

*Schools of education are helping future teachers know and teach global perspectives through curriculum innovations, education abroad, new technologies, language immersion, and other valuable experiences.*



Michigan State University Professor Guofang Li reads to students.

BY ALAN DESSOFF

# Teaching THE World

**A** S P-12 STUDENTS INCREASINGLY LEARN ABOUT the broader world around them through television, the Internet, travel, and interaction with schoolmates from other countries, institutions that educate their teachers are internationalizing their programs to be sure that the teachers are well prepared to instruct the students in a global classroom.

From the courses they provide on college and university campuses in the United States to work, study, and internship experiences they offer abroad, often including valuable immersion in foreign cultures, schools of education are trying to give their undergraduate and graduate students the international perspective they need to keep up with the students they will teach and hopefully to be ahead of them.

New teachers will need this kind of preparation to work in regular classrooms, particularly in urban areas, where internationalization means, among other things, that U.S. students interact with large numbers of students from other countries. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, 81 languages are spoken.

They also will need it to teach in a growing number of schools that are placing a special emphasis on the world far beyond U.S. borders, like the

John Stanford International School, an award-winning public elementary school in Seattle. It offers Spanish and Japanese immersion programs to all students and the immersion teachers speak only in those languages.

Named for a late Seattle school superintendent who envisioned a world-class public school system, the Stanford school features a library with books in many languages and interior design elements reflecting a world culture. It also is one of the Seattle school district's bilingual orientation centers, serving English language learners new to the United States.

In the Asia Society's International Studies Schools Network, 12 schools in 8 cities provide rigorous, engaging, internationally focused education for primarily urban, low-income, and minority students. The organization plans to open 2 more schools next year and 25–30 more by 2013.



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*Conversations with administrators in several schools of education and other authorities in the field reveal that many institutions are paying more attention to internationalizing teacher education in all its dimensions.*

"In today's world, every modern discipline has a global connection. We're worried that this kind of education will be available to well-off students but not every student. Certainly private schools are very active in this space," says Vivien Stewart, the Asia Society's vice president for education.

Although the schools in the program try to recruit teachers "with some kind of international background and passion," and find some, including former Peace Corps volunteers, "most teachers don't have that" and few have had international content in their preparation, Stewart says. "You don't want teachers teaching what they don't know so you have to think about how you can get that to the teachers."

## Catching Up

That's what many schools of education are trying to do, and higher education administrators and scholars who specialize in the international realm agree that it's about time; U.S. teacher education programs have some catching up to do.

"We all need to know more about the world and our schools of education are starting to realize they have a role in preparing teachers for that. But it's a new idea for many of them. I think we're at the beginning of a process," declares Betsy Devlin-Foltz, executive director of the Longview Foundation for World Affairs and International Understanding.

The foundation has been helping young people in the United States learn about world regions and global issues since 1966. In February 2008 it brought together leaders in education, government, and other sectors to examine what is being done in schools, colleges, and departments of education to prepare future teachers for the new global reality and to generate momentum to do more. Its report, *Teacher Preparation for the Global Age*, highlights promising practices and suggests a framework for internationalizing the education of all preservice teachers. The report can be downloaded from the foundation's Web site.

Ann Imlah Schneider, a Washington, D.C.-based international education consultant, agrees that "some things are happening" to move internationalization of teacher education forward but cites "enormous obstacles" that institutions face and often hesitate to address.

"The major thing they tell me is that there just isn't time in the curriculum for it. There is a lot of entrenched interest in education in keeping the curriculum the same because that's what they have taught for years and they question why they should change it," Schneider says.

The concept of study abroad "is really a problem," she continues. "When many people think of international education, they think of study abroad. They think that's the real answer. They do not think more broadly than that about what the curriculum on their home campus can do." Still, Schneider says, "I think they are trying."

Conversations with administrators in several schools of education and other authorities in the field reveal that many institutions are paying more attention to internationalizing teacher education in all its dimensions.

## New at MSU

In the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University (MSU), the first year of a new Global Educators Cohort Program is ending this spring. A specialized teacher preparation program focused on global and international perspectives; it takes undergraduates through a four-year curriculum plus a fifth year internship and includes extracurricular programming and practice-teaching in multicultural and/or international contexts. Students are mentored by faculty with expertise in international education.

"The twenty-first century classroom is becoming more globally and culturally diverse, and the needs of students to be globally competent citizens also is increasing. We have made a commitment to preparing teachers to work in the global context of the twenty-first century classroom," says Margo Glew, coordinator of international initiatives in MSU's Department of Teacher Education.

Like many other international education administrators and teachers, she has global experience herself. A former high school social studies teacher in the United States, she also spent two years teaching English as a second language at a high school in Niger, West Africa.

The new program is open to all incoming freshmen and students with relevant majors or specializations like English as a second language; social studies and geography are especially encouraged to apply. The 25 students who are completing the first year of the program are "a great group," says Glew. "They are very clear about knowing that this is something important and what they want to do."



Students at the Zodwa Special School for Children in the Gauteng Province, Tshwane South District, of South Africa participate in a numeracy lesson. Students and faculty from USD's School of Leadership and Education Sciences visited this school for learners with special educational needs in June of 2008.



**Michigan State University teacher education student Kristin Thielemans gained valuable classroom experience on the Pre-Internship Summer Teaching Program to South Africa.**

Supported by a grant from the Longview Foundation, the Global Initiative Forum for Future Teachers (GIFT) is a program for students in the Global Cohort program as well as other preservice teachers in MSU's College of Education. GIFT is a learning community of international and domestic students at MSU interested in learning and interacting together on global issues in education.

GIFT sessions provide an opportunity for international students in the college to mentor students in the teacher preparation program and together arrange programs and opportunities to learn about other cultures. This learning community, which draws on the experiences and cultural heritage of international students from many countries, is modeled on a successful established program at MSU for in-service teachers called LATTICE (Linking All Types of Teachers to International Cross-Cultural Education).

## Admissions at OSU

In the graduate School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University (OSU), an international perspective begins with the admissions process. "We're looking for people who haven't grown up in a homogeneous environment, who have international experience, or have experience with diverse populations in the United States. We look for something in their applications that shows they have sought out interactions with people different from themselves," says Merry M. Merryfield, professor of social studies and global edu-

cation and a former Peace Corps volunteer, USAID worker, and Fulbright Dissertation Scholar in several African countries.

"Most teachers are white and middle class, even though the student population has become incredibly more diverse. They often go into a culture shock when they are working with kids in high-poverty schools. So part of what we do in the selection process is focus on people who already show an indication that they are interested in something different," Merryfield explains.

Candidates also must have at least 40 hours of undergraduate coursework "on every world region," in subjects like history, political science, economics, sociology and geography. "We want to make sure they bring some international knowledge into the program, and not just the United States and Europe, which is traditionally what Americans do," Merryfield says.

Once in the program, their curriculum includes two seminars that Merryfield teaches herself, including one titled "Perspective Consciousness." The idea, says Merryfield, is to teach the future teachers "why they think the way they do" on issues and events and to "understand the perspectives of other people" because they will be in schools with diverse populations.

Teacher candidates at OSU also gain that perspective first-hand and close to their home campus in Columbus, where 50,000 Somalis live. "They are coming out of refugee camps and learning English. Many were victims of torture before they came here. They are Muslim and the



# Student Teaching Abroad



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG KISOCK

**Craig Kisko, Ph.D.,** has been working to place student teachers in classrooms abroad for nearly 20 years—first as a professor of teacher education in the University of Minnesota system and now as director of Educators Abroad Ltd. Since 1989 Educators Abroad colleagues have

offered 2,188 students from 104 colleges and universities in Canada, the UK, and the United States professional support and supervision through 3- to 18-week individualized placements in 689 primary and secondary schools in 54 countries.

However, the first program Kisko was involved in began placing student teachers in international settings was in 1964, so the idea of doing student teaching in another country is not new—but it has also not yet become popular.

Because teacher licensure varies state by state, it can sometimes be difficult to get teacher educators to think beyond “local.”

“A great challenge has been trying to convince teacher educators that teaching abroad is valuable in preparing future teachers,” says Kisko.

Many teacher educators think about education in their own state like many teacher educators in other countries think about education in their own country. But Kisko says that when teacher educators from different countries start talking about teacher preparation, their perspective broadens as they recognize that they face the same issues in preparing future teachers to deal with more diverse classrooms.

There are two paths in which prospective teachers can student teach abroad: 1) if their university has an international student teaching placement process already set up or 2) if the university works with an outside organization to facilitate international student teaching placements (such organizations include Educators Abroad and the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching, among others).

“It’s frustrating when a student wants to student teach abroad and they are unable to do it because of limitations set by the program they are enrolled in,” Kisko says.

Ultimately, it comes down to “whether a teacher education program is willing to think globally rather than locally.”

“Teacher educators have to prepare tomorrow’s teachers for the diverse classrooms they will ultimately teach in,” Kisko explains. “Our job is to prepare future teachers to be able to teach any student from anywhere in the world.” —IE

girls cover their hair. We’re trying to get our students to see their classes from the viewpoint of these Somali kids,” Merryfield explains.

She describes part of what her students’ experience: “We all go out to a Somali restaurant for supper. Most of the restaurants have a women’s section because sometimes the women prefer to eat separately from the men. So my women students will sit with them, which is a totally new experience for them. Goat is always served because that is important to Somalis. It is the first time my students have had goat. But they are casual and relaxed and having conversations. It is a powerful learning experience for them.”

The students also benefit from other resources that Ohio State offers, including Middle East, Slavic-East European, East Asian, and African studies centers. They provide “cultural consultants” from the different regions as well as “resource consultants” who can identify educational materials about the regions. “Say somebody suddenly has to teach about China and they’ve never taught about China before. Here, they actually have somebody from China who can look at the materials they are using and make suggestions and bring up issues they may not otherwise consider,” Merryfield explains.

“Teachers don’t teach what they don’t know, and if they have good resources it will make an incredible difference in what kids in their classes are going to be exposed to about certain parts of the world,” Merryfield declares.

She and other educators agree that an international teacher education program also should have faculty who have their own international experience or who are from other countries. Japan, China, India, and Nepal are among countries represented on Merryfield’s faculty. “If you don’t have anybody from another country, how can you call it an international teacher education program?” she asks.

Technology also “makes an incredible difference,” she continues. “It makes interacting with somebody in another part of the world to be an everyday experience. My students do it regularly,” she says.

## Foreign Cultures

In the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington, students can gain first-hand international perspective and enrich their classroom learning by participating in cultural immersion projects in 13 countries. “They don’t go over and live in dorms. They are not just college students throwing on a backpack and traveling after classes are finished or enjoying a really cool graduation gift from their parents. They have to get out into the communities in those countries and be active participants, and learn about the culture and values, and how people live their lives, and how that interfaces with their schooling,” explains Laura Stachowski, who directs the projects.

Undergraduates at Indiana can sign up for the program as juniors and begin a year-long preparatory period that includes 10 weeks of student teaching in Indiana “so they can demonstrate that they are successful in the classroom before we send them to an overseas location,” Stachowski says. They also study about the education systems and cultures of the countries where they will go as seniors. “That’s in addition to their regular course load so it requires a commitment on their part. We want them to be committed,” Stachowski says.

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**Michigan State University graduate Pamela Arnold experienced teaching in a bicultural, bilingual immersion kindergarten program in Beijing, China.**

Once in their designated countries, students live with local families and spend their days at a local school, first as observers and then taking on instructional responsibilities. They also must complete a community service project and send weekly reports back to IU addressing specific academic questions and their own professional development and growth.

Stachowski, an IU graduate who “had a wonderful experience” as a student teacher in England, returned to Indiana and has been working with the cultural immersion program since it began in the 1970s. “These young people at IU come largely from small towns and suburbs around the state, and we felt we needed to give them an opportunity to get out and see how other people live and broaden their perspectives on the world before they went into their own classrooms to teach,” she says.

Most teachers get their first teaching job close to where they grew up “and we tell our students there’s nothing wrong with that, but before they go back to their hometowns, they have to see how people live and educate their children in other parts of the world,” Stachowski declares.

About 100 IU students participate in the cultural immersion projects annually “because they realize how important it is to have that international perspective, and their families do, too. In spite of the world being a tricky place right now, there is a lot of family support for their kids to do this,” Stachowski says.

All students in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences (SOLES) at the University of San Diego are required to have an international experience, whether studying, working, or interning in countries as close as Mexico, 15 miles away, or as distant as South Africa, where San Diego has a partnership with the University of Pretoria.

“When I ask students what attracted them to our program, they always say it is the international focus. They want the experience of interacting with other cultures. They know that in their world of work, they are going to be working with a very diverse population in America,” says SOLES Dean and Professor Paula A. Cordeiro.

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“and we tell our students there’s nothing wrong with that, but before they go back to their hometowns, they have to see how people live and educate their children in other parts of the world.”*

SOLES is in the third year of an initiative to internationalize its curriculum as part of a five-year strategic plan. The initiative has been supported by a \$30,000 grant from the Longview Foundation to help SOLES faculty “train globally competent, intercultural teachers,” says Professor Reyes Quezada, program director of the “Interculturally Teaching in Teacher Education” project.

Other higher education institutions and related organizations also are engaging in a wide range of activities to internationalize teacher education. In North Carolina, a Preservice Teacher Education Study Group in the Center for International Understanding at the University of North Carolina has recommended that more teacher education candidates participate in structured international experiences, including education abroad; have intense, globally oriented engagement in the United States, including interaction with international K–12 as well as university students; and complete more internationally focused coursework, including language study.

The study group’s work was part of “North Carolina in the World,” a collaborative effort by 16 universities in the state to strengthen K–12 international education. “If teachers are to prepare their students to thrive in the interconnected global economy, all teachers, not just those in social studies and language, must feel confident and competent to teach about the world,” asserts Millie Ravenel, executive director of the Center for International Understanding, which has coordinated the effort.

In Pennsylvania, the Center for Collaborative Research and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education held a conference in 2008 and planned another one in 2009 for Philadelphia-area K–12 teachers and administrators. The objective is “to begin thinking about what internationalizing teacher education means and what teacher educators need to support them,” says Sharon M. Ravitch, senior lecturer and co-director of the Center.

“We have a commitment to urban education domestically. We want to think about teacher education in other contexts and what teachers need to prepare, sustain, and nourish them in a globalizing world,” says Ravitch.

## Foreign Languages

An issue that has emerged in the internationalization of teacher education is whether future teachers should be required to know other languages in addition to English.



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MSU students experience diverse field placements such as this bilingual Chinese-English Immersion school in Lansing, Michigan.

Schneider says some educators believe requiring knowledge of foreign languages would “put off students wanting to become teachers.” But “the teachers I talked to,” she adds, “were pretty unanimous in wishing they had some foreign language competence, especially those working in a multicultural setting. When they are dealing with Koreans or Spanish-speakers or whatever in their classrooms, they don’t have the background to deal with them appropriately.”

Some schools of education require that their students be proficient in another language. Ohio State is one that does not. “We tried to require it back in the ‘80s but it didn’t work out well so the university stopped it before I came here. I believe you can’t understand a culture unless you understand the language to a certain degree and I wish we would require it, but at this point we don’t,” Merryfield says.

Part of the problem, she explains, is that “while most people in the world learn other languages from kindergarten on, Americans usually don’t start until high school.” There also is a feeling, she continues, that “teachers have enough to do just mastering the content they have to teach” without having to learn another language as well. She notes that most of her African students speak as many as seven languages. “It makes Americans look really slow in some ways,” Merryfield says.

In Indiana University’s cultural immersion projects, students traveling to Spain and Costa Rica must know Spanish “to be able to integrate into the community,” but those are the only countries where native language proficiency is required, says Stachowski. “If they go to China or Turkey or Russia, they are working with people who have some English proficiency. There are enough English speakers in those communities so that they can get by alright,” she

explains, adding that “if we required them to speak Russian to go to Russia, nobody would want to go.”

April Knipstine, a graduate student in international education at Indiana, who has worked and traveled abroad, says she “always felt it was somehow okay” that she did not know the native languages of the countries she visited. “It was acceptable that I only knew English; people catered to me,” she says.

But “I felt sort of sick about that,” she adds, “because it’s such a double standard for people who come to the United States from other countries and want to survive here. They don’t get the kind of treatment I got. I began to have a lot more empathy for them.”

## Students’ Experiences

Undergraduate and graduate students at different levels of internationally focused teacher preparation programs share enthusiasm about what they are getting into and excitement over their experiences so far.

“I thought it could be fun,” says Jared Schulman, one of the first-year students in the MSU Global Educators Cohort Program. With travel to Europe and Asia with his family already under his belt, “I hope to expand my global knowledge overall. As teachers, we’ll have to be able to pass that on to our students,” says Schulman, who wants to teach social studies and history in a high school, perhaps in another country.

“I think the only way to really bring knowledge into the classroom is to experience different things firsthand. It’s important to travel and experience different cultures,” adds a classmate, Ashley Maloff, who wants to teach students with special needs. She is considering joining the Peace Corps or Teach for America following her graduation.



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Knipstine knew she wanted to be a teacher when she was a freshman at IU and enrolled when she was eligible as a junior in a cultural immersion program in the School of Education. After a preparatory year that included 10 weeks of student teaching in Indiana, she traveled to her designated country, Kenya.

She recounts how she lived in a mud hut without running water or electricity on her host family's sugar cane farm and walked a mile each way to the school where she taught English to classes of 50 students. "There was no technology. I had a chalkboard but had to buy the chalk in town. There also was no paper unless I bought it," she says.

"It really stretched my idea of comfort but I became extremely comfortable there," she says. "The students were excited to learn. They wanted everything I could give them so classroom management was easy. It was quite refreshing after teaching 12th grade English in a rural part of Indiana where they couldn't see any point to what they were learning. In the education system in Kenya, students have a good understanding that their grades play a direct role in their future. If they don't get good grades, they won't have a chance to go to college and won't have a career. Now an M.S. student in language education at Indiana and an associate instructor in the cultural immersion projects, Knipstine wants to teach English to immigrants to the United States.

Evan Mickey, now winding up his first year as a Ph.D. student in international and comparative education at Indiana, says his experi-

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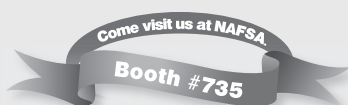
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ence teaching the equivalent of the U.S. seventh grade in an affluent suburb of Auckland, New Zealand was "eye-opening" in a different way.

Previously, as a student teacher in a sixth-grade math class in Champaign, Illinois, he had a computer for himself but none for his students. In his New Zealand classroom, he had 15 computers—"a massive amount of resources," he says. "Having all those resources changed how I could deliver my lessons," although he acknowledges that he had to develop lesson plans "culturally relevant" to his students, including some language differences.

Mickey wants to help more future teachers gain international experiences and also would like to work for the World Bank or similar organizations to do "more educational research in countries around the world" before eventually probably teaching in a classroom again himself. Meanwhile, he is getting back into substitute teaching in Indiana.

Students in Merryfield's program represent a diversity of backgrounds and interests. Jing Chao, who is in the third year of a Ph.D. program, came to the United States in 2005, "very interested in global education" after working for multinational companies in Beijing. She wants to return to China to join a university faculty.

Luke Sundermier, already a licensed social studies teacher, says he enrolled in Merryfield's program "to deepen my understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the world." He is pursuing a master's degree and plans to join the Peace Corps before deciding whether to pursue a doctorate.

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