

This past semester OCENET and OCDSB schools hosted international students from 48 countries around the world...with international students attending 21 high schools and 22 elementary schools throughout the OCDSB.

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## Japanese exchange students share culture at Gloucester HS



Throughout the evening of Tuesday, April 18th, exchange students from Yamate-Gakuin School in Yokohama, Japan, set up many interesting displays in the foyer at Gloucester High School. Attendees at the event learned about and could participate in Japanese arts and culture, including trying out calligraphy, Japanese games, kimonos, and kendo, among many other traditions. Towards the end of the evening the audience gathered in the auditorium to see a series of cultural performances that included martial arts, singing, and dancing. Almost 80 Japanese students were hosted by four OCDSB high schools and stayed with local students and their families to experience Canadian culture. In the summer, the reciprocal part of the exchange will take place when 34 Ottawa students will be travelling to Japan to stay with the students who came to Ottawa.

## In-person orientation returns for new international students

OCENET has a well established orientation program that helps prepare new international students for living and studying in Ottawa. The program helps students to feel comfortable and confident in their new school and with living in a new city with a host homestay family.

The pandemic required orientation sessions to be conducted online, but this past January saw the return to in-person orientation sessions where OCENET staff re-

viewed key aspects of school life such as the daily routines, class timetables, and bus schedules. The staff from Canada Homestay Network addressed adjusting to life with a Canadian family, and staff from the RBC bank provided students with information about banking and



Musician Krish Sundaram led a student group drumming experience

money management. The new students received helpful answers to their questions.



Members of the OCENET staff, along with representatives from Canada Homestay Network and RBC, at the January 30th Orientation Day

## International education heads in many directions



*OCENET Executive Director Geoff Best address a group of German educators at an orientation session*



*Students from Brazil attended a short term placement in OCDSB schools*

While the main role of OCENET is to recruit and support international students who come to study in OCDSB schools, OCENET is very busy in developing learning partnerships between educators and students from around the world with local students and teachers.

With the goal of developing intercultural awareness, OCENET facilitates both virtual and in-person educational exchanges, and currently has projects with OCDSB schools and students in Japan, France, China, and South Korea, among other countries.

Students from many countries, including Brazil and Spain, attend short term and summer programs, usually with placements in local schools.

Over the years, OCENET has become renowned for its teacher education programs and regularly attracts visiting educators from countries such as Sweden, Spain, China, and Germany, among others, who come to learn about Ontario's educational system.

In addition, there are numerous delegations of international educators who come to visit OCDSB schools, and OCENET serves as a key organizer of school visitations.



*Students from Featherston Drive PS who have been part of an online learning exchange with students in Chengdu, China, visited the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa to learn about Chinese culture. Shown in the photo (l-r): Geoff Best, OCENET; Guido Ronci, Principal; Reg Lavergne, OCDSB SOI; Chinese Ambassador to Canada, Cong Peiwu; Sean Oussoren, International Education Coordinator; Samantha Conley, OCDSB Teacher; and Alex Mao, International Educational Consultant.*

## OCDSB renews educational partnership with S. Korea



*Acting OCDSB Director of Education, Michele Giroux, with Jeju Provincial Office of Education, Governor of Education, Kim Gwang Soo, at the May 23rd MOU signing ceremony*



*The delegation from the Jeju Provincial Office of Education led by Governor of Education Kim Gwang Soo (center left) with OCENET Executive Director Geoff Best (center right) and the OCDSB's General Manager of Communications and Public Relations Diane Pernari in the foyer of the OCDSB offices at 133 Greenbank Road. The Memorandum of Understanding signed on May 23rd continues the educational partnership between Jeju Island educators and students in South Korea with local OCDSB staff to participate in mutually beneficial learning initiatives for staff and students on both sides of the Pacific.*



## OCENET hosts International Certificate Program Graduation



Graduates are all smiles as they receive their OCDSB International Certificates at a special ceremony held at the Albert Street Education Centre, the building which is home to OCENET's offices.

On June 8th, 98 graduates from 21 local high schools who completed the requirements of the OCDSB International Certificate Program (ICP) crossed the stage in the auditorium at 440 Albert Street. The proud Grade 12 students were enthusiastically applauded by friends and family in the audience.

OCENET International Education Coordinator and administrator of the ICP, Sean Oussoren, served as the MC for the ceremony. The evening included presentations from several ICP students who provided reflections on their participation in the ICP and the innovative projects they completed throughout the program.

Following the presentation of the International Certificate diplomas, Mr. Geoff Best, OCENET Executive Director, provided closing remarks about the im-



Mr. Oussoren's entertaining ICP "rap" for the graduates was enjoyed by all attendees

portance of intercultural awareness and congratulated the ICP graduates on their leadership.

Currently there is a total of 716 students enrolled in the ICP from Grades 9-12 in 24 OCDSB schools, and supported by 34 teacher advisors who are key to the success of the innovative ICP program. Since the first ICP graduation ceremony in 2013, 590 OCDSB students have received the International Certificate. Several colleges and universities recognize the OCDSB International Certificate and offer scholarships.

Variations of the OCDSB ICP model are now found in schools across Canada.

***"It's the way that we can reward curiosity and initiative that I think is particularly special about the ICP, and the students that step out of their comfort zone are the ones who get the most out of this program. I'm just lucky that I get to witness it."***

- Brandon Crilly  
International Certificate  
Program Teacher Advisor,  
Earl of March S.S.

## OCDSB students complete exchange to France



Exchange students from OCDSB schools enjoy Aix-en-Provence



Students on the Provence international exchange with OCENET International Education Coordinator Sean Oussoren

For a number of years now a special international exchange program between students from OCDSB secondary schools and schools in the Provence area of France have provided intercultural learning opportunities for students.

In the 2022-23 school year, following the pandemic restrictions, 40 local students in Grades 10-12 from thirteen OCDSB high schools participated.

During the months of October and November in the fall of 2022, students from five schools in Marseilles, Nice, and Aix-en-Provence in southern France were paired with local students and arrived in Ottawa to live with their host family for five

weeks, where the French students learned about everyday life in Canada and also attended school. While here, the French students also participated in outdoor education experiences, as well as going bowling and attending a hockey game.

In March and April 2023 it was time for the OCDSB students to reconnect with their French counterparts and to meet and stay with the family of the student they hosted in Ottawa. For five weeks the Ottawa students communicated in a French speaking environment, studied at a French school, and experienced a new culture over an extended period of time. These types of opportunities can forge lifelong friendships and shape futures.

This type of “immersive” approach is a much richer and deeper learning experience than a tour where students stay in hotels and have little opportunity to get to know a family and insights into day-to-day life in another country.

And looking forward to the next school year, 39 OCDSB students from seventeen local schools have been selected to participate in a similar learning exchange opportunity in France.



Living with a French family offers a unique cultural experience for OCDSB students

## International students from Bell HS attend Atlético Ottawa soccer game



On Saturday, June 3rd, thirty excited international students from Bell HS watched a soccer match between Atlético Ottawa and the Halifax Wanderers, cheering on the Ottawa team to a 2-0 victory. Principal Jon Harris along with Bell HS staff organized the excursion and hosted the group of students in a spectator’s VIP suite along with a pizza dinner.

## OCDSB students achieve recognition in the second annual EURO Challenge



The second annual EURO Challenge Canada was held at the Ottawa Art Gallery on May 2nd where local OCDSB schools and one from Toronto competed to address policy issues related to the economies in countries that use the euro as their national currency. This year’s winning team from Earl of March SS was presented with the first place trophy by the Canadian Ambassador for the EU, Dr. Melita Gabrič, and each team member awarded a prize of \$1,600.



## *In their own words: International Students in the ICP*

Most issues of *Global Connections* highlight the experiences of OCENET international students studying in OCDSB schools or educators participating in one of OCENET's teacher training programs.

### **Harris @ Gloucester HS**



About to graduate from Grade 12, Harris has been an international student at Gloucester High School since Grade 9. He arrived in Ottawa during Covid and didn't have many opportunities to get involved in school life apart from online classes, but when pandemic restrictions lifted Harris became very active, joining Link Crew, the International Certificate Program (ICP) and starting an International Friendship Club that meets on Fridays at lunch. Harris began with ESL (Level 3) and now is taking Grade 12 English classes. His level of spoken English has improved greatly and he likes that he has many options among courses to study. He studies approximately 3-4 hours per day. After visiting his family in Vietnam for the first time in 3.5 years this coming summer, Harris will study Bio-Technology at Algonquin College this September.

***"I enjoy being at Gloucester High School because it is a multicultural community where I have met a lot of people, made many friends, and formed new connections."***

- Harris,  
international student from  
Vietnam

### **Laura @ Canterbury HS**



Laura comes from Hamburg, Germany, and is in her second year as an international student, but this is her first year at an OCDSB high school. She enjoys Ottawa because it is not too large a city, but there is always lots to do. She chose to attend Canterbury HS in order to study Spanish as a course option. For Laura, a few of the biggest differences between high school in Germany and in Ontario include the daily schedule of classes and number of courses. She is impressed by the many school activities available to students here, and she has been involved in Key Club projects and joined the ICP because of her interest in travel and learning about different cultures. She has enjoyed making new friends from all over the world. Following her Grade 12 graduation this June, Laura's plans include taking a gap year followed by university.

***"Being an international student has been one of the best decisions I could have made; it has taught me how to overcome challenges and I have made friends that I know will last a lifetime."***

- Laura,  
international student from  
Germany

### **Emma @ Gloucester HS**



An international student in Grade 11, Emma comes from Germany and started at Gloucester High School in Grade 9. She lives with her family who came to Ottawa for an overseas work placement. Emma had some initial challenges because the Covid online classes made it difficult to make new friends, but now she has some close friends. She feels her level of English has improved significantly and that she is more competent with her speaking skills in particular. Emma still does miss some German cuisine. She believes it is important for international students to get involved in school life and she is a member of both the school soccer team as well as an ICP candidate who attends the International Friendship Club meetings at Gloucester. Future plans include attending university in Germany after graduation next year.

***"I really like interacting with other people from other countries; it's always interesting."***

- Emma,  
international student from  
Germany

## International Education Champion: *Bob Barter, A.Y. Jackson S.S.*



- Bob Barter,  
Global Studies Department Head,  
A.Y. Jackson S.S.



ICP Advisor Bob Barter (left) with  
A.Y. Jackson students who re-  
ceived the OCDSB International  
Certificate at the June 8th  
graduation ceremony

*Global Connections highlights individuals who have been key advocates and role models in supporting OCENET international students and/or the International Certificate Program.*

### **What are some of your roles with international education initiatives at A.Y. Jackson S.S.?**

My main roles include serving as the International Certificate Program (ICP) Advisor and chairing our Exchanges & Trips Committee. This committee looks for opportunities for our students to have national and international learning experiences through travel to support curriculum goals. The aim with these trips and exchanges is to provide equitable access for all students as much as possible, with options for billeting with families on reciprocal exchanges to not only have a richer cultural experience, but also reduce costs.

### **How long have you been involved with supporting international programs?**

I have been involved for more than 20 years, ever since I started teaching at A.Y. Jackson. In 2003, the school made a deliberate choice to actively “internationalize” by seeking an international partner for a student exchange, which we did with a school in Zaragoza, in northern Spain. What followed were efforts to reflect this international focus with a display of national flags, a huge world map at the entrance to the school, and

hallways painted with internationally themed murals.

### **What are some of the reasons you became involved as an advocate for international students?**

My interest predates my teaching career and goes back to my work as a geologist in Peru. I arrived in a new country where every thing was different and there was a sense of anxiety mixed with excitement. I was immersed in a language and culture all foreign to me. These are some of the same types of feelings that our international students experience. I am both empathetic and supportive of their decision to challenge themselves by studying in a new environment.

### **What are some of the initiatives that your school has taken to serve international students?**

At A.Y. Jackson we make sure to connect our new international students with students enrolled in the ICP. We also have a special lunch to welcome and honour our international students and provide them with A.Y. clothing such as T-shirts and hoodies. We want to expose the international students to a “full” learning experience and A.Y. teachers are encouraged to invite the students on field trips even for courses they are not registered in. I also invite the international students to participate in ICP events

such as a recent visit to the Japanese Embassy in May.

### **Which aspects of your work with the international students do you find most rewarding?**

The obvious answer might be taking students on international trips, but I find the many activities going on locally at A.Y. the most rewarding with events such as our annual Multicultural Buffet where students and their families prepare and bring foods for a special lunch to share with all the students and staff. I love that day not just because I am a bit of a “foodie” but because it shows the pride the students feel in sharing their culture with the whole school.

### **What has been the impact of your work with the international students upon you and what have you learned from them?**

As much as the international students learn and grow from their experiences at A.Y. Jackson, the Canadian students and staff benefit from having the international students as part of the school. New understandings develop and new friendships are forged.

### **What is next for you?**

Post-Covid I am working to re-establish the opportunities for national and international learning experiences for our students to explore the world beyond Ottawa and to become more informed and active global citizens.



## Students present at second annual ICP Health Forum



Student presenters at the ICP Global Health Forum, along with Sophia Mizayee (front center right) from the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamah and Sean Oussoren, OCENET's International Education Coordinator

women in different parts of the world were delivered by ICP students. Keynote speaker Kathryn LeBlanc provided strategies for the students to effect change. Student presentations ranged from reproductive rights to gender inequalities to mistreatment of female athletes. All attendees left better informed about the health issues.

The International Certificate Program (ICP) encourages OCDSB secondary students to participate in numerous leadership opportunities, both at home and abroad.

On May 25th, at the headquarters of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada building on Sussex Drive, eight presentations on issues related to the health of



## The world of international education

by **Dahlia Liwsze,**  
**Administrative Assistant**

Working in the Ottawa International Student Program (OISP) office, I answer a wide variety of questions by phone and email.

Prospective international students and their parents wonder about everything from the application process to government and educational documents that must be submitted to tuition fees and homestay/custodianship options.

They sometimes ask which schools are the best in Ottawa, and I assure them that all OCDSB schools are excellent and teach the curriculum mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Many questions focus on language requirements. There are 5 ESL levels with AO being beginner and EO being advanced. Students coming for Grade 12, for instance, must have more advanced English and are informed that it may take them longer than a year to graduate. Students take online assessments to determine English and math skill levels before arriving in Ottawa to assist with school placement.

If his or her parent has a valid study or work permit, a student can study for free until the age of 18. Otherwise, he or she is an international fee-paying student. I advise

students that they need to have a study permit if they plan to study in Canada for more than one semester, i.e. more than six months. Our office does not provide immigration advice though. We direct students and parents to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Overall, working with international students is rewarding. I strongly believe in international education and convey that to students. As Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."

## OCENET Photo Contest Winners

Each semester, as part of their student orientation, new international students attend an online photography tutorial followed by a contest. Below are recent winners in each of the three entry categories:



At School Category  
- Leandra Miranda



Around Ottawa Category  
- Santiago Rocha Pachon



With Homestay Category  
- Suttida Luo



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## OCENET Bulletin Board

### 2022-2023 Lynch-Getty Global Student Awards

**Amina Adams**  
Glebe Collegiate Institute

**Aya Arey**  
Colonel By Secondary School

**Ashiq Gazi**  
Cairine Wilson Secondary School

**Yalda Matin**  
Earl of March Secondary School



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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:  
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