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TEXAS STUDY

Vol. XXIV, No. 1

OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Fall 2014



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Articles were submitted by educators and others in related education fields. Articles on any subject concerning current education trends, innovative programs, etc., are welcome. The *Texas Study* presents articles on the major topics of leadership and learning in each issue. If you are interested in receiving information about writers' guidelines or if you have an article that you would like to submit, please contact: TASSP, The *Texas Study*, 1833 South IH 35, Austin, Texas 78741, 512-443-2100, or Fax: 512-442-3343. Send advertising queries to the same address.

The *Texas Study* is published in December and April by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals. Copyright 2014 by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals. All rights reserved.

Articles in the *Texas Study* are the expressions of the author and are neither endorsements nor statements of TASSP policy. Copies of the *Texas Study* are mailed to TASSP members. Subscriptions are available to non-members for \$20/year or \$10/issue. Address changes should be sent to TASSP, 1833 South IH-35, Austin, TX 78741 or E-Mail: membership@tassp.org

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Creating Global Citizens: The Ultimate Responsibility of Every Educator

By Dr. Steven Edwards and Michelle Rodak

In an era of high-stakes testing and global comparisons that continue to place the United States lower and lower on international rankings of educational indicators, the need to reexamine the United States' educational system and priorities is critically important. The current educational catch phrase in our nation is (as all educators know) "college and career ready." What does that really mean in a rapidly changing, globalized world, and how are test scores and global comparisons relevant to truly being "college and career ready"?

It can be argued that the real challenge is to prepare young people for a competitive global labor market, to achieve community harmony on a global scale, and to promote cultural diversity and the value of universal citizenship in a global community. Is the current educational model preparing children to thrive as citizens in this rapidly changing world? This article will examine what it means to be a global citizen and the essential skills that need to be embedded into our educational system to make college and career readiness a reality for all children.

College and Career Readiness: A U.S. Perspective

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College and career readiness is narrowly defined as the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed — without remediation — in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program, or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future ad-

vancement (Conley, 2010). Using this reasoning, one can infer that high schools are trusted with the task of ensuring that students are learning the skills they need to succeed in their learning and career endeavors post-graduation. Yet, the U.S. Department of Education's (2010) publication *College and Career-Ready Standards and Assessments* states that, "four of every 10 new college students, including half of those at two-year institutions, take remedial courses, and many employers comment on the inadequate preparation of high school graduates" (p. 5). Based on Conley's definition, it is clear that schools are failing to create college and career ready students, and that, perhaps, an element is missing from that definition. This presents a significant challenge on multiple levels. Norman R. Augustine (2007), the retired chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin, asserts:

Today, it is possible that our nation's adult generation will, for the first time in history, leave their children and grandchildren a lower sustained standard of living than they themselves enjoyed. Should that occur, it will be the consequence of a collective failure to respond to the increasingly clear signals that are emerging and indicate that we have entered a new era, a global era, an era in which Americans must compete in the marketplace not merely with each other but with highly qualified people around the planet. It will represent a change of seismic proportions with commensurate implications for America's economic well-being, national and homeland security, health care and overall standard of living. (p.6)

Students who cannot compete nationally have no chance at successfully competing internationally, and since one can basically apply to

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Michelle Rodak, the chief program officer for Edwards Educational Services, Inc., is proud to be working with a company that actively meets the educational, social and emotional needs of children and their schools worldwide. Rodak earned her undergraduate degree in psychology and theatre at the Pennsylvania State University and her master's degree in psychology at New York University. A true believer in education for all, she also initiated a supported education program in Arlington County's Behavioral Healthcare Department to help clients navigate the post-high school educational system.

Educators who link experiences, learning and knowledge that children access outside the traditional school day will be better able to engage students during the school hours. Teachers as facilitators need to direct the learning in and out of school by asking the essential questions that take learning deeper.

any job anywhere in the world with the click of a button, students are required to compete internationally. During the Industrial Age, the need for a compliant, task-driven workforce was the norm. Professor Jonathan B. Turner's notion in 1852 – that there is a Professional class that makes the decisions for the Industrial class (as cited in Davenport, 1909) – is obsolete, yet many schools still seem to operate under this premise. Far too many classrooms in America are preparing children for a world that no longer exists and focusing on routine tasks that are teacher-directed and textbook-driven. But how can educators reframe learning experiences to make them relevant not only in and out of the classroom, but also in and out of the United States? The concept of global citizenship and the inherent skills required is the missing link. Knowing that global citizenry is not only the future, but also the *present*, is key.

Global Citizenship 2.0

Understanding the world's changing dynamic and global citizenry requires a new set of skills. One can argue that the global citizenship skills below are critical to success in the changing, world-based workplace. Global citizens who will be able to prosper in a global economy:

- Are culturally agile and able to adapt to different situations, environments and cultures;
- Have highly developed soft or 21st century skills;
- Have a high Situational IQ/Practical Intelligence;
- Have a high Emotional Intelligence (EQ);
- View the world as an interconnected place and understand that the events in one region of the world can have a profound impact on other regions;
- Appreciate diversity, embrace uniqueness and are able to work in high-functioning, results-driven teams;
- Feel responsible for the world in which they live;
- Use various technologies as tools and know their value in increasing productivity and effectiveness;
- Actively participate in finding solutions to global problems;
- Are entrepreneurial thinkers with innovative spirits; and
- Are college and career ready in a global context.

In order for the United States to stay competitive in the coming decades, transitioning to an educational system that cultivates college and career ready global citizens is really non-negotiable. Students

need to be prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world and not just be effective test takers. It is no longer sufficient to simply be good at math on a pencil and paper task; students need to know how to apply mathematical concepts and skills in real-world settings. This is known as Situational or Practical IQ. Unlike traditional IQ, Practical IQ (PIQ) can be developed, and refers to one's ability to adapt, problem-solve and make sense out of situations that often occur in daily life (Sundem, 2014). For learning and development to happen, students need learning opportunities that challenge their thinking, and they need to be exposed to situations that are new, different and outside of their comfort zones. When this happens, students are able to make new learning connections, thus enhancing future experiences. What was once outside their comfort zone now becomes familiar and comfortable, allowing for new challenges to expand their comfort zone even further. Experiences in one area can then be transferred and applied to new and different situations. This is not a new idea. According to John Dewey, thinking and learning does not occur spontaneously but must be "evoked" by "problems and questions" or by "some perplexity, confusion or doubt" (Dewey, 1933). When students are exposed to new and different situations, their thinking and learning is challenged. Yet, many schools continue to educate students using a traditional, Industrial Era paradigm and wonder why students are left unprepared for the real world.

The Strategy

This paradigm shift begins with a shift in the role of the teacher. The classroom teacher is still the essential element in creating a different learning dynamic. The teacher can no longer be the keeper of all the information and the deliverer of the content, but must shift his/her role to that of a facilitator who applies the inquiry process and allows students to be the architects of their own learning. In a technology-rich age, learning takes place 24/7. Educators who link experiences, learning and knowledge that children access outside the traditional school day will be better able to engage students during the school hours. Teachers as facilitators need to direct the learning in and out of school by asking the essential questions that take learning deeper. It is no longer about the breadth of the curriculum, but rather about the depth. This is in stark contrast to a high-stakes test model. When students are able to take concepts to deeper levels and are not bound by time, more and more skills are embedded in the learning experience. New skills are introduced based on the artful questioning by the teacher. These learning activities must require higher levels of critical thinking, analysis, transfer and application that is relevant to the student.

The responsibility is shifted to the learner. As Rebecca Edwards (2010) states, "Those who do the work do the learning." The students engage in activities that are meaningful and relevant, and the learning experience becomes purposeful while they do the work. Experiences in school and in college need to replicate the conditions students will face outside of a traditional K-12 or K-16 school model. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is one method used to structure learning experiences noted above in a truly meaningful way. PBL provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of academic concepts and essential life/workforce skills as well

as build their capacity to solve real-world challenges. PBL helps students build the skills needed to integrate and apply knowledge to real-world situations in new and creative ways. Technology also has a significant role to play in facilitating and enhancing this educational transition. For example, Skype, webinars and email all provide for many varied cross-cultural student collaborations in which students can work in virtual teams with students from other regions of the United States and from other countries. Internships and study abroad opportunities allow for rich cultural exchanges that can increase cultural sensitivity and appreciation for diversity. The immediate relevancy of these activities increases student engagement, which will in turn increase the likelihood that the Global Citizenship 2.0 skills are mastered in an applicable way and at the highest level of learning. The notion of college and career readiness only will be achievable when the public education system as well as colleges and universities commit to teaching the skills required in the workforce.

In addition to creating real world learning experiences for children, another task of our educational system is to help foster an entrepreneurial mindset and skillset in students. James Oblinger, chancellor of North Carolina State University, states it simply and clearly (as cited in the Council on Competitiveness, 2008, p.22): "Those who learn to innovate will prosper in a global economy."

A wider scope of learning experiences at school inspires students to innovate, create and eventually become entrepreneurs in the global economy. Entrepreneurs take calculated risks; have a high degree of self-efficacy; and an unwavering belief that a new opportunity, breakthrough or positive event is just around the corner. Entrepreneurs, who tend to be frustrated by bureaucracies, see failure as an opportunity for new learning and look at every experience as a link to new learning. Entrepreneurs build planes as they fly them; is this thinking being instilled in students?

The Naysayers

Pioneers who understand the complexities of college and career readiness as it relates to global citizenship will no doubt encounter naysayers, whether it's a teacher who feels too bogged down in standardized testing to make time for 'just one more thing to do' or a parent who wants to see a grade attached to every learning activity. And it is true—no multiple choice/true-false assessment can grade how students work in diverse teams, problem-solve and innovate. But consider the ramifications if college and career readiness is not made a priority. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has been ranked as the most robust economy in the world. The U.S. has held that position for 70 years and to maintain that position (which really affords its citizens tremendous opportunity), we must continue to challenge ourselves to do business in different ways. We assess what we value, and our current educational assessments make the statement loud and clear that the U.S. educational system does not value the skills that students need to flourish and compete in a globalized world.

Conclusion and the Bottom Line

The world is rapidly evolving, and competition for jobs is fierce. America's students are no longer competing solely with each other; they are competing with millions of other highly qualified candidates across the globe, many of whom will work for a fraction of that of an American worker for positions in schools and jobs—jobs that possibly haven't even been created yet. The current educational framework in the United States does not reflect this reality and, as a result, the graduates our schools produce are not college and career ready in the context of global citizenship. Statistics show that many of our graduates leave high school without the skills they need to be successful in the workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2010); these graduates will have little to no chance of success in a global economy unless we make preparing them for global citizenship a priority. The future is *now*, and it is the ultimate responsibility of every educator to help foster college and career ready students who also are prepared for the reality of global citizenship. Are you doing all you can as an educational leader to create learning environments that encourage innovation, cultural diversity and real-world problem solving?

The first step is to have the conversation with colleagues and peers. We do not have to have the answers, but we have to be willing to ask the tough questions that will challenge the system to reinvent itself. Peter Drucker (2001), the noted American business expert said, "Business has only two functions—marketing and innovation." Is that not the case in education too? The challenge is to continually find new and different ways to disrupt our thinking and then let all stakeholders know what we are doing and why we are doing it.

This is a complex maze; there are no easy answers. It is a case of second order change—A does not necessarily lead to B, and B does not necessarily lead to C, and so on. What we can predict is unpredictability, but collectively we can, we must, and we *will* find new and different ways to maintain a world-class educational system that prepares children for both college and careers in this rapidly changing, globalized world.

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