



Partnership for
Global Learning

Seattle Public Schools

Pioneers in International Education

With support from

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Case studies provide an opportunity to hear directly from school districts actively working to integrate global competence into their schools. This series is meant to illustrate strategies and provoke discussion in your district. Each begins with the definition of global competence, followed by an in-depth look at the history and current programs for international education in the district.

Global Competence

Global competence is the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need in the twenty-first century to be successful. Before examining district policies designed to ensure students are successful in the twenty-first century, let's first look at what makes a student globally competent. Globally competent students must have the knowledge and skills to¹:

Investigate the World. Global competence starts with the capacity to *investigate the world*: that is, to be aware of and interested in the world and its workings. This ability involves formulating and exploring globally significant questions that address people, places, events, and phenomena that may be rooted anywhere from a local community to a faraway country. It also includes the skill of identifying, collecting, and analyzing information in response to important issues. The goal of investigating the world is to create a coherent response that considers multiple perspectives and draws useful and defensible conclusions about anything from an economic or political problem to a scientific query, or a work of art.

Weigh Perspectives. Globally competent students recognize that they *have* a particular perspective and that others may or may not share it. They are able to articulate and explain the perspectives of other people, groups, or schools of thought. They can also identify influences on these perspectives, including how differential

access to knowledge, technology, and resources can affect people's views. Their understanding of others' perspectives is deeply informed by historical knowledge about other cultures as well as contemporary events. They can compare their perspective with others and integrate their own and others' viewpoints to construct a new point of view.

Communicate Ideas. As in so many areas of life, an aptitude for *communicating ideas* is essential. Global competence entails effective communication—both verbal and non-verbal—with diverse audiences. Modes of communication must be adjusted to reach different groups, since audiences differ on the basis of culture, location, faith, politics, socioeconomic status, and other variables. Globally competent students are proficient in English (the world's common language for commerce and communication) and at least one other language. They are also skilled users of media and technology within a global communications environment.

Take Action. Beyond recognition and adaptability, global competence calls for students to *take action*. They should not only learn about the world but also feel empowered to make a difference in it. Globally competent students see themselves as being capable of making a difference and being aware of opportunities to do so. They're able to weigh options based on evidence and insight, assess potential for impact, consider possible consequences for others, act whether individually or in groups, and reflect on those actions.

In all of these steps toward global competence, students *acquire and apply disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, expertise, and skills*. Simply put, content knowledge is a critical attribute of global competence. Students learn to think like scientists, mathematicians, historians, and artists by using the tools and methods of inquiry in each of the disciplines.

¹ Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning (PGL) and Council of Chief State School Officers' EdSteps Project: <http://asiasociety.org/node/9179>

A Pioneering Vision

As in so many cases, Seattle's story of change begins with a visionary, a man who in a matter of months, moved from a distinguished military career to a self-proclaimed "children's crusader." When John Stanford was recruited to the position of superintendent of Seattle Public Schools in 1995, he had no education experience, but had ideas for reform and no fear of implementing them. From day one, when he proposed that central-office staff spend one day a week helping in schools, it was clear that this was a man with a vision for change. Five months later he recommended a mandatory requirement for students to study a second language and proposed an international language school.

When Stanford introduced the idea of an international school, he didn't have a clear plan for it. He recognized the need both for English language speakers to learn a second language beginning at an early age, and for non-native English speakers to be part of a nurturing environment that would allow them to learn English and maintain their native language. Integrating technology to achieve these goals was viewed as a key component.

Enter Karen Kodama. Kodama started as a teacher in Seattle Public Schools, and at the time Stanford announced his vision of an international school, she was the principal of a K-8 school. Prior to that, she taught classes to teachers and principals, helping them to improve their craft and working as a coach on pilot program instruction. This combination of experience led Stanford to choose her to implement his idea of an international school for the district.

With no clear direction for the international school, Kodama, along with a group of parents and educators, began surveying their local business community – as local employers, it was important to know what skills they prioritized for future employees and what languages would best serve the local market.

Through these surveys and additional research, major components for the school (and future international schools) were outlined:

- All students are to become proficient in a world language other than English.
- Global perspectives are not an add-on. They are included in *all* content areas, including math, science, physical education, and the arts. In this way, global competence is intentionally integrated into the way teachers teach their curriculum and how students learn it.
- Academic achievement is essential and all state and district standards must be met.
- Effective use of technology, as per Stanford's vision, is critical. The school would have state of the art technology and it would be used consistently in the classroom to promote global learning and connections - everything from iEARN projects to videoconferencing with children in other countries.
- Kodama's committee felt that partnerships were of vital importance, not only with parents, different ethnic communities, and businesses, but also with higher education and international partnerships with sister schools.
- Teachers are the key ingredient. Teachers need to be life-long learners, open to innovative ways of teaching. Professional development is provided weekly to enable teachers to improve and globalize their practice continuously.

Kodama and her committee visited schools around the country, trying to locate a model similar to what they had in mind: an immersion school that not only taught languages, but taught students to be globally competent. They visited international baccalaureate schools (IB), language immersion schools, and bilingual and ELL schools, but couldn't find a model that fully matched their vision. They knew they were pioneers.

I have traveled around the world and witnessed firsthand our competition, and it is very clear that we need to maintain high standards. We let our students down if we fail to prepare them to succeed in this global economy. Our future lies in our ability to compete, and that lies in our ability to have the best-trained workforce.

-Governor Christine Gregoire

It took four years, but in 2000, sadly two years after John Stanford lost his battle to leukemia, the John Stanford International School (JSIS) opened its doors with Karen Kodama as the founding principal. Today it is a thriving kindergarten through fifth grade public, dual immersion school which lives up to Stanford's and the exploratory committee's vision. At JSIS:

- Students spend half their day studying math, science, culture, and literacy in their chosen world language, either Japanese or Spanish, while the other half of the day is spent learning reading, writing, and social studies in English. Starting at grade two, social studies is taught in the target language and some math and science are taught in English.
- International content appears across all curricular areas.
- A local arts organization provides artists-in-residence to teach students the language of world dance, music, and visual art.
- The immersion program emphasizes attaining social and academic fluency in at least one world language. Immersion class teachers, or their assistants, must be native speakers.
- JSIS serves as one of Seattle's centers for new immigrant students, and offers English as a Second Language courses for children and after-school courses for their parents.
- The school has demonstrable success both in language acquisition and

academic achievement.

- Partnerships with local international businesses, as well as curriculum support from the University of Washington, have helped the development of the school.
- A partnership was established with a small school in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and students in the K-5 Spanish immersion program have the opportunity to visit their sister school for a week during the school year.
- At the end of fifth grade, students in the Japanese immersion program go to Japan for two weeks. They have home stays and visit a school in Kobe.

And as predicted, teachers are key to the success of the school. They receive extensive professional development and introductions to innovative ways of teaching world languages and core subjects. In weekly professional development meetings, sessions are provided on cultural competence, minority and bilingual parents come in to share their perspectives, and movies from other countries are viewed and local and international news articles read, to show different perspectives – all with the aim of increasing the cultural competency of the teachers. This assists the teachers in planning curriculum that reflects the real-life needs of their students – helping them understand issues in their communities within a global context.

A District Inspired

The school was a huge success, winning the Goldman Sachs Prize for Excellence in International Education in 2003 and named the Best of the Best elementary school in the nation in 2005 as well as receiving the Intel/Scholastic Schools of Distinction Award. JSIS immediately began inspiring other schools in the district. In 2001, Hamilton Middle School was designated the first international middle school in the district and the first middle school in Seattle to offer world languages to all 6th grade students.

This formed a languages pipeline for the first group of John Stanford students finishing fifth grade in 2005.

The largest impact for John Stanford International School however occurred in 2007 when the district announced a plan to launch a network of twelve international schools. Under the new plan, ten international schools (in addition to the existing JSIS and Hamilton International Middle School) would be established over the course of the next three to five years. The new schools would have the same dual-language immersion format and international focus as JSIS. Karen Kodama was hired by the district to oversee the network and lead the expansion.

A Network is Born

The transformation to an international school is not something the district allows a school to take lightly. Kodama was immediately tasked with writing a district policy for the school board showing their commitment “to offering international education opportunities for students in grades Kindergarten to 12.” The adopted policy contains two components. First, it states the commitment of the district to teaching world languages in an immersion setting for grades K-5 as well as ensuring availability of immersion classes at middle and high schools to be able to accommodate the growing pipeline of immersion language students. Second, it states “The District is committed to teaching global perspectives in all content areas of an international education program, as well as focusing on: examining and evaluating global issues, problems, and challenges; studying human differences and commonalities; and analyzing economic, technological, social, linguistic, and ecological connections between the United States and the World.”

With the district policy in place, a process for existing schools to convert to international schools was created. It begins with Kodama visiting interested schools to explain the

mission and vision that the exploratory committee formed in the late 1990’s. Although new international schools need to align under this vision, they are not required to adopt it verbatim; they are free to alter it to fit their own vision and needs. After the initial presentation, sessions are held with the staff to determine what they believe in – are they aligned with an overall vision of an international school? Community meetings are held to ensure buy-in of all stakeholders, including parents, for without their support a school cannot be successful.

Once these initial steps are complete, the school enters into an optional, but strongly encouraged, exploratory year during which they are provided with funding to do research, including visits to and study of other international and immersion schools in the district and across the country. A planning committee is formed, which uses this research as background to create a plan for the school transformation.

If all goes well and the school is still committed after the exploratory year, it applies to be officially designated as an international school. Once accepted, the school is given start-up funds to assist with planning and professional development for teachers from the district or other sources. Other local international schools are available to assist with the integration of international perspectives throughout the curriculum. Each curricular department at the school meets to examine the best way to incorporate this new vision into their teaching. The district funding is also used to purchase curriculum materials, books for the library, and upgrades to the school’s technology. If everything is in place, the following September the school opens as an international school.

Currently there are six international schools in the Seattle School District:

- [John Stanford International School](#), an elementary school, the first of the international schools, opened in 2000.
- [Hamilton International School](#), the first middle school in Seattle, became an international school in 2001.
- [Beacon Hill International School](#), the second elementary school, opened in 2008.
- [Denny International School](#) (middle school) and [Concord International School](#), (elementary school) were designated international schools in the fall of 2009.
- [Chief Sealth International High School](#), the first International High School, opened fall of 2010

Continued Involvement of the District

Once a school is designated an international school, it is not left on its own. Kodama and an international education consulting teacher (.5 FTE) hired by the district, work with teachers on curriculum planning. For instance, assistance is provided to integrate a global perspective in social studies, a required subject in all elementary schools, as a natural way to start developing global competence.

This work with teachers has been at the core of the creation of international schools. The first step is to ensure that existing teachers buy-in to the vision. When Kodama started at JSIS, she created a list of expectations for teachers, which is continually updated and changed for each new school. Some of the key qualities are:

- interest in working at an internationally focused school,
- commitment to taking classes in the second languages taught at the school if they are not bilingual,
- willingness to engage in extra professional development,
- eagerness to learn about the cultures and traditions of the families they serve,
- ongoing commitment to cultural competency, and

- professional planning of lessons, courses, and alignment of curriculum.

Current district policy, formulated by the district human resources office as well as the teachers unions, allows for any teacher employed at a school converting to an international school to continue at the school or be moved to another school. This allows interested teachers with the appropriate backgrounds to stay and for schools to hire the kind of teachers needed for these specialty schools.

Another district program allows for certificated teachers to earn special status in categories such as language immersion. For instance, certification in a new International Education category proposed by Karen and the principals of the international schools would require teachers to, among other requirements, demonstrate that they have taught units with a global perspective for at least a year. After meeting these requirements, they would earn special status in this category. This will hopefully allow teachers who may not have seniority, but are the best teachers in an international school, to survive downsizing. A “walk through” tool has been created by the six International School principals to use as they observe teachers during the two year period needed to earn this International Education certification.

What is wonderful in schools with an international focus is that the diverse students within our classrooms are able to sit side by side as they learn about peoples across the globe. As they build competency in understanding the cultures beyond the classroom, they develop a curiosity that extends into the classroom itself. This allows students to see what they share in common even as they explore how they are different. - **Michele Anciaux Aoki, World Languages Program Supervisor, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction**

The Seattle School Board continues to be supportive of the work. The president is a member of the International Education

Advisory Board of Leaders, the group of business leaders which provides advice to the schools and assisted in the creation of JSIS. A recently elected school board member ran on a platform which stated that every school from elementary through high school should offer world language classes. At the request of the Board, Kodama organized a special work session for them explaining the concept of an international school and the workings of an immersion program. The first question posed to her after the presentation was, “Why isn’t this included in every school?” Kodama’s reply, “Every school could integrate global perspectives into their curriculum. It is about taking the time and having the resources for professional development. If every school would make this commitment it would certainly go a long ways in preparing students to be globally ready.”

Is it working?

Kodama cites both assessment data – students are meeting state standards and test scores – and anecdotal evidence. For instance, if you walk onto the playground at JSIS, you will see students of various backgrounds, speaking various languages, playing together without a second thought. They effortlessly mix and work together in social situations and the classroom. This open-mindedness towards students from other cultures, and the displays of respect and understanding, are all measures of success. When guests from other countries visit, students don’t laugh at their clothes or the way they speak, to them this is all natural, not “different.” These are small but important indicators of JSIS students’ ability to identify and embrace varied perspectives – a key component of global competence.

Fifth Grade Trip to Japan

At the end of fifth grade, John Stanford students travel to Japan. Immersed in Japanese for six years at this point, these students are able to speak and understand Japanese at an advanced level – at times to the amazement of their parents. On a recent trip, a father decided to stay in Japan with his son for an additional week. The surprised father later reported that it was not he who was in charge during that week, but his son who was able to read signs, complete banking transactions, buy train tickets, order their meals, and eavesdrop on conversations.

This experience demonstrates that when well prepared, students can survive and thrive in an international context – they can speak the languages, understand what is happening and most importantly, feel comfortable being in this environment. “To me, this is the ultimate example of cultural competence,” states Kodama. “To be able to go out there into the world and feel that you are part of it and be comfortable in it.” Reflecting such “cultural confidence” our intrepid student proclaimed after his fifth grade trip that he and his friend would boldly go where few middle grades students have ever ventured – an unchaperoned trip to Japan at the end of eighth grade!

Partners and Support

At the state level, national world language standards have been voluntarily adopted by the state. Although these are not mandated, they assist world language directors in aligning their programs to national standards. This alignment moves the state's world language programs beyond grammar, instead placing an emphasis on real communication and cultural knowledge, and strengthening the district's and the state's emphasis on global competence in schools.

Demand for admittance into the international schools is high, however, the cost to open one is slightly more than for a "traditional" school. This presents a hurdle the district must overcome as parent and business communities demand these schools, but the majority of state funding is earmarked for traditional curricular areas such as math and science. Some state funding has been provided for Mandarin programs and a federal Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant established three pilot programs in Mandarin. The programs flourished, but parents were upset when the three-year grant ended and the programs were threatened with curtailment. Fortunately, the district was able to add Mandarin guest teachers through the College Board's Guest Teacher initiative. Through this program, four additional schools were also able to add Mandarin programs by sharing two teachers. Washington State has also used federal funds through the STARTALK program to assist in certifying teachers in Mandarin, Arabic, and Persian. An additional STARTALK grant provides funding for world languages professional development. All of this support has led to ten schools in the district offering Mandarin – three elementary, three middle schools, and four high schools. Three of these schools are international schools and two more are in the pipeline to be future international schools. There are seven guest teachers from China and five Washington State teachers certified to teach Mandarin.

The Confucius Institute of the State of Washington opened in the spring of 2010. This partnership with Seattle Public Schools, the University of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (state level) and the office of the Governor of the State of Washington, is the only state-wide Confucius Institute in the world and the only one utilizing this type of collaborative effort. It is housed at Chief Sealth International High School, with Karen Kodama now serving as the initial Director of the Education Center.

Private foundations rarely finance this work, but a family foundation, provides a grant to support all six international schools' music, drama, and visual arts programs. The grant will also support the creation of a technical manual to assist all schools in adding an international dimension to arts programs. Other foundations such as the Freeman Foundation and US Japan Foundation have provided funding for the international schools.

Support has come in forms other than monetary. The Seattle World Affairs Council provides teachers across the state with valuable professional development. The Association for Cultural Exchange brings Korean teachers to the United States for internships, which include two weeks in Seattle's international schools. Giant Magnet, an arts organization, provides the five international schools with artists-in-residence from around the world. Publications and visiting speakers from a variety of sources such as the Asia Society, assist with developing teachers, materials, and workshops.

Business continues to be a strong advocate and partner for the schools. The Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle

China's emerging as one of the centers of the world, if not the center of the world. If my

assisted in the search for funding for a Confucius Institute. The Sister City Council has helped connect the schools with schools in Seattle's twenty-one sister cities, including schools in China, allowing the students of Mandarin to practice their new language skills. The District maintains the International Education Advisory Board of Leaders, who ten years ago advised the newly created John Stanford International School on which languages would be most valuable for students to know. They continue to advise on language and skills needed in the workplace, for instance: cross-cultural communication skills, the ability

to think outside the box, adaptability, and examining issues from multiple perspectives.

Conclusion

Each district's path to global competence is different, but many include a visionary leader. Seattle's success reflects John Stanford's pioneering vision. In his absence, it is being carried forward in the able hands of Karen Kodama and her colleagues who have worked to build support at every level – business, parents, teachers, and community leaders. With such a system in place, there is every reason this work will flourish for years to come.