

Globalization of Education in a Digital World of Learning  
by Don Knezek

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As recently as a decade ago we were convinced that if we could ensure our students were competent academically and technologically literate, they were ready to face the challenges of the impending 21st Century. What we know now is that the challenge has changed significantly. With the globalization of the economy, with the ability of workers anywhere in the world to fill even sophisticated roles in the current information and knowledge economies, and with major segments of traditional work opportunities moving out of Texas and offshore, it is no longer sufficient to benchmark locally or even nationally our schools and the learners who successfully complete their courses of study here. It is no longer adequate to sprinkle a bit of technology literacy on a traditional curriculum and expect that students are ready for relevant higher education or for entry into a highly competitive workforce. And, it is no longer realistic to think that a 21st Century educator can be effective by preparing once, teaching the same thing every year for twenty-five or thirty years, and call that a career.

To thrive in today's world economy, an emerging citizen must be competent ... able to (1) communicate, (2) gather, analyze and use data and information, (3) think critically and solve problems as a part of a team, and (4) operate from a solid social and moral framework as they work and live. What is clear today however, is that those students most able to choose where and what their work is, to earn top salaries and experience high job satisfaction, and to be most productive in this era of innovation are the students able to add to the four areas outlined above in their ability to think creatively, to function in multicultural work environments, to continue to learn for a lifetime, and to be adaptable. It is that creative and inventive thinking, translated into innovation which makes the worker and leader of tomorrow valuable in our emerging global society.

These increased demands and expectations for our young learners translate into greater challenges for our school leaders, teachers, and parents. As the skills necessary for success change for those entering the workforce, and as competition comes from every corner of the world, demands change, too, to effectively meet the learning needs of our students. Current education professionals must continue to upgrade their teaching skills, content knowledge, and understanding of the world outside school. Preparation of new educators must reflect emerging trends, and we must realize that more and more education services and learning experiences come to our students for outside our classrooms ... even from outside our national boundaries.

In light of current trends toward a digital learning landscape within the globalization of education, I see five major challenges for teachers and other education leaders today. In order to provide our students the preparation and life-long learning they need to thrive in this 21st Century, we must:

- \* Study digital-age learners and what engages them
- \* Foster creative and inventive thinking for innovation
- \* Understand what tools and strategies are available to reach and teach our students
- \* As educators, sustain our own learning and development
- \* Prepare to contribute to an increasingly global and multicultural system for learning

Where do we start as educators and education leaders from across South Texas to understand and prepare for the globalization of education and the transformation of learning in a digital world? One very high-value opportunity to better understand global trends in technology and innovation in education occurs this summer right in your own back yard as ISTE's National Educational Technology Conference (NECC 2008) comes to San Antonio June 29 through July 2 (see [www.iste.org/necc/](http://www.iste.org/necc/)). This premier international education conference, involving over fifty countries, provides an opportunity to understand first hand many of the most compelling forces affecting education today. By virtue of this exciting event coming to San Antonio, education leaders can ensure, at very low cost, they are not caught flat footed ... that their staff and even the members of their Boards are better prepared to support the schools, districts, and young learners of South Texas as they find themselves in the increasingly global and digital business of learning. Go to the Web and register today, and I'll see you all in San Antonio.