

About the Stevens Initiative

The Stevens Initiative is an international movement whose mission is to connect young people through virtual exchange to enhance their understanding of the world around them, giving them critical skills to succeed and encouraging global friendships along the way. The Initiative does this through virtual exchange.

About Virtual Exchange

Virtual exchange connects young people from around the world for learning and collaboration, immersing them in digital spaces to gain practical skills and build friendships along the way.

Stevens Initiative and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Wisconsin DPI and the Stevens Initiative are partnering to support global learning across the curriculum through virtual exchange. Virtual exchange gives all students (and educators) access to global relationships and learning. We believe in the value of language, intercultural, and global competence for a world-ready Wisconsin.



“When I first learned about virtual exchange, I was very excited because it is the perfect opportunity for students of all socioeconomic levels to have a global experience. Virtual exchange is a low or no-cost way for schools to give all students valuable skills for working with kids from other countries and cultures. Many students do not have exposure to world cultures or the means to travel internationally, especially in rural areas, so virtual exchanges can be a great pathway for students to become more globally engaged.”

- **Jodi Resch Brownell**, Spanish Teacher, Global Scholars Advisor, Virtual Exchange Academy Graduate, Wisconsin Global Educator of the Year



Why Engage in Virtual Exchange?

Virtual exchange creates cross-cultural experiences that build real-world job skills – including communication, collaboration, empathy, language, and problem-solving. Participants gain self-awareness, self-confidence, and the start of a global network of peers. It's also cost-effective, scalable, and uniquely capable of reaching diverse populations that might otherwise not have global experiences.



Frequently Asked Questions

- **How do participants communicate?** In real-time over Zoom or Skype during classroom meetings or team-based breakouts, asynchronously through message boards and WhatsApp groups, or a combination of the two (which we see often).
- **How long are programs?** Anywhere from two-eight weeks, sometimes up to 12 weeks, if they're following a semester or course calendar.
- **What is the time commitment of participants?** Eight-30 hours over the course of the exchange, which boils down to a few hours a week and could look like participants meeting for group program activities led by facilitators, attending calls to work on projects or working offline on contributions, messaging one another, or attending a culminating celebration.
- **Where do teachers come in?** Virtual exchange enables educators to become facilitators of learning beyond their expertise, which we know is critical for preparing young people to thrive. Teachers and other leaders who work with young people can join existing virtual exchange programs, where they receive curriculum and training to augment what they're already doing in the classroom.

How to Get Involved in Virtual Exchange

Primary school teachers, district superintendents, and more can help young people broaden their skills and horizons through virtual exchange.

- Engage with existing virtual exchange programs that support language learning, social science and STEM exploration, art and storytelling creation, and so much more through two pathways:
 - **Join a program.** Gain access to content, partnership networks, technology, facilitation training, and other forms of guidance and support. These programs can be seamlessly incorporated into classroom curriculum and are designed to meet standardized learning goals.
 - **Mobilize youth participation.** Share open enrollment opportunities with young people who can participate on their own time, often from home.
- **Train for virtual exchange.** Participate in our landmark training, the Virtual Exchange Academy, or one of the Stevens Initiative-vetted trainings we will be sharing about soon.

Access all of these engagement opportunities and more resources [here](#). For more information, contact StevensInitiative@aspeninstitute.org.

Join us!

Please join us to learn how to bring global learning experiences to your school community.

March 20, 2024 | 3:30-4:30 CT | [Register](#)

The Stevens Initiative is housed at the Aspen Institute and is supported by the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. The J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative is a U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program administered by the Aspen Institute.