

INTERCONNECTIONS 21

Newsletter

Summer 2004

US Chapter of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project is Growing!



Following the US government's re-entry to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in October 2003, InterConnections 21 (IC 21) is expanding its activities and recruiting new members to the US chapter of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project (ASPnet). We aim to nearly double the network by December 2004 and continue to add schools throughout May 2005. New ASPnet schools bring a global perspective to their students through curriculum and/or school clubs and have an interest in the four ASPnet priority areas:

- ▶ World concerns and the role of the UN system
- ▶ Human rights, democracy and tolerance
- ▶ Intercultural learning
- ▶ Environmental concerns

The Associated Schools Project network was established by UNESCO in 1953 to encourage educational institutions worldwide to undertake and disseminate educational activities related to UNESCO's overarching goal of promoting peace and international understanding. Since 1953, ASPnet has grown to include nearly 7,700 educational institutions in 176 countries, ranging from pre-school education to teacher training. ASPnet/USA strives for a balanced membership of public and private institutions; urban, suburban and rural schools; geographic regions and levels. Membership offers unique opportunities for students and teachers to engage in international activities such as the Swiss UNESCO workshop on languages and communication and the annual UN Student Human Rights Conference, reported on in this newsletter.

Susan Fountain, an internationally renowned facilitator and specialist in teacher education and curriculum development, is leading this expansion initiative for IC 21. Her specific areas of expertise are global education, human rights and conflict resolution. She has taught courses in conflict management at the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR) of Teachers College, Columbia University, and at Cornell University. Other previous work includes 10 years with the Education Section of UNICEF New York; in this capacity, she ran workshops in 23 countries including Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Croatia, Kenya, and Egypt. She has served as a consultant to such organizations as UNICEF Belgrade and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, Landmine Survivors Network, the Canadian Department of

Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Educators for Social Responsibility and Creative Response to Conflict, as well as IC 21. She was also a classroom teacher in the US and abroad for 12 years.

As we embarked on this expansion program, IC 21 asked current ASPnet/USA member schools for suggestions for future priorities and activities. The resulting program for the upcoming 2004-2005 school year will emphasize the following themes: UN International Days—Bringing World Issues into Your School,



Susan Fountain

World Heritage in Young Hands and HIV/AIDS and Human Rights—Awareness to Action. IC 21 is currently producing lesson plans for each of the above themes that will be available on our web site in September. These materials will encourage an interdisciplinary approach and enable educators to work new learning opportunities into existing curricula and school clubs.

We are also co-sponsoring the 7th Annual UN Student Human Rights Conference on December 2-3, 2004, in New York, that will focus on HIV/AIDS. A small number of IC 21 sponsored students will participate on the drafting committee of this conference in New York; all ASPnet students and educators are invited to participate through a web cast. The conference background document, details of the webcast and a chat forum will also be available on our website. Finally, to mark US re-entry into UNESCO and promote the introduction of the World Heritage Education materials into US schools, IC 21 will host a national conference for 60 educators and student leaders on January 28-30, 2005, at the American Philosophical Society's Benjamin Franklin Hall in Philadelphia.

We look forward to welcoming new schools and students to ASPnet/USA and will be accepting applications throughout the 2004-2005 school year. If you know of a school that would be a good candidate, please send an e-mail with contact information to info@ic21.org or refer them to our website at www.ic21.org, where they can download and print an application. They may also contact Ms. Fountain at shfountain@msn.com.

UNESCO's ASPnet 50th Anniversary Celebrated at Switzerland Conference



To celebrate the 50th anniversary of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project, the Swiss Commission for UNESCO hosted a conference entitled "Do you speak UNESCO... Many Languages—A Common Understanding" from November 19-22, 2003. One hundred and seventy students, educators, and professionals from Switzerland, Canada, Brazil, Mali, Italy, Belgium, Vietnam, India, Serbia, Germany, Tanzania, Ecuador, France and the United States met in Biel, Switzerland for the three-day conference to discuss, debate and experiment with communication across language and cultural barriers. Workshops during the conference addressed themes such as cultural mediation, non-verbal communication through music and theater, and intercultural communication. The conference was followed by a week-long home stay for students and their chaperones with an ASPnet school and family in Switzerland. For many participants, this was a highlight of the program as it enabled them to experience a "week in the life" of a Swiss student. Among other conference benefits, participating schools are being "twinned" to facilitate long-lasting contacts and activities between students and teachers in Swiss schools and schools from other countries represented at the workshop.

The United States was represented by IC 21 and three ASPnet schools from around the country: Fallon Higgins from The Wakefield School in The Plains, VA, Martina Mustroph from Atlanta International School in Atlanta, GA, and Harrison Tomé from Jackson Hole High School in Jackson, WY. Below are two accounts from participating students, Martina Mustroph and Harrison Tomé:

Martina Mustroph, 12th grade

"After the conference, all students were split up and sent to live with host families across Switzerland. I spent a week with a Swiss host family in Berne and attended the International School of Berne. The school follows the IB (International Baccalaureate) program, as does Atlanta International School. It was interesting to see what classes were like there. I was welcomed warmly by the school's staff as well as by the students.

During the school week, I'd walk a mile down the hill from my host family's home to get to school in the morning and I'd drop off my host family's children (in kindergarten and first grade) on my way. I'd walk back up the hill in the middle of the day to join my host family for lunch and then I'd return to school for afternoon lessons. On my last full day in Bern, I came back for lunch and helped my host family's kids bake Christmas cookies, about half of which they insisted I take home to Georgia with me. I felt so comfortable in Berne that I wished that I could spend the rest of the school year

there. The 12th grade, consisting of all of 21 students (it's a very small school), threw me a little 'going-away party.' I was sad to leave so soon.

The trip was an incredibly enriching experience. I still think about it a lot—even now, nearly seven months later—and I am very grateful for the Swiss Commission of UNESCO's sponsorship."



Students from Belgium, Rwanda, Switzerland and the US in Biel, Switzerland, for the 50th Anniversary ASPnet conference.

Harrison Tomé, 10th grade

"On my way to Switzerland I anticipated that there would be a huge change in my life. I felt that the people I would meet and the lives I would become a part of would affect me in dramatic ways. Here's the funny thing: My perspective of life *is* different than it was prior to the UNESCO conference but not in the way I expected. It wasn't a lightning bolt change; it was a small and meaningful transformation. It's like this: I have been humbled.

While at the UNESCO conference, I gained some amazing insights from the workshops and meetings that taught me about cultural diversity and intercultural education, but the most important things I learned came from the people I met. How many Americans have the opportunity to meet kids from all over the world their own age and learn their different perspectives regarding the United States and the world? I'll never forget meeting people like the student from Belgium whose parents were killed during the genocide in Rwanda; you would never meet a nicer or smarter kid. He spoke seven languages fluently and had some of the most interesting views of the world that you'll ever see.

It seemed like I learned something new from every person I met, but the things I noticed most were not the differences between us but the similarities. I saw that no matter where we are from, we all have similar families, similar ways we entertain ourselves, and similar ways we live our lives. When I was on my home stay in the small village of Aeschi, I wondered how different family life in Switzerland would be from in the United States. I wondered how different the schools would be. The answer I found: they really aren't different.

How can the people of the world learn this? How can we enlighten them to work towards peace, harmony, and respect? I believe work starts here at home. The foundation has been laid by this "Do You Speak UNESCO" conference for communication among youth from all around the world and for communication between our different schools. This communication could eventually lead to future ASPnet conferences that would create greater understanding between the people of the world, one individual at a time. Interconnections 21 has given me a wonderful opportunity that has broadened my knowledge of the world. I have learned compassion and appreciation.

It's time to act."

Students Discuss “Education for All” at 6th Annual UN Student Conference



For two days in December, youth leaders from around the world had the chance to make their voices and opinions heard on the UN’s Education for All initiative. The occasion was the 6th annual UN Student Conference on Human Rights, December 3-4, 2003. Over 50 students from the US, Canada, the Dominican Republic and Mexico convened at the UN Headquarters in New York City, with countless others from countries around the world participating through webcasting and videoconferencing.

The Student Conference on Human Rights, co-sponsored by IC 21 and hosted by the UN’s Department of Public Information, seeks to promote awareness of, learning about, and action on human rights among student leaders, focusing on different specific rights and related themes from year to year. The conference provides opportunities for students to network and develop important leadership skills, such as public speaking, team and consensus-building, negotiation, research, and drafting. It also gives participants first-hand experience using current information technologies like webcasting and videoconferencing.

The theme of the 2003 conference, “Education for All,” refers to an initiative embraced by the world community at forums convened in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The initiative recognizes that provision of universal basic education is critical to achieving the UN’s Millennium Goals, including halv-



Students engage in spirited debate on the topic of “Education for All” at the 6th Annual UN Student Conference on Human Rights, held at the UN on December 3-4, 2003.

ing the incidence of global poverty within less than a generation. The student conference was an opportunity for the young people to caucus and brainstorm on this important topic. At the conclusion of the two-day conference, the group submitted a Youth Action Plan to the President of the UN General Assembly on behalf of the world’s youth. For more information visit: www.un.org/cyber-schoolbus/student/2003/.

IC 21 Students Participate in Denver Model UN

On the weekend of February 27-29, 28 students and 5 educators from Jackson Hole High School, Jackson Hole Middle School and Journeys School traveled to Denver, Colorado to participate in the Rocky Mountain Model United Nations Conference at Denver University. In preparation, the students spent several weeks researching and studying the United Nations and the policies of the countries they represented in mock sessions of United Nations proceedings. They also benefited from expert training by a NY-based staff member of the UN Association of USA which runs Model UN nationally.

The Model UN program cultivates students’ skills in public speaking and private negotiation, as well as their knowledge about international relations, the United Nations and current events. At



Students from Journeys School, Jackson Hole High School and Jackson Hole Middle School traveled to Denver University for the Rocky Mountain Model United Nations Conference.

the Denver conference, each student played the role of a “delegate” to one of several United Nations committees such as the Security Council, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly First Committee for International Security and Disarmament. On these committees, students debated and passed resolutions on themes such as access to fresh water in the developing world, rights of prisoners and migrant workers, and the role of science and technology in the context of interna-

tional security. The students from Jackson Hole High School and Jackson Hole Middle School are all members of the Global Connections Clubs, sponsored by IC 21. Seven of these students received Outstanding Delegate Awards or Honorable Mention for their performance.

FLASH!

IC 21 is co-sponsoring the 7th annual UN Student Human Rights Conference on December 2-3, 2004, in New York City and videoconferencing at sites across the US and internationally. The theme of this year’s conference is “HIV/AIDS and Human Rights: From Awareness to Action.” For more information or to participate in the 2004 conference e-mail us at info@ic21.org

We have a new email address! Please email us at info@ic21.org

United Nations International School Hosts Student Media Conference



Students from the United Nations International School (UNIS) hosted the 28th annual UNIS-UN Conference on Thursday and Friday, March 4-5, 2004, at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York City. Entitled "Modern Mass Media: The Influence of Information," the conference examined matters ranging from propaganda and broadcast ethics to the pervasive influence of the Internet and advertising and the impact of pop culture on everyday lives of teenagers. Distinguished speakers and representatives from BBC News, Al-Jazeera, NBC News and other media outlets reported on sensationalism, government and the media, and the media in the Middle East. Other notable speakers included Mrs. Nane Annan, wife of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; Danny Schechter, executive editor of MediaChannel.org and a taped message from Noam Chomsky of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Kyleigh Kun, 16, co-founder of Pennies for Peace, spoke about her organization's success in raising \$70,000 (seven million pennies) to support the removal of landmines from war-torn countries. Kyleigh described to fellow high schoolers how she started such a large project, and gave much credit to co-founder Cheryl Jennings, an ABC/KGO anchorwoman whose media influence brought positive support to the program.

Students were able to voice their opinions on media-related issues in a student forum and a student panel. Jackson Hole High School student Lindsey Canant remarked, "The most enlightening part of our trip was hearing the opinion of the international students about American media and politics." There was also a speaker panel that included four media representatives who debated and answered questions on the subject, "How Much Does Today's Globalized Public Have the Right to Know?"

The two-day event requires a full year of preparation and is organized entirely by students. UNIS student Nora Choueiri commented, "The knowledge and dynamism of the presenters made for one of the most fascinating discussions in recent UNIS-UN history." This year, the conference attracted 630 student representatives from seven US states and over 14 countries, including China, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan and New Zealand.



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