

One District's Commitment to Global Education

Teaching students to have a global perspective was a districtwide priority in Muscatine, Iowa, long before the term gained national attention.

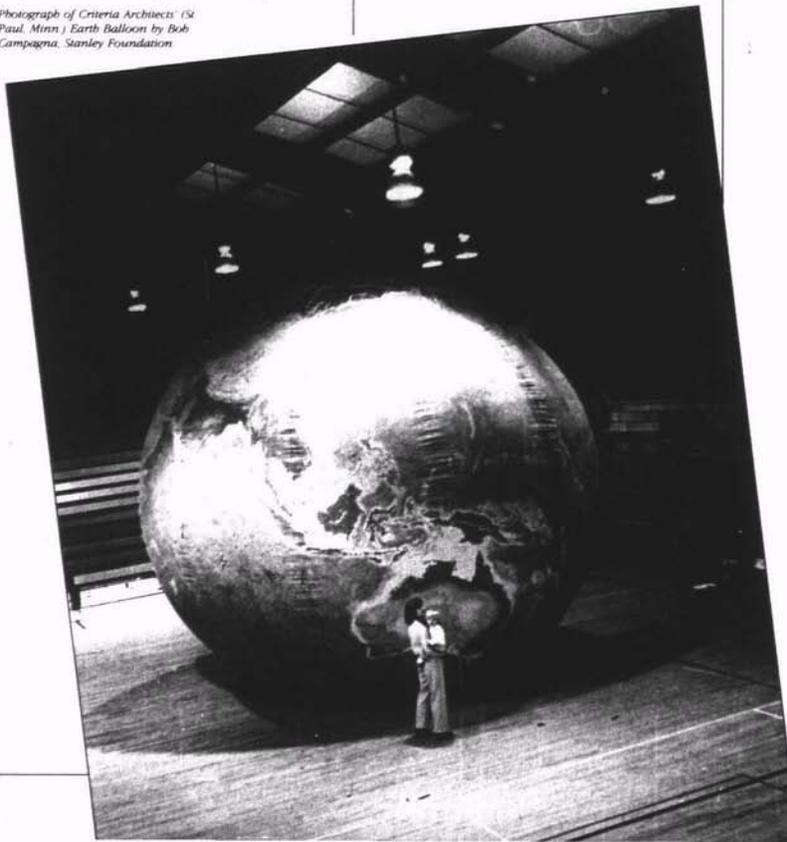
The library chairs are placed in a tight circle. Participants push back to ponder; others lean forward to listen more intently. The issues are weighty—matters of war and peace, resource scarcity, human rights and equity; the discussion thoughtful and earnest; the tone serious and intent. One might expect a high-level, multi-national summit with senior statespersons and diplomats, three-piece suits, briefcases, a sleek walnut conference table, and the smell of wood polish and leather.

Not so. These participants wear faded, acid-washed jeans, T-shirts advertising everything from *Coke* to the *Iowa Hawkeyes*, and sneakers—mostly *Reeboks* and *Adidas*. The room smells of chalk dust and hot lunch. The carpet is slightly worn, and the chairs bear initials scratched with pencils during a not-so-interesting film many years before. These thinkers are 9- and 10-year-olds discussing their visual depictions of the state of the world. The colored-marker masterpieces they hold and describe show a world divided, subjected to famine, pollution, and the brutality of war. In the language of 9- and 10-year-olds, they speak eloquently of homelessness, hunger, and inequity. This is not someone else's world, and these are not someone else's problems, but rather their world and their problems. They speak hopefully of people working together to right wrongs and create a better, safer world. These students' words and their tone reveal their personal sense of responsibility.

The questions are: Have we, as educators, faced these facts? Will today's 9- and 10-year-olds be prepared to live productive lives as 21st-century adults? Teachers, administrators, and parents in Muscatine, Iowa, are searching for ways to ensure a positive response to

those questions. A significant part of the answer, we believe, is that students must develop a worldwide perspective. In addition to their knowing the state of the world and how the United States fits in, we believe that our students must be able to communicate

Photograph of Criteria Architects: (S) Paul, Mirra; Earth Ballroom by Bob Campagna, Stanley Foundation



with people of different cultures and learn to accept and appreciate the world's diversity.

Such knowledge goes well beyond the kind of information about names and places so often surveyed by public polls and questionnaires. This type of education challenges students to take the names, places, and myriad facts about world issues and (1) contemplate their own roles and stakes in all of these and (2) consider how best to pursue their dreams and desired outcomes through the jumble of governmental and nongovernmental avenues available. Preparing students to meet these challenges is the essence of global education (Alger and Harf 1986).

Our View of Global Education

What does global education look like? We think Muscatine's schools provide the basic outline of such a picture, yet our view of global education is still evolving. In brief, global education means purposefully acknowledging that we are all part of an interconnected and interdependent world and that we need to know how to operate in it.

From a *teacher's* perspective, global education is as much a change of vision or perception as it is a change of activities or curriculum. It means looking intentionally for ways to connect instruction to the rest of the world; for example, by reading short stories from many countries; analyzing the perspective on global issues found in foreign as well as U.S. newspapers and periodicals; and giving students the fundamental knowledge of geography and world history needed to understand current issues. Global education is also about food fairs and world days organized not to show quaint customs but rather to heighten interest in, and appreciation of, the world's diversity and the efforts of different cultures to meet human needs. And it means arranging for students to examine such issues as pollution, human rights, and world hunger—and then providing forums where they can discuss them and grapple with the implications of proposed solutions. Such activities are clearly not the domain of any single

grade level, subject, or curricular area. All teachers can find ways to add a global perspective to material they are teaching.

From a *student's* viewpoint, global education provides basic knowledge

in history, geography, world cultures and religions, language training, and global issues. It also affords students opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to think about and discuss issues. In the best of cases, it

Internationalizing Your School

Don Bergman and Stuart Young

To become responsible citizens, students need to assume a global perspective. The following activities can help initiate a sense of world-mindedness in students and begin the process of internationalizing schools.

- Have students participate in a Model United Nations Program within your school or between groups of schools that have set up Model United Nations Conferences. Write to: UNA-USA, Publications Department, 485 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017-6104.
- Have students participate in the 1,000 Crane Club, which collects thousands of origami cranes made by students in schools throughout the world. Students at Hiroshima International School take them to the Sadako Monument in remembrance of a young school girl and others who perished in the atomic blast. Write to Hiroshima International School, 3-49-1 Kurakake, Asakita-ku, Hiroshima-shi, Hiroshima-ken, Japan (739-19).
- Arrange overnight visits whereby cultural exchanges can take place between your students and those from other schools. A student is assigned a "buddy" and attends classes for a day and spends the night with a host family from a different social or cultural background.
- Establish a pen pal relationship with a class from an overseas school. Send a class photo, arrange for exchanges of art projects, or request information on cultural topics.
- Encourage school or class support of a worldwide humanitarian project such as UNICEF or CARE. Identify other worldwide organizations and discuss their role in fostering internationalism.
- Encourage student participation in community service projects such as sponsoring fund-raisers to buy toys and books for orphanages or for the underprivileged.
- Simulate global problems. For example, to simulate famine and malnutrition, have students choose a country and check the average daily calorie intake of its people. Then to dramatize the unequal distribution of food among the world's children, dish up each child's lunch accordingly (make "seconds" available after the dramatic impact).
- Identify a global problem (war, pollution, terrorism, nuclear accidents, pre-juvenile brainstorm solutions).
- Whenever possible, use textbooks and teaching materials that reflect an international perspective and that review historical and current events from more than one point of view. Point out the limitations of materials that are narrow in perspective.
- Include "international thinking and problem-solving skills" in all areas of the school's curriculum. The concepts of internationalism, the interdependency of nations, and global perspectives of the world's problems and possible solutions should be reflected in written course goals and objectives.

Among the recommendations that will be proposed to prepare students for the future, perhaps none is more basic or more imperative to future generations than the incorporation of an international perspective into our curriculums.

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enables students to travel abroad and interact with people whose experiences are very different from their own. Muscatine tries to accomplish these goals from the earliest years of elementary school through high school by bringing international visitors into classrooms, having issues conferences, participating in Model United Nations activities, holding leadership workshops, arranging exchanges with students at the United Nations International School in New York and with students from other countries, and by organizing student/faculty trips to such places as Japan, Germany, France, Uruguay, and the Soviet Union.

From an administrative point of view, global education means a commitment to making a global perspective an integral part of curriculum development. In Muscatine, the district's commitment extends to the use of released time and discretionary funds for the K-12 global education task force. The Muscatine Global Education Task Force—composed of teachers from each building and various administrators—is devising ways to instruct their peers on global education issues and to create and compile teacher-tested materials for classroom use.

From Thought to Action

The programs and attitudes now in place in Muscatine are the result of years of hard work by a number of

people both in and out of the school system. More than 15 years ago, the Stanley Foundation, a private foundation dedicated to working toward a secure peace with freedom and justice, began working with interested teachers. Through the years a loosely knit consortium of educators defined, redefined, and expanded their own understanding of the goals of global education. In the words of Jan Drum, vice president of the foundation, "The foundation's role was to give teachers time and support to think about what they really wanted to see happen for the kids they cared about. Then, together, we determined what of that they could really do."

Muscatine is a small (population: 26,000, 5,600 students K-12), basically homogeneous river town in the middle of the Midwest. We have a Hispanic community of significant size, yet only a small fraction of the population speaks something other than English as a first language. We are very much middle America. What sets our district apart is the emphasis we place on process as well as product in the area of global education. Developing a global perspective is a major part of our district's statement of mission and philosophy—equal in weight to learning the three Rs. Parents, teachers, school board members, and administrators developed the statement, and the school board adopted it. We have thought seriously about what we want for our students and are now trying to make those plans real. Five important elements make up this process: community partnerships, teacher networking, teacher ownership of the process, school board and administrative support, and state initiatives.

All teachers can find ways to add a global perspective to material they are teaching.

Community Partnerships

As noted, for more than 15 years the Stanley Foundation has provided materials, speakers, ideas, and moral support for interested educators. It assisted teachers in attending summer workshops and training sessions and was instrumental in turning the dream of a Global Education Task Force into a reality.

More recently, other partnerships have also played important roles. Through an adopt-a-school consortium, local businesses and industries, many of which operate internationally, have complemented school programming by providing globally knowledgeable speakers and resources. By bringing in visitors from other countries, the Sister Cities organization has helped establish ties to Europe, Asia, and South America, thus heightening student interest in the world beyond Muscatine County. Through these efforts, Muscatine High School enjoys a sister school relationship with Ichikawadaimon High School in Yamanashi Prefecture in Japan.

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Countdown 2001: The Future Belongs to Everyone

Countdown 2001 is a nonprofit organization that works to help people and organizations shape a better future. Young people in particular need to realize that although we have a lot of problems, people working together can create positive solutions. The organization spreads its message through speakers, workshops, and materials, such as its newsletter and *Educator's Guide: An Agenda for the 21st Century*. For further information or to become a "partner," write or call Countdown 2001, 5635 Utah Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20015, (202) 537-1179.

Teacher Networking

An unexpected benefit of the global education task force is the networking it has engendered. It is difficult for teachers to get together to share ideas and support each other's efforts. When this does happen, it is usually among teachers at the same level. The multicategorical makeup of the K-12 task force established connections among teachers at different grade levels and among many disciplines. In addition, many Muscatine teachers also actively participate in the Iowa Global Education Association. This group's activities keep everyone aware of what is happening in classrooms across Iowa.

Teacher Ownership

Long before the district's mission statement, the task force, and national attention to teaching with a global perspective, there were teachers in Muscatine teaching students about living in a highly interdependent global village. With support and encouragement from a few peers and the Stanley Foundation, they persisted. Now teachers can rightfully boast of ownership of the global education model that exists in Muscatine today. Our experience is not one of state or district mandates coming from the top down. Rather, Muscatine's global effort is an example of efforts bubbling up from the bottom to energize the district.

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Odyssey of the Mind

Odyssey of the Mind is an international problem solving competition among K-12 students. The program is run by the OM Association, a nonprofit corporation. Problems cover a wide range of interest, from designing and building mechanical devices to interpreting famous works of literature. Approximately 350,000 students participate annually in local, regional, and statewide competitions that culminate in the World Finals.

To participate in the program, a school must become a member of the OM Association (\$90 for U.S. schools). For more information, write Odyssey of the Mind at P.O. Box 27, Glassboro, NJ 08028.

School Board and Administrative Support

The school board and administration have taken their support of global education out of the realm of mere verbal assent into the real world of action. Adopting the mission and philosophy statement and making a global perspective a criterion for curriculum development are two important ways. On a concrete level, they have showed their support by providing school time for the task force to do its work and by using discretionary funds to support teachers writing curriculum in this area. The level of support has varied over the past 20 years throughout the terms of many superintendents and boards of directors. It is a tribute to the persistence of all that progress has steadily continued.

State Initiatives

Those involved in agriculture know firsthand how events in other parts of the world directly affect their lives and livelihood. So perhaps it is not surprising that Iowa, a leader in both education and agriculture, would mandate global education. The state standard that went into effect in July 1989 calls for each school board to "adopt a plan which incorporates global perspectives into all areas and levels of the educational program. . . ." A state mandate had long been a dream of global educators in Iowa. When the state department of education began a review of state standards, the Iowa Global Education Association worked diligently for more than a year to ensure that global education would become one of the state's mandated items.

An Evolving Vision

We believe that Muscatine's experience suggests the value of teachers' and communities' persistently asking themselves, "What will our students need to know to live productive lives?" It also shows the value of teachers' owning and designing educational programs, the benefits to all of district support of teacher leadership in curriculum development, and the many and varied rewards of teachers' networking with agencies, businesses, foundations, as well as with other teachers at different levels.

Perhaps most important, our experience points to the need to remember that education, as a process, always needs to be moving ahead. Our global education program is not yet what we envision it can be. In fact, we expect the vision we have today to be different tomorrow. Having a worldwide perspective and appreciating the world's diversity—these are our goals for our students; how we accomplish them is an evolving process. □

Reference

Alger, C.F., and J.E. Harf. (1986). "Global Education: Why? For Whom? About What?" In *Promising Practices in Global Education: A Handbook with Case Studies*, edited by R.E. Freeman. New York: National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies.

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