COLLEGE READINESS MEETS GLOBAL COMPETENCE

Asia Society’s International Studies Schools
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I. AN AMBITIOUS IDEA BECOMES REALITY

Introduction

In 2003, Asia Society launched a network of schools with an ambitious, two-part mission: close the achievement gap for low-income and historically underserved secondary students, and address the growing opportunity gap between what American schools typically teach and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for full participation in a global economy. The founders of the International Studies Schools Network (ISSN) believed that these two goals could be achieved concurrently. What’s more, they hypothesized that a rich, global curriculum that engaged students in investigating and addressing real-world problems could, in fact, provide a more efficient route to college and career preparedness.

The International Studies Schools Network by the Numbers

34 schools serving traditionally underserved populations...

By Grade

- K-5: 20
- 6-8: 6
- 6-12: 6
- 9-12: 2

By School Type

- Independent: 1
- Public Traditional: 29
- Public Charter: 4

13 schools serve 400 or fewer students... in 8 states (number of schools).

63% of ISSN students are low-income

From an initial group of four schools to 34 today, Asia Society has built a network of high-performing, globally oriented schools that demonstrate what a rigorous global education can do for a largely low-income, urban student population. Along the way, Asia Society and the ISSN schools have designed a robust approach to performance-based learning and assessment that has implications well beyond the network, offering lessons for policymakers and practitioners concerned about preparing students to live and work in an increasingly complex world.
The New Demands of a Global Society

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III, Asia Society has worked to promote understanding and strengthen partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. Over several decades, the nonprofit organization has fulfilled its mission in a variety of roles and arenas, serving as a thought leader, convener, and program administrator in the arts, education, diplomacy, business, and other fields. Asia Society’s move into school development was prompted by a growing recognition among its leaders and collaborators that there is a concerning gap between what American students know about the world and what it demands, both in terms of workforce opportunities and global citizenship.

Asia Society is among many organizations that have called public attention to this global competence gap, noting that, increasingly, American workers compete in a global market, with the best job opportunities available to those who can analyze and solve complex problems and connect across cultures and languages. Meanwhile, the most pressing issues we face today—economic, environmental, political, and health-related—require leaders and thinkers who can investigate problems deeply from multiple angles, working across traditional boundaries to find solutions. Asia Society posited that a robust global education would prepare many more high school graduates for fulfilling, sustaining work, while also benefiting their own communities and the world as a whole.

In 2003, Asia Society received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to lead the new school design effort. Although the organization had never managed schools before, it had acquired deep expertise in global issues and
learning. In this new role, Asia Society partnered with school districts and charter management organizations to put its definition of global competence into practice in 10 small, internationally themed schools. These International Studies Schools served as replicable examples—or proof points—of what a high quality, global education can do for students, positioning Asia Society and its partners to inform policymakers and leaders in education, and to inspire a broadening of secondary school curricula nationally.

**Charting New Territory in School Design**

Asia Society’s task was daunting. It launched 10 schools able to achieve a mission that no existing schools had ever achieved: college and career readiness and global competence for every graduate. What’s more, Asia Society and the Gates Foundation were committed to partner with districts and organizations that served traditionally underperforming student populations, understanding that in the new global economy, these students would be the most vulnerable. The founders of the International Studies School Network (ISSN) understood that mastery of basic academic standards was a necessary but insufficient goal for these populations. They believed that low-income students of color, perhaps more than any other group of young people, would benefit from an intellectually engaging, rigorous curriculum designed to cultivate flexible thinking and broad knowledge of the world on a global scale.

“Achieving this ambitious mission required designing a school model from the ground up. Asia Society’s Anthony Jackson, Michael Levine, and Vivien Stewart began by surveying middle and high schools that taught some form of global curricula. Asia Society had run the Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education for several years and, as a result, knew of schools around the country that were implementing bits and pieces of what they sought to design. However, no single school had developed the full spectrum of international learning experiences they envisioned. The ISSN founders also examined promising practices of other small schools that were achieving strong outcomes for traditionally underserved students, and that engaged students in complex, real-world curricula. The Expeditionary Learning Schools and the New Tech Schools were among the models that offered transferable structures and practices. From these examples, the ISSN’s leaders stitched together a new model that was partly rooted in existing practice and partly aspirational.

A guiding idea behind the design was that a global studies program should not have to compete with the core knowledge and skills required by colleges and state accountability systems. Rather, the network founders saw global studies as a way of engaging students with interesting, real-world problems; these global topics and problems would provide a vehicle through which core knowledge and skills could be addressed. In other words, students would develop global competence at the same time that they were mastering core skills and knowledge.

**Rapid Learning and Expansion**

The first three International Studies Schools were launched in 2004. The International School of the Americas in San Antonio and Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago had experience with aspects of global studies, and also joined the initiative, serving as anchors for the network. Asia Society had developed a broad-strokes school design prior to the launch, and the founding schools worked closely with Asia Society to refine the design, putting the model into practice in varied circumstances. This iterative learning process is emblematic of the initiative as a whole. Over 10 years, the model has evolved organically and intentionally. As needs have emerged in schools, Asia Society has initiated research and development efforts—particularly in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment—and has designed new tools and frameworks to support the schools.
The network leaders were surprised, and pleased, to find significant demand for the international studies model within a few years of launch. Upon the sunset of its Gates Foundation grants, Asia Society shifted to a fee-for-service model via its Partnership for Global Learning. Districts and school management organizations now purchase ISSN tools and support services from Asia Society. Recently, with the pace of small school creation slowing nationally, Asia Society has found the greatest interest for its model among existing large high schools or academies within comprehensive schools.

Many of the schools have used federal or state grants, including turnaround and Race to the Top funds, to partner with Asia Society to transform their schools. Others have found funding independently. At this point, the demand is such that Asia Society can be selective as it brings new schools into the network, prioritizing partners who add strategic value, as well as strong leadership and commitment to the model.

The ISSN Network Today

As of 2013, the ISSN comprises 34 schools, serving approximately 16,000 students in eight states. Most are urban public high schools, but the network also includes several 6-12 schools, two elementary schools, four charter schools, 29 suburban and rural schools, and even one independent school. In keeping with Asia Society’s original mission to serve traditionally underserved populations, the majority (63%) of ISSN students are low-income, and 73 percent are students of color.

The Results Explained

Asia Society’s achievement data is based on a multi-year study of all ISSN schools that were part of the network for at least one year by 2010-11 (and therefore does not include the 9 schools that joined that year).

Comparison schools were selected according to the availability of state test data in grades 8-12, and the proximity and similarity of demographics. No statistically significant differences were found between the percentage of low income, minority, and English Language Learners in the comparison group versus the ISSN group.

Four-year graduation rates and student performance rates exceed those in comparable schools. In 2011, ISSN schools had an average four-year graduation rate of 89 percent. In addition, evaluators found that ISSN schools outperformed their peers on 71 of 107 total measures (66.4%).

Global Competence by Design

Asia Society does not promote a single, prescriptive school design. Instead, the starting point for all of its schools is a shared definition of a college-ready, globally competent graduate. The ISSN Graduate Profile describes a student who has mastered the knowledge and skills required for college, has expertise in core content areas from a global perspective, is a proficient thinker and problem solver, can view and analyze issues and events from varying perspectives, can communicate in more than one language and collaborate across cultural boundaries, and fulfills the responsibilities of global citizenship. (See Appendix for full profile.)

“\text{When students have global competencies and global awareness, it both figuratively and literally expands what their horizons are, so that their lives can be much richer and their own estimation of what they can do grows incredibly.}”

\text{--Dr. Dan Lutz, founding principal, Denver Center for International Studies}

\footnote{Schools varied widely in the number of tests in core subject areas that were available for comparison. Frequency counts of comparisons made (to comparison schools) for each ISSN school were used as the base numbers referenced above. Due to concerns regarding the unbalanced impact that a school could have on the overall computation of the number of ISSN “wins” against comparison schools, the evaluators also computed aggregate percentage of “wins” per school. The mean aggregate number of “wins” over comparison schools was 69.2%. Mean percent proficiency across tests was also examined. The ISSN mean aggregate percent proficiency for 2010-11 was 69.1% compared to 61.1% for the comparison schools (with a mean difference of 8 percentage points in favor of ISSN schools). Although this difference is not statistically significant, F(1.38)=1.25, p=.27, it is expected that in future years when the sample size increases that effects of this size (d= .35) will reach statistical significance. It is also encouraging that for 4 of the 5 ISSN schools that did not outperform its comparison school; the mean proficiency rate was still within 10 percentage points of its peers.}
Individual schools are working to develop globally competent graduates in different ways, often in combination with local requirements. The schools vary in size, grade-level configurations, and in the populations they serve. To address this diversity, Asia Society has developed a flexible ISSN School Design Matrix, adaptable to a range of school conditions. The matrix sets a trajectory for each school's development across six domains:

- **Vision, Mission, Culture**
- **Student Outcomes**
- **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**
- **School Organization and Governance**
- **Professional Learning Community**
- **Family and Community Partnerships**

The detailed matrix includes quality criteria for each domain, with benchmarks that describe beginning, emerging, proficient, and exemplary implementation. Many of the quality criteria describe practices that are common to the small schools movement generally—e.g., implementing a student advisory program—or that are good practice in any setting—e.g., establishing a clear and consistent grading policy. Other criteria, while not necessarily exclusive to the ISSN, exemplify the international studies approach:

- **Global content, skills, and perspectives are embedded in the core content areas.** Students explore global topics in all of their classes. Curriculum units are often organized around global themes, supporting students to make connections across disciplines.
- **World languages are part of the core.** Every school offers multiple languages, including an Asian language, and all students are expected to demonstrate fluency in more than one language.
- **Curriculum is student-centered, authentic, globally significant, and connected to real audiences.** Students engage in solving real-world, internationally important problems and present their solutions to experts. They are empowered to make decisions about what and how they learn. (See the box below describing the ISSN’s SAGE framework.)
- **Global learning extends beyond the classroom.** Students participate in service learning and internships that immerse them in local and global issues, expose them to professional opportunities, and prepare them as global citizens. They also participate in simulations, such as Model United Nations, and have opportunities to hone their language skills and gain appreciation for differing perspectives through travel, student exchanges, and online learning with international peers.
- **Teacher professional development is high priority.** Teacher teams have dedicated time to develop curriculum, look at student work, and refine their teaching practice together.

In the early years of the initiative, when Asia Society was launching new schools, the matrix functioned as a detailed blueprint for school development. Individual schools might develop their own variations on the model—for example, implementing a global studies curriculum in combination with the International Baccalaureate program—but all of the schools worked on implementing all six domains. Now, as Asia Society partners with a number of pre-existing schools, its support is more customized. Depending on an individual school’s starting place, its goals, and the level of services it receives from Asia Society, its implementation plan may focus on different areas of the matrix. Even with this variation, the language of the six domains continues to serve as a touchstone for network-wide conversations about practice.
The ISSN’s SAGE Framework for Global Curriculum

Asia Society works with each school to develop or revise its curriculum according to the SAGE framework.

- **Student choice:** Students have a say in what they learn and how they learn it.
- **Authentic tasks:** Students perform tasks and investigate questions that adults would perform or study in the real world.
- **Global significance:** Students study topics, issues, and phenomena of global importance, and gain deep knowledge of countries and cultures other than their own.
- **Exhibition to a real-world audience:** Students share their work—and receive feedback—from audiences with relevant expertise, in person and on the web.

A Day in the Life of an International Studies Student

For students attending International Studies Schools, a typical day includes multiple, meaningful explorations of global ideas and content. The following composite demonstrates what an eighth-grade student might experience on a given day.

**Techno Tutors (7:30-8:15):** A small group of students meet with their math teacher before school to design and produce a short tutorial on an Algebra topic for the school’s Podcast archive. The activity supports both the “tutors” and other students who can download the Podcasts when they need help.

**Community Meeting (8:15-8:45):** Today’s opening meeting is a brief question-and-answer session with an official from the Palestinian Information Office, invited as part of the school’s Conversations for Understanding series. Additional speakers will give other perspectives on the origins of unrest and options for peace in the Middle East.

**English/World Literature (8:50-10:10):** Students work on an essay and multi-media project jointly assigned by their English and social studies teachers. Groups select from a series of options to explore differing perspectives on the choice to go to war. Today, they provide and receive feedback on their written presentation using a ‘critical friends’ protocol.

**Advisory (10:15-11:00):** A small group meets in the school library, where they participate in the Council process, expressing their thoughts on racial and ethnic “micro-aggressions”—unintended put-downs by people who may mean well but don’t realize that what they say reflects bias.

A few students meet with the advisor individually to go over their Passages Portfolio, which they will present at the end of eighth grade.

**Integrated Physical Science (11:05-12:25):** The class applies what it has learned about framing and solving scientific questions to figure out what a mysterious substance is, research where the substance is most prevalent in the world, and describe what significance it has to the people in the region where it is found. Students must use at least one foreign source.

**Lunch (12:30-1:05):** Students chat with the school principal about an upcoming summer trip to the Concordia Language Village in Minnesota, where they will develop their Chinese language skills.

**Chinese (1:10-2:20):** A visiting teacher from Shanghai works with a credentialed Chinese teacher to prepare the class for a field trip to a nearby nursing home for elderly Chinese immigrants, where students will practice conversational skills with residents.

**Physical Education (2:20-3:00):** Students practice the ancient Indian physical art of yoga. Next week, they’ll begin a unit on another world athletic tradition—lacrosse.

Note: This example is based on a block schedule. Core classes meet on alternating days.

Excerpted from: http://asiasociety.org/education/international-studies-schools-network/profile-students-school-day
II. DEEPENING THE INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS

The ISSN’s Graduation Performance System

Asia Society and its network schools entered new territory when they set out to design a sequence of learning experiences that would simultaneously cultivate college-ready and globally competent students. Rather than layer sporadic global projects on top of existing lessons, their goal was to reinvent the high school curriculum, systematically integrating global content and skills with core content to engage students and accelerate their achievement. Not surprisingly, curriculum, instruction, and assessment were the areas where the newly established ISSN schools needed the most support.

Early on, Asia Society staff received requests from teachers and principals for criteria and tools to guide the learning process. First and foremost, these educators needed a clear definition of global competence: what kids need to know and be able to do. They also needed help figuring out how to measure the skills and knowledge that comprise global competence and creating curricula through which students would acquire and demonstrate those skills and knowledge. Responding to this need, Asia Society launched a multi-year project to design a Graduation Performance System (GPS) for the ISSN. The GPS, still a work in progress, has already become the backbone of Asia Society’s approach to teaching for global competence and to building the capacity of its teachers.

Spotlight: Denver Center for International Studies

The Denver Center for International Studies (DCIS) is an active member of the ISSN. Originally a magnet program within Denver’s West High School, DCIS broke off as a stand-alone public school in 2006. A second elementary school campus will eventually serve early childhood through grade five.

DCIS serves 695 students in grades 6-12.

- 42% are low-income.
- 67% are students of color.

Program Highlights:

- To receive a Diploma of International Studies, DCIS students must successfully complete five areas of focus: cultures and cross-cultural communication; international studies and issues; world geography; comparative governments; and world history.
- Students are required to complete three International Passages: challenging, hands-on research projects that evolve from their own interests. Two of the projects require an experiential component; the third includes a 15-page, college-quality paper.
- To graduate, students submit a portfolio of their best work, guided by the ISSN’s four domains of global leadership.
- Students study one of six world languages (Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Lakota, and Spanish); they have opportunities to travel abroad and learn with students from different cultures and countries.
- Enrichment activities connect students to real-world experiences in international affairs and draw on community partnerships with groups like the Institute of International Education, the Rotary Club, and Namlo International.
- All students participate in community service projects every semester; they also contribute to the school itself through service.
- All-school assemblies showcase cultural diversity, international experiences, and speakers who are leaders in global affairs.
- DCIS students have had opportunities to meet or attend lectures by world leaders, including the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Bill Clinton, Madeline Albright, Costa Rica’s President Oscar Arias, and UN Foundation President Tim Wirth.
In 2009, at the same time that Asia Society was shaping its Graduation Performance System, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) embarked on an effort to better describe the skills and competencies that researchers, policymakers, educators, and academics identify as crucial for students to master in the 21st century, but that had thus far eluded assessment on a broad scale due to their complexity. The CCSSO’s EdSteps Initiative, funded by the Gates Foundation, identified skill groups like “analyzing information” and “creativity” as important areas in need of more clear definitions. Global competence emerged as another area for careful exploration.

The CCSSO commissioned a Global Competence Task Force comprised of representatives from state education agencies, nonprofit organizations focused on global education, and representatives from higher education institutions. The task force, chaired by Asia Society, met for more than a year to arrive at a common definition of global competence. They agreed that globally competent high school graduates should be able to:

1. **Investigate the world** beyond their immediate environment, framing significant problems and conducting well-crafted and age-appropriate research.

2. **Recognize perspectives**, including one’s own and those of others, explaining the nature and origin of these perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.

3. **Communicate ideas** effectively with diverse audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.

4. **Take action** to improve conditions, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively.

Asia Society incorporated the work of the Global Competence Task Force into the design of the GPS to combine successful practices of ISSN educators with best practices in global competence and performance-based learning. The GPS includes:

- **Performance outcomes and rubrics** that address the four domains of global competence identified by the CCSSO Task Force and the Common Core Standards for each of the core disciplines.

- **A framework for curriculum design**—with example units—that engages students in solving complex, real-world problems, and provides multiple opportunities to demonstrate growing mastery.

- **A process** for teachers and students to assess and reflect on their work.

- **A platform** for teachers to share curriculum and best practices and receive feedback on their work.

The GPS does not tell teachers what to teach or when to teach it; rather, it provides both teachers and students with the frameworks and the tools to make good choices.

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EdSteps is an ongoing effort, led by educators, to collect and publish student work that demonstrates college and career-ready skills, and to provide educators with the tools they need to teach and assess these skills. (www.edsteps.org)
The ISSN Graduation Performance System

Performance outcomes and rubrics are the frame for the system, delineating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need to be college ready and globally competent.

The performance cycle is the engine: teachers plan and implement curriculum; students perform formative and summative tasks; teachers rate student performance against rubrics and provide specific feedback; students reflect on their progress toward mastery; and teachers look for patterns in student performance that help them refine curriculum and inform their next teaching steps.

The graduate portfolio is the destination, the result of multiple performance cycles across all courses and learning experiences, a collection of student work that demonstrates that a student is both college-ready and globally competent.

Global Leadership Performance Outcomes

Based on the four domains of global competence defined by the original CCSSO Global Competence Task Force, the ISSN’s Global Leadership Performance Outcomes (see box on page 12) are the network’s articulation of what a globally competent, college-ready student knows and can do. They serve as graduation requirements for all students who attend ISSN schools, in combination with the Common Core State Standards and local requirements.

In addition to these overall outcomes, ISSN teachers also needed more detailed, content-specific measures that could guide their curricula, so Asia Society brought together a group of content experts and ISSN educators to develop rubrics for each of the six core content areas: math; science; English language arts; history/social studies; world languages; and arts. The group looked at key global needs, issues, and challenges related to each discipline, and they examined student work in relation to those topics and state standards. They also sought out existing examples of performance-based measures that could inform their work.

The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) was engaged in a similar effort with Envision Schools, a charter management organization based in California’s Bay Area. Envision Schools shared the ISSN’s philosophy regarding inquiry-based learning and performance-based assessment, and the rubrics they had developed with SCALE were largely compatible with the ISSN’s goals. ISSN work groups collaborated with SCALE’s assessment experts to develop new rubrics—using the existing rubrics as a guide—that address globally specific knowledge and skills along with college and career readiness.
The result of that effort is a set of 12th-grade performance outcomes and rubrics for six core subject areas. These have become the driver of the GPS—the end goals against which student work is assessed and curriculum is developed in each of the content areas.

Last year, the Gates Foundation funded Asia Society to develop similar performance outcomes and rubrics for the 10th and 8th grades. Together, these rubrics chart a trajectory for student mastery of Common Core Standards and global performance outcomes in each subject area. Asia Society has also mapped back even further to 5th grade outcomes for its elementary schools.

**ISSN Global Leadership Performance Outcomes (Grade 12)**

**Investigate the World**
Students initiate investigations of the world by framing questions, analyzing and synthesizing relevant evidence, and drawing reasonable conclusions about globally focused issues.

- Identify, describe, and frame questions about an issue, and explain how that issue is locally, regionally, and/or globally focused.
- Use a variety of international and domestic sources to identify and weigh relevant evidence that addresses a globally focused question.
- Analyze, integrate, and synthesize evidence to formulate a coherent response to a globally focused question.
- Develop a position that considers multiple perspectives, addresses counter arguments, and draws reasonable conclusions.

**Recognize Perspectives**
Students recognize, articulate, and apply an understanding of different perspectives, including their own.

- Express personal perspectives on situations, events, issues, or phenomena, and identify influences on that perspective.
- Explain the perspectives of other people, groups, or schools of thoughts, and identify possible influences on those perspectives, including access to information and resources.
- Explain how perspectives influence human interactions, affecting their understanding of situations, events, issues, or phenomena.
- Apply an understanding of multiple perspectives and contexts when interpreting and communicating information about situations, events, issues, or phenomena.

**Communicate Ideas**
Students select and apply appropriate tools and strategies to communicate and collaborate effectively, meeting the needs and expectations of diverse individuals and groups.

- Identify and understand the expectations and perspectives of diverse audiences and apply that understanding to meet the audience’s needs.
- Select and apply appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to communicate and collaborate effectively.
- Select and apply appropriate resources—technology, media, and/or world languages—to communicate and collaborate effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
- Reflect on audience response and/or feedback and revise communication choices based on the impact of communication.
Take Action
Students translate their ideas, concerns, and findings into appropriate and responsible individual or collaborative actions to improve conditions.

- Identify collaborators across disciplines and industries and create opportunities for individual and collaborative action to improve a situation, event, issue, or phenomena.
- Assess options and plan actions based on evidence that indicates the potential for impact, taking into account previous approaches, varied perspectives, and/or potential consequences.
- Act, individually or collaboratively, in creative and responsible ways to contribute to improvement locally, regionally, and/or globally, and assess the impact of the action.
- Reflect on their capacity to contribute/advocate for improvement locally, regionally, and/or globally.

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Download the full rubric at: http://asiasociety.org/files/gps/leadership-12-outcomes.pdf
The full set of competencies in global leadership and all disciplines, as well as benchmarked grade levels, is available here. Each link has a corresponding PDF: http://asiasociety.org/pos

The GPS Performance Cycle

With rubrics in place, Asia Society could now focus on helping teachers design curriculum and classroom practices that put students on a path toward mastery of the network’s shared outcomes. The GPS performance cycle is the primary mechanism through which that support happens. Each cycle provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate learning, receive feedback, and reflect on progress. Each cycle also supports teachers to plan, implement, and reflect on the effectiveness of a lesson sequence.

While initially the GPS effort focused on graduation outcomes (and the final product: the graduation portfolio) over time, the emphasis has shifted to the learning cycle that plays out day-to-day in classrooms. To reflect this shift, Asia Society renamed what was originally called the Graduation Portfolio System as the Graduation Performance System.

Asia Society initially developed the performance cycle as an in-person process for teacher teams to implement with support from ISSN coaches. Very recently, Asia Society found a technology platform, ShowEvidence, that could house the components of the GPS and incorporate them into a responsive, web-based system. They saw that embedding the GPS within a web-based platform was essential to making performance assessment achievable at scale in schools, districts, and states that currently have only paper-based methods of documenting and revising assessment tasks, capturing and collecting student work, tagging evidence and scoring against a rubric, comparing and moderating scores, and training teachers to implement performance assessments consistently and effectively.

ShowEvidence provides these functions in a context of online collaboration between teachers and students, including sharing of online portfolios. Without such a platform, the work becomes prohibitively cost- and time-intensive, and nearly impossible to scale up or sustain in the long run.

Some aspects of the online system are still in development and testing phases. Meanwhile, ISSN educators are already using the ShowEvidence system to engage in online cycles of planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection. When complete, the online GPS performance cycle will comprise the following phases:

1. The teacher develops or adapts a curriculum unit that leads to a final summative task and includes formative tasks through which students demonstrate learning.

2. Students participate in learning activities. When they have completed a task, they upload their work (document, image, video, or audio) into the system.
3. **The teacher rates each student’s work**, inserting electronic markers where a student has demonstrated, or struggled to demonstrate, a key skill or competency. The system offers the teacher a dropdown selection of possible performance indicators for each marker, which are based on the GPS rubrics. The teacher selects as many as apply, focusing on the work itself and the skills and knowledge it specifically demonstrates, rather than on a numerical rating. The teacher may also add personalized notes and audio comments.

4. **The system aggregates the feedback** and suggests a score for each performance outcome, which the teacher can review and adjust.

5. **The student reviews the feedback.** The ratings and notes show a student where s/he has mastered key competencies and where more practice is required for future assignments.

6. **The teacher looks at patterns in student performance** using the system’s analysis of class-wide data to see which curriculum objectives were met, to understand where the unit or task may need refinement, and to identify students who may need additional help reaching particular performance outcomes.

7. **The teacher revises the curriculum and plans next instructional steps** based on the data.

The performance cycle described here reflects the ISSN’s underlying philosophy: both educators and students are always learning and improving. Therefore, they need frequent opportunities to practice, assess their work, and adjust. Rather than looking at an assessment as a final judgment of whether a student “gets it” or whether a teacher has succeeded or failed, the GPS performance cycle fosters a mindset of continuous learning and improvement.

**Sample GPS unit overview in the ShowEvidence system**

![Sample GPS unit overview](image)

**GPS Curriculum**

Asia Society has developed a set of example curriculum modules and tasks to demonstrate what the GPS performance cycle looks like in its fullest form. A handful of these examples are already available through the ShowEvidence system. Within the next year, Asia Society will have completed two modules for each of the six core content areas, for both 9th/10th grades and 11th/12th grades, as well as several interdisciplinary modules.

Each module is a full unit of curriculum that can be implemented in a classroom over several weeks, with formative tasks building to a final summative assignment. The units for grades 9 and 10 are built around a global theme of environment and human migration. The grades 11 and 12 modules relate to the changing demands of work in a flattened global economy. Each module is pegged to Common Core State Standards and relevant outcomes on the GPS rubrics. Several of the modules are based on curriculum units developed by ISSN teachers that had gained popularity in the network.
The model units demonstrate the ISSN’s **Four Quality Components of GPS Curriculum**: clear expectations; authenticity; student-centered learning; and multiple opportunities to reach mastery. These four qualities are not specific to a global studies curriculum, but are derived from effective practices in performance-based instruction and assessment more generally. Asia Society uses these criteria to guide school-based and network-wide conversations about teaching practice. These components were articulated after an early discovery by network leaders that, while it was easy to get students and teachers excited about creating authentic, real-world projects about global issues, it was much harder to ensure lessons addressed all of the skills and knowledge students need to become college-ready and globally competent. The quality framework helps ISSN educators balance rigor with authenticity, and the curriculum examples help them to see what it looks like in practice.

The primary purpose of the curriculum examples is to enhance teachers’ capacity to develop and transform their own curriculum. Teachers can implement the modules wholesale or modify them. Teachers can also build their own units in the system. Soon, teachers will be able to share their own curriculum units with colleagues in their school, region, or across the national network, and peers will be able to rate and provide feedback based on the Four Quality Components of GPS Curriculum.

### The Four Quality Components of GPS Curriculum

1. **Clear expectations**: Tasks are linked to specific GPS performance outcomes, Common Core State Standards, and/or other standards. These targets provide teachers and students with a shared understanding of what proficient work looks like.

2. **Authentic learning experiences**: Students explore topics and issues that represent the work of real-world professionals.

3. **Student-centered learning**: Teachers and students share ownership for learning. With feedback from frequent formative assessments, students understand where they are going and how to get there. They are able to make decisions about what they’re learning and how they’re learning it.

4. **Multiple opportunities to reach mastery**: With multiple assessments embedded in each unit and leading to graduation, students have many opportunities to demonstrate their growing global competence. They are supported until they achieve mastery.
Sample GPS Curriculum Module

China: Land and Lifestyles
Grade 9, World Geography
Time Frame: 12 class periods

Purpose: In this curriculum module, students will learn about the geography, economics, population, and cultures of China. Students will discover China’s land and lifestyle by exploring various geographical regions, comparing different types of homes, and examining population patterns, as well as key events in China’s history. Through these activities, students will come to understand the causes and results of urban migration. Included in the curriculum module is a variety of primary and secondary resources—maps, images, articles, and documentaries—that will help students create a multimedia video about urban migration in China.

Essential Questions:
• How does where you live affect how you live?
• How does culture impact land and lifestyles?
• Is urban migration the result of geographic or economic factors? Or both?
• What is the most significant result of urban migration?

Activity 1: The Geography of China
• Mental Mapping
• Gallery Walk
• Introduction to the Geography of China
• China/U.S. Comparison Activity
• Understanding the Geography of China

Activity 2: Homes in China
• Geography Review
• Homes in China (reading)
• Homes and Geography (images)
• Discover a Chinese Home (website)

Activity 3: Population Growth in China
• Population Growth: Graph Analysis
• Key Moments in Chinese History and the One-Child Policy
• Push/Pull Factors (T-chart activity)
• The Largest Migration in History
• Evidence Workshop (practice & apply)

Activity 4: Migrant Workers in China
• Project Introduction
• Argument Formation and Evidence Gathering
• Migrant Workers, Film Clips
• Personal Stories (from Chinese workers)

Activity 5: Video Planning
• Peer Review (of video scripts)
• Additional Evidence
• Image Workshop

Activity 6: Video Production and Publication
• Video Production
• Video Publication
• Final Reflection

Formative Assessment Tasks
• Mental Mappings of China (at beginning and end of module)
• Quiz: The Geography of Homes in China
• Quiz: Urban Migration in China
• Script for Multimedia Video

Summative Assessment Task
Students create a multimedia video that answers the question, “Is life better in the city or in the countryside for a Chinese migrant worker?” Students publish their videos on an online student news outlet.

Excerpted from GPS Curriculum Module Overview
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**GPS Professional Development**

Over the years, Asia Society has focused its teacher professional development on the GPS, with an emphasis on supporting teachers to regularly and collaboratively look at student work. This process of deep analysis has helped teachers see what students are actually learning in relation to performance outcomes, and to design and refine performance tasks to bring students closer to proficiency. With the advent of ShowEvidence, Asia Society has moved all of its teacher professional development onto the online system. Now, teachers can work with their ISSN coach and colleagues in their school to examine student work online, compare their ratings, and plan and test curricular refinements.

The ShowEvidence interface looks the same for adult participants. Like their students, teachers take part in a sequence of authentic learning experiences, often in person and in conversation with colleagues. They then upload examples of their work, receive feedback from a coach or colleague, and reflect and plan next steps.

Asia Society has launched an initial series of professional development modules that introduce educators to the concept of global competence and to the components of the GPS. Through these modules, teachers familiarize themselves with ISSN rubrics, design and revise curriculum tasks that they can immediately put into practice with students, and examine and score student work.

Asia Society is designing a set of teacher performance outcomes and rubrics, similar to the student outcomes, which will serve as reference points for online professional development in the future. Over the long term, Asia Society is moving toward a process for certifying teachers as globally proficient educators. For now, online professional development modules serve as a valuable opportunity for teachers to receive non-evaluative feedback that guides their work with students.

**Screenview of a GPS task for educators in the ShowEvidence system.**
Sample GPS Task for Educators

Looking for Evidence
Duration: 1 hour, 15 minutes

Objective:
Collaboratively evaluate student work for evidence of proficiency.

Agenda:
First, read through the “Curriculum Task Overview: Bringing Global Issues into Personal Context” to familiarize yourself with what the task is asking students to do.

Then, in pairs, review the “GPS Grade 12 Global Leadership Performance Outcomes” and “I Can” statements and circle the outcomes and “I can” statements that the task was designed to address.

Next, review the Namaste transcript and video. Examine this student’s work and highlight the evidence for the selected “GPS Grade 12 Global Leadership Performance Outcomes” and “I can” statements.

After everyone in the group is finished, compare your responses and discuss the evidence you found in the student work. As you share, discuss the line between observation and interpretation.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

• What did you learn by focusing on evidence rather than interpretation?
• What can you take from this process to inform your own planning and instruction?

By focusing on finding evidence first, you can more easily and accurately find where the evidence shows the student is located on the rubric.

Excerpted from The GPS and Student Learning ShowEvidence module
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Boundaries of the GPS

While the research-based best practices developed through the GPS can be applied throughout the curriculum, Asia Society does not intend that every interaction between teachers and students be framed as GPS tasks. Network schools mix GPS tasks and modules with other curriculum and assessments, using GPS units primarily as milestones when students demonstrate what they have learned in relation to the global performance outcomes. GPS summative assessment tasks are intentionally designed so that the skills students learn in a global context will transfer to the forthcoming Common Core performance assessments.

The ISSN’s consultants work with schools to identify where it makes most sense to embed GPS activities. In some cases, schools have local requirements to consider, or they are blending the GPS with a compatible model, such as International Baccalaureate or language immersion. ISSN consultants also help schools identify additional resources, such as English as a Second Language programs, special education support models, or literacy ramp-up programming that supplement ISSN curriculum.

Thus, the ISSN curriculum will likely never be centralized, but sample GPS curriculum modules will continue to serve as touchstones for school-based and network-wide professional development, where teachers discuss how to help students progressively meet the GPS benchmarks being developed for 8th, 10th, and ultimately 12th grade. Asia Society is also considering integrating units and tasks developed by like-minded organizations in ShowEvidence to help ISSN educators address core skills and knowledge that are less easily embedded in global themes.
Currently, schools that are implementing the GPS use one or two GPS curriculum units per semester in each subject area. Asia Society staff is thinking about what the long-term boundaries of the system might be and how much of a school’s curriculum will be driven by the GPS. Is there an optimal “dose” to achieve the network’s ambitious outcomes for graduates? Where are the key leverage points in any curriculum when students should demonstrate what they know and can do? When should GPS curriculum be used as a culminating project and when can it be used as a building block that is part of a longer-term trajectory? Like the system itself, the answers to these questions will likely evolve over time.

III. AN EVOLVING NETWORK

Reshaping Network Support

In 2010, the International Studies Schools Network reached a turning point. With an expanding network of schools across the country and a shift from new school creation to school transformation, it was time for Asia Society to rethink its approach. The challenge was in figuring out how to best support an increasingly diverse network that included schools designed under the original framework, before the advent of GPS, and schools that had joined more recently.

In response, Asia Society implemented a variety of modifications, including: dividing the network into geographic regions, each with a dedicated coordinator; tightening the coaching model; and clarifying the roles of ISSN consultants. In their function as primary service providers to the schools, the ISSN consultants facilitate whole-school trainings, support school leadership, and help teachers to design performance tasks.

Network schools also benefit from these additional services:

- **Site visits:** Every school hosts a site visit during its first and third years in the network. The visit, and the resulting feedback, is cited by many schools as among the most valuable services the network provides. Visits are conducted by a group of four to six network principals and consultants, who spend two and a half days at a school, visiting classrooms, conducting focus groups and interviews, and reviewing curriculum maps, student and staff handbooks, and other artifacts that capture the work of the school. At the end of the visit, the host school receives a 40-page report with feedback on each area of the ISSN School Design Matrix. That report becomes a tool to guide strategic planning and ongoing improvement efforts. The visits also serve as a rich professional development opportunity for the visiting principals.

- **National network meetings:** Asia Society hosts biannual meetings for ISSN school leaders, where they conduct a study tour of a network school, participate in targeted learning activities, and have time to connect and share ideas. Every school sends someone—the principal, an assistant administrator, or both—to every meeting. Many principals make the time to attend both meetings themselves, because the events provide a rare opportunity to connect with peers, exchange ideas, solve common challenges, and learn together in a safe community.

- **Regional events:** Based on the needs and interests of schools, regional coordinators offer additional trainings and events for ISSN educators to connect within a geographic region. These are opportunities for teachers to share feedback on curriculum, for administrators to support each other in solving common problems of practice, and for all staff to gain new skills and knowledge relevant to the global studies mission.

Increasingly, these support activities focus on the core work of improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment through the GPS.

**Tight vs. Loose**

One of the strengths of the ISSN model is that, unlike more prescriptive school models, it is loose enough to accommodate local needs. Schools within the network are composed of varying sizes, grade levels, and structures, and, in some cases, they have combined global studies with complementary programs, like language immersion or project-based learning. Therefore, each school approaches the global studies model somewhat differently. Asia Society customizes an implementation plan to meet the unique needs of all of its schools.
For the most part, the diversity of schools in the network has been an asset. The individual schools act as mini learning labs of what a global studies program can look like in different contexts, each offering particular lessons and expertise to peers.

The challenge is in determining just how flexible the implementation plan can be—and what happens if a school doesn’t live up to its end of the agreement. Thus far, Asia Society has been able to be selective among potential new schools, giving preference to schools that fit within its regional framework, that have the potential to add value to the network with specific expertise, and that can demonstrate true commitment to the global studies model. Asia Society has established a limited number of non-negotiable criteria for each new partnership: the school must have a committed, capable school leader; a district supervisor who supports the model; and ample professional learning time for staff. Unfortunately, even when schools initially meet these criteria, conditions can change. District leaders, in particular, have high turnover rates, and Asia Society staff frequently has to re-sell the model to new administrators. Turnover of building leadership can also be a challenge. There are no strict benchmarks or timelines that dictate a school’s eligibility for continued participation in the network, but recently Asia Society has severed ties with schools based on lack of commitment from the leader.

It has been a challenge to ensure some level of integrity to the ISSN model, while also remaining responsive to local needs and flexible about changing conditions. Because Asia Society works as a support organization, rather than a school management organization, its staff must walk a fine line in managing expectations. An intermediary organization can’t control all of the conditions that influence a school’s ability to implement the model successfully. Many factors—such as staffing autonomy or local graduation requirements—exist outside the control of the schools themselves. Some schools, with support from Asia Society, have succeeded in advocating for district policy changes and exemptions. Others have adapted their approach to accommodate local conditions. Asia Society works to understand the parameters of each school’s situation and figures out creative ways to create the time, space, and staffing needed to accomplish the mission.

In time, Asia Society may revise its stance on what faithful implementation looks like and how much to explicitly require of network schools. The organization is in the midst of a multi-year research and evaluation effort to identify the conditions that must be in place for optimal implementation of the ISSN model. Evaluators are also looking at what aspects of the model have the most significant impact on student learning to determine what combination of practices are necessary for a school to achieve the mission of the network.

Other Challenges

The other challenges that Asia Society faces in leading the ISSN are exactly the ones it set out to resolve:

- The belief that teaching global studies must come at the expense of other learning priorities.
- Accountability systems that focus almost exclusively on teaching and assessing basic skills.

Both of these challenges are ongoing, but with experience, ISSN educators have proven that a global studies curriculum can be synonymous with a college preparatory program. Educators often need to take a leap of faith to understand how global studies can work hand-in-hand with the Common Core State Standards. Sometimes, it means letting go of some traditional practices, or it requires a shift from worrying about “coverage” to crafting lessons that engage students deeply with content. At this point, the ISSN has strong examples of schools and curricula that successfully integrate global studies with core content, alleviating some of that angst.
The assessment challenge is more daunting. State tests are still the ultimate accountability measure for schools, and the skills and knowledge they typically measure are less ambitious than what the ISSN strives to teach. A next generation of assessments tied to the Common Core may do a better job of addressing the gap between what is currently measured and what colleges and the workforce demand, and the ISSN’s performance-based assessment system may help prepare teachers and students to make that shift. Until then, educators and students will continue to experience tension between the goals and philosophies of the ISSN and the priorities of their states and school districts.

Asia Society sees hope in what appears to be a growing interest in mastery-based learning; several large philanthropies are investing in performance assessments, and mastery-based approaches were represented in the most recent federal Race to the Top guidelines.

**Looking Forward**

Asia Society’s goal is to see the notion of global competence become a core part of the American education system. However, that goal will not be met by developing or transforming schools one-by-one, across the country. Ultimately, network leaders project that the network may grow to include 40 or 50 schools as “proof points” to make the case for global competence, but that number remains to be determined. Additional schools may eventually adopt the GPS.

Asia Society, meanwhile, is continuing to listen to school leaders and teachers, refine its services, and develop tools that support schools’ needs. The latest innovation is a model that blends out-of-school-time learning with the regular school day in a proficiency-based pathway. With support from the Gates Foundation and, in one case, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, four “mastery schools” are using the GPS to encompass the learning that happens in after-school programs, internships, travel experiences, jobs, and other programs toward graduation. They are finding ways to score the work students produce in these programs against GPS rubrics, so students receive credit for what they have learned. By linking these “anytime-anywhere” learning opportunities to performance outcomes, the schools are expanding the notion of how learning happens and leveraging existing resources to help more students advance toward mastery of GPS performance outcomes.

Eventually, more schools may adopt this more robust version of the GPS. Many already have strong community partnerships, and this latest innovation will provide them with a structure to make better use of all of the learning that happens outside of the traditional classroom. Other schools may innovate in ways that are yet to be seen.

With a dynamic network of schools and a framework for global learning that can be exported more broadly, Asia Society is now well positioned to influence the national school reform agenda, pushing for higher aspirations across all schools and helping more leaders and educators understand what it will take to prepare the next generation for life in a global society.

“We’ve come a long way and we’re right at the fulcrum of having a really clear, contained means—a system—by which we can take our learning from the past decade and push it forward with new teachers and schools.”

–Anthony Jackson, Vice President for Education, Asia Society

“Something I’m proud of is starting to see teacher practice shifting in our schools, to see teachers think differently about assessment, to think more deeply about the way they’re instructing kids.”

–Brandon Wiley, Director of the International Studies School Network, Asia Society
IV. APPENDICES

ISSN Graduate Profile

ISSN graduates are Ready for College. They have successfully:

- Completed a globally focused course of study, including classes, extracurricular activities, and international travel, that has enabled them to develop interest and demonstrate expertise in a specific world culture or an important international issue.
- Earned a high school diploma with credits sufficient to pursue a college education in the United States or abroad or to pursue other rigorous post-secondary education.
- Learned how to identify options, evaluate opportunities, and organize educational experiences in college to enable them to pursue a career within the global economy.

ISSN graduates are Prepared for Success in a Global Environment. They:

- Are 21st century literate and are proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English and in one or more other language.
- Analyze and evaluate global issues from multiple perspectives, gather and synthesize relevant information from around the world, and draw conclusions that consider the impact from various viewpoints.
- Understand how the world’s people and institutions are interconnected and know how critical international economic, political, technological, environmental, and social systems operate interdependently across nations and regions.
- Are proficient in the use of a digital media, can evaluate the validity and integrity of information, and can identify sources of bias.

ISSN graduates are Connected to the World. They:

- Understand and value the opportunity to work collaboratively with individuals from cultural backgrounds different from their own and can see the world from the perspective of others.
- Are comfortable and competent in different cultural settings and know how to shift behavior and language to respectfully interact with people from different backgrounds.
- Understand that decisions and actions taken in the United States may have international consequences and that events worldwide may have national and local implications.
- Understand their responsibility to make ethical decisions and responsible choices, to weigh the consequences of their actions for themselves and others across the globe, and to act toward the development of a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

ISSN Teacher Profile

ISSN Teachers prepare students to be Ready for College. They:

- Design and implement a college-preparatory, globally focused course of study for students which systematically builds students’ capacity to demonstrate college level work across the curriculum.
- Recognize the levels of students’ literacy in academic and social language and help them build meaningful bridges between the two.
- Facilitate learning opportunities that enable students to have the experience of achieving expertise by researching, understanding, and developing new knowledge about a world culture or an internationally relevant issue.
- Model and explicitly teach students how to manage their own learning by identifying options, evaluating opportunities, and organizing educational experiences that will enable them work and live in a global society.
- Know the system of schooling deeply and know their students well, advising and advocating for students to graduate with all options open for post-secondary education, work and service.
ISSN Teachers possess the Knowledge Required in the Global Era. They:

- Have a deep understanding of their individual content and connect their content area to authentic global issues and perspectives.
- Understand and stay up-to-date on current world events, international issues, and global debates and help students gain understanding of these through daily interactions.
- Present balanced viewpoints on global issues and assist students in viewing issues from multiple perspectives.
- Have the capacity to integrate international content, issues and perspectives into a standards-based curriculum.
- Understand and model for students how to address complex problems, collect, analyze and synthesize information from a range of sources, tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, and produce potentially viable solutions.
- Understand that decisions made locally and nationally have international impact and that international trends and events affect local and national options.
- Are able and/or willing to learn to communicate in one or more languages other than English.
- Recognize, value, and respect the broad spectrum of ethnicities and cultures in the school community and teach students to collaborate effectively with individuals from different backgrounds.

ISSN Teachers are Skilled for Success in a Global Environment. They:

- Demonstrate proficiency in and model the essential skills of reading, writing, comprehending, listening, speaking and viewing of media necessary for student learning in their content area.
- Develop and present information in an articulate and persuasive manner, orally, in writing, and through digital media.
- Use problem solving skills to recognize and act on the needs of individual students, colleagues, and the school community.
- Are familiar with contemporary and classic culture, associated music, art, literature and trends, and seek to integrate these in relevant ways into the curriculum.
- Understand and use the arts from their own and other cultures to assist students in gaining new knowledge and skills and expressing their own ideas in a variety of ways.
- Reflect on their successes and challenges, utilize new strategies to reach every student, and find resources to maximize student learning.
- Continue to be intellectually curious and demonstrate the habits of mind that lead to life long learning about their craft, their students and their content.
- Use an inquiry-based model of teaching that enables students to actively manipulate ideas in order to construct knowledge, solve problems, and develop their own understanding of the content.
- Use instructional strategies to understand the contributions of different cultures and recognize and draw upon the diverse cultural assets within their classrooms and community.
- Use multiple forms of assessment to evaluate student learning, and provide ongoing feedback to students to empower them to manage and accelerate their own learning.
- Create opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning and the teaching they have experienced.
- Are committed to behaving ethically toward students and other members of the school community.

ISSN Teachers are Connected to the World. They:

- Are proficient in the use of essential digital media and communications technologies and use them to communicate and work across national and regional boundaries.
- Evaluate, critically select, and use various forms of media, art and technology in lesson design and implementation to maximize student engagement.
- Appreciate and respect diversity and work effectively with people from other cultures, backgrounds, and fields of expertise.
• Have traveled internationally or are willing to engage in international learning experiences.
• Are receptive to other’s perspectives, welcoming differences in interpretation and judgment, and are able to revise and expand their own views.
• Accept responsibilities of global citizenship and make ethical decisions and responsible choices that contribute to the development of a more, just, peaceful, and sustainable world.
• Are committed members of the ISSN professional community, participating in on-going professional development, including mentoring, lesson study, peer observation, critical friends groups, study groups and collaborating with teachers locally and nationally through the Network.
RESOURCES


ISSN Directory of Schools: http://asiasociety.org/education/international-studies-schools-network/directory-schools


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