

A Global-Ready California for All

by
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A product of the California public schools system, Dave Potter is passionate about his state fulfilling its promise to provide all students with a world-class education. Dave's focus at the California Global Education Project is to build partnerships that empower teachers to participate in people-to-people exchanges and all forms of cross-cultural collaboration so that they and their students can build global competence while taking action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Priority partnerships include those that support environmental justice, civic engagement, and social-emotional learning.

The State of California promises to provide all students with a world-class education. This includes the challenge of preparing more than 6 million students to live, work, and thrive in a multicultural, multilingual, and highly connected world. In 2016, the California Department of Education took a step towards meeting this challenge by launching the [California Global Education Network \(CGEN\)](#), and publishing a report, *Educating for Global Competency*. This report calls global competence an "educational equalizer" and a top priority in the culturally, linguistically, economically, and politically interconnected twenty-first century. In the past four years, issues of immigration, refugees, sanctuary cities, climate crisis, COVID-19, historic unemployment, and Black Lives

Matters have clearly shown that global competence is a critical part of a modern education. Now is the time to invest in helping our children to understand and take action on real-world challenges that matter in our neighborhoods, our nation, and to our struggling planet.

One of CGEN's driving questions is, "How will we build global competence in California's students through teaching and learning in twenty-first-century schools and local communities?" California's social science teachers are key partners in addressing this question and the effort to build a global-ready school system. CGEN is powered by the [California Global Education Project \(CGEP\)](#), the state leader for providing real-world professional learning experiences for K

-12 educators seeking to foster global competence in all of our students. One of the nine networks that comprise the [California Subject Matter Project](#) managed by the University of California Office of the President, CGEP supports high-quality, standards-based, and interdisciplinary professional learning. For more than 30 years, CGEP has offered teachers communities of practice and leadership opportunities that leverage the latest disciplinary and educational research to improve content knowledge and pedagogy. Other founding partners of CGEN include: California Department of Education, California World Language Project, California History-Social Science Project, California Language Teachers Association, the California Council for Social Studies, and the California Geographic Alliance, which works with educators across the state to promote geographic literacy and global competence.

The work to foster global competence in students is interdisciplinary and aligned with existing state frameworks, standards, and initiatives. Supporting initiatives include: Whole Child Learning, Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, [California Environmental Literacy Initiative](#), [Social and Emotional Learning](#), the State Seal of Biliteracy, Global California 2030, and the new State Seal of Civic Engagement; [ELA/ELD Framework](#), the [History-Social Science Framework](#), and each of the five areas in the [California Arts Standards](#) (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts). Building on these supporting frameworks and guidance documents, the State of California is poised to be a real-world, or global-ready, education leader by elevating and integrating global education into core

content.

Despite evidence of global competence resulting in greater teacher and student engagement and achievement, however, the gap between the state's vision and classroom practice is wide. Few schools and districts have invested in global competency programs, projects, and resources. Many of these programs, like study abroad or International Baccalaureate, have not been widely accessible for all students and many are no longer possible during this pandemic.

This is where CGEN comes in. As a statewide network, CGEN can help close the gap between our vision and practice by connecting educators, students, parents, and community leaders across distance, experience, identity, and subject matter. Three approaches that CGEN can amplify and that are compatible with distance learning are: enable educator collaboration, expand participation in Communities of Practice, and increase access to virtual exchanges.

Enable Educator Collaboration

The [Learning Policy Institute](#) states that "working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district." The state supports several initiatives to support teacher collaboration. The [California Collaborative for Educational Excellence](#) hosts a professional learning exchange and funds several pilot district and county professional learning networks. Other initiatives in the state that support collaborative educator communities include the [CUE Learning Net-](#)

[works](#), the [CLIC Project](#), and the [Educator Innovator](#), powered by the National Writing Project. All 300,000 California teachers should have the opportunity to connect and collaborate with peers, parents, and community leaders both within *and* outside the state.

Expand Participation in Communities of Practice

Expanding California educators' professional learning networks through online Communities of Practice (CoP) is an evidence-based and scalable path forward to a more global-ready California. According to Wenger-Trayner, CoPs are "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." The [Global Education Futures Report](#) calls CoPs, "among the most traditional and the most natural forms of learning for humanity throughout our history," and, "no better way to transfer complex skills to learners." The USC Annenberg Innovation Lab research report, [Participatory Professional Development](#) provides case studies that illustrate how models and theories of connected and participatory learning need to be applied to professional development. Thousands of free & low-cost CoPs exist, such as Participate's United We Teach, World Savvy, Teach SDGs, and CGEP's Regional sites. The challenge is supporting educators' agency to find the CoPs that best fit their needs and interests, and then the time to build trusting relationships with their peers.

Increase Access to Virtual Exchanges

Virtual exchanges are an effective next step for California teachers who are collaborating in trusting communities. Virtual exchanges make it possible for all students to build essential skills while deepening their understanding of and ability to engage with peers from other backgrounds. Virtual exchanges, which are technology-enabled, sustained, people-to-people education programs, have evolved over the past 30 years from experience in the field of educational exchange and study abroad. Flexible and responsive to the explosive growth in new media technologies and platforms, virtual exchanges have been piloted at all levels of education from kindergarten through university and are distinctive in their use of new media platforms to enable deep, interactive, social learning. Virtual exchanges are widely supported by federal, state, and local education agencies, policy-makers, businesses, foundations, and universities as a means to develop a globally



and culturally competent citizenry. [Empatico](#), [Qatar Foundation International](#), and [Generation Global](#) lead a myriad of free virtual exchange communities and [projects to join](#).

Virtual exchange is a key tool for the real-world learning experiences that California needs to provide in order to prepare its students for future success. The policies, platforms, pedagogy, and people exist and are ready to help all California students build global competencies. But what is the catalyst to push virtual exchange into mainstream adoption?

Call to Action

California is global, from its demographics to its industries to its cultural im-

impact. Our K-12 education system must prioritize global competence to prepare our next generation to understand and be ready to leverage our influence wisely. Policy-makers, state and local education agencies, and funders are encouraged to invest heavily in programs that support teacher collaboration, communities of practice, and virtual exchanges. It's imperative that this investment focuses on underserved communities, including tribal, rural, migrant, juvenile justice, disabilities, resettlement, and LGBTQ, so that all California students, not just a select few, are ready for college, careers, and civic life, and prepared to make a positive impact in the world.