

Bold Steps Connecting with the Future: Global Teachers and Schools

By M. Jayne Fleener

Professor and Former Dean

College of Education & Friday Institute for Educational Innovation

fleener@ncsu.edu

North Carolina has been bold in supporting education innovation in the past. NC was one of the first states to develop a scholarship program in the 1980's to fully fund outstanding students to go into teaching (the Teaching Fellows program). We were one of the first states to support the development of Advance Placement courses, a residential public high school for Science and Mathematics (the NC School of Science and Mathematics), and additional pay for public school teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

More recently, North Carolina has engaged in two initiatives leading other states in preparing students to assume leadership roles in a globally connected world. The North Carolina Digital Learning Plan (DLP)¹ provides tangible evidence and support for globalizing our curriculum, taking advantage of technology, and addressing access challenges. The DLP creates the infrastructure for supporting teachers as they become globally competent and deliver a world class curriculum to our students.

Directly related to the preparation of globally competent teachers has been the passage of policies by the State Board of Education to support teachers and schools receiving special designation for being globally focused. Using innovative badging approaches to demonstrating competencies, teachers and schools can receive special global designation. This places new demands on and opportunities for teacher professional development and initial teacher preparation.

The vision, as described by the North Carolina State Board of Education, is that "Every public school student will graduate ready for post-secondary education and work, prepared to be a globally engaged and productive citizen."² To support this vision, the State Board of Education convened a special task force that advocated in their 2013 report for "globally competitive" graduates, recommending (1) robust and cutting-edge teacher support and tools; (2) leading edge language instruction; (3) new school models; (4) district networking and recognition; and (5) strategic international relationships. As part of providing teacher support and tools, the task force recommended implementing a badging process for teachers, administrators and schools to receive recognition from the NC State Board of Education. The task force also recommended requiring teacher preparation institutions to prepare our future teachers with global content and skills when implementing the NC Standard Course of Study.

The badging system developed by the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is now up and running³ to motivate and recognize teachers' development as globally competent teachers. The criteria and a process for teachers to earn a Global Educator Digital Badge⁴ and the supporting documents for pursuing the educator's global badge⁵ are available for teachers to work with their building

¹ NC Digital Learning Plan - see <http://ncdlplan.fi.ncsu.edu/>

² NC Board of Education Vision Statement: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/organization/mission/>, April, 2014

³ <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/globaled/actions/item1-2>

⁴ <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/globaled/>

⁵ Link to pursue educator's global badge (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/globaled/actions/global-ready-district-app.pdf>)

administrators, as part of their personal professional development plan and evaluation, to focus on embedding global education in their instruction. Candidates complete 100 hours or 10 CEUs of global educational professional development and meet a Capstone Project requirement within two years. Twice a year, a state-level review team evaluates Global Educator Digital Badge Capstone Project submissions. The Global Educator Digital Badge designation is awarded by the NC DPI on behalf of the SBE and is noted in the teacher's Educator Profile.

There are several innovations associated with the digital badging system developed by NC DPI and their partners that should make us proud, as North Carolinians, given our history of education innovation and leadership in education across the country. The first is that we have broken out of the mold of professional development that is delivered "to" teachers and created a system where teachers utilize their professionalism to construct experiences and demonstrate competencies associated with a curriculum that supports students' global preparation. Rather than "sit-and-git," the process of pursuing a global designation badge is driven by agreed upon professional learning goals and experiences that are intentional, deliberate, and sustained over a two-year period.

The second innovation is the digital badging process itself which represents a new approach to how we recognize and reward competency. In line with a model of digital-age learning,⁶ the badging process focuses on the unique skills, understandings, backgrounds, and interests of teachers, and is personalized to a particular teacher and teaching context, resulting in a tangible product designed to demonstrate competency and impact relevant to that school and teacher. Also described as "micro-credentialing,"⁷ professional badging is receiving a great deal of attention as an alternative to traditional ways of designating preparation or accomplishment that have relied on seat time (think of CEU's), courses, or degrees.

A third aspect of the global designation for teachers is the use of external juries who evaluate teacher curriculum units which provide students the opportunity to frame, analyze and solve issues of global importance while learning the Standard Course of Study. The teacher receiving global designation receives feedback relevant to her continued improvement and growth from experts who understand the learning requirements and needs of 21st century students.

A fourth innovation associated with the badging process is the development of curriculum materials that build capacity at school and district levels. These units are then shared via the instructional improvement platform to all educators across the state.

With a focus on global preparation of teachers, the NC Digital Learning Plan and Global Educator Designation recognition are a push away from status quo to preparing our students for the future. We should be proud of and embrace these innovations as opportunities to once again assume our leadership role in education.

⁶ NC DLP, p. 4 <http://ncdplan.fi.ncsu.edu/>

⁷ See Digital Promise micro-credentialing opportunities, <http://digitalpromise.org/initiative/educator-micro-credentials/>