

Statement on International Education Week 2009
by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
Washington, DC

It is my great pleasure to invite you to participate November 16-20 in the 10th annual International Education Week, a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of State that celebrates the importance and benefits of international education in the United States and around the world. This year's theme, *Creating a Vision for a Better Future*, emphasizes the key role that international education plays in ensuring a more secure and prosperous future for all.

International education is an important part of the well-rounded and complete education we need to offer all of our nation's children. It can take many forms, from students learning about other countries, to collaborating virtually with peers abroad on a project, to experiencing another culture firsthand by participating in a foreign exchange. And, it also means studying – and preferably becoming proficient in – another language. Not only are foreign language skills increasingly vital in many career fields, but studying other languages contributes to students' academic success and helps learners gain a better understanding of their native language.

In today's world, the line that separates purely domestic matters from those that are international in nature is increasingly blurred, and the world's economies and societies are now connected as never before. For example, trade accounts for an increasingly large share of nations' economies, and technology has revolutionized the ease with which we communicate with one another. For this reason, ensuring that students acquire global competencies is critical to America's economic competitiveness, national security, and capacity to work effectively with other countries. Our graduates should be global citizens prepared to work on solving challenges that transcend borders, and they should be able to work well with people from diverse backgrounds, whether it is an individual who is a recent immigrant to the United States living in the community, or a business client or colleague located halfway around the world.

As President Obama has often noted, education allows anyone, regardless of background, to fulfill his or her potential. In a world that gets smaller every day, a quality education must incorporate an international dimension – not as an add-on, but as an approach that is integrated across all subjects, from math and science to social studies. Fortunately, many hallmarks of a quality education, such as critical thinking and communication skills, are also explicit goals of international education.

Since becoming Secretary of Education, I've had the pleasure of meeting with several of my counterparts – Secretaries or Ministers of Education from around the world. I've learned from these conversations that the overarching challenges we face in education are largely the same. We seek to ensure a quality education for all and are increasingly focused on issues such as teacher quality, assessment, rigorous standards, and preparation of students for success in a global economy. To that end, I encourage everyone to join us this November in celebrating International Education Week and urge all Americans to explore the world's cultures and languages.