

Going Global



Assessing the Needs of the Global Marketplace

We live and teach in an increasingly multicultural world. This holds true even more so for Herricks schools, where over 40 languages are spoken in our students' homes. In Herricks Public Schools, we educate students from all over the world and boast the highest percentage of students of Asian heritage of any school district in New York State. For all these reasons and many more, we have turned more attention to International Education as we educate our diverse student population in an ever more diversified global society.

Recent articles in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist* have noted major changes in workforce expectations, particularly among the most competitive national and international companies. One very significant change has been regarding diversity. In the old model, companies hired African-Americans to sell to African-American markets, Hispanic-Americans to sell to Hispanic-American markets, and so forth. In the new model, diverse groups of individuals are expected to have the personal and professional skills and knowledge to be able to work effectively, both individually and collectively, to market to widely disparate individuals, groups, organizations, regions, and/or countries. Multi-cultural capacity is therefore of critical importance on a professional as well as a personal, civic, or social basis.





John Bierwirth and Lori Langer de Ramirez give global understanding a headstart by integrating cross-cultural experiences and foreign policy into their world languages curricula

Where We Need to Improve

Unfortunately, numerous studies by the National Geographic Society over the past 20 to 30 years of both adults and students have revealed appalling ignorance of the world and even of the U.S. among Americans. For example, a cross section of young American adults between the ages of 18 and 24 were surveyed early in 2006 by the Roper Public Affairs organization. The survey included three different sections: The first tested factual knowledge on important events and issues. The second tested young adults' ability to read maps. In the third section those surveyed were given four different maps — three international and one of the continental U.S. — and asked to identify certain countries and important geographic landmarks. Forty eight percent of those surveyed indicated that they had taken a specific course in geography in either middle school or high school. Among the findings were the following:

Given an 11" x 17" map of the continental U.S.

- 50 percent could not locate New York State
- 1/3 could not find Louisiana
- 48 percent could not find the Mississippi River

Given an 18" x 24" map of the world

- 21 percent could not locate the Pacific Ocean
- 25 percent could not locate the Gulf of Mexico
- 44 percent could not locate Brazil
- 70 percent could not locate Egypt
- 88 percent could not locate Afghanistan
- 31 percent could not locate China

Those surveyed were given the following four choices for the approximate population of the U.S.

- 10 million to 50 million
- 150 million to 350 million
- 500 million to 750 million
- 1 billion to 2 billion