

This past semester OCENET and OCDSB schools hosted international students from 49 countries around the world...and 400 of those international students graduated with their Grade 12 OSSD diplomas in June.

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OCENET sponsors art contest for international students



Covid-19 Heroes poster by Gia Anh Thu Doan (Grade 11, Brookfield H.S.)

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by Kari Hanes
Project Leader
Short-Term/Group Programs

At the end of April, six weeks into our quarantine period, a call went out to our international students asking them to share their special talents and participate in an OCENET-sponsored "QuarantArt Contest".

We asked students to submit works of art that were inspired or influenced by their quarantine experience... "How I'm surviving quarantine." Any genre/medium was welcome. We received short stories, photos, poems, songs, music video, drawings, paintings, and digital artwork.

The talent amongst our international students is incredible! The voting was done by OCENET staff and it was very difficult to choose just two pieces. Each and every submission was imaginative, original, creative and deserving. After much deliberation, the winners were selected.

OCENET teacher training adapts to online delivery model

by Constantine Ioannou
Program Director
Short-term/Group Programs

OCENET has recently taken the opportunity to focus on past programs in teacher training for visiting international colleagues. Having had regular programs delivered in the past for educators

from Spain, South Korea, China, Sweden and many other places, the current situation has necessitated a fresh look at offering alternatives for teacher development.

As our colleagues from overseas have had to postpone plans to visit us and the

OCDSB, OCENET has begun to revisit the content and delivery of workshops and teacher collaboration activities and started a modification process for online offerings.

Currently, modules in the areas of Leadership in Education,

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OCENET teacher training adapts to online delivery (cont'd)



OCENET Program Director Constantine Ioannou recently presented a webinar entitled “Canadian Perspectives on Language Classrooms” to an international audience

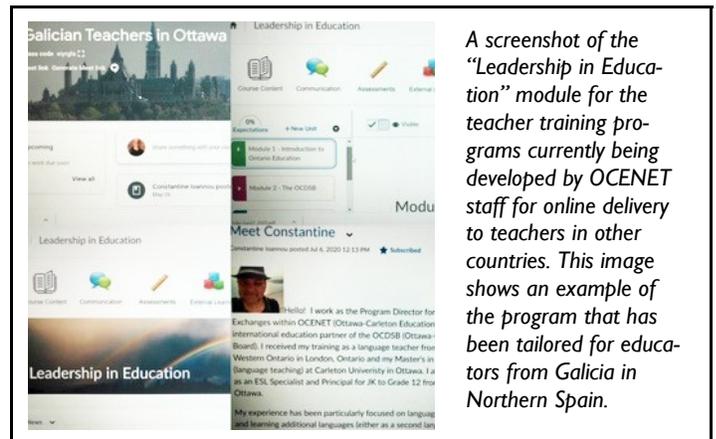
CLIL (Content and Language Integrated in Learning) and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) are being crafted and OCENET is pursuing the development of these courses on both Brightspace and Google Classroom platforms.

We also hope to connect teachers from overseas with their OCDSB colleagues for online interaction and to encourage sharing through digital means - hopefully including live chat sessions if time zone differences permit.

Recently I was able to experiment with the tools available for online teacher development by presenting

to over 100 teachers representing Panama and elsewhere. It was inspiring to be able to interact with colleagues while sharing ideas for the English language classroom. As our online courses continue to take shape, we will look to connect with OCDSB educators willing to invite an interna-

tional colleague to have a glimpse into their classroom and to possibly partner classrooms for other mutual learning opportunities. Want to communicate with a teacher online next year? For more information, contact constantine@ocdsb.ca



A screenshot of the “Leadership in Education” module for the teacher training programs currently being developed by OCENET staff for online delivery to teachers in other countries. This image shows an example of the program that has been tailored for educators from Galicia in Northern Spain.

OCENET sponsors art contest for international students (cont'd)



A screen shot from the music video entitled *How to Handle Covid-19*, the first place winner of OCENET’s QuarantArt Contest

Our first-place winner of OCENET’s QuarantArt Contest was Eunbine (Sally) Park (Glashan PS–Grade 7). Sally wrote her song, *How to Handle Covid-19*, to cheer people up during this pandemic. Her lyrics offer advice on how to beat the virus and shows appreciation for the

work of nurses and doctors. She recorded the music video with the help of her siblings and a “wonderful neighbour.”

Our second-place winner was Gia Anh Thu Doan (Brookfield HS – Grade 11) was inspired by the Avengers movies. Her art-

work entitled *Covid-19 Heroes* depicts front-line workers battling the Coronavirus as the villain stating “they are the heroes fighting against the coronavirus.”

Seventeen students participated in the QuarantArt Contest. The participants were asked to describe their inspiration for their pieces. Several of the international students explained that the quarantine period has allowed them the time to return to their love of art, to use their imagination and be creative.

Others have been inspired by their nostalgia of places, people, and the beauty of “home”... whether of flowers, the sea, or sunsets or other natural wonders.

The OCENET team enjoyed sponsoring this contest and every submission received elicited the “wow factor.”

The winners’ submissions can be viewed by visiting the following link at the Covid-19 student update section of our website <https://sites.google.com/view/student-update-site-covid-19/home/quarantart-how-im-surviving-quarantine-contest?authuser=0>

OCENET is sponsoring another challenge open to our international students over the summer called the *Covid-19 Comfort Food Contest* and will develop a special cookbook of all entries.



wishes to acknowledge its appreciation for the dedicated support Homestay families and OCDSB educators continue to provide to our international students during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Osaka Gakugei Ottawa Program continues to thrive



Japanese students with their Canadian host families in the Library at 440 Albert Street in January. Seated at front (l-r) Greg Duggan, YPLS Director of Studies, Tom Clark, International Projects Coordinator at Osaka Gakugei Senior High School, and Geoff Best, OCENET Executive Director.

by Greg Duggan
Director of Studies, Young People's Language School

In mid-January, OCENET welcomed the fifth cohort of the Osaka Gakugei Ottawa Program (OGOP). This group, consisting of 25 Grade 11

students, spent their first two weeks in Ottawa at YPLS before being placed at Bell, Brookfield, Glebe, Gloucester, Ridgemont, and Woodroffe high schools.

As with previous co-

horts, the students are here on a 12-month international study and cultural experience. According to Chikae Duggan, the OGOP Ottawa-based Support and Liaison Coordinator, "students in this program grow a lot in their

time here". She adds, "They become more independent and confident as they learn a new language and experience a culture very different from the one back home."

In spite of the unfortunate events of this spring caused by the pandemic, the students are remaining positive and looking forward to better days ahead. "The students and their parents have been incredibly understanding and supportive during the COVID-19 lockdown," states Tom Clark, International Projects coordinator at Osaka Gakugei Senior High School.

According to Clark, Osaka Gakugei remains committed to the OGOP program and, "looks forward to continuing to work productively with OCENET and the OCDSB for years to come." This is something we at YPLS look forward to as well.

YPLS Update: A Spring like no other

by Greg Duggan
Director of Studies, Young People's Language School

With the extended closure of schools and board facilities as a result of the governmental response to COVID-19 which began in March, students and teachers at YPLS, like those everywhere in the province were forced to adapt as programming moved online.

Starting after the Easter long weekend and running through June 26, YPLS's spring group, consisting of students from China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, suc-

cessfully navigated its way through two levels of the National Geographic Impact ESL curriculum. "Our partners at National Geographic were great about providing us, at no charge, with all of the online resources we needed to continue to run our program as effectively as possible given the constraints of the lockdown" stated YPLS Director of Studies, Greg Duggan.

Students participated in two one-hour lessons per day, one each with teachers Greg Duggan and Matthew

Levesque. In addition to these classes, daily homework was assigned, scored, and recorded on the National Geographic Impact companion website. Of the need for daily lessons, Duggan says, "Language learning is foundational for all learning for students coming from countries where English isn't spoken much and, therefore, needs consistent supervised practice and feedback."

While the switch to a purely online learning environment went well, it was not without its challenges. Although

Levesque found the process of teaching online to be rewarding, saying that, "it gives teachers a new way to connect with students as well as helping to build student independence," Levesque adds, "they come mainly in the form of utilizing technology as effectively as possible and adapting lesson delivery to suit an online medium." Duggan adds, "There is something lost in the virtual class experience in terms of building personal connections with each student and being able to adapt to their specific needs at any given moment as effectively as one can in a traditional learning environment. However, we need to do the best we can given the current circumstances."

In their own words: International students during Covid

Each issue of *Global Connections* highlights the experiences of international students or educators who visit Ottawa and attend OCDSB schools through OCENET. In this issue the focus is on three international students from Gloucester High School, one who stayed in Ottawa, one who returned home, and one who recently graduated.

Elena from Spain



The pandemic experience affected me in many ways. It was very difficult for me to stay at home everyday and not go to school and do all of the activities I was used to, especially hanging out with my friends. I really thought my exchange year was going to be ruined forever by Covid; I thought I was never going to be able to see my Canadian friends again. I decided to stay in Canada so that I could remain with my new friends and so I could continue to work on my goal of being a fluent speaker of English. I loved going to school and classes everyday and didn't adjust well to online learning as it seemed more difficult on the computer and it was a challenge to motivate myself for learning even though my teachers were supportive and cared for their students. At the beginning of the pandemic, I spent much of my time cooking with my host Mom, talking and watching movies with my host sister, doing gymnastics, and facetimeing with friends. I contacted my family regularly. I have learned how to spend a lot of time by myself and deal with a difficult situation. In spite of all the challenges imposed by Covid, I consider being an international student in Canada the best experience of my life.

Jaeyeop from South Korea



First of all, I was supposed to stay in Ottawa until July for school but I came back to South Korea because of the pandemic. At that time, Korea was safer than Canada and I didn't have assurances that I would be able to go return to Korea for the summer vacation. When I returned to Korea, I isolated and was tested. I found that my courses were easier online and I could spend more time studying other things such as studying English grammar and reading books that I wanted to read after finishing school assignments. Every week I had online meetings through Google Hangouts. My Japanese teacher, Mr. Smith, taught me to understand how grammar works and he helped me practice. Even though we were not in class physically, I was able to improve my Japanese at home. I'm thankful that I met a teacher like him who is passionate about teaching. When I wasn't doing schoolwork, I went to Jiu Jitsu club when Korea's pandemic situation improved. After I came back to Korea, I contacted my Canadian friends and international student friends to ask them how they were doing in the situation. I miss my girlfriend in Ottawa, my friends, teachers, and ordinary life. I hope I can go back to Canada soon!

Katherine from China



COVID-19 affected me in lots of ways. I hardly went out and stayed with my homestay family most of the time. During the pandemic I bought a skateboard, read books, watched movies, and also did some baking. I used social media to talk with my friends and family. Up until the end of June, I felt uncomfortable doing courses online because I couldn't talk to my teachers face-to-face even though they were patient and tried to answer my questions. While online learning allowed more flexibility with my time, I find that it doesn't work well for me. I am very thankful to my host family and many other people who helped me during this time. I graduated from Grade 12 this year, and I applied to Canadian universities. I got several offers and I decided to go to the University of Waterloo to study Mathematics. But then the university announced that all the students in Fall 2020 are going to have online courses, so I will go back to China and I will return to Canada for my studies at a later date. Most of my friends went back to China, though some of them stayed in Ottawa. I hope everyone will be safe, and that we definitely can pass through this together!

Castor Valley ES connects with school in China

“In February of this school year I never would have imagined that I would end the year teaching from home, much less that I would be spending weekday mornings chatting with, and fostering friendships among students and teachers from across the globe in my own kitchen.”

*- Kim Tustin,
Grade 5 teacher,
Castor Valley ES*

There is an exciting new project happening at Castor Valley ES. The aim is to develop a long-term and sustainable relationship between Castor Valley students and staff and their counterparts at Shuanglin Primary School in Chengdu, China.

In spite of the pandemic, students and staff have met virtually on several occasions. The inaugural meeting of the teachers and the students in this global partnership pilot project took place on May 29th. There are 11 students currently involved, five Grade 5 students from teacher Kim Tustin’s class and six Grade 6 students from teacher Sarah Cimetta’s class. These students are essentially part of a school club and are involved because of their initiative, empathy and openness to others, as well as their competence with online learning.

To date, the students have been working on several assignments starting with a focus on themselves, and extending to their home

and then their community. Both the Chinese and Canadian students have made videos which they have shared to learn about each other and to foster friendship and understanding. The goal is to have fun learning about each other’s life and culture.

Principal Chris Toivonen sees the project as important for building positive relationships and understanding; the school community has responded very positively. As Principal Toivonen points out: “Our job as educators is to provide safe learning opportunities that are positive and fun, and recognize that learning can extend beyond our school’s walls and curriculum to reach across the world.”

Teachers Sarah Cimetta and Kim Tustin are excited by the students’ learning. The students are paying attention to communication skills by speaking clearly and

using plain vocabulary that avoids slang or jargon. While the Chinese students have good English speaking skills, some of the Canadian students are now trying to respond with some Chinese expressions. In Sarah Cimetta’s view, the project “opened up our eyes to new experiences and knowledge about Chengdu, China, and to new learning platforms to communicate and develop connections with each other.”

Members of the OCENET team including Executive Director Geoff Best and Program Director Constantine Ioannou and International Education Coordinator Sean Oussoren, have provided support and facilitated the international connections to work in collaboration with the staff at Castor Valley ES and the educators in Chengdu to launch this cross-cultural project.

OCDSB Elementary Principals interested in starting an international club with students in China are invited to contact geoff.best@ocdsb.ca.



OCENET’s Dahlia Liwsze at work from her home office

Working from home during Covid

by Dahlia Liwsze
OCENET Admin. Assistant

March 16th is the day life as I knew it changed. My manager texted me not to come into the office: the OCENET staff would be working from home during COVID-19.

As an extrovert, I have found working from home challenging. I love people,

am very social, and miss the comradery of my co-workers and being at the OCENET offices. However, what has helped me stay connected has been daily OCENET Group Chats as well as weekly staff meetings on Zoom.

The positive things about working from home have been sleeping in a little

bit longer in the morning and occasionally working in my pajamas. On the other hand, the negative things have included dealing with isolation and trying to not get distracted while working. I have persevered though, and staying in touch with my mother and my best friend everyday with a phone call during lunch time has helped make adapting to life under Covid more manageable.

Lynch-Getty Global Student Award Recipients

The Lynch-Getty Global Student Award is presented annually to four students attending school in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board – this award is intended for both Canadian residents as well as international students attending the OCDSB. The students will have demonstrated leadership in their community and involvement in groups, events and activities that foster cross cultural learning and understanding in school and in the community. Each recipient receives \$1,000 towards post-secondary study.

Isabelle



co-president of Global Youth Club at her high school. She believes that “our perception of the world is not the only version. We forget that there are so many cultures, beliefs, and events that it is important to be open-minded to different perspectives, ideas, experience.” She will be pursuing post-secondary education at the University of Toronto in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Isabelle hopes she can also study abroad and learn more languages in the future.

Many of Isabelle’s global citizenship opportunities came through the International Certificate Program, such as volunteer work at OCENET as a summer student ambassador, as well as being

Mohamed



within our community, and how unique every person’s story is. He also learned about the numerous barriers that currently exist in society that affect inclusiveness. Mohamed feels that receiving the recognition from this award will encourage him to continue his intercultural activities. In September, he will study at the University of Ottawa to complete an Honours Bachelor of Science degree in Human Kinetics with a minor in Conflict Studies and Human Rights.

Mohamed has volunteered extensively at both the Boys and Girls Club and with Special Olympics where he had opportunities to learn about the wide diversity of individuals that live

Prasith



were invaluable because they taught me about multiculturalism and event planning. Also, being able to understand the historical and socio-economic context of a vast majority of countries is important, in my opinion, for my future pathway in global engineering and business.” He is very thankful for this recognition because it celebrates his personal contributions to the community, and he recognizes that becoming a global citizen does not happen in just 4 years because it is a lifelong process.

A Grade 12 student from Bell HS, Prasith was a leader with the Model United Nations Club, Multicultural Club, as well as many other global citizenship roles. In his view: “These experiences

Katelan



South Korea. She served as a student ambassador for the OIPE summer program and as co-president of the Global Youth Club at SRB HS. Through global citizenship activities, she feels that she learned about self-identity and about other cultures. In her words: “I learned how to think outside the box and it helped me to push myself out of my own comfort zone.” Katelan feels very honored receiving this award, and next year will be attending Queen’s University to study Commerce.

Katelan was enrolled in the International Certificate Program, which opened up many opportunities for her to get involved in many global citizenship activities, such as attending the Jeju Youth Forum in



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OCENET Bulletin Board

2020 ICP Grads



Photos of some of the 77 students from 20 secondary schools who received the OCDSB International Certificate. Students were not able to participate in the usual annual ceremony for ICP graduates. All grads received a "special 2020 edition" ICP travel mug.



Thinking About Becoming A Homestay Host?

- Among the many benefits of being a Homestay host:
- make a significant difference to the life of a student from another country
 - learn about people from other cultures
 - make friends across the world
 - introduce your children to an intercultural experience
 - share Canadian culture and life in Ottawa
 - Host Support 24/7
 - receive an honorarium to cover expenses

Visit "Hosts" at www.canadahomestaynetwork.ca

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If you have an international education story that should be included in *Global Connections*, let us know.

Please direct any comments, questions, or suggestions to:
ross.laing@ocdsb.ca

