



With rising anti-American sentiments worldwide, the United States risks losing its world leader status due, in part, to a lack of attention to international education and the development of global leadership competencies. Only through international education can we appreciate and understand global concerns so as to act responsibly on matters that shape our destiny and affect the future of others. Only through innovative programs can we restore America's image around the world and develop leaders who are capable of serving and being accepted as global leaders. This paper provides a contextual framework for international education and describes an arts-based global program to train future global leaders.

Collaborative artwork created by finalists of the First Arts Olympiad during the International festival, held on the National Mall in Washington, DC, 1999.

International Education and Global Leadership

by Ashfaq Ishaq

Weltanschauung

Following the Second World War, international education held out the promise of promoting a lasting global peace and security. Several countries, especially those defeated in the war, revamped their school curricula to promote understanding and cooperation among nations. We, the victors in the war, focused more on informing the world about America while ignoring schooling our own children about the world, so that today many Americans are both ignorant about and uninterested in global issues and their importance.

School leaders need to re-focus their attention on international education. Learning foreign languages and cultures, and the international exchanges for students and teachers, are important but not adequate. The underlying purpose of international education should be to broaden the Weltanschauung or worldview of students. Worldviews, according to the international theory of the brilliant British scholar Martin Wight, fall into three categories: the Realists, the Rationalists, and the Revolutionists.¹ The Machiavellian/Realists see the world collapsing into anarchy and emphasize the role of warfare to end international conflicts. The Götian/Rationalists believe in negotiation and accommodation to attain global harmony in an interdependent, interconnected world. The Kantian/Revolutionists want to subvert the established system to make it just and equitable.

American children need quality international education that is free of nationalist bias and prejudice towards others; not one beholden to the philosophies of Machiavelli or Kant. International education should make use of the resources available in our culturally diversified communities and advance the

belief that “cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature,” as stated in the Declaration on Diversity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).² Another aim of international education should be to encourage students to view the whole world as one, as suggested in 42 A.D. by the Roman philosopher Seneca: “Omnis orbis terrarumpatria mea est.” (The whole world is my own native land). This Rationalist approach to international education, generally attributed to the Dutch legal scholar, playwright, and poet, Hugo Grotius, borrows from John Locke and Thomas Jefferson as well.

Leading the World

In our incredibly shrinking world, the traditional national leadership models are limited by their aims and scope. Hence, several major multinational corporations have set up their own global leadership departments to train future corporate leaders. International education from primary school onward can and should provide a strong foundation for global leadership development. New global leadership models based on Rationalist international education should emphasize not only conflict resolution but also creative problem solving skills.

But the instinctive capacity for creativity and imagination found in young people has often been denied or suppressed in their schooling. UNESCO concludes: “The encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect—critical ingredients for building a culture of peace.” Hence, creative global leaders and a creative citizenry are our best hope for a bright future. The problem is how to encourage widespread creativity when children generally face a

“4th grade slump” in their creativity, as documented since the 1960s by the eminent educational psychologist and creativity researcher, E. Paul Torrance.³

Role of the Arts

The arts can play an important role in both international education and global leadership development. The Winter 2004 issue of the *State Education Standard* focused on arts education and its place in the curriculum. Those articles underscored the importance of the arts, the correlation between the arts and overall academic performance, and the causal relationship between arts learning and the development of life skills. Often overlooked is the capacity of the arts as a dynamic channel to nurture the innate creativity of children, thus overcoming the “4th grade slump.” When introduced to the creative process through the arts, children’s involvement in the arts deepens so that their imagination grows, allowing their creativity to blossom. Hence the arts are the pathways to the creative communities of the future.

With globalization, the role of the arts is becoming ever more important. To open young minds to the world through the arts avoids coloring their perceptions with new and old conflicts. The arts spark and sustain a child’s interest in the world and thus become a partner in fostering international education. Through the arts children can communicate across language barriers, visualize a peaceful future, and gain the ability to prosper in open, pluralistic societies. The arts invoke and uphold empathy for the “other”—a fundamental prerequisite for developing mutual understanding and cooperation. Cultures may clash and divide, but the arts can unite.

The relationship of the arts with creativity and international understanding makes art an appropriate tool for iden-



The global community faces challenges that require creative and sound leadership. Two natural ways in which children—our future leaders—gain and apply leadership skills are through artistic expression and athletic accomplishment.

The Third Arts Olympiad combines these two themes to encourage young artists to develop their physical abilities, and to inspire young athletes to express themselves through art. Through the participation of nearly three million children from over 100 countries, the Arts Olympiad develops the empathy invoked through art and the team spirit instilled by sport to promote the Olympic ideals of mutual respect and tolerance. The children will carry these skills and values with them into adulthood, along with lifelong friendships across borders and cultures. Over time, and given the involvement and support of school leaders, parents, and others able to amplify the accomplishments of the Arts Olympians, the trust and understanding achieved through personal connections will bridge global communities.

The Third Arts Olympiad links art and sport through school art competitions on the theme, *My Favorite Sport*. The Arts Olympiad Lesson Plan can be downloaded in multiple languages from www.icafe.org. The lesson plan encourages collaboration between art teachers and athletic instructors so that students realize the connection between mind and body; between one's self and the surrounding world. The recommended activities bring together students interested in sport and those interested in the arts and enable the young people to understand each other's perspectives as the first building block towards a Rationalist worldview. Students have a choice to create a painting or digital art. The Arts

THIRD ARTS OLYMPIAD (2005–2008)

Olympiad is free and open to all primary and middle schools in the United States and worldwide. The art competition is restricted to 8- to 12-year-old students. The schedule for the Third Arts Olympiad is as follows:

- 2005** Lesson Plan implemented and competition finalists selected
- 2006** Americas Festival in Omaha, Nebraska (hosted by ICAF)
 - Asian Festival in China (hosted by Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation)
 - European Festival in Germany (hosted by Olympia Park Munich GmbH)
 - Middle East Festival in Saudi Arabia (hosted by Saudi Ministry of Education)
 - [African and Latin Festivals not yet confirmed]
- 2007** World Festival in Washington, DC (hosted by ICAF)
- 2008** Exhibitions at international sports and cultural events [Involvement in Beijing 2008 Olympics not yet confirmed]

The Arts Olympiad is organized globally through ICAF's international network of program partners: Latin America's leading children's television, Canal Futura in Brazil; the Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation in China; the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport in Israel; the Jamaican National Commission for UNESCO in Jamaica; the Art Schools Teachers Association in Latvia; the PNG National Museum in Papua New Guinea; and the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia are some of ICAF's partners. It is anticipated that ICAF will have program partners in over 100 countries by March 2005.

tifying creative and empathic children who have global leadership potential. If these children receive proper guidance and leadership training, and are in regular contact with one another for lifelong peer-to-peer learning, they can indeed become the catalysts needed to bring about world peace and global equity and prosperity.

Nexus for the Future

The Arts Olympiad of the International Child Art Foundation (ICAF) provides a step-by-step approach to develop creative and imaginative global leaders. This ICAF program identifies children with exceptional talents through art competitions that emphasize origi-

nality and uniqueness of perspective, rather than technical merit alone. ICAF's selection criteria recognize not only exceptional artistic talent, but exceptional abilities in other creative fields—animation, writing, theater, music, etc.—as well as academic excellence, that reflect a child's overall creativity and

natural leadership abilities. At its festivals, ICAF brings these talented children together to evaluate their leadership potential in face-to-face interactions and provide global leadership training.

The program focuses on developing future global leaders among American children. At the same time, the Arts Olympiad creates national leaders around the world and is an important youth-centered cultural diplomacy initiative. The program involves American children in the development of national leaders in foreign countries, so together these children form a nexus for the future. The children meet at ICAF's festivals, where they develop lifelong friendships, learn universal values, and acquire conflict resolution skills. Through the collaborative creation of art murals, the children experience the power of their collective creativity and make a commitment to promote tolerance and coexistence.

Global leadership elements of the Arts Olympiad are outlined below:

1. School and Community Leaders:

The program provides students an opportunity to express themselves creatively and artistically. They serve as judges in the selection of school finalists, which promotes objectivity and impartiality. The school finalists gain the respect of their peers and have the opportunity to become leaders in their schools and communities.

2. State Leaders: The state finalists selected from among the school finalists are given the responsibility to communicate with the school finalists in their respective state or territory. Statewide publicity and recognition opens the door for them to play active civic roles and advance their leadership competencies.

3. National Leaders: The U.S. state finalists begin communicating with each other prior to their face-to-face meeting and interaction at ICAF's national festival. This festival brings together all the national finalists for three days of intensive training and activities, with an aim to build a national leadership base.

4. Global Leaders: At ICAF's international festivals, the U.S. state finalists meet national finalists from around the world. Regional events in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, etc. culminate in the international festival, held for a week every four years in Washington, DC. The festival program begins with art therapy and bonding exercises to build trust between U.S. state finalists and the international delegates. Art projects, including mural making, are organized, as are creativity and leadership workshops. Equipped with a repertoire of new skills and international contacts, the U.S. state finalists begin preparations for global leadership roles.

The Arts Olympiad has a track record of positive results in the training of teachers and parents as well. Through their participation in the program, teachers have the opportunity to bring the world into their classrooms. They arrange art exchanges with schools in other countries and in the process come into contact with teachers from around the world. Parents, too, become involved, often sharing with and encouraging their children in their work. Workshops on how to support and encourage leadership potential are organized at ICAF's festivals for teachers and parents, giving them opportunity to learn about the importance of creativity, international education, and global leadership skills.

Concluding Thoughts

Education revolutionizes human evolution by endowing the next generation with the knowledge and wisdom to address the ever-more complex problems that will surely arise in the future and by ensuring that children grow up to be lifelong learners so they are better informed and equipped human beings than their parents and mentors. In a rapidly changing world, to avoid failure school leaders, too, must learn and adapt. The dawning of a global information age is not a time to retreat into a comfort zone, but to genuinely open our minds to new vistas and opportunities. "The key to success," according to Jack Welch, former chairman of General Electric, "is to change the way you think." This daunting task is mandatory, and the time is now.

By developing international education curricula that are accepted universally, especially in those countries where the dominant worldview is Machiavellian or Kantian, school leaders can play a significant leadership role in making international education the "glue" that binds peoples of the world in common cause. Since international education and global leadership competencies are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, the involvement of school leaders in global programs like the Arts Olympiad will advance international education objectives and be beneficial to their primary constituency: the children. ■

Ashfaq Ishaq is founder and executive director of the International Child Art Foundation.

¹ G. Wight and B. Porter Eds., *International Theory: The Three Traditions: Martin Wight* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).

² UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Available online at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001283/128346e.pdf#128347>.

³ E. Paul Torrance, "A Longitudinal Examination of the 4th Grade Slump in Creativity." *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 12 (1968): 195-197.