

# COMMUN VII

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## **UNESCO: Establishment of New International Metric For Educational Systems**

### Background Guide

Chairs: Michael Karezin 22' and Annie Jones 22'



## Welcome Letter

Hi! My name is Michael Karezin and I'm a senior at the Commonwealth School. This will be my 4th year chairing a committee at COMMUN, but I've also participated as a delegate in Model UN throughout middle school.

Hi! My name is Annie Jones, and I am also a senior at the Commonwealth School. While I've worked with COMMUN for three years, this is my first year as a chair. I'm excited for you all to join our committee!

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO for short, is an association in the United Nations with the main goal of establishing world peace through anything education, arts, science, or culture related. In its current state, UNESCO looks to provide "global and regional leadership in education, strengthen education systems worldwide and respond to contemporary global challenges through education." As a committee you should keep in mind that although not all countries share the same values, within UNESCO, they should look to put their differences aside to come toward common goals and solutions .

As all of us have experienced in our lifetimes, the manner in which we are scored and tested during our educational systems often do not benefit the students in the long run. Perhaps some of us don't have great memory, or we don't perform well within constraints or maybe we simply do not understand the standardized questions being asked. For this reason, some potentially brilliant students end up being left behind and as a result do not wind up learning what they are capable of. If we can figure out an improved test then both teachers and students grow and learn together, and as a result, our populations will develop to be more knowledgeable and benefit society.

This year, your goal will be to create an international metric for the development of a country's education system—both in regard to equality and ensuring educational growth. While the task itself is fairly straightforward, your intention should be to evaluate important issues such as gender, racial, and religious inequality in the realm of education with your results. They should then be used to uphold the UN's 4th Sustainable Development Goal—"Quality Education" through the passing of resolutions.

Before the committee, you are encouraged to write a 1-2 page position paper. There are many ways you may choose to take this paper, but ultimately, it should address the questions in the last part of this topic guide.

If you've got any questions, please don't hesitate to contact either of us via email at [mkarezin@commschool.org](mailto:mkarezin@commschool.org) or [ajones@commschool.org](mailto:ajones@commschool.org).

*Looking forward to meeting you all, Michael and Annie.*



# UNESCO: Establishment of New International Metric For Educational Systems

“Education is not a problem. Education is an opportunity”

-Lyndon B. Johnson

## Problem Statement:

Despite all of our advances in technology and culture in education, educational inequality and discrimination still persists worldwide. UNESCO believes that education has the ability to “transforms lives... build peace, eradicate poverty and drive sustainable development;” so in this committee, your focus will be to help provide better education for all. That being said, keep in mind that many people have strove for better education for centuries, but even the world's greatest minds have struggled to find solutions.



We do not want you to solve education as a whole, but to start at its roots. In order to understand how we must improve education, we must first find a reliable manner to measure it. In doing so, we want you all to consider different skill sets, cultural backgrounds, and racial/ethnic biases. Although we would like the main goal of this committee to be to create a new metric to measure international intellect, you all are encouraged to be as creative as you want. By this we mean that you do not have to limit yourself to a simple paper test or anything that has previously been done before. If you have an idea that can be backed through reliable information like having all education be measured through verbal tests not written ones then do as you please.

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## **Background: “Brief History of Metrics for Intelligence”**

### IQ

The most well known metric of intelligence is the intelligence quotient (IQ) test. While this standard of test was invented all the way back in 1916 by Lewis Terman, many people still view it as one of the most reliable measures of our biological intelligence. The test measures a series of different skill sets ranging from simple numerical reasoning to spatial intelligence, and then it compares the scores of different people that have taken it. If you are a person that gets a score that is better than half of the people but worse than the other half your IQ would be 100. The IQ test can be taken at any age level and provides a solid comparison of different people, but the test disregards racial, religious, ethnic, or income backgrounds. The test also fails to account for improvements in intelligence overtime and instead relies on the argument that intelligence is innate. Ultimately, the IQ test does not provide useful information for personal development or daily life. The IQ test cannot be used as a tool for understanding and improving education.

### TIMSS

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, TIMSS for short, started in 1995 and promised to provide “reliable and timely trend data on the mathematics and science achievement of U.S. students compared to that of students in other countries.” They primarily focus on kids finishing their 4th year to 8th year in schooling. Although the test is comprehensive and large, in essence, the test is a simple standardized test of mathematics and science for different grade levels . The main issue with this metric was that TIMSS “is curriculum-based, reflecting the skills and knowledge taught in school”. In doing so the United States looks a lot better than the majority of other countries as the TIMSS basically writes the test basing it on what the American kids should previously know. In addition, the test does not account for other backgrounds and merely focuses on convention rather than innovation.

### PIRLS

The Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study or PIRLS test is the most thorough and trustworthy test for language literacy in the United States. The assessment was first created in 2001 and primarily focuses on understanding the habits and the level of “reading achievements” of both fourth grade learners and their teachers. Like the TIMSS, it is a United States governmental body that conducts the test and so there could be said to be some bias. In addition, this test only focuses on the literacy of English speaking languages and so it is not inclusive in any sense. The main problems that have



been noted with this assessment is that it has too much focus on “phonics” and not enough on actual “reading comprehension.” As such, the scores portrayed do not send the right measure for literacy as “research consistently shows that phonics ability does not influence scores on tests of comprehension.”

## PISA

One of the most promising tests in the world was the Programme of International Student Assessment or PISA for short. The test was invented in 1997 by the OECD and first tested in 2000. This exam promised to primarily assess “the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science” and “skills such as collaborative problem solving and global competence,” while also collecting “valuable information on student attitudes and motivations and competence.” The OECD believes that by testing in those particular sections it can reasonably simulate how well a student can do in its everyday life. However, many experts claim that the PISA “feeds into an overreliance on standardized tests and an emphasis on learning that can be easily measured,” and there are many flaws to how the test is administered. In addition, many experts claim that PISA’s assertions about how its test measures “skills that are essential for life in modern economies” and mainly focusing the test on this result “distorts the purpose of education.” Furthermore, although PISA claims to be different from other tests like TIMSS, its scoring directly correlates to it.

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## Discussion: “Thinking about “intelligence”

One of the biggest questions that come up when addressing education is how we should even categorize intelligence. As you will see, certain metric tests like the TIMSS stick to what is taught in the classroom (called academic/general intelligence), while others like PISA attempt to test for intelligence that will help the youth better succeed in everyday life. When thinking about different types of intelligence there are thousands of different directions we could go.



Psychologists like Howard Gardner believed in eight basic groups of innate intelligence: 1. Linguistic Intelligence: The ability to learn and apply language in written and spoken language to “accomplish certain goals,” 2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:



The ability to make logistical analysis of mainly mathematical and scientific problems, 3. Spatial Intelligence: The ability to learn to physically manipulate “patterns of wide space... as well as the patterns of more confined areas,” 4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: The ability to use one's entire/partial body to solve physical challenges, 5. Musical Intelligence: The ability to grasp and compose musical patterns and arrangements, 6. Interpersonal Intelligence: The ability of understanding others, how they feel, and inferring how they would react, 7. Intrapersonal Intelligence: The ability to understand your own thoughts, feelings, and ambitions, 8. Natural Intelligence: The ability to “recognition and classification of the numerous species—the flora and fauna—of his or her environment.” These types of intelligence can serve as examples of what you should think about including or excluding in your metrics and how you can even attempt to measure each depending.

In addition, when thinking about measuring intelligence there are studies that claim different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups substantially vary how they believe intelligence works. In western societies we tend to “view intelligence as a means for individuals to devise categories and to engage in rational debate, while people in Eastern cultures see it as a way for members of a community to recognize contradiction and complexity and to play their social roles successfully.” As such, many believe it is difficult to find one metric that encompasses all cultures and does not particularly target only one specific portion of the world. Part of your job will be understanding how to bypass these challenges and make it as wide-reaching as possible.

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## **Database of Stats to consider:**

In your exploration of various testing methods, please do not feel limited to those referenced above. Other metrics to consider—although not always explicitly linked to academic performance—are statistics such as attendance rate, graduation rate, or UNESCO's Gender Parity Index. Of course, of utmost importance is a global perspective that takes into account the impact of a nation's economic and political standings on the prioritization of education. It is advised that statistics are found that describe trends across as many nations as possible, rather than a select few whose bureaucracy can afford to trace educational metrics.

Some of the things to consider:

- Intake of Students
- Percent Enrollment
- Attendance Rates



- Drop-out Rate
  - Percent Repeating Grade
  - “School life Expectancy” (SLE)
  - Completion Rates
  - Graduation Rate
  - Educational attainment
  - Gender Parity Index (used by UNESCO)
  - Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) - average years of schooling
  - Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) - average years of schooling
  - PISA: By reading & language, mathematics & numeracy, scientific knowledge & understanding
  - School infrastructure
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## **Conclusion:**

Education is one of the most important creators of opportunity and proficiency, and ensuring those ends are accessible to all human beings, as merited by a desire for equality of the human race, is a top priority for UNESCO. Your goal as a committee will be to work towards a resolution that takes steps towards reducing inequality in education, which is at the heart of many of the socioeconomic inequalities in society. Through working with other delegates, you’ll work towards policies that resolve the issue through ensuring the best possible understanding of the factors in education inequality, and employing solutions that your nations believe will move the world towards reducing the discrepancies in the instruction of education.

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## **Questions:**

1. What does your country’s education system look like?
2. What are some of the standardized testing baselines in your country, and does your country have a preferred standardized test? Why?
3. What are some of the strengths, and some of the weaknesses, of your country’s education system?
4. Is there any movement in your country to push for a new education system? If so, what does it look like? Is the government receptive?



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