

## GC XIII

### The Declaration

We set ourselves to the task of considering the nature and enhancement of global initiatives in our schools, the importance of leadership and leadership training in our communities, and what it would mean for our schools to define themselves as world schools. These three themes animated formal and informal discussions that took on both a theoretical and practical tone. Discussions ran the gamut of definitional conversation to practical suggestions shared by delegates who discussed their own schools. These diverse points of view contributed to new ideas and the potential for more sharing of information, programs, students, and teachers in the future.

Delegates to Global Connections XIII presented the initiatives that currently exist in their schools. Such an exchange necessarily generated an enthusiasm for the good work of our colleagues and for trying some of their successful ideas in our own schools. Partnerships across borders and continents represent a common outcome of Global Connections seminars, and this year was no exception. We have an opportunity to explore our commonalities as well as our subtle differences in approach. At the same time, we have ground in concepts such as global mindedness and shared values and humanity. Some delegates spoke of global mindedness as a thought process that began with the larger world and encouraged all members of school communities to engage with that world as exchange students, better-informed faculty members, supporters of international projects, or informed citizens sensitive to developments in all parts of the planet. Central to the task of developing global mindedness in our communities is the concept of empathy, which requires a conscious process of encouraging exposure, the exertion that it takes to think beyond ourselves, and the exchange of ideas, programs, and people. Time and again, delegates expressed the idea that, even with the expanded resources of web 2.0 (the "cloud") that allow us a window into the larger world, actual experience in a new country with new people remains a preferred model.

Leadership for Africa in the 21st century was a common theme in many of our school visits, and formal and informal conversations frequently touched on the idea of leadership in our schools. From encouraging faculty and students to assume leadership roles in their communities to acquiring the knowledge and skills required to become economic and political leaders, we discussed aspects of leadership training and the nature of leadership styles. This is one area in which a strategic approach is necessary to maximize training and leadership opportunities for school community members and to enhance the results of such training.

All of us face the challenge of enhancing our role as world schools as the world becomes both "smaller" and more complex. Just as we desire that our students engage with a world beyond themselves, we express concern that they continue to know and value the cultures and communities from which they come. Just as it becomes more and more possible to be "connected" through the Internet and social media, we care deeply that they find ways to put down Facebook in favor of face time. And just as we continue to develop exchanges and partnerships, we hope that the experiences shared and lessons learned affect the participants beyond the moment and that we are able to bring the idea of "global education" closer to a universal definition of the best of education for all students and members of school communities.

As we return to our individual schools, there are a number of ideas that we can bring with us and turn into meaningful actions and programs as our circumstances permit:

- Support exchanges and partnerships among schools and provide guidance and feedback to participants. We should evaluate our programs by asking, "What do we do?" "What do we do well?" and "What can we do better?"
- Continue to communicate with each other as Global Connection delegates, through email or a social networking platform that will facilitate an ongoing exchange of ideas and anecdotes so that we can share our diverse experiences.
- Promote Global Connections as the vanguard of world education by bringing our experiences to colleagues at home.
- Encourage an interest in global education and an appreciation of global mindedness in the curriculum, especially at the primary school level.

