Persian who could assist with bridging the language barriers with evacuees.

Young learners getting ready to meet Secretary Cardona at Wilcox Academy of Early Learning in New Orleans.



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 of benchmarking 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 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) annual Education at a Glance (EAG) publication, which compares OECD countries using 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.

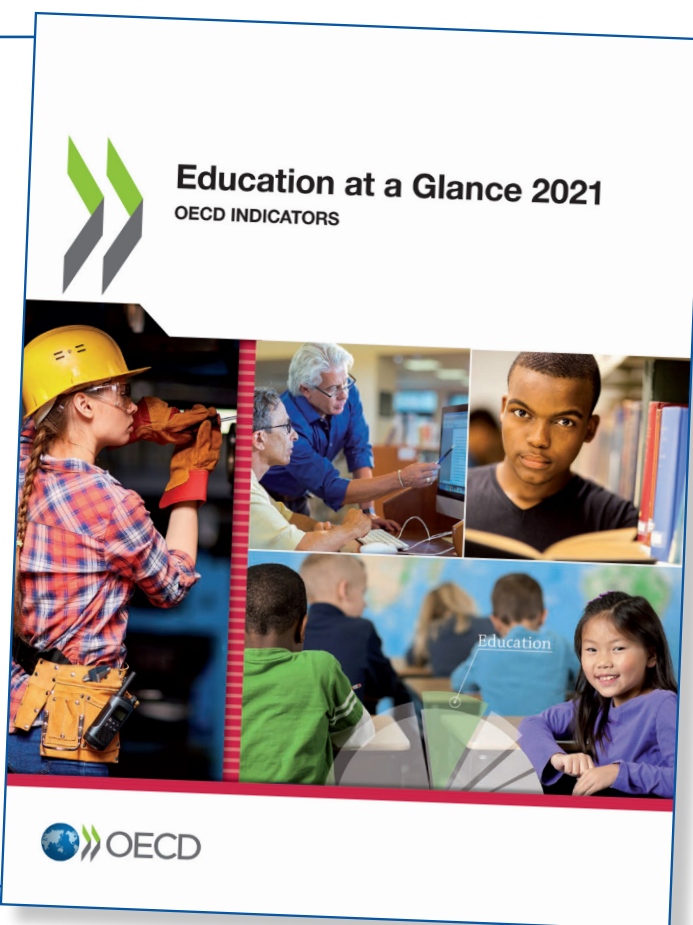
The United States regularly participates in international education assessments and surveys as the first step in benchmarking education in

"Some of our educational systems are quite large and others are more compact. Some make more decisions at the national level and others are more decentralized. Education financing varies across our nations. But as we've seen, our common challenges outweigh our differences as we come together to learn and problem solve."

—Secretary Cardona

Education at a Glance 2021

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, with a focus this year on equity.



the United States against other countries. These assessments and surveys include Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) and Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). In 2018, the United States also participated in the new International Early Learning Study (IELS). 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 not only learn how the United States compares to other countries in terms of student and adult performance, teaching conditions and teacher self-efficacy, but we also learn what U.S. students know and how they perform 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.

A student discusses his project with Secretary Cardona at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.



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

Study	Who	What	Next Data Release
PIRLS	Fourth-grade students	Reading literacy	December 2022
PISA	15-year-old students	Reading, mathematics and science literacy	December 2023
PIAAC	Adults, ages 16–65 (16–74 for the U.S.)	Literacy, numeracy, and digital problem solving	December 2024
TIMSS	Fourth- and eighth-grade students	Mathematics and science; 12th-graders also assessed in 2015	December 2024
ICILS	Eighth-grade students	Capacity to use information communications technologies (ICT)	December 2024
TALIS	Teachers and principals, grades 7,8 and 9	Working conditions and learning environments at schools	June 2025

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 recovery from the COVID pandemic, equitable access to educational resources and opportunities, and supporting a diverse educator workforce. Senior officials in the Department also plan to engage in strategic travel overseas to visit schools and to meet with teachers, students, education policy makers and experts, and to host visits from education policy makers and experts from other countries. The Department will undertake these and similar efforts – virtually and in-person – in order to better understand what works well in high-performing countries.



A mariachi band plays for Secretary Cardona in McAllen, Texas.

International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP)

Secretary Cardona hosted the virtual 2021 International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) on October 19–21, 2021, together with Education International (EI) and OECD. First Lady of the United States Dr. Jill Biden and Secretary Cardona delivered pre-recorded opening remarks in which they thanked teachers for their hard work and dedication never more evident than during the pandemic (see video below).

ISTP 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the event. The Summit was first held in 2011 by then-U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to bring together ministers and secretaries of education from around the world, the heads of their teacher unions, and other representatives of the teaching profession. The Summit was the first of its kind, designed to engage governments and teacher organizations from high-performing and rapidly improving educational systems (based on the results of PISA) in an intensive discussion about how to strengthen education through a stronger teaching profession.

Based on the success of the first ISTP in 2011, the event became an annual event hosted by different countries each year. Subsequent host countries have included the United States (which hosted again in 2012); the Netherlands (2013), New Zealand (2014), Canada (2015), Germany (2016), the United Kingdom (2017), Portugal (2018), Finland (2019), and Spain (2020). OECD and EI have continued to co-host each year.

After the Summit, organizers produce a report of the Summit discussion and what country delegations commit to work on together in the year ahead. The [ISTP 2021 report](#) focuses on intentional collaboration, teacher professionalism and well-being, and whole-child education and equity. (Click image below for video of First Lady Dr. Biden and Secretary Cardona recognizing ISTP 2021.)

"For me, one of the biggest takeaways from the last few days is the importance of intentional collaboration – at all levels of the education system and with other key agencies that support student, family, and teacher well-being. Without deep, deliberate collaboration with all relevant partners, we will not be able to ensure educational equity and student success."

—Secretary Cardona



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 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 supports education diplomacy through almost all of its international activities. These pursuits

include 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. Through such activities, 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 engages on 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 within multilateral forums—such as the Summit of the Americas, the Group of 7 (G7) and the Group of 20 (G20). 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.

The Department's work on issues related to academic and professional mobility also helps to build relationships in the international education community. 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 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.

In July 2021, USAID published the [U.S. Government COVID-19 International Basic Education Response](#) paper, which highlights the collective efforts of U.S. government agencies working on international education issues to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. In addition to the work of agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Labor and State, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Peace Corps, the paper laid out steps the Department has taken to get students back into the classroom.



U.S. Government COVID-19 International Basic Education Response

July 2021



G20 Ministerial Meetings

In 2021, Italy hosted a hybrid G20 Education Ministerial as well as a Joint Education and Labor and Employment Ministerial. The [Education Ministerial and Declaration](#) focused on blended teaching and learning, educational poverty, and global cooperation while the [Joint Ministerial and Declaration](#) focused on transitions from education to work. The focus in 2021 built on efforts undertaken in 2018 in Argentina, but in the context of a highly disruptive pandemic. The 2022 G20 Education Ministerial in Indonesia, scheduled for July 2022, is set to continue this important work.

The Department regularly hosts visitors as part of the [Department of State'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 people from other countries. In addition, the Department hosts high-level government officials who come to engage with the Secretary and other senior officials to learn about current initiatives in U.S. education and to share information about their countries' education systems and political conditions.

Since 2000, the Department of Education has also collaborated with the Department of State to celebrate the importance and benefits of international education in the United States and around the world through the annual International Education Week. (Click image below for video on International Education Week 2021.)

International Education Week 2021



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.



A little chef practices her cooking skills at Wilcox Academy of Early Learning in New Orleans.



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.

Klein, Joel, and Condoleezza Rice, eds. 2012. *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*. New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations.

2. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). 2019. "[Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers](#)," Survey findings from the ACTFL with the support of Pearson LLC and Language Testing International.



A budding young artist at the Capital Area Community Center in Lansing, MI.

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>

Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education:

https://educationusa.state.gov/sites/default/files/intl_ed_joint_statement.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/ope/iegps/index.html>

Education at a Glance 2021:

https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2021_b35a14e5-en

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

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

Learning from Other Countries:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiAo_PfNqXE

U.S. Government COVID-19 International Basic Education Response:

https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/U.S.%20Government%20COVID-19%20International%20Basic%20Education%20Response_1.pdf

G20 Ministerial:

<https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/G20+Education+Ministers'+Declaration.pdf/a1eeb98d-c379-e56e-f6be-3e9bffc45c4b?version=1.0&t=1624384210976>

<https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/>

[G20+Joint+Education+and+Labour+and+Employment+Ministers%E2%80%99+Declaration.pdf/724a9f61-993c-0d38-1445-65afda856510?version=1.0&t=1624384239146](https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/G20+Joint+Education+and+Labour+and+Employment+Ministers%E2%80%99+Declaration.pdf/724a9f61-993c-0d38-1445-65afda856510?version=1.0&t=1624384239146)

U.S. Department of State'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=5tB4xEYv9K4>



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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.

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