

Looking Beyond the Classroom: Integrating Global Citizenship Education Throughout Your Whole School

There is no doubt that the individual efforts of globally conscious educators are vital for preparing learners with the competencies they need to be successful in our interconnected world. Yet if we are to truly educate a new generation of learners as global citizens, we must acknowledge that global citizenship education (GCED) is more than a pedagogical choice. If we are to harness the transformative potential of education to create a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world, we must look beyond our classrooms.

At ACEI, we view global citizenship education as a comprehensive educational philosophy that can be implemented through an integrated schoolwide—or whole-school—approach. A whole-school approach means that the principles of GCED are embedded in every aspect of school life (e.g., governance, policies and procedures, teaching practices, curriculum, physical and social environment, extracurricular activities, teacher training, community engagement, etc.) and that all members of the school community (teachers, school leaders and administrative staff, students, and parents) have a key role to play in promoting a global school culture. Such an approach is more likely to have a positive lasting impact, not only for learners, but for the entire school community.

We share five considerations for looking beyond your classroom and bringing global citizenship education to your whole school.

1. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: GLOBALLY CONSCIOUS SCHOOL LEADERS CREATE GLOBALLY CONSCIOUS SCHOOLS

The introduction and success of a whole-school approach to GCED rests largely in the hands of school leaders who embody the essence of global citizenship. School leaders have the capacity to set the tone for the school by articulating the values that define the school's identity as a global institution. They shape the mission and vision of the school and can establish structures (e.g., anti-discrimination policies, mentoring programs, or regular forums for students and teachers to address school and community issues) that foster

A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH:

“...involves addressing the needs of learners, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these.”

Source: UNESCO International Bureau of Education

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schoolwide global consciousness. And when school leaders act like global citizens in their everyday interactions with students and teachers, they serve as role models for the entire school community.

School leaders also have a responsibility to "onboard" teachers who have less experience with GCED and may be reluctant to embrace it. Leadership support of this kind can require significant time dedicated to understanding each teacher's philosophy and experience and engaging in conversations that are often difficult. However, research shows that when school leaders offer individualized (or "differentiated") support, teachers are better equipped with the understanding and tools needed for the successful implementation of a reform like a whole-school approach to GCED.

Although school leaders are key, many passionate teachers have been able to initiate and lead GCED movements within their school and beyond. Work with your school leader to understand the benefits of GCED or just start with a few close teachers.

Even the efforts of individual teachers can have a huge impact. Michelle Carton, an elementary school librarian in Alaska, is one inspirational example. Not only has she brought a global perspective to library time with her students, but she has also connected with students, educators, and librarians across her state and the world, leading professional development and student learning opportunities in person and online. Her Young Global Citizens program was even recently named a semi-finalist in the Follett Challenge, an annual competition on innovation in K-12 education held by the library book manufacturer.

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2. TEACHING & LEARNING: GCED ISN'T IN YOUR CURRICULUM UNTIL IT'S ACROSS YOUR CURRICULUM

For best results, infuse the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with global citizenship across the curriculum. Mix and repeat. Such an interdisciplinary approach can obviously be achieved by adding global content into lessons, especially those beyond social studies and civics. But this is not the only way. When teachers change how they engage with students and other teachers, they too become models of global citizenship in a way that has effects beyond the classroom. Providing opportunities for students to engage in dialogue about important issues, introducing other perspectives, and encouraging curiosity are just a few things that every teacher can do, regardless of what subject or grade they teach.

Remember: you don't have to go at it alone, and in fact, you shouldn't. Partner with a colleague from a different department and see how you can collaborate. Establish a community of practice

within your school or across schools in your district. Or work with a teacher in your own department—the possibilities when we come together are endless. After all, embracing a collaborative spirit and working with others of varying perspectives is what GCED is all about, so what

better way to demonstrate this to your students than by partnering with colleagues?

It is important to keep in mind, especially for teachers with less experience in GCED, that we are all on this exploration together. The learning that comes from this journey is what's most important. It's OK to not have all the answers. So, step outside your comfort zone and enjoy the journey with your students!

3. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: EXTRACURRICULAR MEANS EXTRA (INTER)CONNECTIONS

Participation in extracurricular activities helps students to develop the skills of global citizenship and fosters a culture of inclusion in the school. Students have the opportunity to explore shared interests with others that they might not connect with in the classroom, and these interactions help to form more diverse peer networks. Students also learn to work with others toward a common goal whether it's winning a sports competition, completing a community service project, or organizing a club event.

Participating in extracurricular activities is especially important for immigrants and other marginalized groups. Research shows that although immigrant students don't participate in extracurricular activities as much as other

students, when they do they benefit in terms of forming connections with others, developing their identity, and feeling a sense of belonging to a community. Intentional efforts by teachers to encourage immigrant students to join activities that align with their interests are key to fostering a more inclusive school community.

4. SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS: CHANGE YOUR COMMUNITY, CHANGE THE WORLD

Just as the proverbial pebble creates ripples in the water, change often starts with the actions of a single person in a single place. Engaging with individuals and institutions in your community helps students learn about the place where they live and how it is connected to other places both near and far. It also has the potential to effect positive change when schools and the community



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work together to address shared issues. Students gain efficacy and feel that they can make a difference in their world. School involvement in the community also gives students the chance to interact with adults beyond their family, which is important since students often model their civic identity after adults they are close with.

Along with your students, take a look outside your classroom and see what's going on in your local community. What's happening, how might things be better, and who is doing something about it? School-community partnerships can be with any institution beyond the school, including other schools, businesses, local government, universities, service providers (e.g., hospitals, police department), and places of religious worship. You may even engage with schools in other countries, state/province or national governments, or international non-governmental organizations. But keep in mind that you don't have to go far to change the world. Change starts with you and me, right here and right now in our own communities.

5. SCHOOL CULTURE: LEARNING, ACTING, THINKING GLOBAL

Of all the aspects of a school discussed, one is particularly critical—school leaders who are able to effectively support the promotion of a global school culture that is democratic and inclusive. When students (and teachers, too!) can voice their opinions, feel a sense of belonging, and play an active role in their school and community, these are the most powerful influences for feeling like they can make a difference in their world. These lived experiences as part of school life are what guide them on their journey to become global citizens. Indeed, developing a global consciousness is not simply a matter of learning, it comes from how we act and perceive the world. It's a mindset, one that must be embedded throughout a school's culture.

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Taken together, these considerations represent the foundation for adopting a whole-school approach to GCED. Such an approach offers great benefits for learners as well as the entire school community. At the core is the idea that GCED can—and should—be delivered not only via formal learning defined by the curriculum, but also via informal learning experiences embedded in every aspect of school life. It also must be lived by all of us—teachers, school leaders, and members of our school communities. As dedicated global educators and tireless mentors of future global citizens, let's look beyond our classrooms and realize the endless possibilities offered by an integrated whole-school approach to global citizenship education.

REFLECTING ON YOUR SCHOOL

- What do you find when you use a whole-school approach to map your school's implementation of global citizenship education?
- What is your school doing well? In what areas is further work needed to better educate your learners as global citizens?

About ACEI

The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) is an international non-governmental organization, based in Washington, D.C., that promotes innovative solutions to education challenges and inspires action that creates positive, sustainable futures for children and youth worldwide. Through three core programs—Global Schools First, Education Diplomacy, and Innovation Exchange—ACEI works to ensure that every child in every nation has access to quality education that prepares them to become responsible and engaged citizens, ready for life in a changing world. Learn more and get involved at www.acei.org.