

DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
HEARING ON WORKPLACE READINESS
April 27, 2011

Testimony from Sally Schwartz

Good evening. My name is Sally Schwartz. I'm Executive Director of the DC Center for Global Education and Leadership (CGEL) – a local nonprofit organization that works to promote high quality, systemic global education in DC's public schools. I'm pleased to be here this evening with my fellow panelists to urge the Board and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to adopt a global approach to workplace readiness.

I'm going to focus my testimony on three points –

1. The need to incorporate global competencies in all workplace readiness strategies for DC.
2. The need to prepare interested students for the range of internationally focused careers that exist uniquely in the nation's capital.
3. The need to expand and improve our PK-12 world language programs.

Global Competencies

Former Ambassador and GWU Professor Ron Palmer once shared this important advice to a room full of DCPS high school students. He said: "No matter what career you choose to enter – from A to Z – whether artists, architects, athletes or zoologists – you will be operating in a global environment. Your colleagues, your competitors, your trading partners, your customers, your bosses, your employees will be global. Your workplace will be diverse. You will be communicating globally. You'll have to interact with people who speak different languages and have different cultures. You'll travel for work; you may actually spend part of your career living in a different country. You'll need to know about the rest of the world, and be able to operate successfully and happily in it."

When we talk about preparing students for the "21st century global economy," we must go beyond the catch phrase. As educators, we need to think very concretely about what this means – and what kinds of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences our young people will be need to be successful in the globally interconnected workplace of 2020, 2030, 2040, 2050 and beyond. It's not just a question of equipping our students to compete with their international counterparts, but more importantly, to effectively communicate and collaborate with them to build prosperity and solve the world's many problems.

Important work has been done over the last decade to identify the need for global preparation and to begin to define necessary global competencies. The Committee for Economic Development, for example, made a strong case for expanding international education and foreign language education in its 2006 report, Education for Global Leadership. I have appended a copy of a wonderful speech by former UPS CEO, Mike Eskew, who identified the six characteristics of employees he was looking for to staff his global company:

- Trade literate
- Sensitive to foreign cultures
- Conversant in different languages
- Technology savvy
- Capable of managing complexity (learning how to learn)
- Ethical

And just this morning, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Asia Society jointly released their very relevant new report: "Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World." The point is that we must recognize the increasingly **global** context and environment of our communities and our workplaces, and we must design our schools, curriculum, and instructional programs accordingly. Global education is not a separate program or an add-on; instead, we need to globalize all our programs, including workplace readiness.

DC as a Hub for Global Careers

In addition to preparing all students for the globalized workplace, we need to do a much better job of identifying and preparing interested students for the range of internationally focused careers that make up our local economy. This includes international business, foreign policy and diplomacy, peacebuilding and defense, travel and tourism, translation and interpretation, international development, journalism, law, museums. The list goes on and on. People from all over the country come to Washington to fill these jobs, yet we fail to acknowledge or embrace them as part of the universe of possibility for our own students.

World Languages: A Missed Opportunity

We need to exploit the advantages that learning a second language (whatever language) can provide our students. Can you imagine the sorts of career opportunities that would be available to our students if we actually made a real commitment to graduate students who were proficient in a second language? Former Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago is well known nationally for his commitment to language learning. He understood its connection to student success, economic development, and job growth in a global economy. With the career opportunities and language resources we have at our disposal in DC, this city absolutely has the ability to develop its own first class language programs for our students – regardless of where they live - if we choose to do so.

This work of globalizing education, creating international career pathways, and developing language education capacity is going on in states and school districts across the country. In DC, we have many individual educators and partner organizations engaged in this work. But the work will remain piecemeal, ad hoc, inequitable, and not systemic until our city's educational leadership also recognizes that global preparation needs to become part of the core mission of our schools. My own organization and over 50 partner organizations look forward to working with you to build a "world class" GLOBAL system in DC.