

NORTH CAROLINA IN THE WORLD

**Increasing K-12 Knowledge and Skills about the
World**

A Manual for Developing Partnerships between Schools in North Carolina and Abroad



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Developing international school partnerships for North Carolina schools is a major objective of North Carolina in the World (NCIW), a statewide collaborative effort to prepare students to thrive in the global community of the 21st Century. At the request of Governor's office, the University of North Carolina's Center for International Understanding coordinates the effort. In April 2005, the Center published *North Carolina in the World: A Plan to Increase Student Knowledge and Skills about the World*, which includes the economic justification for international education. To access the plan on line go to ciu.northcarolina.edu and then click on "Publications."

This manual, which combines ideas from a number of schools and organizations that conduct partnerships and exchanges, is a tool for schools that wish to develop partnerships with the assistance of the Center or independently. Schools will want to conduct their own research to carefully consider the applicability of these ideas and resources to their own goals and needs and to align the program with school system policies for health and safety. The Center gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Millie Cox, Charlotte Country Day School who wrote several sections; Joachim Koerner, Freedom High School, Morganton; Fred Dabney, d2 Consulting, Charlotte; Debbie Antshel, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Birger Axen, Hobro Gymnasium, Denmark; and the China Exchange Initiative, Newton, Massachusetts.

1. Why Have an International School Partnership?

Direct contact with people from other cultures engages students and helps them realize the human impact of world events, understand other cultures, develop new perspectives, and be prepared to succeed in a world that is constantly shrinking. School partnerships are an excellent way of providing such contact in a sustained way thereby motivating students to learn more about the world while building skills at communicating across cultures.

2. What Is an International School Partnership?

For purposes of this manual, international school partnerships are defined as ongoing, multiple-year relationships between NC and international schools that are supported by school leaders and recognized by faculty, staff and students as part of the school mission. Most partnerships rely on the use of technology - videoconferencing, email, web blogs – to enable students to learn *with* and not just *about* people of other cultures. Partnerships provide wonderful opportunities for mutual learning. With careful planning, they can involve significant portions of the student body, not just those who participate in an exchange of persons. The progression of the partnership might ultimately lead to reciprocal exchanges of students but student travel is not a requirement for a partnership.

While elementary, middle or high schools may participate, partnerships in the earlier grades may present difficulties in non-English speaking countries. Most Americans can only communicate in English, and English language instruction starts at different ages around the world.

3. What Are the Steps to Get Started?

- Define a system within your school for managing a sister school relationship.
 - Develop an Advisory Committee of teachers, parents, community organizations, business leaders with international experience, and students to design and nurture the partnership.
 - Appoint a faculty member to serve as partnership coordinator.
- Have the Advisory Committee define the purpose in establishing a partnership.
- Find a partner school through the Center for International Understanding or independently (see following section). Define the type of partner school you are looking for: elementary, middle, or high school; American international school; IB school; school whose students are university bound; school in a developing nation; school with an English immersion track; boarding school; public or private school.
- Visit the partner school. The principal and at least one other person from the school, ideally the partnership coordinator, should visit their international partner. During this “getting acquainted” visit, school leaders will
 - Begin to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect so vital to the success of any international endeavor
 - Learn more about the partner school and its student body
 - Discuss goals for the relationship
 - Explore ideas about potential activities
 - Establish a date for a reciprocal visit
 - Assess technology facilities
- Host a reciprocal visit by the international partner’s principal. During this visit, principals can
 - Strengthen their relationships
 - Agree on mutual goals for the partnership
 - Agree on how costs will be shared for exchanges and other activities
 - Sign a memorandum of agreement
 - Plan specific activities
- Develop a broad level of involvement of students and faculty within your school.

4. How Can We Find a Partner School?

The Center for International Understanding, through NCIW, is identifying partner schools in five countries: China, Denmark, Mexico, South Africa, and Turkey. These countries were selected because they are geographically diverse and have significant educational and/or economic ties with North Carolina already. The Center will concentrate on these countries to ensure that every NC school district has at least one partnership. Contact the Center at 1-888-840-8328 or martyb@northcarolina.edu if you wish to develop a partnership with one or more of these countries.

However, it is hoped that schools will independently develop many other relationships with schools abroad. Those developing their own partnerships may find the following strategies useful:

- Identify international families at your school and in your community. Ask them for contacts in their country.
- Identify international businesses in your region. Ask them for contacts in their home country.
- Call the Mayor's office to see if your city has a sister city. Ask for the names of schools in your sister city.
- Contact cultural and ethnic organizations of various countries, such as the Alliance Francaise, Latin American Club, Chinese Association, etc. They may be found on the web or through international offices at local colleges and universities.
- See *Teachers' Guide to International Collaborations on the Internet*
<http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tech/international/index.html>
- Call cultural attaches at foreign embassies in DC.
- Contact national non-profit organizations that specialize in school partnerships with an introductory letter, e-mail or fax, telling about your school and defining the type of relationship you are seeking. Follow up with phone calls. Following is one example: German American Partnership Program
<http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/ney/pro/gapp/>
- Contact the International Baccalaureate organization
<http://www.ibo.org/ibo/index.cfm> if you are an IB School about finding an IB partner school abroad

5. What Are the Ingredients for Assuring a Good Partnership?

- A strong commitment to the partnership by both North Carolina and international principals
- Establishing a common purpose and agreeing on the nature of the partnership and types of activities desired – grade level and duration of student exchanges, teacher exchanges, pen pals, classroom project, video conferencing, etc.
- Designing a partnership which fits the school's mission and supports school efforts to increase student achievement (the partnership must be central not tangential to the school's goals)
- Communicating regularly with the international school principal
- Identifying a coordinator and/or primary person with whom to communicate in each partnership school
- Establishing deadlines
- Signing a written agreement
- If the two partners decide to conduct reciprocal exchanges of students, agreeing on the cost of field trips and who pays for what during exchanges and establishing criteria for chaperones, host families, student selection, and field trips during exchanges
- Establishing an Advisory Committee which is actively involved and meets regularly
- Regularly evaluating with feedback from partner schools, internal debriefings with students, faculty, and parents and using results to improve the partnership

6. How Do We Find Resources to Support a Partnership?

The most essential resource for international school partnerships, of course, is the commitment of school leaders who recognize that a partnership will provide valuable learning opportunities for their students and see ways to tie it to their vision for student achievement.

Resource needs will vary according to partnership goals but will certainly include access to technology and, when appropriate, funding for student exchange trips. NCIW strongly recommends that participation in student exchanges should be determined by factors other than the ability to pay. *All* students need to understand the world, its impact on them, and their impact on it – not just wealthy ones.

In addition to common fundraising strategies, it is wise to engage local businesses or organizations in the whole partnership program from the outset: goal setting, finding a school partner, designing and carrying out partnership activities. They should be seen not merely as funding sources but as genuine partners in creating and implementing the vision. Business partners, for example, may prefer to provide services – such as videoconferencing facilities or orientation – rather than or in addition to cash contributions. An active dialogue on mutual interests may yield unexpected and valuable assets to the program.

In initial planning, conduct an inventory of potential community partners. Following are some possibilities:

- Your school's own business alliances
- Local companies doing business abroad
- Foreign owned firms operating in the community
- Local ethnic organizations with ties to your partner country
- Civic and social organizations which have international committees and may be looking for new opportunities. Possibilities include Rotary, Lions, Jaycees, Kiwanis, Optimists, Woman's Clubs, Junior Woman's Clubs, Soroptomists, Business and Professional Women
- Parents with international experiences such as returned Peace Corps volunteers, former Foreign Service Officers, or others who have worked abroad

If the school plans to raise funds, be sure the method of fundraising is consistent with the guidelines and rules of the school district. Fundraising should not conflict with other fundraising projects in the school. Students can have raffles, sell products from fundraising organization, and have bake sales and/or car washes. Fundraising which focuses on one or more feature of the partner country, such as food, dance, etc., can yield funds while increasing understanding of the other culture. A search on "school fundraising" on a search engine such as <http://metacrawler.com> will provide other options including online retailers that will return part of the receipts to the school.

Debbie Antshel, Executive Director, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools Foundation and Strategic Partners Office (d.antshel@cms.k12.nc.us) is willing to share lessons learned in building support for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's extensive partnership program.

7. What Happens in a Partnership?

Partnership activities will vary depending on the goals of the two schools. Some common activities are listed below:

- Classroom to classroom projects
 - Lessons or project-based activities should be aligned with the curriculum. Partner classes might study the same issue and compare results, e.g. How can your everyday decisions affect the quality of the environment. See Appendix A for other ideas.
 - Projects should enable students to engage in dialogue with the partners using technology (e-mail, streaming videos, dedicated chat rooms, weblogs, and video conferencing)
- School to school projects involving multiple classes
- Short-term student exchanges of one to three weeks (Contact mfriedrick@northcarolina.edu to request NCIW guidelines on planning and conducting short term student exchanges)
- Long term student exchanges (one year or one semester)
- Teacher exchanges (one year, one semester, or short-term)

To see how one partnership works, consult the website for Freedom High School in Morganton which has German school partnerships arranged through the German American Partnership Program (<http://www.burke.k12.nc.us/fhs/teacherpage/koerner/index.html>) and click on “GAPP.

Remember that international content is relevant to all subjects – not just social studies and languages. Work with your faculty to find ways to incorporate international content into their classes and relate it to the Standard Course of Study. See *Teachers’ Guide to International Collaborations on the Internet*

http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tech/international/guide_pg2.html#resources for ideas. Also see the NCIW website at www.ncintheworld.org for resources for teaching about the world.

Appendix A

Ideas for Joint Partnership Projects

Projects: Schools partners will want to develop their own ideas for joint activities aligned with the curriculum. The following sample activities which have been used by others may help generate your own exciting ideas:

- Reading the same book and comparing perspectives
- Reading the same English newspaper from a third country and discussing conclusions
- Jointly designing projects to gather data on air/water quality in local communities and comparing and analyzing results
- Gathering first hand reports from people in local communities on some historic event and analyzing reactions across cultures, e.g. World War II veterans in two different countries
- Polling students or people in their communities on a common topic (e.g. attitudes toward AIDS) and comparing results
- Completing the same art assignment and sharing work with counterparts
- Studying and comparing folk tales from indigenous peoples in the two cultures
- Featuring news and culture from the partner country on the school's closed circuit TV
- Exchanging student writing of short stories, haiku, etc., and discussing communalities and differences
- Utilizing one of the University of North Carolina K-12 Outreach Programs to provide a school wide seminar on the partner country (<http://ciu.northcarolina.edu/content.php/ncworld/resource.htm>)
- Studying American or host country elections in classes in both schools, sharing conclusions, and analyzing different perspectives
- Studying a common global issue, like immigration or global warming, in partner classes
- Planting vegetables in both countries, sharing data, comparing weather and results
- Jointly conducting a Foundations of Knowledge class in two IB partner schools

Tools: A variety of methods are available for these comparative activities:

- Video conferences, particularly used as a culminating activity for a unit conducted in common between two partners
- Threaded forums
- Streaming videos
- Chat rooms
- Email exchanges between classes
- Email exchanges between teachers who serve as the conduit for student communications
- Weblogs
- iEARN's chat rooms (<http://www.iearn.org/>)

Note: One on one exchanges between students are not encouraged. Usually there are not an equal number of students in participating classes. Furthermore students can feel left out if their partner does not respond when others are writing.

Appendix B

An International Perspective on School Partnerships with North Carolina

Birger Axen, principal of Hobro Gymnasium and HF-kursus in Denmark, shares his perspective on the benefits of international school partnerships and how to make them effective. During a visit to North Carolina as a member of a Rotary International delegation several years ago, he saw great potential for developing partnerships with North Carolina schools. In the past seven years he has visited the state numerous times to establish and promote partnerships with North Carolina high schools. His school is currently partnering with Asheville High School. For further information about Hobro Gymnasium and its international programs see the website at www.hobro-gym.dk. Click on "Guests" for information in English. Following is his description of the Danish education system and his school's international activities.

1. **The Danish education system:** A gymnasium means an upper-secondary non-comprehensive high school for 16-19-year-old students, mostly academically orientated with the aim after graduation of attending 4-year or more college programs. In the same age group the more commercially or technically orientated students will attend an upper-secondary business high school or upper-secondary technical high school.

The term "HF-kursus" indicates a two-year course at the school leading to the Higher Preparatory Examination. Students graduating from this course will normally go on to shorter (2-year) further education programs.

2. **The international dimension at Hobro Gymnasium:** Today it is quite common for our students to go abroad to experience foreign cultures, to learn about them and to discover the differences between them. They take an interest in contacting foreign people either by visiting their countries or by communicating on the Internet.

To better understand the foreign relations it is important that students build up an intercultural competence that might be described as "a widening of the mind and of the spirit". That is why international activities at Hobro Gymnasium are given high priority and have been given so over the last decade.

3. **Objectives:** Albert Einstein once said, "The more people I meet the more human I become!" Therefore, we want to provide students with opportunities of enriching themselves culturally, of improving language skills and of breaking the barriers that often exist between peoples and nations. Partnerships help oppose the concept of a self-satisfied and self-centered people in a small world bound by preconceived notions about the rightness of one's own society and the wrongness of everybody else's.

Upper secondary education must not be limited to the national dimension only of a given country. In a globalized world students must be taught to think and to act as World Citizens. Globalization is now a fundamental condition to all living human beings in this world. Upper secondary education must take into account what the consequences are of a globalized world. If the international dimension is not taught and experienced in education, you cannot make students understand to live in our very fast changing globalized world.

4. **Best practice – students:** During the last decade Hobro Gymnasium has had and still has partnerships with high schools in more than 10 European countries. The European partnerships have partly been funded by the EU whereas our 7- year-old partnership with various high schools in North Carolina is financed by the school itself. In all partnerships the students will pay for the travel, insurance, spending money, some excursions.

Each school decides itself how to handle the visit from the overseas school, the visiting student generally attend classes with the host students. The visiting group may also be asked to present programs to classes and will quite often work on a joint project with the host class.

a. A preparatory visit of 3-5 days carried out by one of the international coordinators or by one of the teachers to be involved in the project. A few times the principal or the deputy principal may attend the preparatory visit. It goes without saying that the international exchange need a thorough support by the school leaders.

Important: The principals of the schools involved have got to fully understand, support and further the concept of teaching the international dimension which of course also includes covering the inevitable expenses.

b. Identification of teachers at either school to be responsible and involved in the international project so the teachers can start communication via the Internet.

c. Identification of students/groups of students that are willing to and can afford to go abroad and can manage to host a student from abroad. Sometimes special conditions call for abroad students staying two together in a family, which is not very recommendable.

Important: At the earliest point possible laying down guidelines as to the curriculum constituting the project or part of it:

What will be dealt with electronically?

What will be dealt with when visiting the partner school?

What will be dealt with during excursions etc.?

In order that the partnerships do not develop into “tourist exchanges” the curriculum based element is of the greatest importance.

5. **Examples of student programs:**

a. The town of Hobro is situated about 100 miles from the very tip of the peninsula of Jutland called Skagen. 3 different lighthouses from different historic periods made it an obvious point to make a project on light houses in North Carolina and in Denmark respectively.

b. The novel by Charles Frazer and the film Cold Mountain makes for excellent group work between NC students and Danish students including facts about the Civil War.

c. Other novels or plays may be found to be used curriculum wise as can interviews with local inhabitants and studies of local communities on special topics: school, culture, drugs, family, architecture, local history etc.