



Global Awareness

In-school and exchange programs open gateway to the world

by Ladan Nekoomaram

Indianapolis schools establish the importance of global community at a young age. Language and exchange programs improve test scores, college or job applications and open students' minds as international citizens.

"The kid who is bilingual, comfortable in other countries, flexible and a critical thinker will most likely get the job because he/she can change with the changing world," says David Garner, head of the International School of Indiana.

The International School introduces its students to the world beyond Indianapolis at age 3 with required Spanish or French lessons that continue through high school. Many take on a second language in middle school and graduate trilingual.

Known for its diverse community, the school has students representing 37 nationalities, and of the 116 employees, only 30 have U.S. citizenship only. Grades five, eight and 10 participate in exchange trips to places

like France, Spain, Mexico, Quebec and Costa Rica.

"Global education is an urgent priority because of the rapid change in the world," Garner says. "They need to be able to compete successfully in tomorrow's world."

St. Richard's School requires French from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade and offers Latin in conjunction with either French or Spanish in middle school. Fifth graders can participate in the French "Back to Back" program. The group travels to France for two weeks at the end of the year, and French students visit the school for two weeks in February. Students visit Italy and Mexico on summer programs to reinforce Spanish and Latin.

"We want them to apply their knowledge of language, culture and history to lessons while they're still here for a few years," says academic dean Carolyn Lausch. The school has students from 21 countries and features cultural presentations and festivals run by all students.

"By the time they leave us, our mission is that they go to high school knowledgeable of other cultures and the worldwide community," she says.

Public schools also have adopted a sense of global community. Carmel High School offers American Sign Language, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Latin and Spanish through their World Languages Program. The school offers two very established exchange programs to Japan and Germany.

Crooked Creek Elementary School, a 2006 Blue Ribbon school, partnered with Wusilu Primary School in Dalian, China, to introduce the children to Chinese culture and language. Yan Yang teaches kindergarten through fifth grade and posts a blog for the students of Crooked Creek and Wusilu to share their thoughts.

"China is a key player in the world, and we want kids to be prepared for the 21st century and beyond," says Mary Beth Reffett, principal of Crooked Creek. ■