

GLOBAL INSIGHTS



FRESH INSIGHTS ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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GLOBAL MINDEDNESS



CULTIVATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

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To succeed in a global economy and make a positive difference in an interconnected world, our students need to be educated beyond our borders.

Unfortunately, much of what is called global education today focuses on superficial information and token activities that do not prepare our students to be global citizens. Real global education involves more than hosting food festivals, offering world cultures classes in a few grades, or sponsoring an occasional trip abroad. Instead, we must use internationally-minded, immersive approaches for learning in and beyond the classroom.

For us at French American International School, a PK-12 school with 1,100 students in San Francisco, global education has been the heart of our mission since our founding more than 50 years ago. We believe any motivated school can offer a globally-minded education. We call it cross-cultural cognition

— the ability to think, feel, and act across cultures. And we demonstrate this understanding in six areas: identity, language study, community, curriculum, global travel, and sustainability.

IDENTITY

We are all citizens of the world — and we all come from somewhere. The foundation of global citizenship is rooted in one's heritage and identity. At French American, we teach the complexity of identity at all grade levels. Pre-k and kindergarten students reflect on their families' places of origin and the different ways of living in San Francisco; middle schoolers study the meaning of citizenship in the US and French contexts; and high school students compare governing systems across the globe.

We aim for students to understand and appreciate identity as a rich mix of national, regional, cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, orientation, socioeconomic, and other factors. This keeps the focus on what we have in common so we do not become ensnared by differences, stereotypes, and simplifications that incite conflict.

LANGUAGE STUDY

We believe acquiring competence in a second and then a third language is central to cross-cultural cognition. Languages are loaded with culture, attitudes, tradition, history, etiquette, and more.

To learn another language is to gain an alternate perspective, increase empathy, and become open to cultural cues.

A bilingual education is at the core of our PK-8 programme, and in our flagship International High School we welcome a large number of students who are not French speakers and who begin or continue second language studies with us. We require students to take four years of a second language to graduate, and during these four years they become fluent through language immersion in classes, around campus, and on global trips. We devote significant resources to our language programmes in Arabic, French, Mandarin, and Spanish.

We also honor our students' home languages. If we are educating global citizens, we are affirming the value each child's identity, including their language. We delight in a diverse set of mother tongues within our faculty, staff, and families, and encourage use of these languages.

COMMUNITY

Our school's bilingual and international curricula allow us to hire citizens from around the world. Many families hail from other countries and choose our school for its international culture. Rather than pushing international faculty and students to assimilate into our school culture, we encourage them to share their cultures with us. We believe having an educator or fellow student share his or her personal cultural significantly enriches all students' experiences.

Welcoming students from a variety of other countries also invites us to question our own practices and to be more purposeful in fostering an inclusive, international culture on campus. By reflecting on the experience and meeting the needs of our international students, we can make our school campuses and communities more global.

CURRICULUM

At French American, we define cross-cultural cognition as the ability to grapple with challenging and abstract concepts across all subjects in more than one culture. Our bilingual curriculum in grades



PK-8 and our International Baccalaureate and French Baccalaureate programmes in the high school foster this ability.

Global education must be infused in curriculum design. This could take the form of document-based world history and geography, literature in translation, or cultures' contributions to mathematics. To strengthen classroom culture, teachers can foster cross-cultural cognition through collaboration, appreciative listening, and respectful discourse. In pedagogy, this can mean highlighting the different ways that cultures approach the academic disciplines.

One high school student, Fatou, compares approaches to literary analysis in French and English:

I believe that a language is the essence of a culture; and each culture has its own approach to literature. For example, when we write commentaries in French our writing is deep and thorough because it is focused on the quality and depth of the content. Our essays discuss several themes, and each theme is divided into several points that are developed and analysed in detail. In English, our main focus is on the structure and flow of the argument. So, in essence, by using the techniques from both languages we're able to create elaborate essays, while keeping our writing cohesive and organised. The best of both worlds, in other words.

GLOBAL TRAVEL

Many schools have travel programmes, but to enrich students' learning, these offerings must combine authentic encounters with other cultures and opportunities for self-reflection.

Our Global Travel programme involves hundreds of students and dozens of teachers annually. Our approach is developmental: Lower school students begin their global travel journey with a sleepover in kindergarten, which helps them understand their community and builds resilience and autonomy. Students make regional trips of increasing duration in subsequent years. In fifth grade, our students host students from France for two weeks, then travel to their correspondents' homes for two weeks, putting their linguistic and cross-cultural skills to work. In middle school, students travel to the country of the additional language they are studying; additionally, they complete their bilingual journey with another exchange in France. **(Digital version: click image)**



In high school, students can take cultural, linguistic, and service learning trips across the globe every year; these have recently included Tahiti, India, the Galapagos Islands, Jordan, Senegal, Austria, Guatemala, and Malawi. Gwyneth, after her cultural study trip to India, shares her experience:

No matter where we were, be it the slums of Mumbai, or the rural areas of Hyderabad, the people were so full of life and culture. They are what made the country so beautiful. Their enthusiasm to bring us into their world, even for a brief moment ... is what made this a cultural immersion. My eyes have been opened to culture like never before. You can read about the slums, listen to the music, watch a Bollywood dance film, but only when you're there, doing it all, do you truly learn and become an international student.

SUSTAINABILITY

A critical marker of a global education is a sense of responsibility for our shared planet. We make it clear at every grade level that students' local decisions have a global impact.

Our youngest students plant urban gardens of pollinator targets, delving into the sharing economy and the ways their actions matter for our planet's future. In middle school, students build green architectural models designed to reduce carbon dioxide, harvest rainwater, and generate solar energy. High school students continue their studies on climate change, exploring population dynamics and biodiversity in and out of the classrooms to deepen their understanding of stewardship. When 12th grader Wesley traveled to the Galapagos, he remarked on the deep impact of globalisation:

I realised that most of the island is inhabited by thousands of people. This was a shock to me to see roads, cars, and convenience stores, just entire communities on the Galapagos Islands... I really took into consideration the fragility of the natural environment and understood the globalisation that is happening in every corner of the world.

Educating students about sustainability also highlights the value of collaboration. As the curriculum evolves, that collaboration expands beyond the classroom to a world perspective that has roots in their first grade urban garden.

BUILDING SCHOOLS WITH GLOBAL REACH

Our schools may have different communities and programmes, but we all share a mission: to develop

global citizens who will make a positive difference in our world. In a shifting international political and economic landscape, this work is essential. We have seen how an international school approach to identity, language, community, curriculum, travel, and sustainability can shape the character of our students for the benefit of our communities. We trust other schools see the value of these areas of cultivation, too.



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