

IDS Middle School Students *Acting Locally, Connecting Globally*

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Do you dump the day's junk mail in the trash without a thought? What about tossing an empty plastic water bottle in the garbage can because there are no recycling bins nearby?

For 16 environmentally conscious IDS-CC middle school students, those thoughts never cross their minds. They are learning about the practice of recycling, but on a global scale. The lesson literally starts at home and culminates in a video conference with like-minded peers across the world.

The middle school students, who are members of the "Act Locally, Connect Globally" elective, are participating in a year-long partnership through the International School Connection program that pairs Independent Day School - Corbett Campus with schools in Sweden and China.

Middle School English teacher and environmental elective adviser Jenn Jagdmann said the goal for the recent recycling unit was to have students make real-world connections at home, in the classroom, and then examine those connections through a presentation on a global platform.

So while IDS students were researching what and how they recycled at home and at school, students in Sweden and China were doing the same thing. The three sides met and compared notes in their first virtual meeting on October 13.

Each country took turns presenting reports on recycling. The Chinese students shared Power Point presentations. Swedish students made oral reports and included pictures showing the topics they were discussing. And IDS-CC students began their oral presentation with dramatics by having middle school student Anthony Pellingra introduce their findings about recycling by popping out of a recycling can.



Students in Sweden (l), China (m) and the United States(r) took turns presenting their reports on recycling through the use ooVoo computer technology. Pictured here, students in Sweden and the US address their questions to the speaker from China.

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"It has created awareness," said Mrs. Jagdmann of the four-week theme on recycling. "They have rediscovered that what they do at home does have environmental significance, and that these small tasks connect them to the greater global community."

IDS students began by surveying recycling habits at home. In the classroom, students researched recyclable materials and what happens to them once they are recycled. To reinforce lessons in conservation, a few students transfer paper from classroom recycling bins in the middle school to the larger paper recycling dumpster once a week. "It's a sense of ownership in the process. They are proud to say they are making a difference at school," Mrs. Jagdmann said.

She said the global interaction uncovered a few surprises. Students learned that their peers in Sweden recycle batteries at home or mainly use rechargeable batteries, while Americans toss batteries in the trash. They also quickly realized, after reading student logs written in English on the shared program site *Moodle* that Americans were the only ones who needed to become fluent in a secondary language.

"When I saw the presentations from other countries, I was stunned not only by the amount of interesting facts, but also about their ability to speak fluently in another language," said middle-schooler Ben Muschol after the group's video conference.

Fellow student Anthony Pellingra also was impressed by the international exchange. "Experiences like these really do make me feel as if Earth is one global community," he said.

Classmate Avi Baskin added, "We are making global connections that can only produce solutions," while Maddie Baruch said, "I think if we continue to ooVoo, we could help each other out and end up with an equally environmentally friendly planet!"

Middle School student Sean Chowdhari said the first-time meeting was a success. "At the end, I liked how all of the countries were asking questions. Some of them were not even about recycling, but that's what made it cool. It made the other students seem not just like kids from other countries, but friends."

Casey Bauer thought it was cool to see students half way around the world and noticed the subtle differences in the classrooms. "At IDS, we were sharing a team desk, students from Sweden were sitting in a group, and students in China were all sitting in rows."

As the students said their goodbyes, a comment from Quintin Kauchick pointed back to the purpose of the day—the sharing of ideas. "I was surprised to hear of the many different ways Sweden recycles. I think it is very interesting that they get paid to recycle plastic bottles!"

Mrs. Jagdmann said she hopes to continue fostering cooperation between the teachers and students as they focus on the next environmental theme - water usage and water conservation. She and the school librarian Kim Fields meet with the other two teachers - Mark Xing from Second Foreign Languages School of Nanshan in China and Helena Lewin from Vasa Real Middle School in Sweden - through an ooVoo video conference once a week to review progress on their current unit and to collaborate on future ideas. There are many more virtual meetings planned for 2010.

Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, independent school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County. The school serves students in PreK3 through 8th grade and offers the International Baccalaureate program of study for both elementary and middle school students (PYP and MYP). IDS-CC balances a nurturing learning environment with high standards and high expectations.

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