

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on International Education and Exchange

Adopted March 4, 2009

The Connecticut State Board of Education regards high-quality international education as an essential component of a comprehensive prekindergarten through Grade 12 education. There is growing evidence, however, that without a renewed sense of urgency, Connecticut's students will be unprepared to take advantage of opportunities in the globalized 21st century.

The Board believes that Connecticut's public schools must provide opportunities for acquiring international skills and experiences that prepare students to participate in a connected and integrated world. State and local educational planning for the acquisition of new international knowledge and skills will position Connecticut's students to take advantage of new opportunities in today's international environment.

Several factors such as dynamic changes in world economies, concern for the global environment, expansion of international legal institutions and increased migration have combined to create significant multicultural and international challenges for education. Meeting these challenges requires new international knowledge and skills, including proficiency in a language other than English, literacy in global trade, an appreciation of diverse cultures and the ability to understand the cultural and national perspectives of others. International study and exchange for students and educators are effective methods to advance knowledge in these areas and to create new experiences and relationships. In addition, these measures can inspire future educational policies and best practices.

A quality international education program includes the following components: integrated international curriculum, world language learning, active international engagement, international partnerships, international professional development focus, technology linkages and communication, and measurement of student international learning.

Sections 10-27 and 10-27a of the Connecticut General Statutes, adopted by the General Assembly in 2001 and amended in 2004, speak to the importance of international study and exchange. The legislation includes the following components:

- forming a state advisory committee on international education;
- establishing official state policy encouraging international education;
- providing opportunities for Connecticut's schools to form partnerships with schools in other countries;
- sharing with and among schools, experiences and opportunities for international education;
- developing criteria for international programs in schools and development of international schools;
- creating guidelines and standards for international studies; and
- encouraging school staff and student exchanges.

This position statement embraces the belief of the State Board of Education and the intent of the General Assembly. It commits policymakers and educators to developing in students the skills commensurate with their responsibilities for global stewardship and international participation.

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Guidelines for Policymakers

In its 2009 Position Statement on International Education and Exchange, the Connecticut State Board of Education calls for increased opportunities for students to obtain knowledge and develop skills required for competent participation in a rapidly expanding global society. This position statement acknowledges that some discrete skills, such as second language competence, are important and should be part of each student's experience. It also implies that international education will bring about new perspectives in students that inform how the general curriculum will serve them as it prepares them to think and plan for their futures.

Implementing this position statement and creating the opportunities envisioned in Sections 10-27 and 10-27a of the Connecticut General Statutes, requires a great deal of collaboration among the Connecticut State Department of Education, local boards of education and families. Having the knowledge, skills and behaviors associated with international education competence is critical for our students' futures, as well as for Connecticut's place in the globally competitive economy. International education should begin in the earliest grades and extend throughout a student's educational career.

The Board offers the following guidelines to support the establishment of collaborations among various stakeholders to create greater opportunities for international education to benefit students and teachers in preschool through high school. School districts are encouraged to tailor strategies across grade levels that are consistent with each student's personal development, maturation and grade-level expectations.

The Connecticut State Department of Education can contribute effectively to international education by:

- forming a statewide international education advisory committee to provide guidance to the Department and support to state and local initiatives;
- promulgating guidance and policies encouraging international education;
- planning opportunities and providing incentives for school districts or schools to form partnerships with schools in other countries;
- organizing opportunities for districts or schools with established programs to share implementation strategies, programs and benefits with others that want to create or expand opportunities in their schools;
- developing criteria or guidance for international education magnet or charter schools, or international education programs within comprehensive schools, including student clubs and organizations;
- creating curriculum and assessment guidelines and standards for in-school and approved out-of-school international studies programs and opportunities;
- including international content on appropriate state assessments across content areas;
- promoting opportunities and providing incentives for staff and student exchanges between schools in Connecticut and those in other countries;
- encouraging the expansion of prekindergarten-Grade 12 world language instruction; and
- reporting on language-learning opportunities at each level to foster accelerated participation and proficiency.

School districts can contribute effectively to international education by:

- investigating existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to teach global knowledge and understanding of issues and problems facing the world. Districts also can develop curriculum in all content areas that require students to make informed decisions affecting their own lives and the lives of others;

- reviewing existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to teach and expose students to an array of diverse cultures and to encourage them to evaluate and articulate the impact of culture when considering the perspectives of others on a given issue or situation;
- reinforcing the expectation and benefit of students being able to speak, read and write competently in English and at least one other world language by implementing prekindergarten-Grade 12 world language programs;
- examining existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to teach international trade and exchange. Curriculum must provide students with the knowledge and understanding of the dynamics and complexity of trade in the world economy, and require students to have skills to access diverse ideas, use economic measurements and methods, and understand social and political contexts in world affairs;
- revising existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to support students in developing high standards of ethical behavior and to enable them to negotiate fairly and effectively with other global citizens toward a common resolution. Curriculum must provide opportunities for students to practice concepts such as integrity, courage, responsibility, fairness, empathy and reciprocity;
- reviewing existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to manage changing situations, articulate multiple perspectives on problems or issues and make informed decisions;
- critiquing existing programs and creating new opportunities, as appropriate, to ensure that students are technologically literate and understand technology's role and potential in international business and communication; and
- seeking associations with local or regional groups with perspectives from other cultures to support international education in local schools.

Schools can contribute effectively to international education by:

- providing opportunities for international knowledge acquisition and international perspective throughout the curriculum. Students are expected to use international skills that are integrated within and across academic disciplines and social learning opportunities in considering real world phenomena;
- offering a variety of instruction in languages and cultures beginning in prekindergarten and continuing through Grade 12, including less commonly taught languages and those critical to national economic and security issues. Schools seek ways to further develop the language of nonnative English speakers and English language learner students, and seek ways for English speakers to benefit and learn from the language and cultural experiences of their English-learning peers;
- promoting opportunities for student learning experiences in international settings by supporting short-term and extended study abroad and by hosting Connecticut-based experiences for students and educators from other countries;
- establishing partnerships with schools in other countries and using the international, cultural educational, civic and business communities to inform and support educational partnerships at appropriate government levels;
- providing opportunities for staff participation in international studies and field study experiences in other countries. Such training and travel will enable authentic curriculum content integration and foster an expanded learning community between Connecticut educators and educators in other countries;
- supporting a curriculum that encourages students and staff members to communicate electronically with students and staff in other countries; and
- monitoring, assessing and reporting on student progress in international learning activities.

Teachers can contribute effectively to international education by:

- expanding their own general and professional knowledge, understanding and practice to include the cultural and national perspectives of others;
- helping students understand their existence in a context that includes the national and cultural perspectives of others;
- welcoming diversity and supporting all students in benefiting from it;
- reviewing their curriculum frequently to include international examples that support their content;
- including travel to other countries and study in their professional development plans; and
- encouraging and supporting student travel and creating opportunities to host students from other countries and cultures.

Students can contribute effectively to international education by:

- being proactive in developing a course of study that includes international study;
- learning English and a language other than English;
- welcoming students from other countries who attend their schools;
- organizing or joining a school international club;
- finding out how to get a pen pal or e-mail pal in another country;
- helping organize a school exchange;
- volunteering to host exchange students;
- seeking internships in companies that do business with other countries; and
- developing a capstone project that includes international components.