

# Global Education as School Reform

We should educate today's students for tomorrow's world—a world in which peoples and nations will be increasingly interconnected.

Most current reform rhetoric ignores what should be our primary concern: the nature of the world for which we are preparing today's children.<sup>1</sup> Too little is being said about how schools can meet the demands of citizenship in the world of the 21st century.

## Traditionalists and Structuralists

School improvement advocates generally fall into two camps. "Traditionalists" want to return schools to the way they were before the curriculum innovations of the '60s and '70s, with emphasis on the teaching of skills and traditional school subjects. Traditionalists typically push for *more*: more time spent in schools, more required courses, more testing, and more rigorous standards for promotion and graduation. They believe that the schools and educational practices of the past, if repaired or strengthened, are adequate to prepare students for life in the year 2000 and beyond.

"Structuralists," on the other hand, believe we need fundamental changes in the structure and organization of schools. They challenge the basic design of the American school, recommend changes in the teaching profession, and urge new goals and priorities for schools.

Neither of these groups, however, has addressed the central question for true school change: What should schools be teaching to prepare students for citizenship in the globalized society of the 21st century?

## What Should Schools Teach?

What we teach is obviously of great concern to the traditionalists; they believe our schools are either teaching the wrong things or are teaching the right things badly. The traditionalists' prescriptions regarding what should be taught, however, are seldom informed by a perceptive vision of the

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## Four Domains of Student Inquiry

- *The Study of Human Values*—both universal values defining what it means to be human and diverse values derived from group membership and contributing to particular worldviews.
- *The Study of Systems*—including the global economic, political, technological, and ecological systems in which we live and that contribute to the interdependent nature of our world.
- *The Study of Global Issues and Problems*—including peace and security issues, national and international development issues, local and global environmental issues, and human rights issues.
- *The Study of Global History*—focusing on the contact and borrowing among cultures and civilizations and the evolution of human values, contemporary global systems, and the causes of today's persistent problems.

—Willard M. Kniep

## The World Future Society

Edward Cornish

The World Future Society, an association for the study of alternative futures and a leading source of futures information, is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization. It acts as an impartial clearinghouse for a variety of views and does not take positions on what will or should happen in the future.

The Society's bimonthly magazine, *The Futurist*, is well known to many educators. But WFS also publishes books; those of especial use to educators include *The Study of the Future*, which is an introduction to the cross-disciplinary field; *The Future: A Guide to Information Sources*; *Careers Tomorrow*; and *The 1990s and Beyond*.

The Society also publishes *Future Survey*, a 16-page monthly magazine that provides abstracts of futures-related books, articles, papers, and other literature, and *Futures Research Quarterly*, a scholarly journal for professional futurists that focuses on methods of studying the future.

For more information, write to the World Future Society at 4916 St. Elmo Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814-5089, or call (301) 656-8274.

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future. The structuralists, on the other hand, have been largely silent about the substance of school programs. Even their most influential voices virtually ignore this issue, focusing instead on the form and structure of schools and teaching.

To adequately address questions of content, we must consider them in the context of today's local, national, and global realities. To be sure, today's students need to be grounded, as the traditionalists remind us, in their own history and culture. But we live in a world where people and nations are

increasingly connected with one another economically, politically, technologically, and ecologically; therefore, today's young people also need a sense of global history, an awareness of common human aspirations, and the will and abilities to tackle the great problems facing not only our own nation but the entire planet.

The global education movement has responded to this need by attempting to influence the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. It has focused on educating teachers and on changing their curriculums and classrooms. These strategies, often supported with funds from government or foundation sources, have helped teachers infuse global perspectives and concepts into existing programs.

### The Model Schools Network

To further this goal, in 1987 the American Forum began working to develop

a comprehensive school improvement project rooted in global education. As an outgrowth of the report of the National Commission on Global Education,<sup>2</sup> we are assembling a "model schools" network. In selected communities throughout the U.S., districts are forming partnerships among local schools and their communities, institutions of higher education, and state agencies to make a long-term effort for school improvement and program development.<sup>3</sup>

The districts composing the network hold a common commitment to identifying the essential elements of an education for the 21st century, using our framework for global education as a starting point.<sup>4</sup> The framework identifies four domains of student inquiry for which all school subjects should be accountable (see "Four Domains of Student Inquiry").

The American Forum's role in the network is to link school districts engaged in remodeling their programs and to support them in infusing the essential elements into all areas of the K-12 curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Several of the districts have held community forums where parents, teachers, and the public discussed the role of schools in the context of local, national, and global realities. These districts are using those forums as the basis for developing curricular blueprints, setting program priorities, forming plans for staff development, and developing structures and resources for implementation.

The network is based on a shared conviction that the time is ripe to integrate concerns about both substance and school structures in the development of "model" programs. As the network matures, we hope to be able to report on the progress of schools where global education has been set as the highest priority—

**The districts composing the network hold a common commitment to identifying the essential elements of an education for the 21st century.**

### Educational Futurists Network

If you would like to join ASCD's Educational Futurists Network, contact:

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schools that are educating children for the world they are entering rather than the world we are leaving behind. □

<sup>1</sup>For a scholarly analysis of that world, see Harlan Cleveland, (October 1986), "The World We're Preparing Our Schoolchildren For," *Social Education* 50: 416-423.

<sup>2</sup>Clark Kerr et al., (1987), *The United States Prepares for Its Future: Global Perspectives in Education*, New York: The American Forum, Inc.

<sup>3</sup>At the time this article was written, we had selected six districts for participation in the network and were negotiating to add four more by the fall of 1989. Anyone wishing more information about the network is encouraged to write the author at The American Forum.

<sup>4</sup>A full description of the framework is contained in Willard M. Kniep, (October 1986), "Defining a Global Education by Its Content," *Social Education* 50: 437-445.

<sup>5</sup>The National Model Schools Network Project will use the process for curriculum development outlined in Willard M. Kniep, (1987), *Next Steps in Global Education: A Handbook for Curriculum Development*, New York: The American Forum, Inc.

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