

# **OUTREACH: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

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## **Summary**

The major focus of this paper is on the present status and future prospects of the K-12 outreach endeavor pursued by the current 114 National Resource Centers (NRCs) and the 14 National Foreign Language Resource Centers (NFLRCs) funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The authors begin by providing a brief account of the emergence of this national effort to improve and expand international and area studies instruction in elementary, intermediate and high schools throughout the United States, prompted by the National Defense Education Act, and the strategies pursued to accomplish national goals and objectives over the course of more than a quarter-century.

Drawing on exemplary programs and activities, the authors provide proof of the success of the K-12 outreach endeavor in the sphere of teacher training and professional development, the production of core and supportive educational materials for instructional purposes, textbook evaluation, library support, new media technologies, networking and collaboration.

A number of recommendations are offered, with specific emphasis on addressing the structural issues confronting the outreach enterprise vis-à-vis national and state standards for teaching and learning, the peripheralization and the professionalization of the outreach endeavor, engaging Schools of Education in pre-service teacher training (including foreign languages and overseas programs), and a national organizational structure that could advance outreach goals in the twenty-first century. While the authors employ case studies representing the Africa, Latin America and Middle East outreach programs nationwide, the exemplary activities cited and the recommendations offered apply to the Asia and Europe components of outreach as a whole.