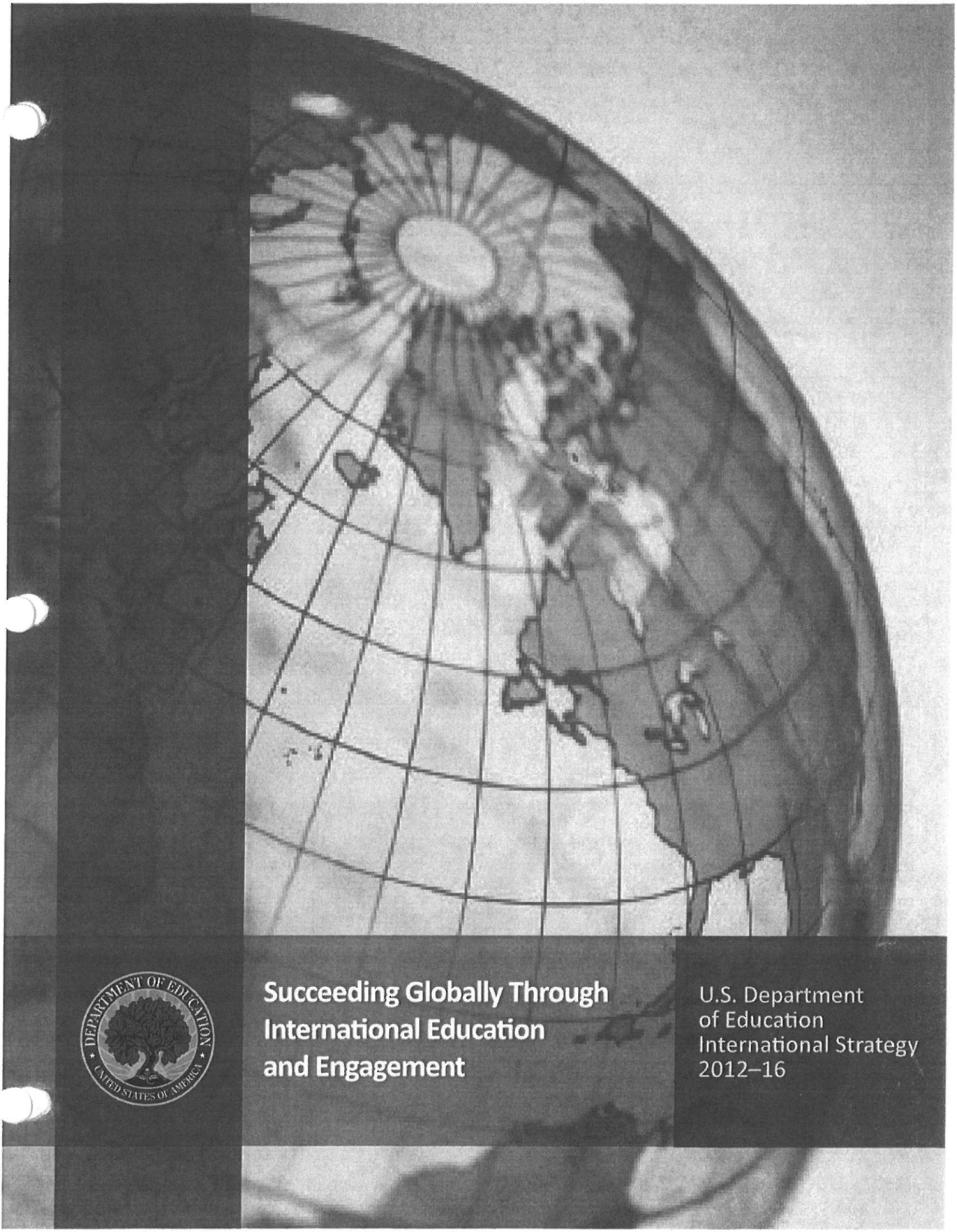


Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement

U.S. Department of Education International Strategy 2012–16

Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement

U.S. Department of Education

International Strategy

2012–16

November 2012

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education has established its first-ever, fully articulated international strategy. The strategy is designed to simultaneously advance two strategic goals: strengthening U.S. education and advancing our nation's international priorities. The strategy reflects the value and necessity of:

- a world-class education for all students;
- global competencies for all students;
- international benchmarking and applying lessons learned from other countries; and
- education diplomacy and engagement with other countries.

The international strategy for 2012–16 affirms the Department's commitment to preparing today's youth, and our country more broadly, for a globalized world, and to engaging with the international community to improve education. It reflects ongoing work in implementing international education programs, participating in international benchmarking activities, and working closely with other countries and multilateral organizations to engage in strategic dialogue.[1] At the same time, it reflects a deliberate shift to a systematic and integrated approach to international engagement based on the goals and objectives of the strategy. The strategy, which the Department has already begun to implement, will be used to guide the Department's activities and allocation of resources to reflect the highest priority and most strategic topics, parts of the world, and activities.

This international strategy was developed through extensive consultation within the Department of Education and with other U.S. government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Many stakeholders offered their perspectives and recommendations for how the Department should approach international education and the path forward.

"Ultimately, the economic future of the United States rests not only on its ability to strengthen our education system but also on citizens in other nations raising their living standards. Thinking of the future as a contest among nations vying for larger pieces of a finite economic pie is a recipe for protectionism and global strife. Expanding educational attainment everywhere is the best way to grow the pie for all."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, March 3, 2011

Why an International Focus?

In today's globalized world, an effective domestic education agenda must address global needs and trends and aim to develop a globally competent citizenry. It is no longer enough to focus solely on ensuring that students have essential reading, writing, mathematics, and science skills. Our hyper-connected world also requires the ability to think critically and creatively to solve complex problems, the skills and disposition to engage globally, well-honed communication skills, and advanced mathematics, science and technical skills. Such competencies will prepare students, and our nation, for a world in which the following are the reality.

- **Economic competitiveness and jobs.** Students today will be competing for jobs with peers around the world and those jobs will require advanced knowledge and nonroutine skills. Transglobal communication and commerce are increasingly part of the daily work of large and small businesses, which face difficulties in hiring employees with the requisite global skills, including cultural awareness and linguistic proficiency.[2] To be successful in such an environment, students will need to perform at the highest academic levels and have the capacity to understand and interact with the world, including language skills and an appreciation for other countries and cultures.

- **Global challenges.** Students will need to have the substantive knowledge and understanding to address issues, phenomena and catastrophes that cut across borders, like the spread of disease, climate change, natural disasters, and financial crises. They also will need to be able to communicate and work collaboratively with international peers to address these global challenges.

- **National security and diplomacy.** Strong educational outcomes for all students, global competencies, and modern technological expertise help to fuel innovation and growth and are therefore critical for national security, as highlighted in the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report, *Education Reform and National Security.*[3] 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 national defense, intelligence, homeland security and law enforcement.[4]

- **A diverse U.S. society.** The United States is a multicultural society. In 2010, an estimated 50 million immigrants were living in the United States, bringing a wealth of cultural experiences and languages. It is essential that we are all 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 will facilitate civil discourse and a cohesive society.

A paper published in 2011 by the Woodrow Wilson Center, *A National Strategic Narrative*, confirms the value and need for an international focus and perspective in education.[5] The authors, two active military officers, argue that our success as a nation requires that we invest more in sustainable prosperity and the effective tools of public engagement and less in defense. Fostering an educated and engaged citizenry is a cornerstone of a strong democracy. The United States' role in the world, and our ability to support and strengthen nascent democracies, rests on the strength of our nation and how well we support and practice democratic principles.

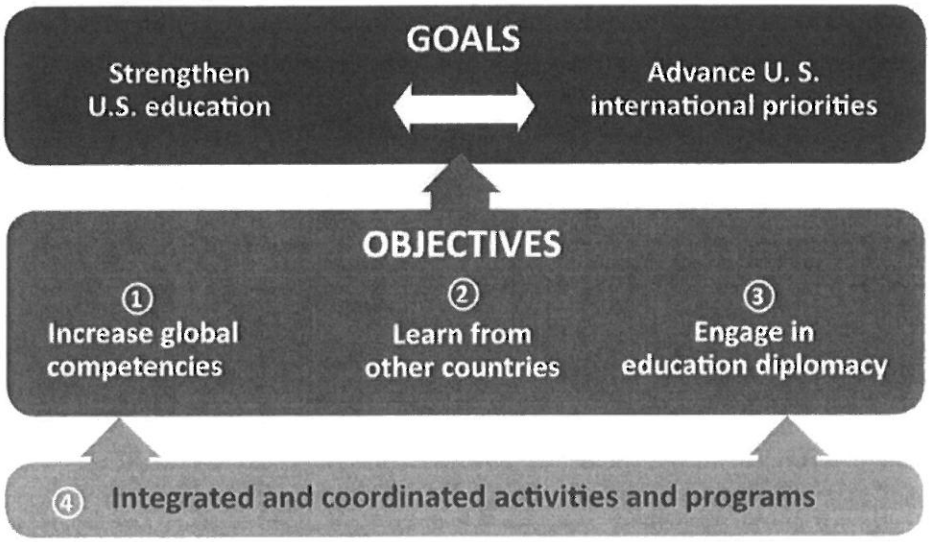
"We must focus on integrating international perspectives into our classrooms. It is through education and exchange that we become better collaborators, competitors and compassionate neighbors in this global society."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, November 14, 2011

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Department's international strategy is fully 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 global competencies, learn from other countries, and engage in education diplomacy—will advance the Department of Education's larger strategic goals. The activities supporting these objectives are undertaken by program offices across the Department of Education and with other government agencies, and thus the success of the strategy depends on their integrated and coordinated implementation, the fourth objective of the strategy.

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



Underlying the strategy is the notion that advancing educational attainment and achievement and increasing economic viability, both domestically and internationally, are worthy pursuits. A world-class education for all is not a zero-sum game: when individuals learn and nations succeed, it is a win-win for everyone. Thus, in implementing the international strategy, the Department of Education will focus on building awareness of the importance of a world-class education for all,

international collaboration, and cross-cultural exchange. The secretary and other high-level Departmental officials will use the "megaphone" to address these issues in speeches, publications and other communications. In the past two years, for example, the secretary has addressed these issues in speeches at such organizations as the CFR, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Bank.

Objective 1: Increase the global competencies of all U.S. students, including those from traditionally disadvantaged groups.

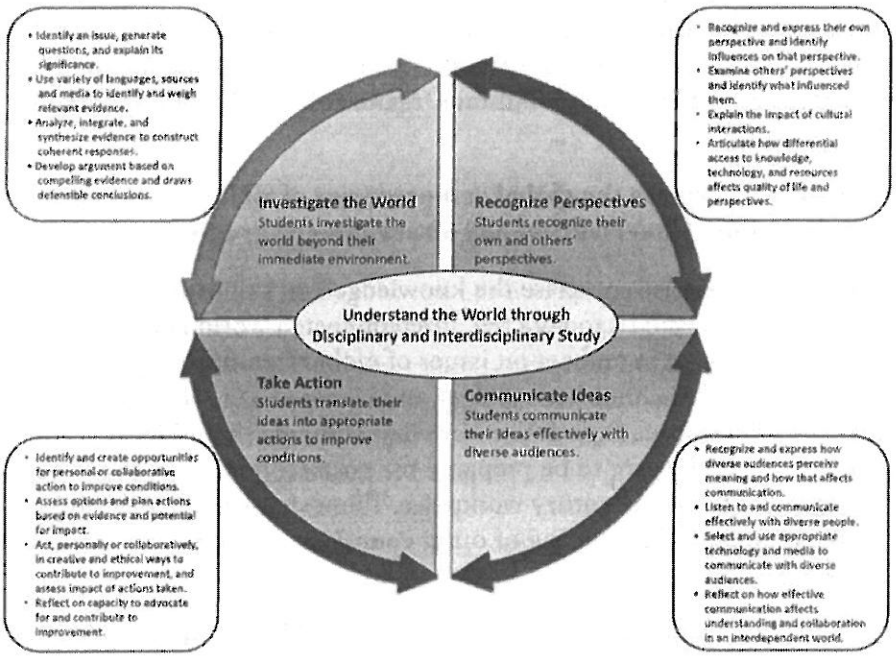
Global competencies comprise the knowledge and skills individuals need to be successful in today's flat, interconnected world and to be fully engaged in and act on issues of global significance.[6] Internationally benchmarked college- and career-ready standards define academically rigorous expectations of what students should know and be able to do if they are to be prepared for postsecondary education and to succeed in the 21st century workplace. These standards, including knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures, languages and perspectives, are applicable across the world.

The Global Competence Task Force, formed and led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Asia Society, defined globally competent individuals as those who use their knowledge and skills to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, recognize their own and others' perspectives, communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences, and translate their ideas into appropriate actions. In short, global competencies are "21st century skills applied to the world." As illustrated in figure 2, these competencies are not isolated skills, but rather interrelated skills and knowledge that are used together to enable individuals to understand the world and take action. Finally, global competencies are not a luxury for a select few, but rather, are essential skills for all individuals.

"To be on track today for college and careers, students need the 21st century skills that are so vital to success in the global economy. They need to show that they can analyze and solve complex problems, communicate clearly, synthesize information, apply knowledge, and generalize learning to other settings."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, March 14, 2012

Figure 2: Global Competencies: 21st Century Skills Applied to the World



Source: The Global Competence Task Force, formed and led by the Council of Chief State School Officers' EdSteps Initiative and the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning.

The Department of Education integrates global competencies into its core work, primarily in three areas: implementation of internationally benchmarked, college- and career-ready standards, the development of knowledge and understanding about the world, and the acquisition of foreign language skills and area expertise.

Rigorous standards that reflect what high-performing countries expect of their students—together with appropriately aligned curricula, assessments, and supports—are essential for ensuring that U.S. students are held to the same standards as their international peers and, in turn, prepared for the global economy. The Department supports the development and implementation of internationally benchmarked, college- and career-ready standards and the development of assessments aligned with the internationally benchmarked Common Core State Standards through Race to the Top.[7] The new assessments, when available, will yield valuable information on how well states are doing in preparing students for

college and career, and for living and working in a global economy. The Department's recent blueprint to reauthorize the *Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* focuses on revamping career and technical education so students are prepared to compete in a 21st century global economy.

Understanding and appreciating other parts of the world, different religions, cultures, and points of view are essential elements of global competence. Students at all levels, from elementary to postsecondary, can acquire this understanding through course work tied to college- and career-ready standards that encourage students to learn about the world or take alternate perspectives and is infused with, for example, global texts, issues, or problems. Students gain this knowledge by studying the arts, civics, geography, history, and foreign languages. And opportunities for study and research abroad can deepen this understanding and global perspective.

Nelson Mandela has said, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart." Even in a world where English is often considered the primary *lingua franca*, speaking another language and understanding the culture that accompanies the study of this language, improves communication and effective working relationships. This is true across disciplines from academia and business to healthcare, intelligence, law enforcement, and the military. In addition, foreign language study leads to an increased understanding of one's native language and has been shown to improve cognitive development and academic performance.

For many years, the Department of Education has supported programs designed to increase expertise in foreign languages and area and international studies, such as those programs funded under Title VI of the *Higher Education Act*.[8] Most of these programs support deep subject matter expertise for a relatively small number of students. With the strategy's focus on global competencies for all students beginning in elementary school, the Department is exploring how to leverage these programs to achieve broad global competencies for more students and teachers.

"America is too far behind other countries in terms of math and science. Top students from around the world are more likely to be bilingual or even trilingual than our children."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, October 2, 2012

Objective 2: Enhance federal, state and local education policy and practice applying lessons learned from other countries to drive excellence and innovation in the U.S. and abroad.

Sharing policies and practices with other high-performing countries about how to improve teaching and learning, and applying these lessons in the United States where appropriate, is a critical element in the Department of Education's efforts to facilitate a world-class education for all. To that end, the Department supports "benchmarking" U.S. students' performance against that of students in other countries. The goal of this research is to identify areas of strength and deficiency, and then use this information to guide our learning.

The United States regularly participates in international assessments and surveys (see table 1), such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), as the first step in benchmarking the United States against other countries. From these studies we learn not only how the United States compares to our economic competitors and trading partners in terms of student performance, but we also learn what students know and can do in key subject areas and about contexts for learning. In 2013, the United States will participate in TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) for the first time to learn more about teaching, schools, and school leadership in the middle grades. A new assessment of adult competencies, PIAAC (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), administered in 2011 with results to be released in 2013, will tell us about the literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills of adults, and about the types of skills people use in work and everyday life. There are other studies that the United States could potentially participate in as well, such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) 2016 international civic education study and the IEA's 2015 TIMSS-Advanced, an assessment of advanced mathematics and science students.

The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) implements these international studies in the United States and is actively involved at the international level by serving on the international governing boards that guide study policies and by collaborating with other countries to continually improve data quality.

While the international studies have primarily reported results for the United States overall, the Department is actively seeking ways to enhance the use of international data at the state and local levels as well. Some states participate in PIRLS, TIMSS, and PISA in order to obtain state-

*Table 1: U.S. Participation in International Assessments and Surveys**

Study	Who and What	When	Next Data Release
PIRLS Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	Fourth-graders, assessed in reading literacy	Administered every 5 years since 2001 and most recently in 2011	December 2012
PISA Program for International Student Assessment	15-year-old students, assessed in reading, mathematics, and science literacy, and other subjects such as problem-solving and financial literacy in 2012	Administered every 3 years since 2000 and most recently in 2012	December 2013
TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study	Fourth- and eighth-graders, assessed in mathematics and science; also assessed 12th grade in 1995	Administered every 4 years since 1995 and most recently in 2011	December 2012
PIAAC Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies	Adults aged 16-65 years, assessed in literacy, numeracy, problem solving in technology-rich environments, and components of reading	New in 2011	October 2013
TALIS Teaching and Learning International Survey	Teachers and principals, grades 7, 8 and 9	New for the United States in 2013	June 2014

*The United States also participated in earlier international reading, mathematics, and science assessments, the 1999 International Civic Education Study (CivEd), and the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL).

level results. In its FY 2013 budget, the Department has proposed a pilot to expand state-level participation in PISA so that states can learn how their student performance, policies, and practices compare with other countries, and then apply the lessons they learn in their schools. Other countries with federal education systems, such as Australia and Canada, have expanded their samples to enable them to report results for their nations overall as well as for each state and province, respectively. Another way to facilitate wider use of international data is to make international assessment and survey data more readily available to stakeholders through data tools and other resources.[9] Publications and workshops specifically geared toward states, districts, schools and teachers could also broaden the use of international data at the state and local levels.

Benchmarking U.S. performance against other countries is just the first step. The Department is delving more deeply into what works in other countries and learning more about innovative practices and how they could be applied in the United States. The International Summit on the Teaching Profession (see sidebar below), which Secretary Duncan cohosted with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Education International (EI) in 2011 and 2012, is one example of powerful learning through international dialogue.

Applying Lessons Learned from High-performing Countries

International Summit on the Teaching Profession

In 2011, Secretary Duncan conceived of and cohosted with the OECD and EI (the federation of international teachers unions) the first *International Summit on the Teaching Profession*. This gathering was designed to enable education ministers and national union leaders from countries with high-performing and rapidly improving education systems (based on the results of PISA 2009) to come together to share practices. A direct outcome of the 2011 summit for the United States was the Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching (RESPECT) initiative to empower states and districts that commit to pursuing bold reforms at every stage of the teaching profession.

A second summit, also cohosted by Secretary Duncan, was held in 2012 and focused on how to prepare teachers and develop school leaders. A direct outcome of the 2012 summit was the shared vision statement, *Transforming the Teaching Profession*, developed and signed by Secretary Duncan, the presidents of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, and five other U.S. education leaders.

The third summit will be held in the Netherlands in 2013 and this new international "community of practice" is now an annual event.

http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/internationaled/teaching-summit.html

Partnerships with other multilateral organizations and with individual countries provide additional examples of learning and knowledge sharing. For example, the Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the U.S. Department of Education are conducting joint research and held a seminar in May 2012 in which experts and practitioners from both countries shared policies and practices about dramatically improving their lowest performing schools. The Department of Education has bilateral agreements with several countries, including Australia and Singapore, to promote active dialogue about education topics of mutual interest, including teacher quality and 21st century skills. And, senior officials in the Department have also engaged in strategic travel overseas to visit schools and meet with teachers, students, education policymakers and experts in high-performing education systems.

The Department of Education will continue these and similar efforts aimed at understanding what works in other countries in high-priority areas such as teacher effectiveness, technology, career and technical education, school funding, equity, and early learning. We will focus these efforts on countries with high performance or rapid improvement on international assessments such as PISA, strong performance or high degrees of innovation in specific areas (such as early learning or innovation) and educational contexts similar to those in the United States. The Department will also examine how the learning can be applied in the United States and at what level (national, state, district or school). At the same time, we view this as a shared endeavor in which the United States not only learns from other countries but in which we also share U.S. experiences and lessons learned with other countries.

Objective 3: Advance U.S. international priorities in strategically important countries through active education diplomacy.

The Department of Education supports diplomacy through almost all of its international activities. By building and fostering relationships with government officials, policymakers, researchers, educators, students, and other professionals around the world, providing leadership on education issues, and learning about and from 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 focusing on high-priority countries or regions of the world based on U.S. government needs and priorities, engaging bilaterally with other

"I am committed to benchmarking the practices and performance of top-performing countries because it can help America accelerate achievement and elevate the teaching profession. I am convinced that education leaders can better boost student learning by working together and sharing best practices, than by working alone."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, May 24, 2011

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 of Education focuses efforts on countries and regions of the world that are a priority for the secretary of education and other U.S. government officials. Important factors for prioritizing countries include geopolitical significance and national security, trade relationship with the United States, size of the economy, proximity and immigration patterns, acute development needs, and the number of U.S. students abroad and foreign students in the United States.

Education diplomacy is important for building mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships between countries. For example, the U.S. government, led by the secretary of state, has strategic partnerships with key countries, including Brazil, China, India, and Indonesia. In each of these strategic partnerships, education diplomacy plays an important role, and priorities include expanding higher education partnerships, increasing international exchange, and promoting equity in education. For example, the United States and China have the 100,000 Strong Initiative to increase dramatically the number of Chinese students in U. S. postsecondary institutions and vice versa. The United States held higher education summits with India and Indonesia in 2011 bringing together government and private sector officials from each country to examine ways to build partnerships among institutions and to consider the role of community colleges. The U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality is another example (see sidebar, next page). Student exchanges and student mobility across country borders are issues in the multilateral as well as the bilateral context.

Engaging in Education Diplomacy Through Strategic Partnerships

U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality

The U.S.-Brazil Joint Action Plan to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality, launched in 2008, calls upon both governments to increase collaboration by sharing best practices, resources and information to address issues related to racial equity in a variety of fields, including education. Under the education component of the Action Plan, Brazil and the United States have significantly strengthened their bilateral dialogue on matters related to increasing equal opportunity in education at all levels and have established a number of related activities or initiatives.

Cooperation under the Action Plan also includes a new partnership between the government of Brazil and a coalition of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States that aims to increase collaboration through joint research, institutional partnerships and exchanges. HBCU collaboration with Brazil also includes efforts to address topics of mutual interest such as recruitment, retention, bridge programs, STEM education and ethnic studies.

In addition to working with countries as part of U.S. governmentwide strategic partnerships, the Department of Education has bilateral agreements with a number countries, including, for example, Spain and Mexico, through which we collaborate on key education issues. For example, the United States and Spain work together to facilitate the learning of Spanish in the United States and English in Spain under the Plan for Joint Activities. This cooperation at the national level complements the high level of cooperation that exists between Spain and a number of U.S. states, school districts, and universities. A Memorandum of Understanding on Education between the United States and Mexico fosters dialogue between policymakers on education issues of mutual concern with particular attention to efforts to improve the quality of education for binational migrant students.

Similarly, the United States actively participates in multilateral organizations—Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), East Asia Summit (EAS), Organization of American States (OAS), OECD and UNESCO—through which we share best practices and lessons learned and work collaboratively to improve education here and abroad. Recently, for example, the APEC, EAS, and OAS Education Ministerials addressed such issues as teacher quality, career and technical education, technology, and higher education. The Department of Education is also helping to lead research within APEC to examine teacher quality and the preparation of teachers in selected countries. The Department works closely with the OECD on many issues, including the International Summit on the Teaching Profession and multiple international data collections. Activities with UNESCO in 2012 include key roles for the United States in the Third International Congress on Vocational and Technical Education and Training and the 2012 World Congress on Open Educational Resources.

The Department of Education also regularly hosts visitors in key fields as part of the State Department's International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP). This program helps to strengthen U.S. relations with other countries by providing emerging leaders with the opportunity to experience firsthand American political, economic, social and cultural life and to build long-lasting connections between Americans and delegates from other countries. In addition, the Department hosts high-level government officials, researchers and educators who come to learn about current initiatives in U.S. education and share information about their countries' education systems and political conditions. On average, the Department of Education hosts more than 1,200 visitors from more than 140 countries each year.

Since 2000, the Department of Education has also collaborated with the U.S. 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.

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.

Objective 4: Develop, monitor and continuously improve ED's international activities in an integrated and coordinated manner.

This international strategy provides a framework for a diverse but targeted set of activities that are carried out by multiple offices across the Department of Education. Implementing the strategy requires clear guidance and leadership regarding the strategy, as well as close cooperation and coordination throughout the Department. The Department is developing an annual implementation plan and is creating and refining internal processes, guidance, and mechanisms to facilitate an integrated and coordinated implementation of the strategy. And, while this is the Department of Education's international strategy, the importance of global competencies, learning from others, and engaging internationally cuts across disciplines, government agencies, and stakeholders. The Department of Education has and will continue to work with other U.S. government agencies, such as the Departments of State, Commerce, and Labor and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and with global partners to promote qualitative improvements in education, to strengthen systems here and abroad, and to promote international exchange.

In Conclusion

The Department of Education's international strategy is designed to achieve the two overarching goals of improving U.S. education and advancing our nation's international priorities. More specifically, though, it was developed to ensure the competitiveness of our nation and our workforce; educate our own increasingly diverse U.S. society; promote national security and diplomacy; and strengthen our ability to address global challenges. The strategy reflects the importance of international engagement as a core element in the work of the Department of Education. The strategy also reflects the importance of a world-class education for all, so that we have a nation, and a world, that is informed, engaged, and prepared to deal effectively with the global challenges that will face us.

"Education is now the key to eliminating gender inequality, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, to preventing needless deaths and illness, and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity. Education today is inseparable from the development of human capital."

—Secretary Arne Duncan, March 3, 2011

Endnotes

1 The inventory of the U.S. Department of Education's international programs and activities provides a description of all international programs and activities, including funding. It is available from the International Affairs Office at the Department of Education, International.Affairs@ed.gov.

2 *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security*, Washington, DC: Committee for Economic Development, 2006.

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

4 *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* (Mary Ellen O'Connell and Janet L. Norwood, eds.), Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2007.

5 *A National Strategic Narrative* (Mr. Y, a pseudonym for Captain Wayne Porter, USN, and Colonel Mark "Puck" Mykleby, USMC). Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011.

6 *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World* (Veronica Boix Mansilla and Anthony Jackson, eds). Council of Chief State School Officers' EdSteps Initiative and the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning. New York, NY: Asia Society, 2011.

7 The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. Most states have adopted these standards.

8 See the inventory of the U.S. Department of Education's international programs and activities, available from the International Affairs Office at the Department of Education, International.Affairs@ed.gov.

9 For example, the Department's International Data Explorer (www.nces.ed.gov/international/ide) is a web-based analysis tool that has made the international data more accessible.