

## **INTERDEPENDENCE: Increasing Global Awareness and International Perspectives (Mindedness)**

### **Introduction**

Several years ago the Scarsdale School District created a “think-tank”, which we call the Interdependence Institute. It is an opportunity through conversation, sharing and community exchange for teachers and administrators to think critically and creatively about the forces that are shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how these forces are shaping the education students must acquire to be successful in a rapidly changing multinational society. Globalization, the key agent of change, is shaping markets, labor, technology, economics, and politics. Our students need to be prepared to successfully navigate the challenges of this new “flat world” (as Thomas Friedman defines it). Not only do they need to be prepared with significant content knowledge but with the ability to be innovative and imaginative. It is our hope that Scarsdale will lead the way in defining education in the Age of Globalization.

We recently surveyed the faculty on where we are on our interconnected journey. Sue Peppers and I will summarize the work, thusfar.

### **Global Awareness in the Scarsdale Schools: An Overview of the Current Scene and Future Prospects**

This report provides a concise overview of indicators, efforts, activities, and initiatives designed to increase global awareness, understanding, and perspectives among the Scarsdale academic community. Without attempting to catalogue every instance of global activity in the schools, the report highlights representative examples of efforts to increase global awareness and understanding at all academic levels and across the spectrum of academic disciplines. The report is divided into the following areas: (1) Curriculum; (2) Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities; (3) Staff Development; (4) Teacher and Student Exchanges (5) Community Service; (6) Community Participation; (7) Reflections and Recommendations.

**Curriculum (Increasing Students' Awareness and Appreciation)**

The elementary school curriculum is replete with courses and projects that capitalize on opportunities to introduce the concepts of global awareness with a broad global perspective. Courses in foreign language in the upper elementary grades and units in music courses throughout the elementary grades introduce differences in cultural attitudes and behaviors, along with folksongs, instruments, and music from many cultures. Elementary teachers use literature (stories and poems from around the world); social studies (units on immigration and geography, arts, architecture); and physical education (artists, buildings, sports and games from around the world), to enhance and expand their students' international awareness. These examples are supplemented by library research on topics such as world economic resources, including issues of poverty and homelessness; global ecological issues, including deforestation, water distribution and waste disposal; the study of Japanese culture; and a contextualized study of the American Revolution and United States Constitution in the context of Greek, Roman, and British law.

The Middle School curriculum deepens and extends the introductory experiences in global awareness that students carry over from elementary school. In particular, the programs in World Languages (including ESL), Related Arts (Music, Art, Health, and PE), science, social studies, and CHOICE, emphasize global awareness and international understanding in their curricular offerings. Most often, teachers integrate into their courses units that provide a global perspective—whether the subject involves geography and history, science and technology, music and art, or foreign languages. Among the wide range of topics studied through the Middle School curriculum are interdisciplinary lessons and projects related to conservation and sustainability, human rights and social justice, diversity and

difference—all taught and experienced with the goal of deepening student understanding of the complexity of these global issues and developing their recognition of the value of other perspectives.

The High School curriculum further extends and enriches students' understanding of the uncertainties, complexities, and ambiguities involved in what it means to be a global citizen and to live in an interdependent world. Freshmen read myths from a dozen different cultures and other works of literature from around the world. World History courses are part of the ninth and tenth grade curriculum. AT History and American Politics courses consider global issues, perspectives and developments. In a twelfth grade "Dilemmas" course, books such as *The Kite Runner* are read to examine ethical dilemmas confronting contemporary Afghanistan. Art and music from a range of world cultures is studied, including from countries along the Silk Road. The science curriculum includes global perspectives through the study of chemistry, ecology, energy, and evolution. Among topics considered in the various courses are different belief systems, the roles of women and families in different cultures, colonization and conflict worldwide, globalization, trade, cultural diffusion, language and literacy, terrorism and human rights.

### **Co-Curricular and Extra-curricular Complementarities (Extending the Student Learning Experience)**

At each level—elementary, middle, and high school—curricular work to promote global awareness and understanding spills over into projects, activities, and other forms of engagement that go beyond school, department, and course. Examples at the elementary level include Environmental Field Day, Family History, International Fair, and Multicultural Fairs. At the Middle School Human Rights Day exposes students to significant local and national problems with wide-ranging global implications. One of the major goals of Human Rights Day and of its curricular connections throughout the year, is to increase students' empathy and compassion for others. A second goal is to emphasize the complex and far-reaching implications of interdependence.

Another way that the Middle School promotes and develops global awareness is through its clubs, such as the World Culture Club, Total Immersion, Ecology Club, and Upstanders Club. In addition, the Middle School brings in international speakers, such as the Lost Boy of Sudan for Human Rights day, along with other domestic presenters and workshop leaders to dramatize and create virtual experiences involving global problems, as for example, Carl Hobart with his Axis of Hope workshops on topics such as land ownership in Ethiopia.

At the High School, co-curricular and extra-curricular projects and initiatives that reflect and develop global awareness and understanding take a wide variety of forms. Among them are Upstander Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, World Language Day, Ghana Assembly, a health fair, an international luncheon and workshops, class trips to NYC, special museum exhibits, historians at the NY Bar Association, the New York Historical Society, African dances and movies, and trips to other countries run by the art, music, and foreign languages departments. Not to leave out the International Buddy Club.

### **Teacher and Student Exchanges**

At the high school level, there has been and continues to be a wide range of student and teacher global exchanges. Through the Carnegie Hall music program, Scarsdale teachers met with teachers from India. The Department of Music and Performing Arts invited a conductor from Ecuador to work with the high school choir. The Yale-PIER Program included work in Ecuador and Nicaragua. Through the East West Center, teachers have traveled to Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Through other programs and sponsors, teachers have traveled to Brazil, Cuba, Ghana, Germany, and Morocco. Scarsdale students have worked with students from India in the Carnegie Hall program, and they have traveled to Australia, Cambodia, China, France, Ghana, Greece, Italy, and Spain. Students from China, France, and Italy have visited Scarsdale.

### **Staff Development (Deepening Teacher Understanding)**

Scarsdale's strong tradition of professional development includes a number of Scarsdale Teacher Institute courses with a global perspective. In the Earthlinks course, for example, the following topics have been included: Islam in Public Schools; Gender Issues in the Developing World; Israeli Peace Now Movement; Chrysalis Campaign, Helping the Poor; Yale Programs in International Education Resources; Natural and Man-made Disasters in the Developing World. Other STI courses with an international dimension or framework include courses such as the following: Chinese Culture through Films, World Culture Through Dance, Global Capacities, Japanese Culture, and Literature Across Boundaries. In addition to courses offered directly through the STI, staff professional development continues to be supported through projects and trips abroad. Some recent examples include Language Study in Valencia, Music Study in Latvia, Lesson Study in Singapore, Music and Dance in Ghana, and a number of Asia Pacific programs involving students and faculty in Cambodia and Indonesia.

Beyond the STI, Scarsdale faculty, particularly at the secondary level, have participated in conferences devoted to aspects of global and international concepts and issues, both in the United States and abroad. Teachers have taken courses at the American Historical Association, ACTFUL, the Asia Society, the China Institute, the Japan Society, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the United Nations. They have attended conferences in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Berlin, to name a few.

### **Community Service (Involvement, Engagement, Participation)**

Elementary school service projects include fundraisers and food drives to increase awareness of the problem of malaria in Africa and world hunger there and elsewhere. Money that students raise is used as a small step to help alleviate these and other global problems and catastrophes, including tsunami and earthquake relief. Middle School service projects include the walk for water and the public service announcements that students complete in seventh grade. Other service project opportunities are associated with Human Rights Day themes and include political and environmental issues, such as civil

rights and sustainability, respectively. High School community service projects are partly linked with Senior Options, though not exclusively so. Some examples include the Bronx River Project, Service Day to Afya, sending books to Cambodia and Sri Lanka, and community service in Spanish-speaking countries.

### **Community Connections (Broadening the Base)**

The larger Scarsdale community supports many school global projects and initiatives. The Elementary PTA, for example, has sponsored and/or supported a wide variety of global and international events and activities. Examples include music and dance performances by visitors from Brazil, Columbia, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and Puerto Rico; Chinese acrobats; Japanese drummers; an annual Chinese New Year Dragon Parade—and more. The Middle School PTA sponsors an annual International Luncheon. The Multicultural Committees of the PTA in each school have been instrumental in affording students first hand understanding of other cultures. Another example of opportunity to experience the world from another perspective.

### **Reflections and Recommendations**

The activities, projects, programs, and professional development opportunities supported by the Interdependence Institute go far beyond the customary and familiar “food, flags, and festivals.” Those types of socializing international-minded activities are indeed included, but much more is offered. The curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular courses and activities, projects and programs embody strong connections to the Scarsdale Education for Tomorrow document and to the District Strategic Plan. Characteristics and features of these internationalizing offerings and opportunities include an emphasis on developing empathy and compassion for others; understanding the world views of others; and appreciating and respecting cultural differences. These emphases are intertwined with other

aspects, including interdisciplinary teaching and learning, critical and creative thinking, and the collaborative solving of non-standard problems.

### **What's On The Immediate Horizon**

- Jean Francois Richard—author of *High Noon*, former vice-president of the World Bank will present a Keynote talk for a Superintendent's Conference Day.
- Visit from The Afghan Youth Orchestra—February 8, 2013 related to Carnegie Hall
- Partnership with Chinese schools in Shanxi Chunzi
- Continued opportunities for STI
- More opportunities for international teacher and student exchanges
- Invitations to prominent speakers with a global perspective and message
- School and Departmental emphasis on global awareness and understanding
- Expanded curricular embedding of global perspectives

### **CFI Grant**

A team of teachers and administrators received a grant to research the redesign to the Senior High School calendar in order to provide all students with authentic learning opportunities through which they will increase their global perspectives and cultural understanding and develop capacities to successfully navigate this ever increasing flat world.

### **Conclusion**

We will conclude with student voices who give testimony to this important work and why we are pursuing the redesign of the Senior High School calendar.