



Preparing Nebraska Students for Global Literacy in the 21st Century

Nebraska Department of Education

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

- ▶ One of the urgent challenges we face in Nebraska and as a nation is to improve the international knowledge and skills of our young people. To address the challenges of preparing students to be citizens, workers and leaders in the interconnected world of the twenty-first century, we propose to create the Nebraska Council of International Education. The Council will include experts representing the Nebraska Department of Education, K-16 educational institutions, teacher and higher education, government officials, the Department of Economic Development, the private sector, foundations, non-profits and philanthropists. This is a first step in the Nebraska Department of Education initiative to promote integrating international education into the current curriculum of Nebraska schools. This is not an “add-on”, but an integral and complementary part of the effort, to strengthen global education in Nebraska.
- ▶ The primary reason for integrating International Education in all curriculum areas is to meet the needs of an expanding and internationalizing Nebraska economy and to cope with the changing demographics of the state. Employers from agriculture to industrial businesses in Nebraska are searching for employees who have the necessary cultural understanding, technical skills and linguistic knowledge of the global community to work effectively with agriculture and businesses in countries around the world. According to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska exporters sell to about 180 countries worldwide each year. Nebraska’s exports totaled over \$3.6 billion in 2006 representing a 20.7% increase of exports over 2005. In addition, since 1990 as the economy has expanded, the state’s population has diversified and grown to more than 1.7 million with the Hispanic population increasing 155.4% and the Asian population increasing 124%. While these two groups showed the largest growth, the diversity of Nebraska’s population includes people from at least 25 global communities of the world. In order to meet these needs and educational challenges, the Nebraska Department of Education will convene a statewide summit on International Education to develop a strategic plan and launch the Nebraska Council of International Education, which will work to oversee the development of the resources essential to guarantee integration of international education into the curriculum. The Council will also work to secure long-term funding to ensure sustainability of the project. This will be preceded by a state survey to assess the training needs, curricula and resources for international education.

- ▶ Since 2004, the Nebraska Department of Education has been building the foundation to provide opportunities for schools to integrate International Education into all curriculum areas. Larry Starr, Director of Social Studies, and Vickie Scow, Director of World Languages, have collaborated with Natalie Hahn, president and founder of The Malaika Foundation, and have formed a partnership to address the issue. The mission of The Malaika Foundation is to “add an international dimension to learning in Nebraska schools and libraries, and other educational institutions, with the goal of building greater understanding among young people from different global cultural traditions.” As a result of this partnership, The Malaika Foundation sponsored three International Education Symposia for Nebraska Educators. The first was held at Doane College in 2004, the second at the Mahoney Center in 2005 and the third at the University of Nebraska-Kearney in 2006. Approximately 150 Nebraska Teachers gained new understandings of the global community, obtained models of effective classroom strategies for teaching international education, and had access to a large number of resources that can be used to enhance the global thinking of their students. The Nebraska Department of Education has also been working with postsecondary institutions, the governments of China, France, Spain, and Germany, Offutt Air Force Base, and businesses to provide leadership for the International Education effort. To provide International Education resources for all curriculum areas, the Nebraska Department of Education and its partners need to bring together all the various pieces that have been developed in order to attain our goal of helping schools integrate International Education into all school curriculum areas.
- ▶ Dr. Doug Christensen, Commissioner, Nebraska Department of Education and Dr. Natalie Hahn, President of the Malaika Foundation, have demonstrated foresight and commitment in promoting international education, in order to prepare Nebraska students to be successful global citizens, workers and leaders in the interconnected world of the twenty-first century. As a result of these efforts, the concepts and strategies for developing International Education in Nebraska have begun to take shape. Nebraska is ready to move forward with the next steps.

GOALS

- ▶ Goal 1: Organize a state wide survey on the needs for training and curricula for international education
- ▶ Goal 2: Convene a Nebraska Summit on International Education
- ▶ Goal 3: Establish the Nebraska Council of International Education

