

---

## **AESA Leadership Academy Global Learning Visit Explores Education Systems in South Korea and Singapore**

### **International Experience Reinforces the Power of Education to Drive Innovation, Economic Growth, and Global Collaboration**

**Ripon, WI** – In April 2025, participants in the AESA Leadership Academy embarked on a transformative global learning visit to South Korea and Singapore, two countries recognized for their exceptional education systems and commitment to future-focused learning. The trip, part of AESA’s continued effort to support leadership development and global competency, offered U.S. education leaders a rare, firsthand look at how these nations strategically leverage education to fuel innovation, drive economic prosperity, and prepare students for a globalized world.

The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs) is a national organization serving over 470 educational service agencies (ESAs) across 40 states. These agencies collectively impact more than 80% of public school districts and students nationwide. AESA is dedicated to strengthening the capacity of ESAs through professional learning, leadership development, advocacy, and strategic partnerships.

The AESA Leadership Academy is a premier leadership development initiative designed for current ESA chief executives. It equips participants with the tools, global insights, and peer connections needed to navigate the evolving landscape of public education. The global learning visit to Asia was a key component of the program, designed to broaden perspectives, deepen global understanding, and foster cross-cultural collaboration.

### **Highlights from the Global Learning Visit**

#### **South Korea:**

Leaders engaged with elite science high schools and the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, gaining insight into Korea’s rigorous STEM-focused approach. With days running from 6:30 AM to nearly midnight, students pursue interdisciplinary STEM learning, often aspiring to top U.S. universities. Korea’s integration of AI, focus on gifted education, and structured teacher development reflect a national commitment to innovation. Collaboration with Korean educators highlighted shared goals around inquiry-based learning and real-world application.

#### **Singapore:**

Singapore’s tightly aligned national education system, unified teacher training, and holistic student development model stood out. From the Ministry of Education to Temasek Polytechnic and neighborhood schools like St. Stephen’s, the team saw how applied learning, micro credentials, and flexible professional development are embedded system wide. Teachers are highly respected, well-trained, and supported. Schools embrace project-based learning, leadership development, and community engagement, with a clear trajectory from education to workforce.

## Key Takeaways for U.S. Education

- **Teacher Excellence:** Both nations prioritize educator preparation, compensation, and continuous learning.
- **STEM as Interdisciplinary:** STEM is taught as integrated, real-world learning—not as siloed subjects.
- **Student Differentiation:** Learning is personalized, and pathways are aligned with future careers.
- **Global Connections:** Both countries are eager for international collaboration in research, exchanges, and innovation.
- **Education = Economic Strategy:** Education is viewed as central to national prosperity and identity.

## Implications for U.S. Stakeholders

This trip reinforced the need for immersive student exchanges, educator global learning experiences, and virtual cross-cultural collaborations. The experience calls U.S. leaders to rethink STEM instruction, support educators, and cultivate curiosity-driven, globally connected classrooms that prepare students for the world ahead.

## Strengthening Global Partnerships

During our visits, AESA engaged with leading education organizations in South Korea and Singapore to advance a shared vision for international cooperation. Together, we explored a collaborative framework that promotes academic excellence, scientific innovation, cross-cultural fluency, and institutional partnerships.

At the core of this evolving initiative is a mutual commitment to developing global competencies—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students and educators need to thrive in an interconnected world. Through innovative, experience-rich programming, AESA supports K–12 students, educators, executive leaders, and visiting scholars.

Program components include science-focused curricula, experiential learning opportunities, digital classroom exchanges, professional development for educators, and international summer academies. These initiatives are designed to cultivate global awareness, foster mutual understanding, and empower participants to lead with confidence in an increasingly global society.

## Looking Ahead

As global challenges and opportunities continue to shape the future of education, AESA remains committed to building bridges across borders. By fostering meaningful international partnerships and expanding access to transformative learning experiences, AESA is not only enriching educational practice but also helping shape a generation of globally competent leaders prepared to navigate—and positively impact—our shared world.