

A Preliminary Survey of Student Activism in the International School Setting:
Focus on the American International School-Riyadh

An Independent Learning Project

Presented By

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Abstract

This Independent Learning Project fulfills the need for preliminary exploration of the motivations and opportunities available for high school student activists attending English-speaking international schools overseas. It focuses on the unique situation of the American International School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and student members of a co-curricular club called Technology With a Cause (TWAC).

TWAC began its work during the 2005-2006 academic year and with the completion of its second year of work was used as a time to evaluate the club and to gain some insight into the motivations and future ambitions of student members. An online survey tool, SurveyMonkey, was used to survey club members in areas that included technology use and proficiency, evaluation of Technology With a Cause and future ambitions.

The results of this project can be used as a preliminary case study of student activism in the international school setting and will be useful for future explorations in other international schools. In addition, this work provides some insight into the successful implementation of co-curricular clubs addressing humane issues.

Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale

American international schools overseas provide an excellent and unique opportunity to explore the issues of student activism and the role of technology in promoting and enhancing student activism. It is my hope that through the development and evaluation of a school based student group at the American International School-Riyadh (AIS-R) that I will not only create opportunities to empower and challenge students of that school but will also begin to develop an idea of best practices for student groups of this type. One critical part of this study will be to determine student motivation for participation in a humane education student group, to determine efficient use of technology to move the groups activities forward and remain connected to other school groups, to monitor students activism once they leave AIS-R, and to develop a successful template for other schools to use in replicating a club like this.

There will be an emphasis on the use of technology. Technology, especially computer and Internet based technologies, provide students with up to the minute information about the world around them. In addition, easy and cheap computer based forms of communication, including e-mail, chat rooms and instant messaging mean that students are able to break down geographic barriers that may have previously prevented rapid organization and global participation. Finally, computer based multi-media programs allow students of all ages to create memorable and motivating presentations that can mobilize communities and inspire action.

These international academic institutions often reflect the methodologies and practices of stateside academic institutions with some international academic programs but they are located where participatory democratic principles may not be embraced and student activism is typically unheard of. In addition, since these schools are operated to educate expatriates, the student body attending these institutions is often extremely diverse with the number of nationalities reaching into the dozens. This diversity and work in student activism will often bring together students from backgrounds that may have a history of conflict. It is not uncommon for Pakistanis to work alongside Indians, for Sunnis to cooperate with Shias, and for Druze to brainstorm with Maronites. Many of the students who attend these schools come from well-connected families and are of a higher socioeconomic status. So, one may argue that getting these groups to work together and to participate in changing what they identify as injustice and rights violations, one is also building bridges for a more peaceful future. The higher socioeconomic standing of these students also means that they have access to the newest technologies and given the high tuitions at these international schools, the schools are able to provide multiple opportunities for the students to learn and consistently use technologies in their studies.

A glance through any daily news can be an invitation for despair, depression and detachment. As a young person in today's world these news items can be particularly daunting as they wait in a kind of "power limbo", seeking chances to be involved in dealing with these critical issues. Not all kids, however, sit idly by allowing themselves to be buffeted by the events around them. "Kids are natural rebels, whether its 1967 or 2007. There are kids out there who are committed to challenging that which they believe

needs changing. They want to change the world. And they understand that although they may not succeed, making the attempt was-is-worth it” (Ellerbee, 2007, p. 1). From Iranian students taking to the streets and being detained incommunicado to Chilean students participating in the “Penguin Revolution” calling for educational reform, students have demonstrated a willingness to participate and to suffer for injustice and abuse and there are examples of this from all over the globe.

Schools and school districts have often been involved in providing students with the knowledge and the opportunities to nurture the skills necessary to participate in the world around them and to act against injustice and rights violations. Many schools across the globe have established Amnesty International chapters, have participated in the well-known Roots & Shoots program or have developed Community Service requirements designed to spur student participation in their communities. At the same time, other schools have developed clubs unique to their environment or that address single item issues deemed important by their student body or greater community. School districts have committed to various programs, including leadership development retreats for their students and, as Ralph Baker, Superintendent of Victor Elementary School District in San Bernadino County California, stated as his district hosted one of these leadership conferences, “Students achieve at high levels when they invest their thoughts and energies in long-term projects that are interesting to them” (as cited in Bonstingl, 2006, p. 35). Students today realize better than most that these global issues are important and interesting because of the wide-ranging impact they can have on all of humanity. In the same article, Karen Morgan, school board president of the same school district, states, “. . . every success builds new competencies and gives them another level to strive for” (as

cited in Bonstangl, 2006, p. 35). Success of the kind Ms. Morgan refers to builds momentum among the participating youth as they continue to handle more complicated issues.

As Howard Dean's presidential campaign in 2004 demonstrated, computer technology and the Internet can be powerful tools for gaining up to the minute information, for disseminating information quickly, and for mobilizing legions of people despite significant geographic separation. The availability of technology, especially computers and Internet access, have also greatly enhanced the ability of younger activists to gain knowledge, to raise consciousness, to enlist those separated by geographic barriers and to respond to issues quickly. Computer skills have become part of a generalized school curriculum in technology and tech savvy students easily transition from basic keyboarding skills to data manipulation to multimedia work. The role of technology in student activism is recognized in resources as varied as *Time Magazine*, the *New York Times* and *The American Psychologist*.

In short, providing students the opportunity to explore and participate in the world around them, to consciously think about the lives they lead, and to act to make the world a better place is what humane education is all about. My interest in humane education in the international school setting is the result of several parts of my life dovetailing. After over a decade teaching in American international schools overseas, I have witnessed what can happen when students from different nations sit together and work to address issues of global importance. Whether it is environmental roundtables in Oman, model United Nations conferences in Egypt, or in-class role plays in Saudi Arabia, students tackle difficult issues with energy, compassion and intelligence. Additionally, having spent

most of my time in the Middle East, I continue to witness the damage biased news reporting can bring in terms of perpetuating victimization and feeding stereotypes. My students also drive my interest through their consistent questioning of the kind of education they are receiving, the way schools are structured, and their unlimited capacity to work with technology. Over the years, I have heard many students inquire as to why they needed to study a particular issue or subject because in their eyes it did not relate to the “real” world. I continue to reflect on what I teach and its utility for my students. Articles like *Does Science Matter?* (Broad & Glanz, 2003) challenge me to think about the discipline I teach as well as the skills that my courses nurture. My colleagues also feed my interest in this topic through their energy and interest in humane education as evidenced by attendance at workshops I have offered and their eagerness to incorporate it into their course or at their home schools. Finally, on the personal side, having children of my own sensitized me further to the kind of world we live in, the kind of world they will inherit, and more specifically the type of world that many children have to negotiate as they struggle to survive.

Problem Statement

From my experience, efforts to empower students to address issues of justice and rights are often done on a piecemeal basis, if at all. Individual teachers will create a lesson or unit that addresses some type of rights or justice issue while others will create student groups that address these same types of issues outside the formal class setting. I believe that it is important to look at what makes the extra-curricular group successful as an interim step to introducing humane education into the formal classroom.

Schools are the institutions society looks toward to educate youth for success in their environment. As schools have become increasingly standardized and testing has become the central indicator for success, student opportunities to participate in activities addressing justice and rights have diminished. As many American international schools overseas tend to import structures and schemes from the United States, these institutions often mirror developments at home despite educating a student body that is not from the home country and that has very different experiences and intentions. It is therefore imperative to explore how issues of rights and justice can be integrated into these overseas institutions and challenge these diverse student personalities to work together to enact change despite the fact that the host country may not be one for which participatory democracy is the goal of formal education.

It is important to determine what it is that motivates these young people to participate in student groups addressing rights and justice and to get some insight as to how they see themselves participating in their communities once they leave their secondary education. There are numerous studies that have been conducted to determine any similarities between activism and background, race, socioeconomic standing, etc. (Sherkat & Blocker, 1994) but many of these have focused on college-aged students. My hope is that by creating a student group addressing humane issues and evaluating the first two years of its work at the American International School-Riyadh, we might get some insight into student activism at international schools overseas. With this information some conclusions may be drawn as to how best to involve international students in student activism.

As part of the overall design and assessment of the student group, it will be important to consider the role of technology and how it is used. International schools overseas often are isolated and means of communicating with the community can be restricted. There is often no efficient mail service and the use of local broadcasting is limited. In order for the group to get its message out to the community and to work with other groups on common issues, computer technology and the Internet must be enlisted.

It is my desire that this student group and its evaluation provide the impetus for a model that can be replicated at other international school around the globe. After talking to numerous colleagues and students over the years, I concluded that many students are eager for the opportunity to participate in activities to address important humane issues and that my teaching colleagues are also eager to support and/or advise these kinds of student groups at their institutions. It would be more inviting for all of those with these desires if they had some type of an outline to use when getting their group up and running. Finally, this kind of research and reflection will provide some baseline data that can be used to track how student participant in these groups continue to participate in their communities after graduation, to further explore the possibilities for humane education as a more central component in the formal class setting and for possible inclusion in some of the international academic programs like the International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement International.

Goal

The goal of this ILP is to create a school based, student run group at the American International School-Riyadh that will address issues related to humane education and to

then have members evaluate the success of the group by reflecting upon its productivity, the community response to group projects, and through completion of a formalized survey. This student group will be viewed as one way to bring humane education into the formal international school setting and as an opportunity for students to become empowered participants in the world around them. Students will be challenged to work on issues of local, regional, and global importance. It is important to also note that this pilot group is intended to be a step toward development of a model student group, replicable at other international schools and as an opportunity to further promote humane education in the international schools circuit. One hoped for offshoot of this work will be a grant-supported publication that chronicles the current work in Humane Education underway in the Near East South Asia (NESAs) group of international schools.

I envision an extra-curricular student group that will meet on at least a weekly basis to explore issues affecting the world. These students would select issues that are important to them for further research and would use their research to create multimedia presentations to raise community awareness about the issue. Once the issue has been presented to the community, student members will be challenged to create some type of action to address the problem. As part of the technological component, there will be a group of students tasked with creating and maintaining the group's website where the multimedia campaigns, resources and other relevant information can be posted. The possibility of a student blog will also be explored. This club will be open to all high school aged students, not just those who are tech savvy. It will be important to enlist the talents of a wide range of students to insure successful campaigns.

After two years of activity, the club will be evaluated based upon its success in completing campaigns, the reception of the campaigns by the greater community, the degree of networking with other schools, and surveying the participating club members. From this evaluation, it is hope that some conclusions can be drawn about how to further enhance the productivity and efficiency of the club and to develop a template that would be replicable at other international schools. I am also aware that the survey data could serve as baseline data for possible longitudinal study of group members once they have left the school.

Finally, I will also pursue a grant from the Near East South Asia (NESA) Council of Overseas Schools located in Athens, Greece to support the publication of a teacher resource that will document the humane education activities currently underway in the NESA region. This document will include information narrating the humane education activities undertaken at each participating school; numerous activities designed to spark reflection, debate, and discussions about humane education issues, and a list of important resources related to humane education topics. The published document will be available in print or electronic form through the NESA offices in Athens.

Population

The primary beneficiaries of a project like this will be the students who choose to participate. As I alluded to earlier and will discuss in more depth later, schools do not often provide opportunities for students to pursue greater understanding of and participation in the world around them. With clubs available that focus on these important social issues (as defined by the students themselves), students will become

empowered to engage in their communities. In addition, these group participants will have the opportunity to nurture relevant social skills and learn more about the issues that concern them and what is being done to address those issues. Skills such as teamwork, public speaking, researching, campaigning, and networking are all important for life-long learning and transcend the traditional classroom.

This ILP will also serve as a model for other teachers and international schools interested in further challenging their student body to become more socially aware and participatory. As a result, there is the potential for more meaningful community service and with that the entire community will benefit.

My ILP may also help the work of humane educators to evolve within the international schools circuit. It is apparent that there are numerous ongoing activities in humane education within the NESAs region and a careful analysis of student groups designed to facilitate humane education can only enliven and help coordinate these efforts. This project will help them in designing and implementing student led groups focused on humane education and will also facilitate the networking of humane educators within geographic regions.

Finally, as the exposure to humane education grows, it is hoped more and more schools and academic programs will look to incorporate humane themes and topics in their syllabi.

Methodology

The pilot student group humane education project will be undertaken in two parts: Part One will outline the process of developing the student group and will document the

activities of the first year and Part Two will include an evaluation of the program which includes surveying the student participants and a request for grant funding to further explore humane education in the NESAs region.

Part One

As several items in my own personal and professional lives were dovetailing into a greater awareness of Humane Education and on the heels of my on-site training at the International Institute for Humane Education, our technology coordinator at AIS-R, Mike Pelletier, had become quite frustrated with current manifestations of our student run technology club. The technology club was called Students Working to Advance Technology (SWAT), but it had devolved into more of a gaming club with no real direction. I had recently returned from a summer of introduction to Humane Education at IHE's home base in Surry, Maine and was keen to explore the idea of student produced digital videos addressing human rights and social justice issues knowing that, as a school, we had quite advanced technology available for our students.

Mike and I met during the teacher orientation week prior to the start of the 2005-2006 academic year and determined we would pool our resources and create a new type of club that challenged students to live more consciously and to use technology to raise awareness in our community about student selected humane issues. At the start of each academic year, AIS-R hosts a clubs fair in the cafeteria which allows clubs and their sponsors to advertise their activities and encourage students to sign up. We had asked for a booth to present our club to the student body and simply determine if there was any interest. At AIS-R a club would only be sanctioned to run if it had at least 10 members

and so this was the number we were hoping for. We were prepared to present the club as a more progressive technology club but one that would require the expertise and interests of more than just the technologically savvy student. We had a very fine example of the kind of video production we were keen for the group to produce and the student producer had agreed to be the inaugural president and help drum up support. There were also other examples that we pulled from the Internet.

We were extremely encouraged when nearly twenty percent of our high school population signed up for the club. It was an inspiring first step as many students came to our booth with issues they were already interested in working on.

We had determined that we would hold our all-group meetings on Mondays during the lunch period and that additional time after school would be used for filming, researching, and production of the awareness campaigns. The students were challenged to go beyond the consciousness raising and to also plan for some type of action to help address the issue raised.

The working groups would be determined by the students. Once a topic had been raised for consideration, if there was suitable interest, a team was developed that would work on all components of the consciousness raising production. This would include those who were researchers, videographers, and technology folks. In an effort to ensure that there was an exchange of skills, technology tutorials would also be offered during after school sessions.

The final products of this group work will be presented at our monthly community assemblies. Each month the high school student body is gathered in the theatre to share success and recognize achievements. During this time, it is expected that

at least one of our working groups would have a multimedia presentation ready to present. Although these assemblies will be our most consistent venue for presentation, they will not be our only venues. The AIS-R community also hosts two large events each academic year, Family Fun Day and International Festival, while also maintaining several publications, NewsFlash and Mawade'ah, which can be used to present issues to our community. Finally, since this group will be using technology as a vehicle to get its message out, it was our intention to create a website that would present the student productions to a much larger audience.

Part Two

The second part of this project will be to conduct surveys with the student participants in the group and begin to draw some conclusions about the type of student who participates in this opportunity and how to better organize an efficient student group. I hope that this data will also provide some preliminary data for a longitudinal study of how high school level Humane Education affects later behavior and participation in community action. With this information, I hope that there can be some progress toward developing a template for other schools to use when implementing a student group focused on humane issues.

The survey procedures will be conducted electronically and will be given to all participants in the program over the past two years. The survey will be administered using SurveyMonkey, an on-line survey resource, the link for which will be given to the students so they can take it at their leisure. See Appendix A for the survey questions.

Part two of the project will also involve development of resources and information that can be used to further promote and highlight Humane Education within the NESAs region. To that end, I will submit a grant application (See Appendix B) to the NESAs organization to cover the costs of producing a paper and electronic resource for NESAs region teachers. This resource will document the Humane Education activities occurring at each school in the NESAs region. In addition this resource will contain recommended resources that have been used by NESAs region teachers and that have informed their work in Humane Education.

As a final note, I know that this is a preliminary step in exploring the role of humane education in the international setting. As this is the case, much of the work is meant to determine the viability of student led groups addressing humane issues, the level of activity currently undertaken in the NESAs region related to humane education, and the long-term impacts of such activities on students, teachers, schools, and the region. As I stated, I hope that this exploration will serve as a preliminary step in more careful analysis of humane education in international schools and as a catalyst for further development of work in this area.

Limitations

There are definite limitations to this study and the organization of the project. The most glaring limitation is that it is focused on a small population at a single international school. This will narrow the number and types of conclusions that can be drawn. These conclusions will also be dependent upon the response rate from students currently involved with Technology With a Cause and from teachers who are actively engaged in some type of humane education within the NESAs region. As I have stated

previously, the hope is to begin to determine the motivations for students to participate in student led groups addressing humane issues, to determine the level of current activity in NESA region schools addressing humane issues, and to develop a resource that will further promote Humane Education in the NESA region.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

I. An Abbreviated Consideration of the Purpose of Schools

Are students' moral desires to act being denied because students are too occupied with formal schooling that asks them to be an artist, biologist, mathematician, and historian all within an eight hour class day, and kept busy without addressing these issues? Our formal education system is creating a scenario where today's students inherit tomorrow's problems, which are the product of yesterday's generations but with no opportunity to hone the skills to tackle these problems and prevent future ones. As Michael Shellenberger and Ted Norhaus (2005) point out in *The Death of Environmentalism*, our approach to problems will require "articulating a vision of the future commensurate with the magnitude of the crisis...a collective step back and rethink everything [and approaches which no longer] address the world's problems separately" (p. 12).

Given the gravity of the issues presented at the start of this paper and the seriousness of many other issues not indicated by the list, we need to involve as many people as possible in addressing these concerns and this increasing involvement must include our youth. There is considerable work to do to empower our youth and encourage them to act, as often they feel helpless, resigned to apathy as they wait their turn to get involved.

The first step in empowering high school aged students to involve themselves in raising consciousness of these issues and involving themselves in change is to indeed recognize that each of these youngsters has leadership potential. Too often, the potential

of students to act, lead, and participate in change is underestimated. As leadership development retreats for students in the United States continue to attract large numbers of students, they seem to be a new and exciting idea that is rapidly inspiring students to act and lead. As youth in the developed world spend so much time in schools, it is while in this institution that students are expected to gain the knowledge and nurture the skills thought to promote success in their local environments.

There are many examples of bringing school based activities and technology together to empower youth to participate in global issues such as those highlighted at the start of this paper. Whether it is elementary aged students participating in Generation YES or more formalized instruction in Humane Education, schools and technology seem to be natural bedfellows in efforts to catalyze youth activism. By bringing together up-to-date information about issues of student interest and individuals whose unique perspectives on issues enliven debate and planned action, school based activism is enhanced by technology.

Discussions regarding the role of schools in educating the populace, funding this endeavor, and the process of education in formal settings are often heated, emotional and divisive. As more and more people lay claim to scholastic territory the demands on educational institutions continue to grow and too often, schools become the playground for political games. From Total Quality Management (TQM) schemes to No Child Left Behind and high stakes testing, there seem to be no shortage of “fixes” for our endless educational woes. All of these are trumpeted as the next carefully designed program to truly educate the masses and correct the ailing educational system.

As Westheimer and Kahne (1998) point out, “Despite the rhetoric, curriculum that considers the nature of social problems and ways youth might respond as citizens rarely gets center stage” (p. 1). They argue that education should be about participatory democracy and not about procedural democracy. As they state, “In the latter, citizens maintain the right to vote and take part, while in the former, they actually do take part” (p. 2). A glance through the history of education in the United States reveals that in the early part of the twentieth century, teaching for active participation was embraced. This involved challenging students to analyze the world around them so that problems could be identified and remedied. This approach was often coupled with experiential activities and other communal undertakings that highlighted the fight against injustice and promoted the value of working together. “The core was designed to place multidisciplinary analysis and action regarding social problems and themes from social life at the heart of students’ school experience” (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998, p. 3). We have gotten away from this. The need to return to this educational focus is presented by a teacher at C. Wright Mills Middle School on behalf of its students:

I’d like to see them have an awareness of what makes the world , in their eyes, a good place and a set of skills that allows the to act on their vision. I’d like [students to understand] the need for individuals and groups to act collectively to make the world a good place(p. 7.)

There are many who would argue that schools mirror societal values and priorities and this may explain why there are so many hands in the kitty of the educational enterprise. From the generalized standards to which all students should aspire, to the lobbying for benign language in all manner of textbooks (Ravetch, 2003), the debate over

educational priorities is endless. If John Taylor Gatto (2003), in his essay *Against School*, and others are correct, schools are doing exactly what they are designed to do and those who are in power are content with that status quo. As Gatto (2003) draws upon his own teaching career and what is familiar to any experienced educator, it is clear that students and, too often, faculty are bored. As students are chomping at the bit to do “something real”, they are told that passive test preparation is what is best for them. Gatto (2003) draws upon H. L. Mencken, who put it rather succinctly when he stated in that public education specifically is not

to fill the young of the species with knowledge and awaken their intelligence. . . . Nothing could be further from the truth. The aim . . . is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same safe level, to breed and train a standardized citizenry, to put down dissent and originality. That is the aim in the United States . . . and that is its aim everywhere else (p. 35.)

Gatto goes even further and draws upon Alexander Inglis’s (1918) six basic functions of modern schooling. These six include: the adjustive/adaptive function; the integrating function; the diagnostic and directive function; the differentiating function; the selective function; and the propaedeutic function. In short, all of these were designed to negate any potential unity in those who had been “schooled”. Gatto concludes by stating that “genius is as common as dirt” (p. 38), but our school systems work hard to squelch or carefully control it.

He is not alone in his scathing appraisal of public education in the United States but if one is inclined to ignore his conclusions and relegate his insights to those being produced by yet another disgruntled educator, let’s at least consider for a moment one

part of his appraisal, specifically that those in power are content with the current situation and may not be interested in changing the system. If this is true, it is clear that any federal or top down initiative is going to be limited in its impact and its potential to change such a monolithic undertaking as public education. Significant change might only happen at the classroom level by students and teachers who are willing to engage in more worldly, meaningful educational activities. Education that nurtures participation in contemporary society must nurture skills and empower youth, not pacify and deny students real world experience.

Schools are a reflection of economic priorities and hyper-individualism. These are the values that are embraced by most contemporary educators and reflect the evolution of a capitalist paradigm. Jane Pitt (1998) in her work, *Social Justice in education in "new times"*, argues for the "emergence of a curriculum that educates for social responsibility, rather than the current curriculum that is aligned to economic imperatives" (p. 2). She concludes that as we move toward a more intellectualized society, "we see the emergence of four main inter-related issues" (p. 2). First, technology dominates the landscape and people incorporate technology in all areas of their lives. Globalization in the second issue and this brings about "global connectedness, the changing relationship between the global and the local" (p. 2). This also brings with it the development of a global consciousness which is certainly necessary for a shift toward a more socially responsible curriculum. Pitt continues by stating that the third issue is economic rationalist tendencies which tend to hyper-objectify the market. She argues that this narrow focus on the market catalyzes a split from the socio-cultural order and results in the sense that society is an obstacle to economic success. Pitt states it

succinctly, “this new form of economics prefers efficiency to equality and humanity” (p. 2). The fourth issue is one of bureaucratic rationalism which with the other three brings about a life of hyper-individualism. She argues that intellectualization and these issues are found in both policy and practice in schools during these “new times.” This movement toward a more socially just educational environment to counter the synergy of these inter-related issues is quite different from the idea of justice in the classical sense (Pitt, 1998, p. 3). “Aristotle, for example, emphasized the individual striving for virtue within a community, when an individual was striving to be virtuous the result would benefit the whole of society” (p. 3). What is clearly missing in our current predicament is that connection between the individual and the greater society.

Giddens has proposed a six-point framework for such a shift in education. The six points are:

- * repairing damaged solidarities by reconciling autonomy and interdependence
- * recognizing the importance of the discussion of ethics, “life politics”
- * allowing individuals and groups to make things happen, a “generative politics”
- * creating a democracy where issues are discussed openly by the public
- * developing welfare state which is empowering rather than merely dispensing
- * confronting the role violence plays at all levels of human affairs (as cited in Pitt, 1998, p. 5)

This framework is a first step in bridging the gap between individualism and collective good. To bring about this type of radical shift, it is important for schools to begin nurturing the necessary skills and to work toward what MacIntyre calls, “shared

contribution to tasks and shared understanding of the rules within community” (as cited in Pitt, 1998, p. 5) so that justice can be realized.

Pitt (1998) does not stop there however, but goes on to argue that our current curriculum of economic ends results in the marginalization of many groups and the idea of cooperation. Griffiths (2003) posits that those details and persons who disrupt the smoothness and standardization of educational policy and practice are those that either assimilate or become marginalized. Differences are smoothed over and little room is given to diversity discourse. Students in a formal educational setting need to feel comfortable that their voice and life experiences are important. It is essential for students to develop an “education of their own” (Griffiths, 2003, p. 34) and have their voices heard. To this end, diversity must become a more central component of the educational enterprise.

One approach to reconnecting and embracing the diversity that schools draw has been labeled “transversal politics” (Cockburn & Hunter, 1989). In this context, transversal politics is defined as “the practice of creatively crossing (and re-drawing) the borders that mark significant politicized differences” (Cockburn & Hunter, 1989, p. 89). Griffiths (2003) points out that central to this approach is “keeping differences deconstructed, rather than solidifying, or reifying them” (p. 38). This approach has significant implications for a shift from the current curriculum of economic imperatives to a curriculum founded on social justice and moral conscience. There are opportunities for school-wide and classroom-based change that would include the very actors, teachers and students, who can most affect educational change.

In summary, the current status of our schools is one of education for employment, income generation and consumerism. Original thinking and collective action is frowned upon as academic institutions work to standardize all pupils. The products are flexible workers but not persons who are truly educated (Gatto, 2003). In this climate, value is placed on functionality and not social responsibility. Any critical analysis of the marketing industry (Linn, 2005; Stauber & Rampton, 1995) and a careful consideration of the factors that determine a “robust” economy, will lead one to conclude that the functioning of the individual is the critical component and disregard for society as a whole is expected. In short, schools are mirroring the values of the intellectualized elite and are being successful in what they are designed to accomplish.

Referring to Pitt (1998) once again, there are ways to efficiently facilitate a shift in curriculum to reflect a more socially responsible education but this will not come without significant effort as the powers that be are content with the status quo. What is required is an education founded on participation and not material accumulation. Pitt proposes eight factors needed to cause profound curricular change.

- 1) The building of a social identity is a key to the development of a sense of community and thus a more socially just culture.
- 2) The development of social responsibility where all members of a society are involved in the discussion of a diverse range of subjects.
- 3) Providing space for the creative and aesthetic will allow for the development of new ideas for the promotion of social responsibility.
- 4) The school would become a place which modeled social cohesion and a sense of community.

- 5) The classroom would become a place which modeled social cohesion and a sense of community.
- 6) The school and classroom provide opportunities for reconnecting with the self and understanding and (re)acting to change.
- 7) The school and classroom become forums for the discussion of ethical issues.
- 8) The school and classroom provide opportunities for exploring one's creative capacities and gaining pleasure from learning (pp. 7-11.)

It is easy to see how these eight factors can quickly lead to what Beyer (1993) has defined as critical democracy – a way of understanding, participating in, and reshaping the institutions, daily practices, relationships, and values that now dominate in education and the wider society. Beyer continues by arguing that participation must be broadened if we are to realize critical democracy and to do so people, in this present context, students must develop:

- 1) the ability to analyze, critique, and evaluate options so that both short- and long-term consequences can be considered;
- 2) a forum for the public discussion of issues and ideas, since it is through such discussion that we create, clarify, and re-evaluate our own positions and understand the viewpoints of others;
- 3) access to relevant information, and to multiple interpretations of it that provide new meanings;
- 4) the habit of coming together to make public decisions, within which we are not coerced or manipulated by “experts” with access to forms of allegedly private and specialized knowledge (the intellectualized elite that Pitt refers to?); and

5) a moral commitment to the common good that transcends both individual self interest and emotivism and exposes the tendency for more powerful individuals and groups to manipulate and cajole the rest of us (p. 1.)

In these skills and situations that need to develop, we can begin to see a way forward in bringing more humane education to the fore. Beyer continues and focuses on more detailed areas of need. He states,

Central to a rejuvenated form of education is the development of collaborative projects involving students, teachers, and community members. Such projects unite the interests and questions of students with forms of knowledge and action in the real world. When undertaken in a social environment emphasizing ethical conduct, they provide a plausible way of incorporating the psychological and the social within the framework of schooling for moral action and social responsibility. A reconstructed curriculum must also be founded on the recognition that the boundaries that separate the school day into discrete time segments, subjects, and units of instruction are artificial and damaging. The segmentation of the school day in these ways reinforces the sense that time and space are structured by others, those with power, and lends support to an efficiency-oriented “banking” concept of education while constraining genuine inquiry. It also reinforces the divisions between head and heart, reason and emotion, thinking and doing, that generate passivity in students and citizens and stifles democratic actions” (p. 2.)

This kind of change would move us away from content heavy courses to those that focus on themes and important global issues and that emphasize intellectual engagement. As

Beyer further points out, all of this would be enhanced by student participation with those who are too often marginalized by the current structure. Working with victims of domestic abuse, drug addicts, homeless persons, and others who are under-privileged or forgotten would assist students in understanding the dynamic society we inhabit. It would also provide outlet and action for their inquiry and desire to accumulate real world skills.

All youth have the potential to make a positive difference in the world in which they reside. The fundamental goal of schools must be to empower these young people and provide opportunities for them to nurture skill that will allow them to make a difference. Often young people are held in check as they wait their turn to participate in the world around them. As a result, they lack confidence and are hesitant to take steps to involve themselves in the world around them. Schools contribute to this and assist in creating students who simply exist and are buffeted about by the world around them. “Most teenagers do not possess an innate confidence in their leadership abilities. This is compounded by a paucity of opportunities to lead” (Grothaus, 2004, p. 228). The impetus then falls heavily on schools to provide opportunities to nurture leadership skills to insure a future of active people.

Students will often experience an increased self-esteem and resilience when they are engaged to participate in their communities and are tasked with involving themselves with improving the world around them. Unfortunately, children these days are growing up in a toxic environment for participation and humane lifestyles. Children of all ages are struggling to find appropriate role models as this fifth grade teacher can attest, “I do a unit on heroes and heroines. It’s gotten harder and harder to do. Kids don’t even

understand the concept anymore. They pick TV characters, even Garfield the Cat. The closest they come to real person is professional wrestlers . . . they value money, being on TV, being strong and being attractive. The deeper experiences and values of humanity are lost to these kids. Nobody is exposing them to those” (as cited in Lickona, 1991, p. 308). An environment poisoned by hyper-competitiveness and consumerism, fueled by products of school policies that produce more eager participants in this material world, will mean more of the same inhumane conditions for future generations. We can see evidence of some of this damaging environment already. Pollack (1998) cites Dr. C. Wayne Sells from the Department of Pediatrics at the University of California: “The major causes of mortality and morbidity have shifted from infections to behavioral etiologies” (p. 341).

Fortunately, as Grothaus (2004) points out, there are voices of hope that are challenging youth to be part of a different world. “In 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged a group of high school and college students to ‘make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle . . . you will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.’” Marion Wright Edelman, president of the Children’s Defense Fund, had this to say: “I was taught that the world had a lot of problems; that I could struggle and change them; that intelligence and material gifts brought the privilege and responsibility of sharing with other less fortunate; and that service is the rent each of us pays for living – the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time or after you have reached your personal goals.” Jesse Jackson observed this distinction between champions and heroes: “a champion . . . wins a World

Series or an Olympic event and is hoisted on the shoulders of teammates and fans. A hero carries people on his (sic) shoulders (p. 229).”

As Grothaus goes on to explain, these messages from people of this stature can be inspiring but inspiring messages need to be received closer to home, too. This is where school-based actions can really take hold and begin to build a greater sense of participation, community and accomplishment for youth. Grothaus advocates a “servant-leadership” approach to enhance the leadership skills of today’s youth. The term “servant-leader” was first coined by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970) and it incorporates a “vision of leading through service” (p. 229). Grothaus (2004) continues drawing on Greenleaf (1977) and states, “The servant leader holds the organization or community “in trust” as an act of stewardship. Greenleaf’s (1977) “test” of the effectiveness of this philosophy posed the following questions: ‘Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants’ (as cited in Grothaus, 2004, p.229)? On the heels of these sentiments, Grothaus (2004) proposes the use of the deliberate psychological education model (Mosher & Sprinthall, 1970) to nurture young servant leaders. This model will be explored further in chapters three and four of this work.

It may be wise to take a moment here and heed the words of Rousseau, from his classic work, *Emile*. In the work, Rousseau is very aware that there are limitations to what young people should be exposed to in an effort to stimulate altruistic responses. Too much of the “sad sides of life” is what causes “priests and doctors to become pitiless” (as cited in Roosevelt, 2006, p. 19). Rousseau also realizes that, like Grothaus (2004) above, Emile’s sense of compassion will begin with those who are closest to him.

It is from these feelings for those closest to him that Emile will eventually begin “generalizing his individual notions under the abstract idea of humanity” (as cited in Roosevelt, 2006, p. 19). In this context we are advised by Rousseau to be careful and nurturing in our efforts to expose youth to the machinations of the world around them. That like so many other things, young people need to be developmentally ready for recognitions of the challenges and their opportunities to address them. But as has been indicated before, these actions must start close to home and work gradually to a wider application (Roosevelt, 2006, p. 19).

One of the most important skills to be nurtured if we are to move toward a more humane educational experience for all is the skill of collaboration or partnership. As Griffiths (2003) points out, “the truth is partnerships do not always work well. What is more, the time and resources needed to nurture them is in increasingly short supply” (p. 98). If we are to expect compassionate action on the part of the youth in our schools and communities then we will need to begin to make more time and resources available for partnership skills. These partnerships are valuable not only for the synergistic effect of having several people working toward a specific goal but, arguably more importantly, this is critical to developing an understanding about personal identity and diversity. If one agrees with Griffiths’ (2003) position that “action ought to be based on consent, consultation and common purpose” (p. 99), then to move this forward partners need to have greater understanding about differing opinions, positions, and motivations. This can only come from practicing the skills of partnership. Griffiths also raises a critical point in relation to partnerships often generated in the academic settings, particularly between schools. She posits that often the motivating factor for developing partnership is

fundamentally survival and that this keeps partnerships stymied with “working with” one another rather than “working on, and power sharing” in addressing issues (p. 100).

As mentioned previously, one of the critical factors in partnerships is the opportunity to discover more about the self and about others. As Griffiths (2003) points out, “The usual story is that there are three tenets that would hold in relation to the practice of collaboration. Discussion should (a) take place between people who are considered equals, and (b) be open and honest. (c) As a result of open and honest discussion it will be possible to reach a consensus – or at least a majority agreement – about the enterprise, and provide everyone with an agreed, rational basis for action” (p. 100). These are all well and good but, arguably, rather idealistic. For as many researchers have discovered, it is hard for people to leave their power, status and other society based characteristics at the door when working with persons of different groups. There is a point here and an important consideration is highlighted but I would argue that for school aged students, the initial undertaking of partnerships with the three usual tenets in mind is a starting point. Students will be given the opportunity to confront the power relationships, etc. that come with working together and will begin to gain some insight in how to deal with these issues so that consensus can still be built. We can not discount these differences. Again, as Griffiths concludes, “The reports of successful partnerships show that all concerned bring their whole selves to the projects: their passions and vulnerabilities, personal strengths and idiosyncrasies, social and family relations, ambitions and ideals” (p.103).

Let’s conclude this section of the review by asking a question cited in Griffiths (2003), “Is empowerment all self-delusion and/or confidence trick” (p.84)? Numerous

researchers have claimed that empowerment involves one or both of these elements. Gore (1993, 1997) has argued that the idea of empowerment places power in the realm of commodity, being presented to someone who has little or none by someone who has more (as cited in Griffiths, 2003, p. 84). As Griffiths (2003) rightly explains, though,

There is room for more than one interpretation of empowerment, connected, but different in scope and intention, and dependent on context. It may mean that power that is given away, but it may also mean power that is taken for oneself. Claims for empowerment range from gaining a sense of self as agent, through coming to understand one's class, race, gender, and other positionings, to moving the immediate context forward, and, occasionally, to large scale policy and revolution (p. 84.)

Griffiths (2003) does seem to support the idea though that, at times, getting or giving voice can be misused and lead to even more power being exerted over the already powerless. She describes it as “a kind of ventriloquism occurs when managers, teachers, policy makers and researchers express their own views but use the words of the less powerful people to give the argument a spin of consultation” (p. 84). Iram Siraj-Blatchford (1994) makes an important distinction between voice and empowerment, specifically in the context of black people, when she states that “What is important is finding a ‘voice’ that engages in critical reflection, in resistance to domination, and in affirmation of the liberation struggle” (as cited in Griffiths, 2003, p.85).

Hadfield and Haw (2001) have focused on voice and the inclusion of young people and they outline different ways that voice can be discovered. They posit that depending on what context these voices are heard and whom they are heard by may be a

subtle form of silencing (as cited in Griffiths 2003, p. 85). Fielding (2001) presents that student voices may be “genuinely new, exciting and emancipatory” but it may also be the “entrenchment of existing assumptions and intentions using student or pupil voice as an additional mechanism of control (as cited in Griffiths, 2003, p. 84).” Griffiths (2003) points out a strong correlation to this kind of activity and the work of Edward Said in his work, *Orientalism*, where he demonstrates that colonial peoples have been governed effectively when their own voices have been used against them. It is important to keep in mind that in bringing students’ action and voice into a reformed school curriculum that one must not exploit or silence student voices. Griffiths concludes that voice and the “stories told can be powerful even if imperfect in ways such as: self-expression; validation; solidarity; increasing the air space and interrupting” (pg. 86).

II. The Unique Position of the American International School Overseas

International schools located overseas continue to grow as more and more people are moving about the globe in search of jobs and interesting cultural interactions to accompany their everyday activities. According to the University of Northern Iowa International Teacher Recruiting office (2006), “Interest in international settings continues to grow among contemporary educators, and the opportunities seem to be keeping pace. International teaching opportunities began in 1888 in Mexico City with the establishment of the first American school overseas.” The number of American and International school overseas continues to grow as many political and economic factors contribute to the expansion of expatriate communities worldwide. The International Schools Services (2006) directory for 2006 lists over 500 English-speaking schools.

These schools are often an interesting extension of US based schools where systems, methodology and procedures are often transplanted to serve the American community living overseas. There is an increasing international component at many of these schools, as its student body begins to diversify and expand. As the popularity of these schools grows, so does the diversity of the student population. As a result, it is not uncommon to see the International Baccalaureate and other national curricula being taught at many of these schools.

All of these factors create an interesting environment to explore a more humane and less economy-driven educational experience for the student population and greater community. Often, families living overseas are expecting and, at times, demanding that the overseas educational experience mimic one that students would receive back in the United States. This would include the requisite high stakes testing and content driven courses that lead to “success” in the real world. It is also interesting because as the student body diversifies, there are new generations of students who are being taught in the American system and who are being exposed to what may often be more liberal thinking and less rigid structure than their parents had or that is being taught at the local schools. One last point that is appropriate to mention here given the context is that these schools are often located in countries where the idea of democracy or participatory citizens is not embraced or even denied.

The American International School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (AIS-R) is a private, non-profit, co-educational day school. AIS-R is parent-owned, licensed by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education and accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. AIS-R currently serves students from over 48 different

nationalities. It was first formed by parents in 1963 and served students from kindergarten through third grade with only 7 students enrolled. This school merged with another school in 1965 to form the Riyadh International Community School (RICS). In 1977, after several moves to accommodate increasing enrollment, the school opened on its present site. In 1982, the school name was changed to the Saudi Arabian International School - Riyadh (SAIS-R). The school has grown since its inception with a peak enrollment of 2,775 students occurring in the 1984/1985 school year. With the growth in enrollment came the expansion of curriculum, services, programs and grade levels. The school name was once again changed to its present name of AIS-R in 1999. The current enrollment is at over 700 students from KG through grade 12 and the school offers both a traditional US high school diploma and the International Baccalaureate programs.

There is interesting potential to effect significant change for the future at a school like AIS-R. Students are often of the higher socioeconomic strata and often come from high-powered families. The students often end up in positions of power and influence where they could make a significant contribution to changes in our current global predicament. We currently have sons and daughters from the Saudi royal family and students from families that are part of multi-national organizations and big business. In addition, with the diverse student body, there is excellent opportunity to nurture links between different groups of people and to break down and challenge stereotypes and other damaging generalizations. By working with these students in classes and in leadership roles the opportunities to nurture important skills for a more participatory society are endless.

III. A Brief Consideration of Student Activism

As the world grows every darker, I've been forcing myself to think about hope. I watch as the world and the people near me experience increased grief and suffering. As aggression and violence move into all relationships, personal and global. As decisions are made from insecurity and fear. How is it possible to feel hopeful, to look forward to a more positive future? The biblical psalmist wrote, 'without vision the people perish.' Am I perishing?" (Wheatley, 2004, p. 348)?

So, Margaret Wheatley begins her brief but powerful essay, *From Hope to Hopelessness*, and encapsulates what many of us have thought on at least one occasion or another. As students survey the world around them, the world they are to inherit one day, they, too, must be filled with the same wonderings. What can they do? What should they do?

Why do they seem to be doing nothing about the world around them? In short, where are the student activists that so dominated the landscape of a few decades ago and why do today's youth seem so reluctant to participate in their communities? At the same time that we are so critically considering today's youth it must be remembered that these kids are raised in an environment where, as *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2001) has highlighted, the adults are not modeling much participatory democracy and as a result, these skills are not finding their way into the schools nor are they being nurtured in other venues.

Wheatley (2004) continues, "If I worked hard, with good colleagues and good ideas, we could make a difference. Now, I sincerely doubt that. Yet without hope that my labor will produce results, how can I keep going? If I have no belief that my visions can become real, where will I find the strength to persevere" (p. 348)? With our youth, we need to take a step further back and help them to realize that there are other

possibilities, better visions to behold, than that which is represented by contemporary societies. We must then provide them the opportunities to nurture the skills necessary to achieve an alternative world and to provide them the support to go out and act. As the East German dissident Rudolf Bahro stated, “When the forms of an old culture are dying, the new culture is created by a few people who are not afraid to be insecure” (as cited in Wheatley, 2004, p. 349). As teachers and within our educational institutions we must commit to carefully bringing our students to the boundaries of their security so that they can begin to engage in change.

When students are given the opportunities to reflect, to confront their insecurities and to act, the results can be absolutely miraculous. Inspired by a front page article in the Toronto Star, Craig Kielburger created Save the Children; beginning with fundraising \$70 for a new well, Ryan Hreljac created the Ryan’s Well Foundation; spurred by lackluster education, students of Santiago, Chile took to the streets and began the “Penguin Revolution”; and the crisis in Darfur has ignited activists on American campuses. This is certainly not a comprehensive list; there are thousands of others the world over who are standing up and acting. What are the circumstances that motivate the young to act?

As an expatriate living overseas, the challenges can be more numerous and create significant obstacles for activism. To begin with, an “expat” is a guest in another country and consideration is often given to the host country’s social norms and mores. This can often result in a more accommodating or less active mentality when faced with injustice in a host country. One may simply find themselves in a country where any kind of activism and participatory democracy is frowned upon or illegal. A second challenge is

that of isolation. Persons living overseas are often isolated from the host community or from significant events due to limited technology, carefully controlled media or pervasive censorship. And yet another challenge involves perception of the expatriate by the host country nationals. Often the expatriate community is better paid and has access to more resources than local people and in attempting to participate in solving difficult issues of justice are often looked at as a source of money and resources to be thrown at the problem and not as a source of possible permanent solutions.

So to add to the question posed above, what contributes to motivation to participate in a diverse international environment? One area that is often explored is a formalized community service component. Schools will have certain numbers of service hours that must be accumulated to meet graduation requirements and the hope is that this will feed student desires to get involved in their communities and to develop the skills and the desire to carry this on wherever they may find themselves. The definitions of service learning, a teaching methodology that enriches instruction by providing thoughtfully designed opportunities for students to use their skill and knowledge in service to and with the community, and the idea in theory are remarkable but in practice the programs often fall far short of the desired outcomes. One fundamental failure of this approach is that often students fail to personalize the work and those activities which fall under service are loosely defined. One often hears the question, “Can I get hours for this?” when asking a student to carry out some task. As Thomas Merton, late Christian mystic, points out, it is all about the personal:

Do not depend on the hope of results . . . you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps

results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value the rightness, the truth of the work itself . . . You gradually struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. . . . In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything” (as cited in Wheatley, 2004, p. 350.)

In a more contemporary example, John McMillian, writing in the Washington Post (January 20, 2007), reports that one of the reasons so few young people have taken to the streets regarding the war in Iraq is that the conflict lacks personalization. By way of example, only two of his students knew someone serving in Iraq; quite the contrast to the Vietnam War years when the draft brought the war into the lives of so many. McMillian points out other factors that must also be considered. First, there has been no influential movement to inspire today’s youth. In the 1960’s, the civil rights movement served as an inspirational guide to those who protested against the conflict in Vietnam. McMillian’s students also contributed their own views on the matter. They describe their lives as constant pressure to build a college resume and to compete to survive. Statistics also have a tale to tell. McMillian reports that “according to a recent US census report, 79% of college freshman in 1970 said that “developing a meaningful philosophy of life” was among their goals, whereas only 36% said becoming wealthy was a high priority. By contrast, in 2005, 75% of incoming students listed “being very well off financially” among their chief aims.” The students continue and mentioned other obstacles to activism that included general cynicism about political and global events, and rampant individualism.

“The dearth of academic attention to successful school-based activist programs suggests that the work of practitioners is either undiscovered or undervalued by the academic community” (Lund, 2003, p. 3). If student activism and programs that might promote this kind of community participation and contributions to change are ignored by schools, academicians, policy wonks, and others, then it will be extremely difficult to expect much evidence of its happening in society at large. Continuing, today’s youth are often left fighting an image problem, a campaign which feeds gross exaggeration of the problem that is today’s youth. Lund (2003) comments,

The conservative political landscape and media coverage of current events often entails sensationalist, negative coverage of issues regarding young people. Youth crime and violent behavior are typically provided front-page treatment, even though reliable statistical indicators show that Canadian youth crime rate has actually been declining each year for over a decade. However, the false perception the public may have about our ‘dangerous youth’ has not, among my research participants anyway, prevented their successful activism in the face of this negativity. In some cases, their altruistic behaviors have actually seemed all the more remarkable in contrast to public expectations for them (p. 8.)

This is not unlike the media coverage of news in general – the bad news gets the greatest coverage because sensationalism sells. This does not excuse it and seems all the more tragic when one considers the possible consequences negative depictions of youth have on motivations of the young to involve themselves. As is indicated despite the negativity, students are eager to engage. Ramona, a high school student comments,

It would be nice if we could have some more discussions about human rights within our school. Because all of our teachers are so academic, like in English we don't really have time to read anything about prejudice or human rights. It's all the stuff on the curriculum, and we barely have enough time to finish that. And it's the same with Social Studies. All we're doing is all this stuff that's happened and we don't even get a chance to talk about what's happening right now, and any of the issues we should be discussing right now, because there just isn't time (as cited in Lund, 2003 p. 9.)

This desire on behalf of students to explore and engage with important social issues and if as Gatto (2003) pointed out, "genius is as common as dirt" (p. 38), and one may conclude as Lund (2003) does,

I am convinced we have underestimated the critical agency and tenaciousness of student activist in taking leadership roles within social justice movements. Countering public portrayals of young people as either demonized perpetrators of violence or apathetic consumers of adult driven culture, these students show themselves to be remarkable role models for other students and adults alike. Their insightful reflections on working critically from within politicized environments offer evidence of students' previously undervalued role as crucial participants in education research and reform efforts toward social justice (p. 13.)

Recognizing that young people have a lot to give is not often recognized and utilized. With all of these forces seeming to work against youth to involve themselves in social justice and other related activities, they can be excused for developing what is often referred to as learned helplessness. Many young people still decide to get involved.

According to *America's Teenage Volunteers* (1997), student activism seems to be nurtured in the early years and sustained thereafter:

- * 59% of teenagers 12-17 volunteered in the past year
- * These 13.3 million teen volunteers gave an estimated 3.5 hours per week
- * Total 2.4 billion hours of volunteering (as cited in Mueller, 2005, p. 17)

In addition to this altruism and its positive benefits, it also appears that those who volunteer and involve themselves in their community are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. A Gallup poll (1992) continues to add evidence to the benefits of youth involvement when it found that the three reasons most cited for volunteering were: 1) They felt it important to help others; 2) They felt compassion for people in need; and 3) They could do something for a cause that was important to them (as cited in Mueller, 2005, p. 18). Further, the *Treasure of the Trail, Youth as Volunteers* (1993) cites benefits from volunteering as reported by the young volunteers themselves as:

1. learned to respect others
2. gained satisfaction from helping others
3. learned to be helpful and kind

Other benefits the study noted were:

- * developed new social skills
- * strengthened decision making
- * nurtured an ethic of civic responsibility (as cited in Mueller, 2005, p. 18)

Finally, Luks (1998) has reported evidence for something referred to as the “helper’s high”, which involves many reinforcing emotions and an enhanced feeling of self-worth (Mueller, 2005). Allison Mueller (2005) has written about the positive influence service

can have on at risk youth but it appears that service has an impact on all youth who choose to involve themselves. As Mueller indicates in the title of her work, the antidote to learned helplessness may be empowerment found in service.

IV. The Power of Technology in Activism

Activism in general is becoming more media savvy but this is particularly true where youth are involved. These young people have grown up immersed in a technological world and are capable of using it for many altruistic ends. A recent issue of *Time Magazine* (Dec 25, 2006/Jan 1, 2007) recognized this as it named “You” the Time Person of the Year. The cover was accompanied by a desktop computer with a mirrored monitor. With the advent of technology, students are now more aware of the world around them. As Karl Brooks, assistant professor of history and environmental studies at the University of Kansas, reports, “More students know what’s going on in the world, though fewer of them may understand the political process itself” (Linhardt, 2006, p. 1). This increased awareness feeds the desire to become more involved and it is schools that should be involved in creating those opportunities and in helping youth understand and participate in the political process. As one student activist from Salina, Kansas, states, “The beautiful thing – the advantage we have as students – is that we don’t have the money. The biggest resources we have are passion and people. If we can organize around the passion, then we can mobilize for change” (Linhardt, 2006, p. 2). So, in addition, schools need to provide vents for issues that students are passionate about so that they might participate in the political process. Students are more aware of the world around and, “as with most things, realizing there is a problem is the first step to fixing it,”

states Justin La Mort, president of the KU chapter of the ACLU (Linhardt, 2006, p. 2). Schools need to be involved in guiding this new generation of well-informed student through the political process so that they might act to address those issues they are most passionate about when problems are indeed recognized.

Berson, Berson and Iannone (2000) recognize that “the Internet provides access to the evolving knowledge base and facilitates the dissemination of ideas for protecting, defending, and promoting the rights and welfare of children worldwide” (pg. 2). It is also recognized that other issues can benefit from Internet capabilities also. As Berson et al. (2000) continue,

When young people are armed with the most up-to-date information available on the state of children in the world, their awareness can motivate the initiation of civic action on behalf of those in need. Although children have long been the forgotten segment of society, new initiatives have provided a context in which they can be supported and simultaneously inspired to acquire skills and apply information to decisions about policy and practice. . . . Before the advent of the Internet with its statistical databases, students were relegated to textbooks with sample information that was often outdated. As current information becomes more easily accessible online, it is increasingly important that students have the opportunity to develop their analytical capabilities and acquire the motivation to shift from apathy to action in addressing social issues (p. 3.)

Two other large advantages of technology and especially the Internet are the ability they offer young people to reach out to other kids and organize themselves and coordinate activities across geographic boundaries and the ability to motivate modest

achievers. According to Featherstone (2006), groups like the International Student Activism Alliance (ISAA) are using the Internet to build networks of student activists, many in isolated schools or situations (Featherstone, 1999). This is particularly pertinent to the international school setting, as many can be isolated within their local environment and often from other international schools. Featherstone continues, “For overcoming teenage geographic and personal isolation, building an informed membership and creating at least a nascent sense of collective power, it is impossible to underestimate the centrality of the Internet [to ISAA’s work]” (p. 16). Membership increases regularly through the website and discussions often occur which involve students from all over the United States. As an example, Featherstone cites “a spirited disagreement over whether an Ohio high school had the right to exclude an unwed mother from the National Honor Society. Within twelve hours, they were mobilizing NHS students nationwide to write letters on the girl’s behalf, and a student who initially supported the exclusion became one of the point persons for the action, having been won over by the logic of the civil rights argument” (p. 16). In addition to the networking potential, the use of technology in activism also helps to engage those that might not otherwise participate. Modest achievers and those who are more introverted are often drawn to the potential of the Internet and computer technology. When the advantages of technology are focused on authentic tasks, it can bring in kids of all ages and abilities.

Many authors inject a note of caution to the use of technology in activism. To begin with, just because technology can bring people together it does not mean that it will bring people together. However, careful and appropriate use of technology will insure that people are brought together by thoughtful interactions rather than driven apart by

inaccurate and careless language. As Featherstone (1999) points out, “At this early point in its organizational life, ISAA is still more interesting as a phenomenon than as a model. It’s reliance on the Internet, for example, raises unresolved questions. For anyone who doesn’t read and write easily, e-mail can be a difficult mode of communication. . . . Access is an even thornier problem. . . . Only 18 percent of Web users have household incomes under \$25,000, so it’s not surprising that almost a third of ISAA’s chapters are in Connecticut, the most affluent state in the country” (p. 4). Another issue she highlights regarding online activism and youth involvement is, “when an organizations political indignation – and public appeal – is grounded in its members’ youth, what happens when its activists grow up? Most ISAA activists assume they’ll be politically engaged beyond high school. But it’s far from clear what those politics will be or whether a wider progressive movement will develop to shape them” (p. 5).

It seems Tom Geiger, the Washington Environmental Council’s outreach director, said it best when he commented, “the key to online activism is to not abandon proven methods of activism” (as cited in Wallace, 2001, p. 3). During this transition period it would seem prudent to use actions that have a proven track record as new methods are developed. In schools, though, we must begin by teaching the skills of activism and allowing students to pursue activities to continue to enhance those skills in whatever form they take.

Chapter 3

Evaluative Survey of Technology With a Cause by Student Membership

I. Introductory Remarks on Survey Administration

The forty three-question survey was created using the online resource SurveyMonkey. The survey solicitation was e-mailed to thirty-one past and present members of the group with a link (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=22413462554>) that directed the participants to the survey questions. The survey questions were divided into four sections for easier analysis. These sections included: demographics, technology, evaluation of Technology With a Cause, and future considerations. The questions in each section were designed to minimize time needed to complete the survey while attempting to maximize the collection of important baseline data.

Each survey participant was instructed to take the survey on their own time and were aware that their reflections would be used to further develop the club and to inform a master's thesis on the issue of humane education. Twenty of the thirty-one members responded, which equates to a 64.5% response rate.

II. Demographics

All of the respondents were either students in grade 11 (65%) or grade 12 (35%). The numbers of years attending the American International School-Riyadh (AIS-R) range from 1 to 13 years with an average length of attendance at five years. Of those who attended other international schools, eleven students attended schools in the Middle East South Asia region and the twelve came to

AIS-R from a school in Toronto, Canada. When given the opportunity to self report on ethnicity, five selected Pakistani, three selected Indian, three selected white, while Middle Eastern, Lebanese, Asian, South Asian, White Muslim Arab American, and Other were each indicated once. Three respondents opted to skip the question.

When asked to describe the educational level attained by parents, 73.7% of the respondents indicated that their mother had an undergraduate degree or higher, while 94.7% of the respondents indicated that their father had an undergraduate degree or higher. Just over five percent of the respondents indicated that they did not know what educational level their father had attained. When asked to identify their mother's profession, the students indicated that five mothers are currently housewives, five are teachers, three are in the medical profession, one is an accountant, one a businesswoman, and one a database administrator. Two respondents replied with "none" or "N/A". The father's professions were quite diverse, with a number of them employed in the IT (10%), medical (15%), finance (20%) and engineering (15%) sectors. Only 50% of the respondents indicated that they thought their parents were actively involved in the community. Of those who indicated that their parents were active, three were involved in monetary donations to various aid organizations, five were involved in community sporting events and organizations, and one was involved as part of their occupation.

The vast majority (72.2%) of respondents indicated that their parents' involvement in the community had an impact on their decision to join a club like

Technology With A Cause. The group members who responded to the survey had logged between 28 and 140 community service hours during their high school time (AIS-R requires 50 community service hours to graduate) and nearly all of the service work had been done within the context of school related activities.

III. Technology

When asked to rate their computer skills, 79% of the club members rated themselves at Above Average to Superior. In addition, 63.2% of the respondents had taken at least 2 computer courses. The amount of time spent daily on the computer was reported for all respondents at between 1.5 and 7 hours with the majority spending 3 to 5 hours on the computer each day. Of this time, most of it was reported to be using the Internet.

When asked to assess their level of awareness for current events, students reported a high level of awareness at 36.8% and some level of awareness at 57.9%. Over 68% of the respondents then indicated that their primary source for news was the television while the Internet was the primary course for 21.1% of respondents. Newspapers were reported as the primary news source in 5.3% of the respondents and other people accounted for an additional 5.3%.

Respondents overwhelmingly (84.2%) indicated that they thought computer skills were important for successful careers and 94.7% felt computer technology was important for raising awareness and addressing social issues. Just over half (55.6%) felt that participation in Technology With A Cause helped to improve their technological skills.

III. Evaluating Technology With A Cause

The past and present club members heard about Technology With A Cause through either the daily school announcements or from other members. The motivations for joining such a club included the opportunity to voice some important issues and raise awareness, the chance to help people, the prospect of a more appealing college application, the opportunity to use technology, and inspiration from past TWAC presentations. For 73.7% of the respondents, this was the first chance they had to be involved in a club with this focus and when they joined, 64.7% of them had a particular area of interest they wanted to explore. The areas of interest included: seatbelt use; HIV/AIDS; recycling; poverty; alcohol and other drug use; blogging; and health.

Eighteen of the respondents replied to the question asking them to indicate the most satisfying part of membership. All of the responses indicated satisfaction in having helped members of the community, having the freedom to explore any issues they desired, and/or a real creative outlet. Twenty five percent of the respondents decided not to respond to the inquiry about their least satisfying experience as a member but for those who did respond they indicated the number of issues and the degree of suffering, inability to see immediate implementation or resolution to a problem, lack of time and commitment to the club, club unity and student apathy, lack of time and follow through on projects.

Overwhelmingly (89.5%), student members indicated that participation in the club had changed them and 55.6% expected some kind of change due to their participation. The vast majority (94.1%) of student members indicated that lack

of time was the greatest inhibitor to club success. This was followed by limited skills (35.3%), technology issues (17.6%), parents (11.8%), and ethnicity (5.9%). Those who selected “Other” indicated that transportation, lack of member commitment, and our location were major inhibitors.

Changes suggested by the members addressed all areas of activity, from club structure to the quality of our presentations. All respondents had at least one suggestion for improvement and many had several ideas for moving the club forward in the future.

IV. Future Considerations

One hundred percent of the respondents plan on attending university after leaving AIS-R. Intended areas of study for these participants included engineering, business, law, equine studies, medicine, economics, visual arts, and “some social area”. Eighteen of the twenty answered the question, “What are your future ambitions?” Ten of these indicated that their future ambitions included helping or giving back to their communities either as part of their desired profession or through voluntary activities. The other responses included “not quite sure”, medical or business careers.

Just over 84% of the respondents indicated that they expect to involve themselves with groups like Technology With a Cause when in university and 89.5% indicated that they intend to become actively involved in their new community when leaving AIS-R.

In their current context, nearly 95% of the respondents indicated a desire to take a global issues course as an elective if it were available in the course offerings. And all respondents would like to see more global issues discussed in their current courses. When asked to reflect on what might limit discussion of important global issues in their current courses, the vast majority of respondents indicated that lack of time and rigidity of the syllabi all contributed to a lack of discussion about social issues. Other responses included lack of awareness on the part of students and teachers, an emphasis on grades, a lack of awareness as to how teachers can link social issues to their disciplines, and a lack of open minds to have meaningful discussion.

When asked for any additional comments, seven took the opportunity to respond. All responses addressed the improvement of the club, Technology With a Cause, and included a list of ideas to address in the coming years, an apology for not committing enough time to the club, appreciation for the existence of the club, and a reaffirmation that awareness of social issues need to be taught in order for people to act responsibly. Fourteen respondents agreed to be contacted at a later date for follow up studies.

Chapter 4

Summary and Conclusions

I. Summary Remarks

The age range of the respondents was limited to only grades 11 and 12 despite some grade 10 members having been contacted to complete the survey. Responses from older members may be related to greater maturity and/or more experience with the club. In other ways, the survey sample was quite diverse despite its relatively small size. Members' number of years attending AIS-R ranged from 1 year to over a decade, while those who were new to the school were coming from various other international schools. In addition, the respondents self-identified as being from a wide variety of ethnicities.

The parents of each club member had at least a high school diploma and the vast majority had gone on to acquire undergraduate or graduate degrees. The group of fathers had attained higher degrees than did the group of mothers. Club members were equally split as to their parents' community involvement, with 50% indicating that their parents were not actively involved in the community. Of those who did report parent involvement in the community, they indicated that the school and community sports events served as the central venue for that involvement.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated that their parents' community involvement or lack thereof had no impact or an uncertain impact on their own community participation. All respondents reported a large number of community service hours in the past few years but that is to be expected as AIS-R

has a community service requirement for graduation. What remains unclear is how many students are motivated by altruistic intent rather than the graduation requirement. The kind of service reported was again primarily centered at school functions and activities. This may be indicative of many things, including the rather restricted environment that Riyadh presents for expatriates and lack of awareness on the part of students regarding need in the community. There seems to be a need for expanded community networking and more personal contact with the service requirement so that students can begin to get a more intimate understanding of the impact of their work.

The majority of club members rated themselves as having above average computer skills and having taken two or more computer courses. Participation in Technology With a Cause was reported to have helped further the members' computer skills. All members spend at least 90 minutes a day on the computer and most of that time is spent using the Internet. As a result, many members ranked their knowledge of current events at "some level of awareness" or greater and nearly all felt that technical skills were important for both successful careers and for raising awareness and addressing social issues. Ironically, at the same time the importance of computer technology was noted by respondents, the vast majority of club members get their news from television sources.

Most club respondents noted that they heard about TWAC through the school's daily bulletin of announcements and that they were motivated to join because they were able to make a difference and help other people. In addition, most had not been involved in clubs like this at other schools but several came to

the club with a particular areas of interest they wished to explore. When asked to report what areas of interest they had, many reported topics that had been discussed in the school environment or those that had received the greatest media coverage. There seems to be a need to create a greater awareness about other global issues. There were a wide variety of reported successes at both the group and individual level but the glaring obstacle for the club members was the amount of time available to focus on their work. In all, more club members reported being changed by participation in the club than expected to undergo some sort of change. An area of subsequent research might be to further explore the kinds of changes that these students have undergone and to explore how these changes manifest themselves in other communities.

All participants are intending to matriculate at tertiary level institutions and their ambitions are to work in a variety of service-oriented fields. A large majority intends to join clubs like TWAC, if available, when leaving AIS-R and further expect to be active in their respective communities. At AIS-R, most members reported that they would like to see a global issues course available as an elective and would like to see more of these issues discussed in their current courses.

II. Conclusions

It seems clear that school affiliated student groups like Technology With a Cause serve an important purpose in the development of young, active community members and that in the context of Riyadh, the club serves as a suitable bridge to

full use of global issues in the formal class setting. Despite the small sample size, club member responses indicate that this club is a suitable intermediate step toward classroom level work in the area of social issues and that club members appreciate the opportunity to work on issues they identify as important and to follow through with raising community awareness of that issue. Clubs like this could contribute much to meaningful community service programs and in nurturing skills important for participatory democracy. All members gained something beneficial and/or underwent some kind of change during the short life of this club.

What remains unclear is how these club participants rate with other members of the community for motivation to community service, technological skills, and where their desire to undertake community action in the future originates. Future manifestations of this kind of club and follow up surveys need to address these issues to fully develop the potential of these student groups. Whether these clubs can catalyze more coverage of global issues on the formal class setting or develop into a parallel curriculum addressing skills related to community participation remains to be seen.

In the content heavy, market driven world of the formal classroom, student members of TWAC at the American International School-Riyadh welcomed the autonomous outlet afforded by the club. The intent is to create opportunities for “transdisciplinary projects aimed at social needs, and to couple these with academic analyses of the social and institutional context” (Kahne & Westheimer, 1998, p. 7). This not only challenged students to synthesize knowledge from

various disciplines, to apply critical analysis to these social problems, and to work in the social environment. This application of academic analyses to social issues serves as a nice bridge to the curriculum as it is currently practiced. As Kahne & Westheimer (1998) state, “In addition to traditional academic discipline-based goals, preparation for participatory democracy requires that youth develop both a ‘spirit of service’ and the civic skills needed for effective civic action” (p. 10). It is this role that TWAC currently tries to serve.

Student participation in this subject group seemed to be little influenced by the perceived level of participation by their parents but there may be some relationship that exists between the educational level of the parents and the degree of motivation of the student members. Again, this is an area that would need further exploration, as the investigation of clubs like TWAC continues.

It was interesting to note that student members had their own areas of interest that motivated them to join the club. When asked to identify those areas, many students indicated topics that were in mainstream media or had been the focus of school community awareness over the past several years. This may provide even more support for the use of technology in exploring contemporary global issues to widen student exposure but it may also serve as an indicator to doubters that what happens at school does a great deal to widen the views of students. If more were done at the classroom level with some of these issues we might nurture ever more knowledgeable and active community members.

It was clear that all members who responded would like more opportunities to explore these issues, and that extends to the formal class setting.

As a classroom educator as well as an advisor to TWAC, it seems clear to me that students would welcome the opportunity to consider global issues as part of my science courses. The challenge is now squarely on my shoulders to begin to build lessons around these issues and using these relevant issues as examples. These small steps at the classroom level and an increased awareness on the part of faculty will do more than anything else to bring these issues into the mainstream curriculum and bring it back from a strictly business centered model. Beyer (1993) states it well, "In such classroom, students' interests, their possible actions, and the problems of living in a particular time and place, can be joined with important subject matters in helping build a better world" (p. 2). This would also serve to meet the two major challenges to social justice education articulated by Kahne & Westheimer (1998): development of academic skills and the battle between education and indoctrination.

Reflecting on the past two years, considering the results of this survey and accompanying ILP, and looking to the future, I would like to continue to develop clubs like TWAC at the international schools where I work. My next posting will be in China and I hope that I can further develop this club idea and nurture it into a model to be replicated by others. This ambition comes with some important caveats though that I have become aware of during the past two years.

One obstacle to the evolution and progression of the club was time. Nearly all members who responded to the survey identified this as one of the greatest challenges to their efforts with TWAC and this was a constant topic of conversation at all meetings, especially in the last year. Whether it is due to the

rigors of an advanced academic load or in deciding how to balance time in multiple extra-curricular associations, students often felt that they did not have enough time to explore topics and projects as well as they had liked. At the same time, advisors need to have time to help advise and nurture the club along. AT AIS-R, the last year has brought a change in the course load of teachers and as a result, both Mike Pelletier and I have had to scramble to assist the club. This is in stark contrast to last year when our teaching loads were less. As with all things in education, time is essential and the learning does not subscribe to arbitrary time designations. The second area that needs significant consideration is that degree of awareness and support for these kinds of clubs by the administration. Without administrative support, the success of these clubs can be limited. In our short two years of work we have had posters removed and all types of obstacles placed in our way as students attempted to get the message out. Before inaugurating a club like TWAC, it is essential to determine the degree of support one can expect from the administrative team at the school. Part of the hesitation on the part of administration may be due to what can be characterized, as the controversial nature of some topics and school do not handle controversy well. The other area in need of some focus is collaboration with colleagues. TWAC is the type of club that does not need to be limited to a science and a tech teacher. Rather, it is the kind of student group that will benefit from contributions from all members of the faculty.

In short, this small survey of active students at the American International School-Riyadh and their work with the student group TWAC indicate that there is

a need and a desire for these kinds of clubs and reason for optimism as more of these important global issues make their way into classrooms throughout international schools. With careful assessment of administrative support, designation of time for students and faculty to pursue these issues, and fruitful collaboration with colleagues, student groups like TWAC can work to present students with the autonomy to explore issues of their own selection, to apply academic standards to social needs, and to nurture the skills necessary for an informed and active community.

As these clubs evolve and students continue to participate in their own communities, we will not only begin to reclaim the central curriculum from its current “economic feeder” model but we will also see the fruit of a socially aware and capable populace and the better world that it will create.

For Appendix A: Survey Questions (See SurveyMonkey.com for online administered version - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=22413462554>)

The following survey is designed to explore your motivations for participating in Technology With A Cause and your future ambitions as they relate to community involvement. This is a strictly voluntary survey and you may choose not to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. The responses you give will be kept confidential and will help to draw some conclusions about how successful student clubs might be in addressing humane issues. We would also like to know your opinions and ideas about how to improve the club. Completing this survey should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. Should you have any questions regarding the survey, either before or after taking it, please contact me at jcrook@ais-r.edu.sa.

I. Demographics

- 1) What grade are you in? (9, 10, 11, 12)
- 2) How many years have you attended AIS-R?
- 3) What other international schools have you attended? Please include the city and country where the school was located.
- 4) How would you describe your ethnicity?
- 5) What is your father's profession?
- 6) What is your mother's profession?
- 7) What is the educational level of your father? Your mother? (High School, Undergraduate, Professional Degree, Graduate Degree)

- 8) Would you consider you parents as being actively involved in the community? (Yes, No)
- 9) If so, how are they involved?
- 10) If yes, would you say that their involvement has influenced your own involvement with clubs like Technology With A Cause (TWAC)? (Yes, No)
- 11) How many community service hours have you accumulated to date?
- 12) Please list the kinds of service you have been involved in.

II. Technology

- 13) How would you rank your technology skills? (Poor, Average, Above Average, Superior)
- 14) How many computer courses have you taken in high school? (0, 1, 2, 3)
- 15) How many hours per day do you spend using a computer?
- 16) How many of those hours are spent on the Internet?
- 17) How would you rank your awareness of current events?
- 18) What is your primary source for news? (Television, Radio, Newspaper, News Magazines, Internet, Other)
- 19) Do you think that technological, specifically computer, skills are important for a successful career? (Yes, No, Don't know)
- 20) Do you think that computer technology is an important component in raising awareness and addressing social issues? (Yes, No)
- 21) Have your technology skills improved due to your participation in the club? (Yes, No)

III. Evaluating Technology With A Cause

- 22) How did you first hear about the group?
- 23) What motivated you to join the group?
- 24) Have you been involved with clubs like this at other schools you may have attended? (Yes, No)
- 25) Did you have a particular area of interest you were hoping to explore as part of the club? (Yes, No) What?
- 26) What has given you the most satisfaction as a club member?
- 27) What has given you the least satisfaction as a club member?
- 28) Has participation in the club changed you? (Yes, No)
- 29) Were you expecting to undergo some kind of change as you participated in the club activities? (Yes, No)
- 30) Have you felt that anyone of the following has been a limitation to success in your work as a club member? (Gender, Ethnicity, Parents, Technology, Time, Skills)
- 31) What changes would you suggest making to the club so that it might be more effective and/or more productive?

IV. Future Considerations

- 32) Do you plan on attending university?
- 33) What do you intend to study in university?
- 34) What are your future ambitions?
- 35) Do you expect to participate in groups like TWAC if you enter university? (Yes, No)

- 36) Do you expect to become active in your new community once you leave AIS-R? (Yes, No)
- 37) If there were an elective course offered that would allow to explore and to respond to global issues, would you take it? (Yes, No)
- 38) Would you like to see more global issues discussed in your current courses? (Yes, No)
- 39) What do you think limits the opportunities to discuss these social problems in your current courses?
- 40) Please add any other last comments that you think would be useful for us to have.
- 41) Would you be willing to be contacted again as a follow up to this particular study? (Yes, No) If so, please provide an e-mail address that you intend to retain once you leave AIS-R.

Appendix B: NESAs Grant Proposal

NESA Grant Proposal Submitted by Jason Crook American International School-Riyadh

March 2007

Goals:

- To develop a resource (paper and online) chronicling the efforts of Humane Educators in the NESAs region.
- To provide more coordinated exposure of Humane Education within the NESAs region.
- To develop a resource for Humane Educators within the NESAs region.

Tasks and Deliverables:

NESA (Athens, Greece) and the Institute for Humane Education (Surry, Maine) have recently developed a partnership to further promote Humane Education in the NESAs region. To that end, a discussion forum has been planned for the Spring Educators conference in Athens, Greece (March 31 – April 2, 2007) and a two-day workshop on Humane Education is scheduled for the Fall Training Institute in Manama, Bahrain (November 2-3, 2007).

To further promote these activities and to further publicize the Humane Education that is currently undertaken in the NESAs region, a publication of activities would be helpful. Each school would be given the opportunity to document the Humane Education activities at their school. These reports could be compiled by members of the administrative team or by the faculty members directly involved with the humane activities. Each of these reports would then be collated for publication. In addition to these, the published resource would include favorite activities of the teachers involved in Humane Education and resources of their recommendation. The final product would be a resource book with the potential to catalyze networking between those already involved as well as a manual for those who desire to participate in more Humane Education.

- Task:
- Develop standardized document to retrieve information from NESAs schools. (See attached)
 - Contact NESAs schools for information.
 - Travel to visit selected schools to follow up on their Humane Education activities.
 - Collate school responses, activities and resources.
 - Publish resource.

Deliverables: Final published resource (paper and online) documenting Humane Education in the NESAs region.

Replicability:

With this initial resource available to educators in the NESAs region, educators will begin to network and continue to develop Humane Education within the region. It may also be beneficial to continue to explore the publication of a resource for NESAs region Humane Educators on a regular basis.

Budget Projections:

Printing costs for original publication run: \$750

(Optional) Travel costs to further explore Humane Education activities. Cost dependent on number of schools visited and locations of those schools selected. Or, it would be more cost effective to invite Humane Educators to a scheduled NESAs event for follow up.

Contact Person:

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Appendix C: Letter to Solicit Responses from International Schools Regarding Humane Education in Practice

March 2007

Humane education examines the challenges facing our planet, from human oppression and animal exploitation to materialism and ecological degradation. It explores how we might live with compassion and respect for everyone: not just our friends and neighbors, but all people; not just our own dogs and cats, but all animals; not just our own homes, but also the earth itself, our ultimate home. Humane educators inspire people to live examined, intentional lives so that what they do today helps the planet, animals and all people tomorrow. (for more information, please visit www.humaneeducation.org). Humane educators are involved in classroom activities or extra-curricular groups that:

- Enhance students' **reverence, respect and responsibility** for the earth, other species and all people.
- Convey **accurate information** so students understand the consequences of their decisions as consumers and citizens.
- Inspire **creativity, curiosity and critical thinking** so students can evaluate information and solve problems on their own.
- Encourage **informed, mindful, and positive choices** so students can help bring about a better world.

My objective with this correspondence is to discover what kinds of Humane Education schools in the NESAs region are already undertaking. My hope is to then compile a book that will detail all of the NESAs region activities, provide resources for those wishing to start activities or who desire to expand what they already do, and facilitate networking throughout the region. To that end, I would be grateful for your help in highlighting what your school is currently involved in. I have listed some items below that would be most helpful in creating the NESAs region Humane Education resource and would appreciate if you or someone else at your school could reply to these and return them to me at jcrook@ais-r.edu.sa.

School Name:

Location:

Current Enrollment:

- 1) Is Humane Education at your school happening at all division levels (ES, MS, HS)?
- 2) Is it happening in the formal classroom setting or is it part of an extra-curricular endeavour?
- 3) If it is an extra-curricular group, please respond to the following questions if it is classroom based please skip to question 4:

What is the name of the group?

What are the group's objectives/aims?

What precipitated the formation of the group?

Is this a student led or faculty led group?

How often does the group meet?

- 4) Can you please provide a description of the kind of Humane Education that is happening at your school? Please feel free to provide a narrative of a particularly successful project or result.
- 5) Please describe or attach some of your favorite activities used to challenge kids to raise issues, reflect on material or research topics.
- 6) Optional: Faculty and staff at other schools would also benefit from your experience with different resources. If you are willing please provide a list of some of your favorite resources with a brief description of review of that resource.
- 7) Would you be willing to be contacted for a possible follow up visitation to further discuss Humane Education at your school? If yes, please provide your contact information.

I truly appreciate your time in responding to these questions. Please feel free to contact me with any other thoughts or ideas as they may arise. Once the resource is complete, I will be sure to send one your way. Thanks again.

Jason Crook

American International School-Riyadh

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