

**SPECIAL ISSUE**  
**Education for Global Citizenship:**  
**Democratic Visions and Future Directions**

education policy analysis  
archives

A peer-reviewed, independent,  
open access, multilingual journal



Arizona State University

Volume 24 Number 57

May 16, 2016

ISSN 1068-2341

**Global Citizenship Education within a Context of  
Accountability and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: The Case of  
Olympus High School**

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**Citation:** DiCicco Cozzolino, M. (2016). Global citizenship education within a context of accountability and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: The case of Olympus High School. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(57). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2364> This article is part of EPAA/AAPE's Special Issue on *Education for Global Citizenship: Democratic Visions and Future Directions*, Guest Edited by Dr. John Myer.

**Abstract:** This article addresses the present gap in empirical research on the possibilities and challenges of global citizenship education in U.S. public schools by presenting findings from a five-year, ethnographic case study. The setting for this study is Olympus High School, a small, suburban public high school in Pennsylvania. Beginning in the 2009–2010 school year, Olympus undertook a reform initiative to integrate teaching about the world into its curricular offerings. Although just one case, the story of Olympus's reform process reveals the inherent tension between preparing students to be knowledge workers in the global economy, and preparing them to be active participants in global civil society. It also illustrates how test-based accountability and alignment to standards can impede efforts to broaden the curriculum in the interest of developing knowledgeable, responsible, and critically minded global citizens.

Journal website: <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/>  
Facebook: /EPAAA  
Twitter: @epaa\_aape

Manuscript received: 1/12/2015  
Revisions received: 23/2/2016  
Accepted: 23/2/2016

**Keywords:** global citizenship education, accountability, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, social justice, neoliberalism

### **Educación para la ciudadanía global dentro de un contexto de modelos de evaluación estandarizados y habilidades para el siglo 21: El caso de la Escuela Secundaria Olympus**

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza la brecha en la investigación empírica sobre las posibilidades y desafíos de la educación ciudadana global en escuelas públicas de los E.E.U.U. presentando resultados de un estudio etnográfico de cinco años de duración. Este estudio se realizó en Olympus High School, un pequeño colegio público en Pennsylvania. Empezando en el año escolar 2009-2010, Olympus comenzó una reforma para integrar enseñanza sobre globalización en sus currículos. A pesar de que Olympus es un solo caso, la historia del proceso de reforma de Olympus revela la tensión inherente entre preparar los estudiantes para ser profesionales del conocimiento en una economía global y prepararlos de ser participantes activos en una sociedad civil global. También, analiza como los modelos de evaluación basados en pruebas y estándares pueden prevenir esfuerzos para ampliar el currículo para desarrollar ciudadanos bien informados, responsables y con mentes críticas.

**Palabras-clave:** educación ciudadana global; la rendición de cuentas; habilidades de siglo XXI; justicia social; neoliberalismo

### **Educação para a cidadania global num contexto de modelos de avaliação padronizados e habilidades para o século 21: o caso da escola secundária Olympus**

**Resumo:** Este artigo trata da lacuna presente na pesquisa empírica nas possibilidades e desafios da educação cidadã mundial nas escolas públicas dos E.E.U.U. por apresentar os resultados de um etnográfico estudo de caso de cinco anos. O fundo deste estudo é Olympus High School, um pequeno colégio público em Pennsylvania. Começando no ano escolar 2009-2010, Olympus assumiu uma iniciativa reforma para integrar ensino sobre o mundo em seus currículos oferecidos. Apesar de que Olympus é só um caso, a história do processo reformatório de Olympus revela a tensão inerente entre preparar os alunos de ser knowledge workers na economia global y prepará-los de ser participantes ativas na sociedade mundial civil. Também, ilustra como prestação de contas baseada na prova e o alinhamento com os padrões pode impedir esforços para ampliar o currículo para o benefício de desenvolver cidadãos que são bem informados, responsáveis e com mentes críticas.

**Palavras-chave:** educación ciudadana mundial; la rendición de cuentas; habilidades de siglo XXI; justicia social; neoliberalismo

## **Introduction**

Picking up momentum in second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and spurred on by globalization, global citizenship education (GCE) began to gain a foothold in our public education discourse during the past 10 years. Growing interest in GCE is evident from the wide range of scholarly publications (Myers & DiCicco, 2015), public calls (Nasbe Study Group, 2010), practices and programs (Marshall, 2007; Schattle, 2008), and policy reports (Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Unesco 2015). Global citizenship education has generally been conceptualized as an education that involves learning about the world and its structural inequalities, learning about the histories,

political systems, religions, and languages of other countries, and learning to sympathize with and feel for fellow human beings. Global citizenship education aims not simply to further knowledge about the world, but most importantly to nurture attitudes that will help the next generation confront inequalities and act upon global challenges. In other words, global citizenship education ought to help students develop a moral responsibility to better the world for all. Furthermore, GCE is most often associated with an interdisciplinary curriculum focused on themes such as human rights, conflict resolution, environmental stewardship, cultural diversity, globalization, and the “dialectic of the global and local” (Myers, 2006, p. 12; see also Noddings, 2005). Finally, while most of these themes would fit comfortably in the social studies curriculum some have argued that the goals of global citizenship education are best achieved when such topics are integrated across the curriculum, so that they become the focus of the whole school (Oxfam, 2015).

Although the GCE movement may be gaining ground, its growing appeal is fueled by different, and at times contrasting, ideologies (Schattle, 2008). Marshall (2011) identifies several different agendas behind the current call for global citizenship education in schools. Among these, two are particularly at odds: the “technical-economic” and “social justice” agendas. The technical-economic agenda has its roots in neoliberal ideology, for which GCE is an instrumental and pragmatic response to the demands of the market in the era of globalization. In contrast, the social justice agenda has its roots in the philosophy of cosmopolitanism, which promotes GCE for the humanistic purpose of cultivating responsible and active citizens capable of addressing complex problems and social inequalities around the world. From a technical-economic point of view, teaching and learning about the world are pursued to help the individual become more competent and successful in the global marketplace; from a social justice point of view, the aim is instead to benefit humanity as a whole, for instance by preparing students to confront global challenges and work toward a more just and peaceful world.

Marshall (2011) notes that the field of GCE is currently lacking empirical research that might inform “how schools negotiate the tensions between these agendas” (p. 10). Empirical documentation can help us to understand the challenges and possibilities of GCE and to situate the two competing agendas within the current socio-political context. With this article, I aim to address the current gap in empirical research by presenting a case study of how the tension between technical-economic and social justice rationales for global citizenship education played out in one local context. In doing so, I also aim to contextualize the GCE movement in relation to the two dominant narratives shaping U.S. public education today: test-based accountability and alignment to standards as one narrative, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as the other.

Drawing from a multi-year ethnographic case study, this article offers insight into some of the challenges schools may face in integrating education for global citizenship. The setting for this study is Olympus High School, a small, suburban public high school in Pennsylvania. Beginning in the 2009–2010 school year, Olympus undertook a reform initiative to integrate teaching about the world into its curricular offerings. This initiative failed to achieve an integration of GCE across the curriculum, as first envisioned. Instead, it resulted in a few additions to the curriculum: an elective program of study leading to an additional credential, and some new course offerings in the social studies department. While these new offerings do provide students with some exposure to the world, the benefits have been limited to a minority of students and student engagement has at times been superficial.

Although Olympus is a single case, the story of Olympus’s reform process reveals the inherent tension between preparing students to be competent workers in the global economy and preparing them to be active participants in global civil society. This case also illustrates how test-based accountability and alignment to standards can impede efforts to broaden the curriculum in the

interest of developing knowledgeable, responsible, and critically minded global citizens. As I argue in the conclusion of this article, so long as the dominant educational approach is defined by either a narrowing of the curriculum, or as preparation for the workforce, a vision of global citizenship education based on the principles of cosmopolitanism and social justice will remain idealistic and unattainable.

## **Conceptual Framework**

In this section, I outline the framework that informs my analysis of the case of Olympus's Global Studies Initiative. I begin by considering the lack of GCE in the narrative of accountability and alignment to standards. I then discuss how the narrative behind the 21st century skills movement includes a limited and problematic version of GCE, which Marshall (2011) has characterized as the technical-economic agenda. Finally, I offer a conceptualization of GCE for social justice, the ultimate goal of which is to construct a better world (Andreotti & de Souza, 2012).

### **GCE Under the Accountability Regime**

After more than four decades of reform aimed at closing the gap between high and low achievers, U.S. schools have become trapped in a dominant narrative that prescribes test-based accountability to state-mandated academic standards as a cure-all for the effects of structural inequality in education (Hursh, 2007; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). Historically, the call for higher standards and greater accountability emerged as a response to discomfiting disparities in academic achievement between middle-income and low-income students, between the White majority and African-American and Latino minorities, and between rich suburban school districts and poor rural and inner city school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, enacted by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, was the first milestone in the federal government's commitment to equity. Title I of the act made federal funds available to school districts with low-income students. In the 2001 reauthorization, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), mandated that schools and districts meet "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) benchmarks, measured by performance on statewide standardized assessments, as a condition for receiving Title I funding (Kuo, 2010).

Many scholars and educators have argued that NCLB made the situation worse. The law not only failed to close the achievement gap among U.S. students but it also resulted in a series of unexpected outcomes, including the prevalence of teaching to the test, the de-professionalization of the teaching profession, and an emphasis on memorization and convergent thinking over the promotion of critical and analytical skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gunzenhauser, 2012). Moreover, NCLB's emphasis on the "basics" had the unintended consequence of narrowing of the curriculum by taking attention, time, and resources away from foreign languages, social studies, and other initiatives (Ravitch, 2010). As a result, teaching about the world and achieving Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB have come to be seen as competing priorities for schools (Zhao, 2007).

Within this context schools face a number of barriers to integrating education for global citizenship. For one, school districts have to balance contrasting views of global citizenship curricula. Some members of the public believe it is unpatriotic or anti-American to foster allegiance to the global community even though research on GCE practices demonstrates that young people navigate national and global civic identities as they constructed new meanings about citizenship (Myers, McBride, and Anderson, 2015). Additionally, teachers often do not feel comfortable teaching courses that touch on world issues, especially when they have not had such exposure during

their teacher education programs (Rapoport, 2010). Moreover, with the emphasis on state assessments of reading and math over the last decade, attention and resources have been diverted from other subjects, leaving little or no room for topics and subjects that are not considered “basics” (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008).

Finally, the integration of education for global citizenship is a process that calls for significant change and that requires the guidance of a supportive leadership, as well as investment in building capacity, specifically in terms of professional development (Pike, 2008a). Such a change is difficult to motivate and justify for school leaders and teachers when there is no guidance or support at the policy level, nor any sort of reward system in place. As Rapoport (2015) explains, “because the concept of GCE is still ideologically and politically contested and not uniformly accepted, teachers need a curricular incentive to teach global citizenship-related ideas” (p. 33). Given this scenario, GCE in a context of accountability is seen as distracting teachers from their primary responsibilities and occupies a secondary place to more necessary materials that are going to be tested, and for which teachers are held accountable. What is even more alarming is the fact that, when GCE is seen as secondary to the mainstream curriculum, it becomes a luxury, the privilege of those “better-positioned” schools (Carnoy et al., 2003, p. 56) that often serve communities of higher socioeconomic status (like Olympus). Such schools can afford to widen their curricular offerings to go beyond basic requirements, and to devote resources and time to build capacity in this areas, because their students’ above-average performance on standardized tests relieves them from the pressure of meeting state and federal mandates. Therefore, GCE under the accountability regime becomes one more form of elitism, undermining the ideals of justice and equality that are central to the basic concept of global citizenship.

### **The Emergence of GCE within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Movement**

Despite the narrowing of the curriculum under the accountability movement, greater awareness of the phenomenon of globalization and its effects has forced schools to recognize that teaching about the world is an imperative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A current interest, need, and support for globalizing the curriculum is evidenced by public surveys (e.g., World Savvy, 2012) and by the flourishing of scholarly writing on the topic. Many schools have been renaming themselves as “international” and adding new courses, study abroad programs, and foreign language immersion programs (Parker, 2011). Networks dedicated to the promotion of international education in schools, such as the North Carolina Global Schools Network, the International Studies School Network by Asia Society, and the State Network for Intentional Education in the Schools by the Longview Foundation, have also been formed. Finally, large organizations such as the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and the Asia Society have produced reports and frameworks to advocate for global education as the core of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Boix Masilla & Jackson, 2011; P21, 2014).

Take for example the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (P21), a network including a variety of agencies from the U.S. business, education, and government sectors. This organization seems to promote an approach to education partially in line with education for global citizenship, especially in regards to the curriculum and some of the student outcomes. In what appears to be a counter-response to the accountability outcomes of narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2014) is advocating an expanded curriculum that aims to move beyond basic competency and to include global topics. Additionally, this proposed curriculum places emphasis on developing skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical and creative thinking, which are also encouraged by advocates of global citizenship education (Oxfam, 2015). However, we must take caution before whole-heartedly embracing such a curriculum, because a closer look at the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills movement will reveal that it is guided by rationales of social

efficiency and economic competition (see also Dill, 2013). Despite P21's more recent call to action to revitalize citizenship (P21, 2014), the focus here seems to still be on strengthening economic competitiveness and increasing readiness for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rather than on developing citizens with a strong commitment to challenging inequalities and creating a more peaceful world.

As Pike (2008a) points out, it seems almost paradoxical that neoliberal education reforms (such as the accountability and the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills movements) were created mostly as a response to the changes brought about by globalization. On one hand, globalization has challenged national identities, accentuating the need to open up the public school curriculum to global issues, as well as to other cultures and languages. On the other hand, however, globalization has fueled the discourse on international comparisons, raising alarms about the declining achievement of U.S. students relative to other countries and asserting the need to control, manage, measure, and guarantee learning outcomes (Ravitch, 2013). In line with the social efficiency and economic competition rationales, schools are expected to meet employers' needs for a workforce in tune with the demands of the global marketplace. Familiarity with the latest technology and fluency in at least one foreign language, along with creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, problem solving, cross-cultural skills, and a positive disposition towards others, are some of the qualities employers are looking for in competitive candidates (Stewart, 2007; Wagner, 2008).

Within this context of education for work readiness, of which the P21 is an example, we see global citizenship education integrated in a limited way, mostly in line with the technical-economic agenda, for which teaching about the world is a "resume building" activity (Tarc, 2012). Most common are courses and programs in which students learn about other cultures and countries through a comparative approach, typically from a U.S. foreign affairs perspective. With such an approach, students' engagement with difference and complex global challenges remains superficial. In sum, GCE as understood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills context will help students develop their "cosmopolitan capital" (Marshall, 2011, p. 4) for the purpose of being able to find a job in the global society, but it will not help them to develop the skills and attitudes required to engage with and act upon global complex issues and to better conditions for the oppressed and marginalized.

## **GCE for Social Justice**

As I have argued, in the current educational scenario, many practices labeled global citizenship education are in line with a neoliberal approach to education that favors education for work readiness over education for citizenship. However, in practice we can find a variety of approaches to include an alternative agenda promoting GCE for social justice, that is to say an approach to GCE that encourages deep critical reflection on existing inequalities and promotes engagement and learning not only *about* others, but also *with* them (Andreotti, 2006). This alternative agenda embraces ideas often associated with cosmopolitanism, such as the awareness of being part of a wider community, as well as a strong commitment to social justice—that is to say, a commitment to bring about change that would better the world for all.

GCE for social justice requires educators to reconsider why, how, and what they teach, starting from an awareness of the ways that global relations of power and privilege have been shaped by legacies of exploitation and violence (Pashby, 2012). It requires students to not simply learn about other people and other parts of the world, but also to reflect upon how they construct the world, think deeply about global issues, and contemplate the consequences of their own actions, and act upon issues of injustice (Andreotti, 2006; Rizvi, 2009). In addition to learning about other cultures and countries, the social justice agenda recognizes that knowledge of regional histories and

cultural legacies is a precondition for reflecting upon, understanding, and analyzing complex global issues. As Pashby (2012) cogently puts it,

GCE moves beyond an exclusively national perspective of world affairs and seeks to avoid a social-studies approach that tends to tokenize and exocitize foreign places and people. As an ideal, the concept of global citizenship education encourages students to adopt a critical understanding of globalization, to reflect on how they and their nations are implicated in local and global problems, and to engage in intercultural perspectives. (p. 9)

Central to GCE for social justice is a notion of activism derived from the understanding that all people have rights as well as responsibilities towards others (Myers and Zaman, 2009; Pike, 2008b). Such an understanding enables citizens to develop a natural urgency and a moral responsibility to do something about a situation; in other words, to *act* upon an issue or a problem. Depending on the context, “action” might mean planning an awareness campaign, advocating for the rights of a minority, or providing assistance to those in difficult situations. Some forms of activism that might result from this sense of moral responsibility include efforts directed toward the promotion of human rights, the protection of the environment, and the eradication of social inequalities. The agenda of GCE for social justice is reflected in the work of organizations like OXFAM, UNESCO, and iEARN, which have produced a variety of curriculum materials, guides, and programs to support the work of educators committed to this approach.

### Research Methods, Setting, and Context

Tension between the technical-economic agenda (educating for the global marketplace) and the social justice agenda (educating for a global civil society) is at the heart of the story of Olympus High School’s Global Studies Initiative. My analysis of this case elucidates why, under the current education scenario marked by test-based accountability and alignment to standards, even our most high performing schools, despite the best intentions of supportive leaders and dedicated teachers, are not able to fully embrace GCE for social justice. In the specific case of Olympus, the school’s initial effort to integrate the teaching about the world in a comprehensive way across the curriculum fell far short of this vision, resulting merely in the addition of a few classes as a specialized program of study, which as of this writing serves only a small minority of students.

#### Data Collection

Between September 2009 and April 2014, I conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of a reform effort to integrate global education at Olympus High School, during which I devoted a considerable amount of time to data collection by conducting interviews, engaging in participant and non-participant observation, and analyzing documents with the intent to understand the reform process from the perspective of the administrators, teachers, and students (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Specifically, for this study I collected the following data sources:

**Semi-structured interviews with teachers, administrators and students.** I interviewed 15 teachers including six social studies teachers, two world language teachers, two music teachers, one art teacher, one science teacher, one family and consumer science teacher, one English teacher, and one ESL teacher. In addition, I interviewed eight administrators who

had been involved with the reform process in the advocacy, planning, or implementation stages. The initial interviews were conducted during the 2010–2011 school year. Follow-up interviews were conducted annually with three main informants: the director for academic services, the high school principal, and the Global Studies Credential coordinator. In addition to these scripted and digitally recorded interviews, a greater number of informal interviews took place by email and face-to-face. The latter were recorded in the form of journal entries. In addition to teachers and administrators, 15 of the students (three freshman, one junior and 11 sophomores) enrolled in the Global Studies Credential were also interviewed in the Spring of 2012, using a different semi-structured interview script.<sup>1</sup>

**Non-participant observation.** Between Fall 2010 and Spring 2012, I conducted 10 observations of eight different classes: International Relations, World History, Politics, English, AP World History, Spanish, Civics and Food, Culture and Society. These classroom observations were meant to focus both on the type of activity in which the students were involved and on instructional strategies in order to develop interview questions for the teachers.

**Participant-observation.** Over the course of the study, I recorded a total of 70 journal entries documenting conversations and interactions where I was a participant, including staff meetings, steering committee meetings, parents' association meetings, school board meetings, professional development sessions, and extracurricular activities, all of which helped me to gain a better understanding of the school's dynamics and the reform process under study. The majority of these entries were recorded between 2010 and 2012. My participation in some of the extracurricular activities was very active, especially in the case of the Global Studies Credential (GSC) study group and the E-pals project. For these two enrichments experiences, I also participated in the planning and facilitated discussions. While participant observation of the GSC study group and E-pals project was meant to allow me to get to know students better and establish a rapport, this was also a way for me to establish a relationship with the school based on reciprocity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Document collection.** Over the five-year period, I collected and analyzed a significant number of documents related to the school and the specific reform effort, including the school's mission statement and strategic plan, yearly programs of study, district annual reports, a community survey, students' papers and other forms of assessments, curriculum materials, lesson plans, minutes of staff meetings and board meetings, memos and teacher's manuals, and correspondence between teachers and parents dealing with curriculum matters.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

After having the interviews transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber, I then reviewed the transcripts to ensure accuracy and entered them into the NVivo software package (Seidman, 2006). Additionally, I converted all the notes derived from observations, participant observation, and document analysis into research memos and revisited them throughout the research process (Maxwell, 2005). Finally, I entered and coded in NVivo most of the official documents (e.g., brochures, program description, and school description on the website) and used them either to support a theme or argument, or to gain a more complete understanding of a

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<sup>1</sup> All teachers and administrators were assigned both a first name and last name as pseudonyms, whereas students were only assigned a first name. Direct quotes from teachers and administrators are identified by the initials of their assigned names. Both the name of the school and the town are also pseudonyms.

phenomenon. Overall, my process of data analysis exemplifies the more inductive approach typical of the Grounded Theory Method, in the sense that I started from the interview transcripts and recorded observations to formulate nodes and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I juxtaposed these emergent nodes and categories with my research questions and related literature, and then cycled back to the data once again. As I proceeded with the analysis, I created a provisional list of codes, categories, and themes that I revised in a cyclical process, moving back and forth between the data and the research literature in order to place emergent themes within a larger theoretical context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Research Setting: Olympus High School**

Olympus High School was purposefully selected for the case study because it offers both a confirmation of and an exception to the pressures and trends described in the conceptual framework section of this article. While some of Olympus's features are typical of many school districts in the era of accountability, others set this district apart and made it an ideal case for studying the motivations, processes, and challenges of integrating global citizenship education. A more detailed description of the district's demographics, culture, and reputation for innovation will help to explain why.

Olympus is a small, high-performing public school district located in an affluent suburban area of a major city in Pennsylvania. On paper, it has all the features typical of a better-positioned district, those schools that are already meeting the requirements of external accountability thanks to a high degree of internal accountability (Carnoy et al., 2003). Similarly to comparable districts in the country it features committed teachers and motivated students, a low number of ESL students, a relatively low number minority students, a great parental involvement, and of emphasis on innovation and excellence. What makes this district unique, however, is having a school culture in which excellence and equity are both highly valued. Excellence is sought and encouraged, and the privileged position enjoyed by the district allows its teachers and leaders to have a more relaxed attitude about standardized testing so that they may direct resources, time, and energy toward subjects other than those tested. This allows for a greater emphasis on the arts, on the integration of digital technology, and, as explored in this study, on teaching about world cultures and global issues.

Another important aspect of Olympus's culture, which might not be typical of a high performing school district in an affluent community, is its concern with social justice and equity in education. In other words, the district's culture not only values excellence, but is also committed to making the best possible education available to all of its students. While the student population is relatively homogeneous in terms of racial/ethnic background (with the majority of students identifying as White and the percentage classified as English Language Learners in the single digits), their socioeconomic status can vary quite a bit with the median household income ranging from \$35,748 for the poorest households to \$143,617 for the wealthiest. The district exerts a conscious effort to try to minimize status differences by making all of the curriculum offerings available to all students, even if this means that the district has to take on greater expenses (e.g., the cost of administering the PSAT to all ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, as well as the SAT to all students) or has to make adjustments to its own practices (e.g., the "open-door" enrollment policy for AP classes and for their "gifted" programs, which are available to all students, regardless of academic ability).

### **Research Context: The Global Studies Initiative**

From 2000 to 2010, Olympus School District had been offering the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP), a world renowned, interdisciplinary, and demanding curriculum offered by both private and public schools worldwide to students from sixth through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. However, the problematic implementation of the IBMYP, along with some internal and external pressures (e.g., the district's mission to provide a high quality education to all students, pressures from parents and the community), led the district administration to officially abandon the pre-packaged curriculum in March 2010. This led to the initiation of a reform process—the Global Studies Initiative (GSI)—that was envisioned early on as an innovation to refocus the mainstream high school curriculum. As part of this overall initiative, the high school also decided to develop a specific program for students interested in studying global issues in greater depth, the Global Studies Credential (GSC). Both the GSI and the GSC were formally approved by the school board early in 2010 and were included in the new program of study for the first time for the 2010–2011 school year.

Even at this early stage, district leaders had developed a vision to eventually bring this initiative up to scale; that is to say, making the new global lens a sort of “mantra,” not only for the high school, but for the whole district. As one of the central office administrators explained talking about his vision for the initiative,

If it's done well, it should permeate every single course that's taught. It shouldn't be just certain courses in the program of studies, [...] It's not like we are out to create this separate Global Studies Credential and then we have this other curriculum that's—what is that, not global? [laughs] So, I see it really influencing our entire school system. I also think that right now we're kind of looking at it as a high school thing, and I think it needs to be also looked at, you know, that's where a lot of good things start and then we have to backward engineer, and make sure that it's not this shocking experience in high school, but that it's a natural growth from elementary on up. (GP)

However, the authors of the reform had strategically decided to start small, introducing minor changes and capitalizing on those activities related to teaching about the world that were already present at the high school, such as student exchange programs, study abroad programs, and foreign language instruction. The changes affecting the mainstream high school curriculum resulted from a combination of re-designing and adding new courses. The Civics course was now called Global Civics, and the content changed completely to focus on three major areas: human rights, global governance, and the interconnectedness of our society. Two elective courses with a strong global component were added to the course offerings: the Criminal and Civil Law course (with an entire unit dedicated to international law) and the Food, Family, and Society course (which focuses each year on the history, customs, culture, and economics of a different world region). In the World Language Department, an Honors French class and an AP French class were added. In addition to French and Spanish, the study of two more foreign languages was made available to students: German (already offered at the middle school) and Mandarin-Chinese (offered through distance learning).

Other changes to the curriculum dealt with updating the summer reading list for the ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classes, as well as the assessment form for the book review assignment, which is now intended to encourage students to make connections among countries and to analyze global issues from different perspectives. The new summer reading list was changed to incorporate a greater number of books written by foreign authors or that take place in different world regions

(Asia, Europe, Africa), as well as dealing with global topics such as international immigration, the condition of women in different areas of the world, education around the world, and peace. Examples of selected books are *Child of Dandelions* by Sheenaz Nanji, *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario, and *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. As a result of this new focus on selecting books for English classes, the library has included a separate section for Global Studies. Finally, a global component was added to the experiential part of a class called English for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When taking this class, students are asked to complete an assignment in which they write a reflection after having observed someone in a job setting. Some students have had the opportunity to fulfill this requirement with an international business, such as a local medical and developmental organization with the mission of improving health conditions in developing countries.

In addition to the changes to the mainstream curriculum, the school created a specific program, called the Global Studies Credential, through which students interested in further exploring global topics could earn an additional credential along with their high school diploma. The credential included four requirements: (1) Specific coursework made up of 5 credits earned with the core courses and 4 electives (specifically designed as global courses). (2) Three courses (4.5 credits) in a foreign language. In order to reach a high level of proficiency, students would need to either study the same language for all three courses (at the high school), or they can opt to study a language at the high school level for two courses, and then complete a course that focuses on a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTLs). (3) A total of 50 credits that students can earn independently through participation in a series of global enrichment experiences and upon demonstration of learning through a portfolio of assignments. Experiences may include but are not limited to: study abroad, global dual-enrollment coursework, global enrichment workshops, videoconferences, seminars or study groups. (4) A capstone project. At the very beginning this project was intended to be incorporated in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade personal project that students need to complete as a graduation requirement, but with a “global spin.” However, the project was then changed into a final exit interview.

When the credential program was launched, a coordinator was appointed by the school with the responsibility to develop the program and manage the students enrolled. Additionally, ad hoc professional development was provided to the entire faculty during the first year of the initiative. However, as I explain below, while the first year of implementation saw a great deal of activity, soon the initial enthusiasm and focus faded away as a result of pressures from other competing initiatives.

## Findings

In this section, I present the major findings concerning the district's motivations for the Global Studies Initiative (GSI) and the subsequent challenges that resulted in its incomplete and problematic implementation.

### The GSI as a Way to Increase the School's and Its Students' Competitiveness

Olympus's effort to integrate teaching about the world into its mainstream curriculum was initiated for a variety of reasons, above all the pragmatic need to fill the void left by the IBMYP. As explained above, the IBMYP was adopted to bring rigor to the new middle school; however, its problematic implementation led the district to officially abandon it in 2010. It is important to understand that the IBMYP was not just a curriculum frame. The IB logo carries with it a great deal of prestige that, under a neoliberal approach to education, schools have learned to use to increase

their profiles and better appeal to their consumers (Tarc, 2009). In line with this logic, the IBMYP at Olympus was a strategic choice that the district decided to invest in because it was seen as a selling point for parents coming into the community and for students trying to differentiate themselves on their college applications; in other words, it was part of the district's effort to compete with other districts and private schools and to gain visibility. As one of the administrators explained in her interview,

To be able to put that on your, with your school district logo, I mean that's a pretty prestigious program. It costs a lot of money, it's a big commitment as a district. I think it looks good, and I think that, I'm sure that there was an interest in that too...And that brought Olympus up several notches in the eyes of, I'd say the region, probably the community. And, I mean I remember even as a parent, when we moved here and I was looking for school districts, I remember going to Olympus' website and seeing IBMYP and I was like, "oh my God, that's awesome, because they're thinking about the world beyond Olympia, Pennsylvania." And I mean that's one of the reasons why I was interested in this district. And I'm sure that other people thought the same. (KC)

By this administrator's rationale, abandoning the IBMYP would mean losing an important logo that enabled the district to differentiate itself, which was of particular concern given that a nearby private K–12 institution had just developed a similar initiative. This climate of competition among schools, a mentality promoted by neoliberal accountability and school choice movements, helps to explain the school board members' concerns about dropping the program until something else was in place. As stated in the school board minutes of September 8, 2009,

Rich discussion took place concerning the IBMYP, as the district continues to explore curricular options that meet or exceed the substantive nature of IBMYP ...Mr. Pollon [school board member] stressed the importance of credentialing and requests a formal adoption of an alternative program prior to abandoning the IBMYP. Dr. Daller [the superintendent] offered assurance that an alternative curriculum framework will be presented in the spring of 2010. In the meantime, the district remains an IBMYP school.

Not only was the district concerned with finding an alternative program, but also with losing a program that could already count on a worldwide reputation. As Olympus developed its Global Studies Initiative, the school's administrators had been concerned with finding an outside agency that could validate the new initiative. This concern was voiced specifically by one board member, and the school took it into serious consideration at least during the first two years, seeking a partnership with a university and a non-profit that they saw as potential accreditors, as well as meeting with an evaluator. Most of the faculty and administrators involved agreed that obtaining outside accreditation would bring prestige to the program, the school, and the district, while also adding value to the new program (GSC) for both the parents and the students. This point was confirmed by interviews with students, all of whom indicated that the number one reason for enrolling the GSC was to earn an additional credential that could make them "stand out" in a crowd of college applicants. As Maggie, a sophomore, stated,

Like, well, if you write on your college applications as like extracurricular activities and stuff, um, I just think the Global Studies Credential is a new program, so I doubt colleges have seen many kids with this program on their application, and nowadays it's like so tough to get into colleges, something that makes you stand out from like—I feel like to get into a really good college, you need something to make you stand out, and this could help, because it's not so, um, well known . . . I think that's definitely a perk of doing it, and I know some kids just, um might do it because they're interested in global stuff, but then I think there's also kids that are just trying to like add stuff to an application.

This suggests that students at Olympus seem to be aware of the importance of having extra accomplishments to display on their transcripts and on their resumes that will allow them to enter a “good” college.

The expectation for schools and students to function and compete within a system regulated by objective data (credentials and tests) that can guide consumers' choices (parents) and establish models of good performance, reflects a neoliberal approach according to which education is seen as a consumer good and promoted—for the individual and the nation—as an investment that will ensure its competitive edge in the global economy (Rizvi, 2007). In this respect, Olympus's reform effort falls under the category of global citizenship programs that “endorse, at least tacitly, the idea of unfettered global markets and justify the existence of their programs as increasing the readiness of their students to compete in the world economy” (Schattle, 2008, p. 83). The narrative of educating for the global marketplace has dominated the initiative from the very beginning and is echoed in its stated goal: “to provide every student in the high school with a relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century education *steeped in real-world application* that places special emphasis on *the skills needed for future success.*” By appealing to parents' concerns about their children's future competitiveness in the labor market, rhetoric such as this serves to legitimize a limited approach to global citizenship education—one that does not promote responsibility toward and critical engagement with global issues, but aims merely to provide employers with workers who possess skills currently in demand in the global marketplace.

### **The GSI as a Way to Learn About and Engage with the World**

A second, less pragmatic motivation for undertaking the initiative was the district leaders' desire to intentionally provide students with greater exposure to foreign cultures and global issues. As argued above, the abandonment of the IBMYP made it necessary in the minds of administrators to develop a similar curricular experience—i.e., the GSC—that, upon the fulfillment of specific requirements, would give students an additional credential to add to their high school transcripts. However, beyond this pragmatic objective, discussion of curricular reform prompted district leaders to recognize the intrinsic value of incorporating a more global perspective in the high school curriculum. In the words of the superintendent, it led them to “understand the importance of understanding the world.” As a result, the district's frustration with the IBMYP came to be seen as a “blessing in disguise,” and the Global Studies Initiative was envisioned as “more than a replacement, as doing what we had hoped IB would do” (DH).

The vision of the Global Studies Initiative that emerged from subsequent discussion was inspired by the moral principle of educating a global citizenry for intercultural understanding and social justice. The Global Studies Initiative mission statement expresses this intent with regard to course offerings:

The lens for these courses will become increasingly global in nature. This entails *a purposeful focus on the interconnected and interdependent nature of our world* by examining topics and systems such as the world's economy, political systems, health systems, cultures, and the environment. Teachers will plan their courses so that students are afforded the opportunities to analyze critical global issues from multiple perspectives, thus *allowing students to explore the commonalities and differences of the world's people*. Students will be *challenged to understand the shared needs and shared problems that impact the entire globe* and will be encouraged to *seek solutions by looking beyond the traditional constraints of borders, geographical locations, language, and cultural understandings*. (emphasis added)

All of the stakeholders involved in the reform process (parents, school board members, administrators, and teachers) saw the value in incorporating elements of education for global citizenship into the school curriculum to better prepare students to live and work in a world that is increasingly global and interconnected. Such an understanding came across clearly in interviews with faculty and administrators, all of whom expressed the belief that it is important for education to prepare students for citizenship. As a social studies teacher put it, “We want them to be productive citizens, and really, I see the value in being productive global citizens. You used to always talk about American citizens, but I think it’s definitely comes to light now that they have to be global citizens” (TN). Further evidence of such shared understanding comes from a community survey that was administered by the district in November 2011 for the purpose of soliciting input, suggestions, and comments to inform future planning. In response to a question asking how the district could improve, a number of entries echoed the need for students to be exposed to other cultures, to have an early start in foreign languages, and to learn about global issues in order to be prepared to “enter an increasingly global world.”

The need to expose students to realities and issues beyond their immediate experience, is felt strongly in the small town of Olympia, where the district is located and where most of the students’ social lives take place. As one of the students interviewed explained,

I think especially in Olympia where it’s kind of a bubble, you know like, it’s kind of very safe and cushioned from the rest of the world. If you live here, you are not really getting much of a glimpse of the real world, and then you go to college and then get out of college and all of a sudden it’s completely different than what you’ve been raised in. And that’s a bit of a problem. And so, I think it’s good for kids to see that there is a world out there, you know? And that there is stuff past Olympia’s borders. And so I think it’s—for as many kids as can do it, it’s good to learn about different cultures. (Luke)

Olympia is an upper middle-class suburban town that includes approximately 4,000 residents, the majority of them white-collar professionals. While both students and staff appreciate the intimate and quaint atmosphere of the town, they also acknowledge its constraints by talking about life in that community as “being in a bubble.” The town of Olympia does not provide a diversity of social and cultural experiences; instead, it contributes to developing a sense of belonging and conformity to one community, one point of view, and one reality. Therefore, Olympus’s staff saw the implementation of the Global Studies Initiative as a way to force students out of their comfort zones, to expose them to “foreign” realities, and as several respondents said, to “get outside of the bubble.”

The GSI was also a way to expose students to current events and global issues that seldom find a space in the traditional curriculum. Some of the issues that students in the Global Studies Credential were able to learn about during their extracurricular experiences include the European economic crisis, the outbreak of Ebola, the challenge of educating girls in the Middle East, and piracy in the Horn of Africa. As one of the students explained when asked if what was learned through the Credential was similar or different from what they learn in other classes,

I think that is actually pretty different, it is certainly more current and in depth, and . . . more global. I don't really get much global experience in my other—or, we don't talk much about global stuff in my other classes. Maybe there is some overlap with some books that we read in English, but we don't really discuss global stuff. And then Spanish, but that's more just learning the language, rather than the culture and the country and stuff. (Emma)

Not only has the Global Studies Initiative been an effort to widen the curriculum by “bringing the world into the classroom,” but it has also helped students broaden their perspectives by exposing them to points of view others than that of their teacher or their textbook. As one example, Olympus students participated in a videoconference on the European economic crisis, where they were surprised to hear a Greek peer argue, with pride and patriotism, in favor of Greece exiting the Euro Zone.

### **Accountability as a Challenge to the Implementation of the GSI**

In the recent years, districts have been under increasing pressure to fulfill the unrealistic promise of NCLB that all students should achieve full proficiency in reading and math by the (now historical) year 2014. While Olympus has been fortunate not to have to worry about meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), it has nonetheless been affected by other aspects of the standards and accountability movement—most recently, the adoption of the Common Core Standards by the state of Pennsylvania (Kendall, 2011). Olympus's work on transitioning to the PA (Pennsylvania) Core began in the year 2010–2011 and reached full implementation in the 2013–2014 school year. In follow-up interviews with faculty and administrators, most respondents agreed that the implementation of the Common Core did not require any specific changes to the Global Studies Initiative, since most of the new requirements would affect only the English curriculum. At the same time, they also expressed the opinion that the Common Core had been a major disruption to the normal routine of the school, consequently taking resources away from other initiatives, including the Global Studies Initiative. In a follow-up interview from December 2013, the principal indicated that “assessment” was the issue requiring most of his attention at the time. During 2011–2012 school year, all teachers were asked to pay particular attention to their assessment practices and make note if and how they were making global connections; subsequently, the focus shifted to “rigor and relevance,” reflecting the school's effort to align its curriculum with the Common Core Standards. Assessment has also been the primary focus of the professional development planned at the high school for the past two years. Finally, in a self-study completed in March 2012, by the school, for the Middle States Association<sup>2</sup> evaluation, “state assessment” is indicated as one of the current challenges for the school.

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<sup>2</sup> The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA) is an accrediting organization. Its evaluations have a reputation for being comprehensive and based on high standards, which has earned it prestige among US schools (<http://www.middlestates.org/>).

Further evidence that competing priorities related to standards and accountability were an issue for the district can be found in articles that appeared in the local newspaper, minutes from school board meetings, and topics selected for community forums. For example, an official document reporting the key findings from a community forum held on May 1, 2012 includes a section with the heading “district challenges,” under which it reads: “Too many initiatives means it is hard to focus, to go deep, to do things at highest level of excellence, and to understand what true, strategic priorities are.” The fact that the community and the administration were actively discussing these concerns indicates that competing priorities were consuming administrators’ time and perhaps hindering their ability to build capacity for the Global Studies Initiative.

In fact, after an initial spur of activity, the actual implementation of this reform was quite uneven, resulting in a much more limited impact on the curriculum than was originally planned. In the first few years of implementation, the staff was highly invested in learning about and planning for the integration of global issues and themes as part of the general curriculum, but with the more pressing demand coming from state and federal mandates (i.e., alignment to Keystone exams and Common Core Standards), activities surrounding the GSI became less of a priority. After the first year, and especially once the school appointed a coordinator for the Global Studies Credential, teachers were no longer engaged in discussions about how to incorporate a global perspective into their teaching, they were no longer attending any pertinent professional development or departmental meetings, and they were no longer involved in planning courses with a global focus. As one administrator confirmed when asked what would be the main challenge in implementing the initiative,

We have to keep the ball rolling, we have to keep planting seeds, and, you know, telling the teachers and the kids what’s out there, what’s available. And it’s hard to keep up with all of that stuff. You know we get kind of isolated in our own little world. . . . So, momentum. [The challenge will be] keeping the momentum, keeping the focus. (KC)

As a result, while faculty and administrators had initially believed the Global Studies Initiative would be an ambitious reform that would make learning about the world a mantra for the entire school and district, the need to respond to intensifying outside pressures emerged as a major challenge to its implementation. Within four years of its initiation, the integration of teaching about the world into the school curriculum had been reduced to a few classes in the social studies department, with the addition of one specific program, the Global Studies Credential. While this program has been made available to all students, so far it has benefitted only a few. Although a significant number of students originally signed up to be part of the program (150 for the first year and 194 for the second year), the number of students who have actively participated in the enrichment activities associated with the program is much smaller (about 30 each year), and very few students in the last two graduating classes actually completed all of the credential requirements (four students in 2013 and six in 2014).

Furthermore, some of the data collected from the students suggest that trying to pursue both 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and global citizenship at the same time has not always resulted in meaningful practices of engaging with the world. For example, the heavy focus within the school on preparing students to master 21<sup>st</sup> century skills has produced some unintended consequences, such as the fact that some students claimed to have used global skills such as creativity and collaboration for projects like redesigning a bedroom. As the student explained in talking about her personal project,

I—well, since my personal project, I worked at that store and I redesigned a room in my house, I like re-did a room in my house, but I am relating this globally, since when I worked in the store I had to get used to the technology on the computers and I had to do—use like problem solving and stuff, and so there's one of the topics that's like, “to become like more globally competitive by gaining skills in” this list of things like collaboration, creativity, technology, and stuff like that, so I'm just talking about how different aspects of working at the store related to collaboration and creativity and stuff like that. (Emma)

Similarly, some of the students' study abroad journals have been limited to a superficial list of monuments seen or food that the students ate abroad, rather than including meaningful reflection on the culture, customs, history, and economic conditions of the foreign country. Finally, another student was able to earn extracurricular credits for a service learning project that consisted of helping to package goods to deliver to the victims of the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

As argued above, while action and service are important components of GCE for social justice, not all forms of engagement will enable students to develop a deep understanding of cultural differences or the complex social factors behind global conflicts and humanitarian crises. When the motivation for action is limited to the good feeling that comes from helping others, critical thinking and empathetic understanding may be neglected (Tarc, 2012). While the intentions behind study abroad opportunities and service learning projects are praiseworthy, a social justice perspective would emphasize that such experiences need to be coupled with opportunities for historical or social-scientific study of the context and critical reflection on the situation or experience.

In presenting my findings, I have emphasized how the GSI at Olympus was initiated for the dual purpose of encouraging students to learn about and engage with the world—the social justice agenda—and preparing students to be competitive and achieve career success in the global marketplace—the technical-economic agenda. While pursuing both goals would have been ideal, the reality is that the school struggled to negotiate competing priorities. Under the pressure of responding to state and federal mandates (e.g., the Common Core) established as part of the current accountability system, the school opted for a more superficial integration of GCE. The Global Studies Initiative became a token for the school's effort to teach about the world, rather than a vehicle to infuse teaching about the world and critical reflection on global issues throughout the mainstream curriculum.

## Conclusion

As my analysis demonstrates, the fate of Olympus's Global Studies Initiative can be explained in part by the inherent tension between the technical-economic agenda for GCE (preparing students to be knowledge workers in the global economy) and GCE for social justice (preparing them to be active participants in global civil society). This tension became most evident in analyzing the district's motivations for the reform and the challenges that resulted in its incomplete and problematic implementation. In analyzing the district's motivations, I found that technical-economic and social justice rationales appeared side-by-side in official documents and records of my participants' conversations and interview responses. In all of these sources, it was possible to detect, *on the one hand*, an understanding of the interconnected nature of the world, a concern with skills and attitudes such as collaboration and empathy, and an appreciation for cultural diversity and alternative points of view, but, *on the other hand*, a heavy focus on preparing students to compete in the global

labor market by honing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication, and so on), which are in demand among employers and highly prized by the corporate world.

When economic competition drives the integration of education for global citizenship, it is likely to result in isolated programs, classes, or events that might accomplish the goal of providing students with some exposure to the world (e.g., the Global Studies Credential), but will not be carried out in a systematic, sustainable, meaningful, equitable, and democratic way. This is what seems to have happened in the case of Olympus's Global Studies Initiative—when faced with the need to direct their attention more urgent priorities, school leaders opted for a “piecemeal” implementation that fell back on technical-economic rationales for GCE at the expense of their larger vision.

If GCE for social justice is to fulfill its vision, stakeholders in the educational arena must be persuaded that the policies we have in place today are standing in the way of educating students to become active global citizens who are prepared to confront global challenges. As Nussbaum (2010) strongly argues, “We are not forced to choose between a form of education that promotes profit and a form of education that promotes good citizenship” (p. 10). Indeed, schools should aim at developing students who can be knowledge workers in the global economy and succeed in their careers, but schools must also prepare students to be engaged and responsible members of society, capable of relating to people from different parts of the world and dealing with issues that affect us all. Unfortunately, as the case of Olympus illustrates, it does not look like that under the current push for test and career preparation, schools are able to also invest the time in preparing students for “virtuous citizenship” (Pike, 2008b, p.41).

Looking to the future, we must advocate on behalf of a broader view of the purposes of education and a widening of the mainstream curriculum to include teaching about the world and civic action. I therefore urge policymakers to consider how large-scale initiatives like the Common Core might incorporate the global civic dimension. This does not mean that GCE should be narrowed down to align with current policies and national recommendations (as has occurred within the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills movement). Rather, curriculum frameworks like the Common Core need to be expanded to make room for robust global citizenship education.

As we work to enact change at the policy level, there is also much work to be done on the ground. Global citizenship educators and advocates need to consider how best to support schools in embracing a GCE for social justice. Documentation of best practices, creation of professional development opportunities, and development of indicators and forms of assessment can contribute greatly to grassroots efforts. Intellectual contributions like this special issue can also play an important part in motivating such efforts.

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Dr. Marzia Cozzolino DiCicco (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh) has conducted research for the past 10 years on international and global education at the secondary and tertiary levels, culminating in her dissertation study, which investigates the challenges faced by U.S. public schools in integrating international and global components into their mainstream curricula. In addition to her scholarship in this area, Dr. Cozzolino DiCicco has extensive experience as an international and global educator, having worked as a foreign language teacher, a study abroad coordinator, an intercultural mediator, and a researcher and university instructor in various educational settings in Italy, France, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. Currently she is a Center Associate in the Global Studies Center at the University of Pittsburgh where she collaborates on outreach programs focused on global education. She also works with schools in the US and in Italy and helps them to integrate global education in their educational offerings.

## **About the Guest Editor**

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John P. Myers is Associate Professor in the School of Teacher Education at Florida State University and coordinator of the Social Science Education program. His research examines the consequences of globalization for how youth understand the complexities of the modern world. This work focuses on classroom practices that foster global citizenship and identities as students come to understand core world history and social science concepts.

**SPECIAL ISSUE**  
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education policy analysis archives

Volume 24 Number 57

May 16, 2016

ISSN 1068-2341



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