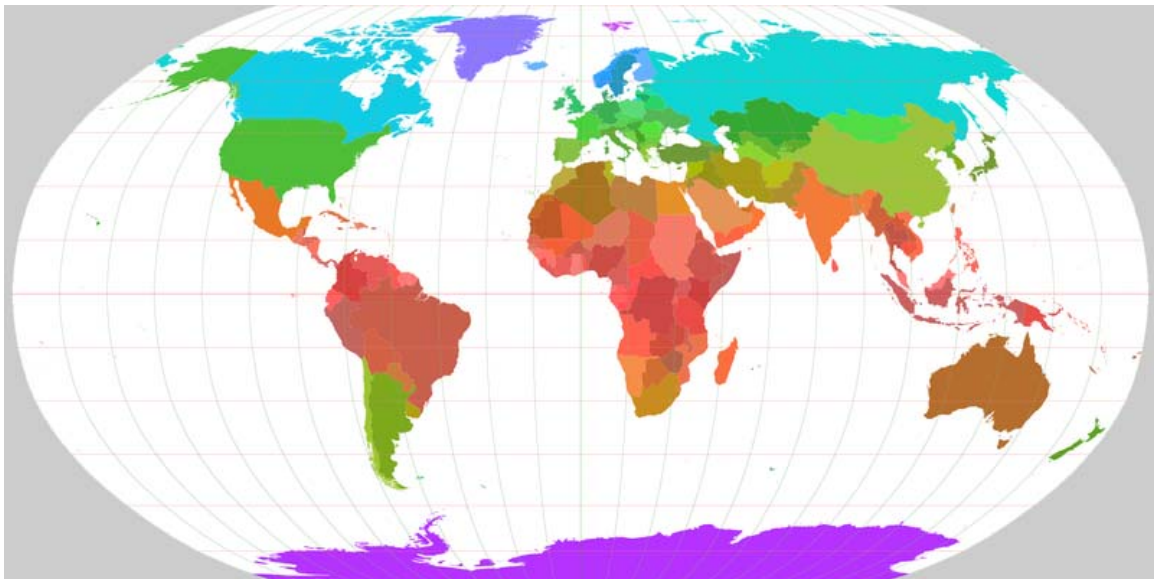


Report of the
**Kansas Task Force
on International
Education**

November 2009



Executive Summary

Americans increasingly recognize global interdependence as one of the most important developments of the twenty-first century. With one in six jobs tied to trade beyond our borders, the need to train more American students in international education is immediate and pressing. Today, the total number of students doing this nationwide is small and in Kansas even smaller. How to meet the urgent need for more knowledge of other world regions, cultures, languages, and global issues—the components of international education—is a challenge being discussed by educational leaders across the United States.

Realizing the significance of this issue to the future prosperity and security of our youth, our nation, and our state, the Kansas Committee for International Education in the Schools convened a statewide Kansas Task Force on International Education. The members of the Task Force surveyed current international education efforts in Kansas public schools, and considered future needs and priorities in this area. The Task Force's report makes specific recommendations for future initiatives in the short and long terms. It is not intended to be a rigid blueprint for future action, but an important first step in starting a statewide discussion on the need for increased international education capacity throughout Kansas at the elementary and secondary levels.

Kansas clearly has a long way to go in creating a sustainable and coherent program in international education – with few school districts offering courses with substantial international content in AY 2008-2009, even fewer offering enrichment programs with international content, and no specialist working for the Kansas State Department of Education in this area – but Kansas has many resources and advantages that position it well for the rapid development of international education training capacity in the years to come. With strong statewide leadership, targeted planning, and broadly based public support, Kansas could well emerge as one of the national pacesetters in building K-12 international education programs over the next decade.

After considering the challenges and opportunities facing international education in Kansas, the Task Force proposes the following ambitious, but attainable goal:

By 2014, all K-12 students in Kansas should have ample opportunity for exposure to international education, whether in traditional classroom settings, through interactive distance learning (IDL) or other digital platforms, or in after-school and summer programs.

To meet these goals, the Task Force makes the following recommendations to educators, policymakers, and all concerned Kansans:

1. Make a public case for the need for international education.
2. Emphasize exposure to international education, especially in elementary and middle schools.
3. Use existing resources and structures in creative ways.
4. Expand distance learning programs.
5. Pursue grant funding and other opportunities for support.
6. Increase opportunities across the state for lifelong learning.
7. Support professional development for pre-service and in-service educators.
8. Appoint a dedicated international education consultant at the Kansas State Department of Education.

According to an ancient Dutch proverb saying, *“In order to get where you want to go, you first have to leave where you are”* (from Sandy Elsberg's Bread Winner, Bread Baker; Upline Press, Charlottesville, VA; 1977, p. 80), now is the time to begin making international education a priority in Kansas. The opportunity is waiting, but first we must open the door.