

NYSAN

NEW YORK STATE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Global Learning and Expanded Learning Opportunities: A Call to Action

In an ever-changing world, young people need to prepare for a far different future than the world we know now. That preparation should include **global learning** opportunities so young people can develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies they will need to be engaged participants in a global world, and effective workers in a global economy. Global learning, or the process of developing global competence, needs to be infused throughout a student's day, become an essential and integrated part of every aspect of their learning and development, and occur anytime and anywhere through a range of opportunities and in a variety of settings.

High-quality **expanded learning opportunities (ELOs)** are especially conducive to building global competence because they typically involve inquiry-based, applied learning that emphasizes collaboration, investigation, and problem-solving. ELOs include afterschool, before-school, and summer programs that take place in schools, community-based and faith-based organizations, and cultural institutions and museums. They are perfect settings in which to try new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. In fact, research shows that ELOs play a critical role in the healthy development and educational achievement of young people.ⁱ

Taken together, global learning and ELOs are natural complements to each other because they develop critical skills and competencies that can inspire and prepare youth for success academically, in the workplace, and in their communities. Globally focused programs and ELOs tend to use assets-based approaches to youth development, involve families and communities, integrate interdisciplinary themes, and explicitly make real-world connections to learning. ELOs can and should play an important role in helping young people become globally competent. In turn, globally focused organizations can support the academic, social, emotional, and youth development goals to which ELOs aspire.

In order to meet the demands of a changing world, we must build a system of learning supports and policies that values and promotes the importance of global competence in ELOs. As the world becomes more interconnected, its citizens face similar challenges. Yet research shows that most American students, and low-income and minority groups in particular, lag behind their peers in other countries on dimensions of global learning. These dimensions include skills and knowledge like world geography and foreign languages, and deeper competencies and dispositions such as critical thinking, communication, and the ability to understand diverse perspectives.ⁱⁱ

This brief outlines policy recommendations that will build a system that supports global learning in expanded learning opportunities. They focus on funding, programmatic alignment, infrastructure and supports, and capacity building. Creating a system based on these recommendations will provide more young people with engaging global learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom in support of their academic success and preparation for college, work, and life.

“Global literacy is not an extra. It’s not a frill. It needs to be an essential part of public education now — during the day and in afterschool programs.”

— Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

What Is Global Competence?

The Asia Society is the leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders, and institutions in a global context. Asia Society's Partnership for Global Learning has found that afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs with a global learning framework can help build program quality, youth engagement, and the skills that all young people need to succeed now and in the future.ⁱⁱⁱ The Partnership's framework for global competence, developed in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and others, guides NYSAN's work. The framework asserts that globally competent students:

1. INVESTIGATE THE WORLD: young people ask, explore, and research critical questions and problems that are globally significant and relevant in their own community.

2. WEIGH PERSPECTIVES: young people are able to communicate their own perspectives; the perspectives of other people, groups, or philosophies; and identify how diverse influences can affect people's viewpoints.

3. COMMUNICATE IDEAS: young people understand that audiences differ on the basis of culture, geography, faith, ideology, wealth, and other factors. They are able to effectively communicate, verbally and non-verbally, with diverse audiences.

4. TAKE ACTION: young people view themselves as change agents and can envision action based on evidence. They assess their potential impact, account for varied perspectives and consequences to others, and act and reflect on their actions.

The Value and Impact of Global Learning Outside the Traditional Classroom

American society is becoming more linguistically and culturally diverse. In 2006, minority student enrollment in public schools rose to 43 percent of the total student population – up from 35 percent a decade earlier.^{iv} Currently, one in five jobs in this country is tied to international trade and requires a cultural understanding and tolerance.^v Global learning is not just about identifying countries correctly on a map, but about the underlying dynamics of the world and the importance of drawing connections between issues, people, and places to become successful citizens at home.

Globally focused learning opportunities in afterschool and expanded learning programs hold great promise because they:

» Enhance academic achievement.

Globally-focused programming encourages student learning through inquiry and investigation that leads to deeper understanding of the issues of importance while constructing new knowledge. It reflects both skills and content young people need to be successful in school, stay on track to high school graduation, and be fully prepared for college or career.^{vi} Global learning opportunities also ask students to put their learning into action. Applying newfound knowledge and skills in this way helps young people connect to – and improve – their communities while simultaneously supporting cognitive development as learners build, apply, and retain knowledge.^{vii}

» Complement and deepen school-day learning.

There are many links between global learning and the school curricula. For example, despite research that suggests second language learning is associated with enhanced cognitive development, higher-order thinking, and creativity, American students are relatively ill-prepared in this area.^{viii} As fewer schools offer foreign language options, ELOs are appropriate settings to incorporate second language learning that align with and enhance academic goals. In addition, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) are natural disciplines through which to explore global issues and build global competence as they offer many opportunities to investigate local issues that have global implications – from the economy to the environment – and vice versa.

» Build the 21st century skills young people need for a 21st century world.

Up to 85 percent of jobs in the American economy are classified as “skilled,” and require a range of competencies that include professionalism, communication, teamwork, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving.^{ix} Yet research shows that the majority of workers often need significant support to develop the competencies their workplaces and employers need.^x Building these skills are strengths of ELOs and dovetail with high-quality globally focused programs. ELOs promote teamwork and collaboration, and encourage students with diverse backgrounds to learn how to effectively communicate with one another in order to solve a problem, which have been identified by employers as critical to workplace success. Furthermore, ELOs are a great opportunity to partner with local businesses to connect students with professionals in a range of fields in order to build skills, career readiness, and connections for future work.

» **Spark interest and engagement.**

Engagement in learning is critical to supporting student success and is highly correlated to high school graduation rates. Global learning should start in early care and learning programs and continue throughout the educational experience. ELOs can play important roles in engaging students who might otherwise drop out of school. Infusing global learning into ELOs provide youth with real world learning opportunities that can spark curiosity about the world, confidence in relating their knowledge and skills to real-world situations, and a passion for learning about the local and global issues important to them.

» **Develop actionable understanding of the global context to foster positive identity.**

Global learning provides the opportunity to develop active citizenship; inform youth about human, legal, and environmental rights; and cultivate a sense of collective responsibility toward one another in local communities and around the world. ELOs can support appreciation for multiple perspectives and cross-cultural differences. A focus on culture, issues of global significance, and/or language can help all students not only feel valued and validated, but also see themselves as actors rather than bystanders on the global stage.

Promising Practices in Global Learning

» [New Global Citizens](#) is an organization that works to inspire youth across the country to become engaged global citizens through their afterschool programs in middle and high schools. Since 2007, New Global Citizens (NGC) has sponsored 306 high school afterschool programs in 14 states. Students form a team, learn about NGC's 10 Global Issues, select a NGC-vetted Global Project organization they want to support throughout the year, and conduct a global policy project focused on educating their school and community. The approach relies on student leadership as teams build knowledge and awareness, advocate to local, national and international leaders, and raise funds to contribute to their Global Projects. NGC supports teams through a curriculum, online lessons and activities, and staff support. The organization reports positive impacts on measures of knowledge of global issues, leadership, self-efficacy, and civic engagement. For more information, visit www.newglobalcitizens.org.

» [The International YMCA](#), a branch of the YMCA of Greater New York, runs several programs committed to global learning. The International YMCA Leaders Club empowers young people in New York City toward service to others on a local, national and global scale, while promoting international awareness

and civic engagement. Teenagers work with advisors to convene the larger community around global issues. YMCA Global Teens is a leadership development and service learning program that engages teenagers in a year-long exploration of global issues through inquiry-based learning and a YMCA-developed Global Teens Training curriculum. Young people conduct research and service learning projects, and collaborate with partner YMCAs around the world to work on social issues of global and local significance. The program culminates in an international travel experience hosted by YMCAs in other countries. For more information, visit www.ymcanyc.org.

» [The Glen Cove Youth Bureau After 3 Program](#) offers students the opportunity to be engaged in global learning and cultural experience and diversity. The program, located in Glen Cove, Long Island, provides students with the opportunity to learn and become accustomed to cultures, traditions, and habitats throughout the world by incorporating the class Geography and Culture into its curriculum. The program taps school day teachers (in addition to Youth Bureau staff and other community partners such as the local Senior Center) in order to create strong links between school day instruction and the afterschool program which facilitates deeper learning through project-based activities. Content includes a focus on art, dance, music, cooking, yoga, and an International Quilt Project. For more information, visit www.glencove-li.com.

» [The Global Language Project \(GLP\)](#) is a nonprofit organization that strives to equip young people with the skills they need for a globalized world and workforce. GLP's free and comprehensive language training program, Speak to Succeed, helps elementary school students achieve proficiency in a language other than English. Offering language instruction in Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic during and after school as well as on weekends, GLP developed a unique curriculum that leverages classroom activities so that the students' use of a language is a vehicle to accomplish a goal, typically with a global focus, rather than only an end in itself. Each student must commit to learning one foreign language with GLP through their eighth-grade year, as well as to attend GLP's 60 minutes of instruction two to three days per week during the school year. For more information, visit www.globallanguageproject.org.

Preparing the next generation of students for the challenges of a diverse and globally inter-connected world is a local, state, and national challenge. Increasingly, policymakers, businesses, educators, parents, and the general public are recognizing the importance of preparing students to become globally competent. Expanding opportunities in these ways will inspire, engage, and prepare young people in pursuit of the competencies, skills, and knowledge all of them need to learn from and contribute to a global society.

Policy Recommendations

In order to create a system that promotes and improves global learning opportunities and global competence for youth outside the classroom, NYSAN recommends the following:

Funding for ELOs should encourage globally focused programming.

- » Requests for Proposals (RFPs) – for example, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) – should encourage program design to infuse global learning approaches.
- » Programs should be encouraged to tap community organizations with a global learning focus as partners.
- » Funders should encourage programs they work with to assess, and consider partnering with, organizations that can provide global learning experiences within programs.

Create infrastructure and systems to link individuals and organizations with expertise in global learning with ELOs.

- » Identify globally-focused talent pools – from STEM professionals to higher education faculty to Returned Peace Corps Volunteers – to bring global expertise to expanded learning programs.
- » Invest in digital media and technology to connect young people to each other, to programs, and to organizations that focus on global learning or issues of global importance.
- » Integrate global learning resources into new or existing databases and information systems so that ELOs can access resources, tools, people, organizations, or affinity groups that have a specific focus on global learning and international education.

Help schools and ELOs understand how global learning aligns with and supports their practice.

- » Create explicit links between social/emotional development, global competence, and the content and academic skills required for improving academic achievement.
- » Create partnerships between schools and ELOs, particularly around filling gaps in the school day curriculum with globally-focused programming (such as language learning, globally-focused STEM learning, or youth-centered inquiry-based learning) that are particularly conducive to afterschool and expanded learning settings.

Invest in capacity building strategies for ELOs to infuse and/or build globally-focused programs.

- » Document and share best practice exemplars that are creating, infusing, and sustaining school-linked, globally-focused expanded learning programs in a variety of settings.
- » Provide expanded learning programs with technical assistance and other supports to build their ability to make the global local and to make the local global.
- » Identify and support professional development opportunities with a global learning focus.
- » Encourage programs to use global learning self-assessment tools, resources, and frameworks.

Endnotes

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The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a public-private partnership dedicated to promoting young people's safety, learning, and healthy development by increasing the quality and availability of programs available outside the traditional classroom. The positions taken and statements set forth in this document do not necessarily represent the views of all NYSAN members. For a copy of this and other NYSAN publications, visit www.nysan.org.

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