Key Themes in CTE

PREPARING A
GLOBALY
COMPETENT WORKFORCE AND CITIZENRY

By Heather Singmaster and Jennifer Manise

Changing Demographics
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- The United States has 40 million people who are foreign-born, more than at any other time in its history.¹
- Twenty percent of the population (older than five years) speaks a language other than English at home.²
- It is estimated that by 2060, the Hispanic population in the U.S. will double to one in three of all Americans.³

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What this means is that for companies of any size to expand, they need to look to international markets. Doing so will both grow the U.S. economy and create new jobs here at home.

For many, this is a sensitive subject, as international markets can be seen as excuses for outsourcing. But the fact is, $1 billion in exports supported 5,600 jobs in 2013.⁴ Not only are more than 38 million U.S. jobs dependent on trade, but even more are supported as part of the supply chain connected to companies trading internationally.⁵

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The year, her career as an agriculture educator in upstate New York, she knew she wanted to expose her students to the world. Berescik came to Tri-Valley with a vision and passion for bringing broader experiences to kids, only to find that other priorities threatened to crowd out her commitment. So, initially, she began with small projects.

Here’s one that may sound familiar: Students examine each ingredient of a cheeseburger and map that ingredient back to its local source. Berescik then took the project a step further, instructing them as to where each component would be in season where they lived, as well as around the world. She followed up this exercise with a dialogue on food sourcing and security issues. As a result, students began an initiative to encourage people in their communities to support local agriculture and reduce their carbon footprint.

The next project was “Trost in the Classroom,” which led to a connection with elementary students in Ireland who were also raising trout. First virtually, and then through a trip to Ireland, students compared the species they were raising and talked about environmental issues related to clean water and fish populations in their areas.

Berescik continues to integrate global perspectives into all of her courses using UN resources and others related to environmental issues. This approach is paying off. She finds that her students are more interested and engaged with real-world topics related to their coursework.

They develop a much deeper understanding of the complexities of global food production and issues of food safety and security, both at home and abroad.

Health

When should global health issues be introduced into the curriculum and how can they spark student interest and understanding? Health Sciences and Human Services High School in the High Line School District, in Seattle, Washington, has found the answer is the semesters-long class, Global Health, for freshmen. The teacher, Alicia Emley, used a project-based learning approach to cover topics such as communicable and non-communicable diseases, policies of the World Health Organization (WHO), major global health problems, as well as awareness and advocacy for issues. Students are given case studies and role-world problems, and work together to evaluate the case, solve problems and advocate for many issues. They then present their findings to classmates and hone their work to present to other classes.

Emley contends the early exposure to global issues broadens not only their understanding of the intricacies of the field, but also builds their understanding of career paths. She said, “I think that the course opens up their ideas of what a job in medicine really means; that there are a lot of options outside of nursing or becoming a doctor. They realize the full potential of having a health career.”

Emley uses the WHO and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) websites heavily to modify lesson plans and rely upon additional resources, such as “Rx for Survival” from PBS, to round out her research. But this global focus does not end freshman year—seniors have the opportunity to move deeper connect and learn about a global-health topic in their Key Themes in CTE

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capstone course experience. Course work like this, designed to connect students through research, projects and presentations, is how a global outlook can be integrated to support CTE curriculum goals.

STEM
Marshall Academy in Fairfax County’s George C. Marshall High School (Falls Church, Virginia) is a Governor’s STEM Academy and home to the largest Mandarin program in the county. Students from area high schools come to study both AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) Mandarin courses, as well as specialized and technical courses, such as network administration, language programming and aerospace science. Academy Administrator Jeff McFarland believes that the CTE program provides cutting-edge and include real-world problem solving to attract AP and IB students. At the heart of their project-based learning is the National Academy of Engineering’s Grand Challenges program, which focuses on global societal issues. Keeping students grounded in global problems, such as solar energy affordability, restoring urban infrastructure and securing cyberspace, allows investigations of the world, building of perspectives, communicating ideas and taking action.

Getting Started
There are many ways to start engaging students through global competence. Remember to start small; it is most practical to begin by adding a single international dimension to an existing piece of curriculum. Find an internationally themed activity of particular interest to parents, students or the wider community and then find time to evaluate and perfect it. Taking these steps can build confidence in the work and allow time for the necessary research, training and professional development.

Some additional strategies include:

- Use international exchanges to promote curricular change. Tara Berscek connected her class to one in Ireland for their trout project. At Bergen County Academies in New Jersey, students partnered virtually with Kokaij High School in Hiroshima, Japan, to work on joint research projects.
- Reach out to local industries, non-profits and colleges with global links and resources. Global speakers are one way to begin to engage students and help them see the value of a global perspective. Start by checking with the local World Affairs Council, Rotary Club, Kiwanis club, or chamber of commerce. Or flip this and take your students to business. Ruth Guglielmo took students to a board meeting of the Mason County Career Center. Students spoke on the importance of the global economy and West Virginia’s place in it. It was an eye-opening event for both the students and the advisors.
- Use international issues and provide access to critical language study to prepare for the global economy. Jeff McFarland encourages students to take Mandarin and a course in entrepreneurship in addition to their information technology and engineering courses to give them more options for college and beyond, and also to build an enthusiasm and aptitude for life-long learning.

Conclusion
Integrating global competence into coursework is a natural way to engage students more deeply in their field and to keep professional learning current. As you consider the opportunities, start small and integrate into existing units and build from there. In doing so, you will be preparing your students more fully for their future.

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ENDNOTES