

Chapter 4

An Internationalization Strategy



This chapter discusses the importance of a holistic approach to internationalization. It provides some guidance in developing a strategy to implement and coordinate international education programs in respective school authorities.

What Is a Holistic Approach to Internationalization?

“The whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

Aristotle

A holistic approach to internationalization acknowledges that:

- a variety of international education programs are required to effectively meet the needs of diverse educational stakeholders; e.g., Alberta students and teachers, foreign students and teachers, school authority staff, community members
- international education programs must be coordinated to ensure they collectively reinforce a school authority’s vision of and goals for internationalization.

To adopt a holistic approach, a school authority must be prepared to play a leadership role and develop an overarching vision, set of goals and overall plan for internationalization—an internationalization strategy.

What Is an Internationalization Strategy?

An internationalization strategy outlines a school authority's vision of and goals for internationalization and describes how the school authority will try to realize them. While strategies should be developed with input from school communities (see Stakeholder Consultation and Involvement on pages 52–53), this handbook identifies key principles upon which all school authority internationalization strategies should be based (see Guiding Principles on page 47). The Guiding Principles for International Education Programs in Alberta School Authorities highlight the value and characteristics of quality international education programs and recommend broad measures that school authorities can take to realize quality programming.



Why Is a Strategy Important?

An internationalization strategy formalizes a school authority's commitment to international learning and paints a clear picture of its future within the school authority. A strategy also provides staff, students, parents and community members with a framework within which they can situate their efforts.

Where Do I Start?

School authorities internationalize in different ways. Some develop a school authority wide vision and gradually develop programs to fulfill it, while others develop one program at a time, eventually coordinating various programs under a broad strategy. There is no right way or right order; however, internationalization is most effective when school authorities:

- research opportunities
- develop a vision statement and set of goals
- identify linkages with existing plans and priorities
- develop an internationalization strategy (and accompanying implementation plan)
- secure approval (from senior administration and the school authority's Board of Trustees).

Researching Opportunities

When asked how they started to internationalize their school authority, most representatives on Alberta’s International Education Advisory Council said that they started by talking to school authorities with established international education programs. Networking with other international education administrators can provide new administrators with an introduction to the inner workings of international education programming. Consulting with keen teachers, students, staff from central office, and local community organizations can also assist international education administrators as they explore the possibilities of internationalization (see Stakeholder Consultation and Involvement on pages 52–53).

Administrators may also wish to conduct online research to see what school authorities across Canada or in other countries are doing to internationalize. For a master list of all the materials referenced throughout the handbook, including Web sites, see the References section on pages 283–303.

The Calgary School District No. 19’s International Certificate is given to graduating senior high school students who have made significant contributions of an international nature throughout their school career. In order to be granted the certificate, they are required to take a second language(s), participate in an in-depth international experience, partnership or exchange, and put an international focus on some of their senior high school study.



Stakeholder Consultation and Involvement

To build support and ensure that the strategy responds to the needs and interests of the school community, it is recommended that school authorities consult with those who would benefit or be otherwise affected by its implementation. When, how and with whom this consultation takes place is ultimately up to the school authority. However, consultations ideally include representatives from the student body, teaching and administration staff, district office and community, so that each group is given the opportunity to comment on the importance of international education and how it could play out in their schools. A survey of the international education activities that currently exist within the school community can help to identify which individuals may be good representatives. Consider the following possibilities.

In the school

- Second language, English as a second language and social studies teachers
- Teachers or administrators who have demonstrated an interest in international or global education; e.g., teachers who:
 - incorporate global themes into their classrooms or schools
 - direct global citizenship projects
 - support students on exchanges
 - coordinate international school partnership projects
 - work with students of diverse cultural backgrounds
 - have participated in an international exchange
 - have travelled, volunteered or lived abroad
 - have a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background
- Students who:
 - belong to a school-based club focused on global issues
 - have participated in an exchange or travelled abroad
 - are studying or speak a second or third language
 - have participated in a model United Nations program

In district offices

- Second language, English as a second language, social studies program coordinators or consultants
- Program coordinators or consultants whose work relates to international or global education; i.e., staff involved in learning technologies or distributed learning

In the community

- Members of a home and school or parent council
- Other public authorities with experience in internationalization
- Alberta Education's International Education Services Branch
- Community organizations, including:
 - language and culture organizations
 - non-governmental organizations dedicated to global issues
 - immigrant settlement organizations
- Post-secondary institutions with expertise in global education, international relations or other related programs.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive but rather is intended to generate ideas about who might be interested in internationalization and have some expertise to share. These individuals are also most likely to champion the development of international education programs.

Of course, it is also necessary to include individuals who may not already be involved in international education activities but whose enthusiasm and cooperation is essential to the successful implementation of the strategy. Consider the following possibilities.

In schools

- School administrators

In district offices

- Superintendents or designates

In communities

- School authority's Board of Trustees

Developing a Vision Statement and Set of Goals

Clarifying the essential purpose and goals of internationalization provides the foundation for future planning. Fleshing out a vision statement and set of goals may seem daunting but there is no need to reinvent the wheel. A number of institutions in Alberta, Canada and other parts of the world have already developed internationalization strategies, which may help to inform your school authority's vision and goals (see side box).

While a school authority's vision statement and foundational goals may have much in common with other school authorities, it should also respond to the school authority's local context. In other words:

- What does the school authority hope to achieve through internationalization?
- What desired effects might it have on students, educators and community members?
- Why would international education programs be important additions to the programs already offered by the school authority?
- How might they enhance learning within Alberta's programs of study?

Internationalization in Calgary School District No. 19 is supported by its governance policies and particularly End 3: Citizenship, which states:

"Each student will be a responsible citizen by being an informed and involved member in his or her local, national and global communities. Accordingly, each student will:

1. Participate in developing and maintaining our Canadian civil, democratic society.
2. Understand the responsibilities of citizenship in local, national and international contexts.
3. Respect and embrace cultural diversity.
4. Develop the skills necessary to work and communicate effectively with others.
5. Actively contribute to creating a better local and global community."

Calgary School District No. 19, <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/policies/policies/E3.pdf> (Accessed August 5, 2010).

Identifying Linkages with Existing Plans and Priorities

It is important to know how internationalization links to and can advance existing educational plans and priorities. An international education administrator can bolster support for the development of an internationalization strategy and add legitimacy to international education programs by outlining how the strategy links to:

- the *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*
- *Alberta's International Education Strategy*
- the Guiding Principles for International Education Programs in Alberta School Authorities
- Alberta Education's business plan
- the school authority's vision and/or mission statement
- the school authority's three-year plan
- other school authority governance policies.

When presented together with research on the benefits and value of internationalization (see Chapter 2: Benefits and Trends in International Education), these linkages can provide a compelling case for the adoption of an internationalization strategy.



Developing an Internationalization Strategy

An internationalization strategy outlines how the school authority will work to realize the vision or achieve the goals that it has established. The various components and programs described in this handbook (see Chapter 1: An Introduction to International Education) are an integral part of the strategy; however, a strategy must go beyond identifying possible programs to consider the necessary structures required to operate these programs and encourage an intercultural and international culture within the school authority.

Key components include the following.

1. Administrative Plan
 - Identifies the programs that best align with the vision and goals of the school authority (see Section 3: Introducing Programs in this handbook).
 - Highlights how existing international education activities may contribute to the realization of the school authority's vision of and goals for internationalization.
 - Identifies additional programs or activities that may advance the goals of the internationalization strategy.
 - Determines who will be responsible for managing components or programs and what background and training or support they require (see Chapter 5: Professional Development and Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations).
2. Financial Plan
 - Estimates how much international education programs will cost.
 - Outlines how the school authority will fund programs, as well as necessary training or staffing (see Chapter 8: Funding).
3. Information Management and Communication Plan
 - Establishes a mechanism to ensure that the school authority is aware of the various programs and initiatives.
 - Identifies indicators of success and plans for baseline and ongoing measurements.
 - Delineates how the school authority will promote internationalization and communicate its benefits to the school community.
4. Risk Management Plan
 - Identifies the potential risks of international education programs and initiatives (see Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad).
 - Outlines how the school authority will mitigate risk.
5. Implementation and Growth Plan
 - Distinguishes immediate priorities from longer-term goals.
 - Establishes time lines and stages of implementation.
 - Outlines how the school authority will adjust its plans to manage growth; i.e., when additional programs are introduced or participation in programs increases.

If you require additional assistance as you develop an internationalization strategy, other school authorities may also be able to provide advice and support. For more information, contact the International Education Services Branch (see Chapter 18: Support Organizations and What They Offer) or the Canadian Association of Public Schools – International (CAPS-I) at <http://www.caps-i.ca>.

Securing Approval

School authorities may require the approval of senior administration and/or the school authority's Board of Trustees to proceed with an internationalization strategy. Involving stakeholders in the development of the strategy will ensure a broad base of support.

Conclusion

Establishing an internationalization strategy is a critical first step toward the integration of international perspectives and experiences into Alberta schools and classrooms. To effectively implement the strategy and its various programs, school authorities will need the help of their staff who:

- are skilled intercultural communicators
- are interested in global issues and appreciate the importance of global perspectives
- understand and practise the concept of global citizenship
- internationalize their approach to teaching.

School authority staff may also require specialized knowledge to manage specific international education programs. The following chapter focuses on professional development activities that can help to build this necessary capacity.

You may find the following sections in this handbook helpful:

- Chapter 2: Benefits and Trends in International Education
- Guiding Principles for International Education Programs in Alberta School Authorities
- Chapter 5: Professional Development
- Chapter 6: Cultural Considerations
- Chapter 8: Funding
- Chapter 17: Educational Travel Abroad
- Chapter 18: Support Organizations and What They Offer
- Appendix A: *Alberta's International Education Strategy, 2001*
- Appendix B: Sample Internationalization Strategy – Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools Division