Year in Review
2017-2018
“The journey not the arrival matters.”

-T.S. Eliot
When THINK Global School was launched by Joann McPike in 2010, it’s safe to say the lofty ambitions she had in mind for the program far outweighed its realities. We started with fourteen very brave kids (and they were really just kids — 13 and 14 at the time), who believed strongly enough in her conviction that they left their family and friends behind to embark on the grandest of educational experiments. The thought being, if teenagers are shown a little bit of the world, the good and the bad, the happy and the sad, can they become engaged and take ownership of their own learning? And through their travels and experiences, can they be inspired to create meaningful change both at home and around the world?

By the time that first year concluded in China, we realized we were on to something. Almost all of our initial students stuck with us through that first year, and then a second, a third, and finally a fourth, where they and the classmates who joined them along the way gained the distinction of becoming the THINK Global School Class of 2014, one of the defining moments in our relatively short history.

As the years went on and the passport stamps added up, at some point we realized that while we were providing an excellent education for our students, the lofty ambitions we’d set for ourselves weren’t being realized.

The vision that Joann had of a school where students truly learned in the world and not just about it was within reach… but we weren’t quite there yet.

So we started over. In terms of curriculum: tabula rasa. Over the span of two years, Head of School Jamie Steckart and our curriculum development team set about redefining what learning means at THINK Global School.

What they came up with is the Changemaker Curriculum: a way to put the student back in charge of their learning by doing away with structured classes and replacing them with teacher-led and student-designed projects that truly leverage our locations and the people that call them home.

The remainder of this book shines a light on our first year under the Changemaker Curriculum, and we hope you enjoy reading about it as much as our staff and students enjoyed participating in it. One year in, we feel it’s safe to say those lofty ambitions held by Joann have finally been realized.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Botswana Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tech Free Rite of Passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Learning Culture Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Conservation &amp; Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>How Termites Taught Me Not to be Afraid of Being Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Gentle Giant: My Memorable Encounter With an African Elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>My Double Life: What Botswana Taught Me About Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>I, a JADED South African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>A Look at Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>India Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>India’s Path to Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Zero to Infinity Student Photography Showcase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Think Global School Gives with E-commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Surfing in Goa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>How Shiva and Brahma Taught Me to Be a Skeptical Believer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Paula M. Reflects on Her Path to Sustainability WeXplore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>EL Tercer Genero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Grade 12 Gives Back to the Mumbai Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>A Look at India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Japan Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>The Nuclear Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Reflections from the Hibakusha Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Hibakusha Word Cloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Harumi Matsumoto &amp; Her French Bulldog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Marketing in Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Marketing in Tokyo: Our Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Conscious Consumerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>A Reflection of My Time in Hiroshima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Cultural Highlights: Martial Arts &amp; Kimono Dress Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>A Look at Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Greece and Spain Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>The Refugee Crisis and Basque Traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Who Are We?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Introduction to Athens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>A Day at the Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>A Look at Greece’s Refugee Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Homestays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Guernica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Mining, Agriculture and Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>A Look at Basque Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Tying It All Together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Increased Engagement &amp; Overall Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Graduation!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table of Contents**
Year in numbers:

- 19 educators
- 44 students
- 2,553,617 miles travelled
Botswana
That’s what we had on our minds heading into the 2017-18 school year. After years of refining every facet of our school, we were ready to ratchet things up yet another level. In the year prior, our Curriculum Development team had diligently scoured the world, putting together a series of modules that would once again change the way our students think, and, if all went as planned, boost their engagement by putting them in charge of their own learning.

Again, big things. Where do you launch something of this nature? In a city teeming with skyscrapers, museums, and world-class educational institutions? In a leafy suburb boasting high speed internet access, cozy coffee shops, and comfortable dorms?

For us it was neither. If we were going to pull off something as big as changing the face of education, we needed to start small. We needed to let our students adapt to their new learning environment, their new classmates, their new expectations, and their new mission and core values. Their new lives.

So we chose Botswana. Here in the African wilderness our students began their journey. They learned the benefits of going tech-free. Many learned to “rough it” for the first time, in ways they never thought possible. One felt her jadedness towards the bush wash away upon seeing her squealing classmates’ first encounter with an elephant. Another learned to love what lies beneath the surface, realizing that perhaps she didn’t need makeup to inspire confidence anymore.

While Botswana might lack the trappings of modern life, we wouldn’t have wanted to start the school year anywhere else. We watched our students grow as learners, as friends and project partners, and most importantly as people.

Enjoy this look at our term in beautiful Botswana, where elephants and the human spirit tower triumphantly. Big things, indeed.
Technology plays an integral role in our lives, but undergoing a digital detox can have surprising benefits: in as few as three days, people’s posture begins to change, they become more approachable due to better eye contact. If that can be accomplished in just three days, what can happen in ten? At the start of the 2017-18 school year we set out to answer this question through a tech-free rite of passage at the Tuli Game Reserve, where our students ditched their tech to instead focus on activities designed to evoke new understandings of holistic health, self-awareness, effective communication, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. The exercise proved to be a tremendous success, with many of our students stating they wish to continue devoting time in their daily routine to being tech free.

For the first time in years, I didn’t have to constantly think about what’s going on in the world, email, text messages or Facebook.

-Julia G.
Spectacular sunsets are one of Botswana’s hallmarks.

Lessons this term covered many aspects of Botswana’s ecosystems, including the importance of termites.

Students gather for a photo after successfully completing their Rite of Passage.

Ina, Amelie, Adi, Lily-Wai, and Shamsia snap a selfie.

Students and staff engage in an evening pre-dinner ritual.
At the conclusion of our tech-free rite of passage, students headed to the city of Maun for their next challenge: rekindling their love of learning. Through a series of workshops, guest speakers, and reflection-based exercises, students examined their path to THINK Global School and laid out what they want their schooling to really be like. The week also served as an introduction to the core components of a TGS education, including project-based learning, personal projects, and the Changemaker Curriculum. Highlights from this busy week including a boating experience on the Themekane River with expert guide Mike Reed and lessons on the importance of storytelling with Bontekanye Botumile.
If there is a reason I didn’t want to come back home, it would be the people of Botswana.

Mak A.
With the basics of TGS’s learning culture under their belts, it was time for our students to put these concepts into action. Students said goodbye to the semi-bright lights of Maun and hello to the wilderness experience of a lifetime: learning about conservation and storytelling in the heart of Southern Africa.

During this module, students worked with research scientists to collect data on the movement and density of wildlife in the Greater Okavango Delta for use by the Botswanan government. They were trained to recognize animal tracks, sight the predominant species, and identify vegetation, and worked in small groups to connect their data analysis to several water-themed conservation proposals.

After their research was complete, each group used the techniques taught to them by writers and storytellers to express their findings in a compelling way during our end-of-term project-based learning showcase.
A Tuli guide holds up the remnants of an animal’s bone.

Changemaker students and their Tuli Wilderness guides.

Alicia presents her findings during the end-of-term showcase.

Max changes a tire in the back-country mechanics class.

Varvara makes some new friends.

Mak, Kien, Shamsia, Paula, and Justin.
Macrotermes Natalensis: more commonly known as fungal-growing termites, or the most under-looked species in all of Africa.

Living in complex colonies, these insects practice the caste system; a division of labor is utilized with the roles of soldiers, workers, and the king and queen all determined by birth. Similar to humans, their social structures are easily identifiable as each individual establishes their own appearance, despite their genetic material being identical. Every role is diverse and focuses on the greater whole of the mound, ensuring that they maximize the potential of having a cohesive community.

A chimney shooting up from the center of a termite mound allows for a highly effective air-conditioning system, resulting in a constant temperature of precisely 32 degrees as well as a long lasting legacy. After the extinction of a colony, they provide homes for up to 27 different species including porcupines, spotted hyenas, and wild dogs.

An ecological force to be reckoned with, the services they provide are vital to the entire ecosystem as they feed on dead and decaying organic material.

Before you disappear and assume that this is a research paper on the brilliance of termites, it's not (although they are pretty spectacular). Instead, this is a story of how fungal termites in the Kalahari desert in Botswana taught me how not to be afraid of being small.

This story begins in the comfort of my own home back in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Icy air spewed out of the AC, fogging up the windows and pulling the hairs on my arm upright. Blankets hugged my body, protecting me from the cold as the room buzzed with the beat from the music that was playing from my speaker on the table. Lights from the neighboring buildings beamed through and trickled along the folds of the sheets. Tick tock tick tock. 8:19pm. Nights like these were very common where I would lie and look at the ceiling, doing absolutely nothing except thinking about absolutely everything.

Appropriate. This all felt... appropriate. Pleasant. Satisfying? Serene. I knew where I was, and everything that surrounded me was familiar. Yet the size of my existence still lingered in my mind as I glanced out my window to find hundreds of buildings, all housing thousands of humans just like me.

These are the moments that really hit me hardest; I’m tiny. In a world that contains billions of people, I’m a raisin in a pool of trail mix. If I look outside, I can see into the apartment of a middle-aged woman, see her dog as it runs past her in the living room. Three floors above her, a toddler, occupied by the harsh light of the widescreen TV hung against the opposite wall. The building across, on the bottom floor, a couple strolling through the lobby, their hands interlaced.

All these people face experiences that differ from each other, and although overlaps occur, they
I knew for a fact that this would be an adventure of a lifetime. I led their own lives that are incomparable to my own. The underlying dilemma with this is that there’s a difficulty to attempt to fathom the volume of diversity present. My train of thought makes stops at multiple stations, each one being a reminder of how extensive this planet is, before finishing at it’s final destination: how can a girl like me make a difference in the world when there’s just so much of it?

Little did I know my bubble of security would be popped and I would have to forget about my lack of size. A new school, with new people, whilst living in eight new countries is definitely one way to go about stepping out of your comfort zone. So three flights, six car rides, and four airports later, I arrived in country number one: Botswana.

Entering the travel lodge in Gaborone, my left hand clutching my suitcase and my right hand clinging onto my passport, I met the eyes of my classmates. As I introduced myself to the twenty-nine other eager teenagers in the room, I knew for a fact that this would be an adventure of a lifetime.

Starting with a ten-day trip through a narrow fringe of land at Botswana’s eastern border, I would have never envisioned the beauty that would lay in front of me. Drives through Tuli Block on the back of trucks through dirt and the arid air filled the next few days as we sat through game drive after game drive.

Yellow hornbills chirped, accompanying the break of dawn as the sunlight leaked onto our freezing faces. The trembling engine roared and then came to a stop as I sat huddled in the back seat, trying to conserve as much warmth as possible. Craig, our guide, motioned for us to climb out of the vehicle and walk near to a section of vegetation. Puzzled, I tried to understand what was so important for us to see when suddenly, a hush fell over the crowd as we noticed the striking sculpture that was stood before us: the termite mound.

“Let’s not be fooled by their size. They’re one of three keystone species!” Craig declared, breaking the silence.

“A keystone species?”

“They, alongside hippos and elephants, significantly alter the habitat surrounding them, thus affecting large numbers of other organisms. They play a crucial role in how the ecosystem functions. In fact, without their existence, the ecosystem would dramatically change or cease to exist at all,” explained Craig. Tired and not ready for new information, we stood around impatiently waiting for the chance to hop back into the truck. Clearly, we don’t do well with 6AM wake-ups.

On the bumpy ride back to camp, the wind playing with my hair and the dust settling on my skin, the idea of these tiny creatures sticks with me. I’m perplexed, completely and utterly confused at the fact that a termite has such an impact on something as large as an ecosystem. I suppose you could infer that they’re are the stars of the ground; you have to make sure there’s no other light shining in order to see them, but when you do, it’s the most prodigious sight.

So here I am, a week into my trip to Botswana and I’ve discovered the power of this miniscule critter, displaying the lack of correlation between size and the ability to make a difference. Fear is an emotion that accompanies any sort of change, especially with the self doubt that rises when attempting to do something bigger than yourself. The feelings of consternation that coexist with the idea of jumping into the unknown are incredibly scary, particularly when my relative size makes me question whether it’s even possible. However, I think I’ve come to realize that ultimately, I’m just a termite in a world full of hippos and elephants.

When speaking about Botswana, termites are the last thing that come to my mind, which is exactly my point. Should I really be afraid of this limiting factor of magnitude when there’s already a species out there that defies that entire mindset? Patrick Overton says: “When you walk to the edge of all the light you have and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown, you need to believe that one of two things will happen; there’ll be something hard to stand on, or you’ll be taught how to fly.”

And that was the day that just like termites, I would learn how to fly.
I have changed from a person who came to explore the wildlife of this country to a concerned individual.

-Zaki A.
As the old engine sputters to a halt, the air is empty of all noise except the squawking of a hornbill in the distance. The guide presses his finger to his lips, signaling that we should be silent, his face dead serious. We wait, ears pricked up anxiously anticipating whatever the guide has stopped for.

We notice movement behind the bushes. The animal is enormous but surprisingly quiet. The grey skin and curved tusks give it away. As the old engine sputters to a halt, the air is empty of all noise except the squawking of a hornbill in the distance. The guide presses his finger to his lips, signaling that we should be silent, his face dead serious. We wait, ears pricked up anxiously anticipating whatever the guide has stopped for.

We notice movement behind the bushes. The animal is enormous but surprisingly quiet. The grey skin and curved tusks give it away. Curious, it reaches out with its trunk to touch the vehicle. A gentle thump can be heard as it touches the hood of the car. His eyes seem gentle, but at the same time they are uneasy, as if he still hasn’t decided if we are a threat. It’s too close for us to do anything about it now; we can’t run, we can’t leave. The only thing we can do is sit tight, wait, and hope—hoping that the elephant decides we are not worth the trouble or time. As I stare up into this creature’s face, doing my best to move as little as possible, there is something distinctly human about it. The intelligence and the gentleness of it and its capability as a formidable destructive force. They are an extremely social and highly intelligent species. In many ways they are similar to humans in their social interactions and systems between each other.

Elephants reflect many of the qualities that we humans view as admirable. When seeing an elephant in a herd with half a trunk, I was confused as to how it managed to survive. The guide explained that the rest of the elephants in the herd help with feeding it. The compassion of these animals reflect some of the kindest characteristics of humanity.

In many ways, they are similar to humans in forming social hierarchy; the oldest elephants are the most respected members of the group. Traditionally, the oldest female in a herd is the leader; she passes on all the knowledge to all of the other elephants. Known as the Matriarch, she is the most revered and respected member of society, the Bull being the most formidable.

Even as I sit there in absolute fear, I can’t stop myself from admiring this incredibly complex animal. Still unsure, the elephant glares at us, tired. His grey skin wrinkled and hanging loose off his body, his ears scarred and mangled, looking disheveled but glorified. In his magnificence and size, he looks tired of life.

When it is time for an elephant to die, it separates itself from its herd and walks extremely long distances looking for a final place to sleep. Other elephants will then pick up the bones and carry them with them as a form of mourning and remembrance, the bones of the departed are spread in all four corners of the map. When an elephant passes away the rest of the group will gather around in silence for several minutes, with some members crying and expressing human characteristics of mourning and even depression. This is especially true for infant deaths. However, the longest period of mourning and grief is at the death of the matriarch, as she is the source of the herd’s knowledge.

He still hasn’t moved on, now circling around the car and coming closer to me. As he reaches my sides of the car, an internal scream ravages my mind. My heart starts beating faster and faster. I hold my breath, worried that the slightest movement may prompt an assault. He extends his trunk as if it were a hand coming in for a handshake. He lifts my cap off of the top of my head and starts playing with it, dropping it back onto my head, just tugging at it. I’m doing my best not to flinch at every drop of the hat. He picks up the hat one last time, and moves away, taking a memento of the experience with him. His hindquarters moving into the distance with his tail swinging from side to side, I inhale the breath I had been holding the entire way through.
WHAT BOTSWANA TAUGHT ME ABOUT BALANCE

by Julia Gwiazdzik

Time goes by. I read one article. Scroll, scroll, scroll. I text people thousands of kilometers away from me. Scroll, scroll, scroll. I read another article just to make sure I have something to talk about tomorrow. Couple more scrolls, maybe I’m missing out on something. I must be. The world is changing so fast that this is the only chance I have of keeping up with it. I have to scroll.

So I do it, with about one hundred tabs open, switching between them, Snapchat stories, my Facebook feed and a vlog on Youtube that makes me forget where I am.

Days and months go by, the world gets blunt and I’m lost, trying to be in two places at once. Information is easily accessible, and it’s getting harder and harder not to drown in it. We are constantly searching for changes, new things that will make our lives more interesting.

The internet provides all of that: with just a few clicks you can “be” anywhere you want. But are you really there?

After almost a month spent in the bush of Botswana, without any way of communicating with the outside world, I now realize that being in
so many places at one time is like not being anywhere at all. It’s hard to keep up with the life we live and the life we pretend to have online. We keep leaving parts of ourselves in random places that don’t even exist, slowly losing our authenticity, putting on more masks we can hide behind.

But what exists is our world, our planet, countries, cities, and the middle of nowhere, full of unexplored places we can visit. And that’s why we travel. I’m a student of a traveling high school and that’s what our group of 30 students from all over the world is doing – learning from the places we visit together.

Experiencing the world as it is, not as we read about it in our textbooks and on Wikipedia.

Botswana, the first country I visited with the school, introduced me to a new way of living. One I would never think I would like when I imagined it back in my own cozy room in Poland. As someone who hadn’t even slept in a tent before, being used to sleeping in a sleeping bag, taking bucket showers, and not having my phone alarm to wake me up in the morning seemed hard.

Everything was new during that month, from the language I was speaking to the people I was living with. For the first time in years I didn’t know what was happening around the world and what my friends and family were up to. Time stopped, the day of the week didn’t matter, and the hour was always approximate, based on the position of the sun and the last time we ate. Days passed, as I tried to remember random words in different languages, no longer able to just ask Google Translate to do the job for me. All the sounds and smells became more prominent, not overshadowed by my phone.

And no matter how cheesy it sounds, we all cherished the little moments: standing in a circle around the fire, admiring the way the sky looks away from the city lights, watching sunsets and not caring about anything other than the mix of colors that was right before our eyes, singing the same songs over and over, having deep talks around the bonfire and focusing on people without our thumbs scrolling through our Facebook feeds at the same time.

Our behavior changed when we realized how crucial it is to use all of your senses and to be aware of your surroundings when you are in the bush. We observed elephants standing only a few meters away from us, we woke up in the middle of the night hearing hyenas near our tents, and some of us tried really hard not to scream seeing spiders in random places. All of our actions were dictated by nature; it became more important to be able to spot animals, to listen to the sounds they make, and to remember to check your shoes for scorpions than to worry about what is happening in the world right now.

All the different realities disappeared and there was only one left—the reality of living in a camp with a bunch of people I’ve known only for a few weeks, whom I now call my friends. I couldn’t imagine what I would do when I got back to Poland, because the world with wifi and a normal bed seemed so distant. And so unwanted.

On our way back to a hotel in Maun, I felt anxious. The thought of being so close to information was like a drug. I was on the verge, imagining how everything could’ve been different to the last time I saw the news. I suddenly felt selfish for not caring about other places for a month. As our car jumped on a bumpy road between our camp and the town, the images of terrorist attacks, nuclear bombs, floods, and earthquakes were flashing before my eyes. That three-hour drive seemed like forever. It was so hard to focus on the beautiful nature that was right under my nose. Once again, I wasn’t there, holding my phone and looking at that top left corner of the screen saying “No service”.

When I finally checked the news and read the messages my family and friends sent me, I realized that everything was still the same. I realized it’s an important skill to be able to look at things on a smaller scale and to focus on just one area, without getting distracted by all the problems in various regions.

And ever since I came back to civilization, I’ve been looking for a way to balance the time spent in both worlds. To decide what is important news and what is just another piece of information I will forget in the next few days. That’s what living in the bush has taught me.

Even if I fail to manage the amount of scrolling, I still remind myself that there’s more to life than that small box I’m looking at.

Take some time to focus on what’s around you. Switch off your phones, and try to remember what it’s like to be in just one place at one time.
WHEN I FOUND OUT MY FIRST COUNTRY AT THINK GLOBAL SCHOOL WAS BOTSWANA, I WAS SLIGHTLY DISAPPOINTED. YOU SEE, GABORONE IS ONLY A FIVE-HOUR DRIVE AWAY FROM JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, MY CITY. EVERY OTHER COUNTRY ON OUR LIST FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS SEEMS EXCITING AND EXOTIC – BOTSWANA, HOWEVER, WAS JUST A FEW GAME DRIVES ACROSS THE BORDER.

I wasn’t looking forward to game drives. I go on multiple drives with my family every year, and so the thought of 7 weeks of it was incredibly dull.

Arriving at initiation that would kick off our first term with the Changemaker Curriculum and loading onto the game drive vehicle, animals were the last thing on my mind. My attention was on the concept of a tech-free Rite of Passage, and the people around me (who I had miraculously become friends with in the span of four days).

Our first sighting of an impala was slightly hilarious to me, the jaded South African that I was. You see, impala are like the weeds of the bush – they’re everywhere. My classmates, people from all around the world with little to no experience with safaris, were acting like they had seen a lion, or something actually interesting. And then we saw our first herd of elephants.

If there’s one thing you need to know about elephants, it’s that they’re almost as common as impala in the bush – a usual Southern African Safari is not complete without seeing multiple elephants.

So, in a jaded, couldn’t care less voice, I said, “Look, elephants.” The reactions of the others in the open Land Rover took me by surprise.

To my left, an excitable Bosnian soccer player stood up and yelled in the loudest voice possible, “OH MY GOD. THAT’S AN ELEPHANT!!!!” (She was promptly forced down and aggressively shushed by the other students in the truck.)

I felt something gripping my right hand, and turned to see the Wisconsin-born girl sitting next to me, with a face strongly resembling Edvard Munch’s Scream, squeezing my hand as tightly as she could.

Two others cried.

In an instant, my perspective changed. All it took was a couple of tears, a few screams, and seeing the pure wonder in my friends’ eyes to make me realize multiple things about travel.

Elephants are beautiful, dangerous, magical and a hundred other contradicting adjectives. I had a conversation with one of the girls who cried – a delightful Mexican girl who had never seen elephants before that first sighting – and she described with passion in her
This realization has made me appreciate my home country. At the time of writing this, I have not been home or seen my family in over a month. It has seemed like no time at all and like it has been years. Being away from familiarity for so long has made me realize how important it is to appreciate the country in which one was born and raised. Whether you’re from Botswana, South Africa, or anywhere else in the world, appreciate that place when you’re there. Be aware of how special it is and never take it for granted. Familiarity might leave you jaded, or feeling like you’ve seen everything you need to see. But you haven’t, and you never will. Appreciating the beauty of the place you’re visiting is infinitely more important than the stamps in your passport. Botswana is only the first of my destinations with TGS, and at the beginning of it all I was already feeling jaded. Whether you’re a traveler or someone who has no plans of leaving where you are, take a moment to see the importance of every destination and the special parts of it, no matter how dull somewhere may seem. It’ll be worth it in the long run if you do, I promise.

voice how seeing the beauty and elegance of them made her realize how important they are to her. Seeing wildlife through my classmates’ eyes opened my own. Looking at an ele-phant as if it were the first time I was seeing one made me understand the importance of wildlife on both a personal and global level. Experiencing wildlife the way I do is a privilege that should never be taken for granted by those that have the chance to do it. If I could give every person in the world the opportunity to see Botswana the way we have, I would in a heartbeat. Botswana is a gorgeous country, and unlike South Africa in a lot of ways. We may be neighbors, but we are not the same. It is ironic that I, an African person, adopted a “western” view of my own continent, expecting it all to be the same. At the start of the term, I viewed the whole of southern Africa as one single unit, rather than as separate countries with vastly different cultures and ways of life.
India
2 million people across 232,000 square miles. That’s roughly how many people call Botswana, one of the world’s most sparsely populated countries, home.

Now take 22 million people and sandwich them into a city roughly 233 square miles in size. Welcome to Mumbai, where nearly 11 times as many people as Botswana live in a city that’s almost one-thousandth the size. You can bet they have a different perspective on life.

After easing our students into new ways of thinking in Botswana, we dove in headfirst here. While cramped and crowded, Mumbai is also colorful and captivating. It’s not always the easiest city to reconcile, but it offers experiences that will stick with you for a lifetime.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.” — Mahatma Gandhi

When you come face to face with India’s wage inequality gap, it’s hard not to look inward. Could I wait in line for hours just for a day’s worth of drinking water? Would I be able to adjust to a life dominated by rubbish and filth, where every puddle is a breeding ground for disease-ridden mosquitoes, and every sharp object possesses the possibility of a fatal infection?

Seeing the absolute poverty that is a lifelong burden for Mumbai’s many slum dwellers is one reason we consider India such a crucial part of our travel calendar: what lessons can our students take home from the squalor that surrounds them? Do they see our core values represented in those of lower castes, the seeming “untouchables” who face discrimination at every turn, yet strive to lead a purposeful life? With this in mind, many of our modules and projects here are service-oriented in nature, giving us a chance to give back to the community directly.

“To other countries, I may go as a tourist, but to India, I come as a pilgrim.” — MLK Jr.

While we considered Mumbai our home base here, our students also had the chance to branch out and work on their various learning modules in three different regions of this massive country: Bangalore and Pondicherry (E-commerce module); Delhi, Rishikesh, and Varanasi (Sustainability); and Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur (Mathematics). These excursions often helped show the country’s quieter side, a seemingly different world than the sprawling behemoth that is India’s largest city.

Not to be outdone and while working hard prepping for their IB exams, our Grade 12s also had a chance to leave Mumbai behind every now and then to explore themselves, taking trips to Kerala, Kolkata, Goa, and Varanasi. They also came together as a community by engaging in two of India’s most popular sports, cricket and soccer, and participating in its most famous export, yoga. So here’s to India — rough around the edges but teeming with charm. You can bet we wouldn’t have it any other way.

Time spent in India has an extraordinary effect on one. It acts as a barrier that makes the rest of the world seem unreal.

-Tahir Shah

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.” — Mahatma Gandhi
This term nine of our students, led by Educators Chelle Marshall and Maria Valle, set out to answer this driving question: How can fresh water and basic sanitation be supplied to India’s diverse and growing population?

Over the course of the term, students gained an understanding of the sustainability issues linked to global population distribution and densities in a variety of ways. Locally, in Mumbai, they met regularly with students from the Sillaborg School, who they collaborated with on a water quality inquiry study centered around samples taken in the Mumbai slum of Dharavi. These findings, along with their findings in other Indian cities, were recorded throughout the term in a digital process portfolio and visualized at the end of the term through an infographic, an experience designed to develop our students’ presentation abilities.

The module also included a visit to the northern town of Jawhar, where students escaped the hecticness and heat of Mumbai to take samples and learn about the freshwater issues faced by those living in India’s rural areas. This weXplore gave students a chance to learn about the hardships being faced by the locals firsthand, including having no pipes, running water, or access to toilets, and their grueling task of transporting potable water across long distances, often via jug or water wheel.

Paula and Corinna share their sustainability findings during the India end-of-term showcase.
To say that I toured the holiest city in the world and visited the tree under which Buddha was enlightened—alongside some of my best friends—was something I never thought I’d be able to do.

-Lily-Wai E.
The highlight of the module for many of our students was the week-long weXplore that took them across Delhi, Rishikesh, and Varanasi. The idea behind this trip was to see the incredible impact human geography has on the physical environment by collecting water samples in all three cities.

In smog-covered Delhi, students donned masks to shield themselves from extreme levels of carbon pollution in the city. They visited the Center of Science and Environment for a talk on sustainable water collection before heading off to Rishikesh.

In Rishikesh, for the first time since arriving in India, students had access to natural water that could be considered clean (and proved so through testing before diving in!). Considered the “Yoga Capital of the World,” Rishikesh sits on the banks of the swiftly-moving Ganges, making it the perfect spot for the day’s activities of white water rafting, cliff diving, and swimming.

The final leg of the weXplore took students further down the Ganges to Varanasi, where the effects of human contamination were immediately apparent. Considered one of the holiest cities in the world, Varanasi is renowned for its importance to Hindus. Here pilgrims line the river’s stair banks (known as ghats) to wash away their sins and cremate their dead, a ritual students saw the preparation for during an early morning boat ride. They...
White water rafting in Rishikesh also confirmed the detrimental effects of the religious practices on the Ganges through testing, discovering high levels of fluoride and metals that did not exist in Rishikesh.

The city’s religious aspects featured heavily in our other experiences: students met with Professor P.K. Mishra for a talk on religion and water and followed the talk up with a riverside Hindu display and to close the eventful weXplore, students visited nearby Sarnath, an ancient deer park filled with towering stupas. Here, Buddha first preached his message after enlightenment, making it a particularly prolific place to engage in a creative exercise. Working in teams, students were asked to create a sustainable society based on the layout of Sarnath.

At the conclusion of the term, students had the opportunity to tie everything together, leaning on their findings from a productive term to share how they think fresh water and basic sanitation can be supplied to India’s growing population.
Zero to Infinity

Student photography showcase

Continuity

Photo by Soeun Kim
During our time in India, Educators Matt Cook and Lindsay Clark led 10 of our students in the Zero to Infinity module. This teacher-designed module combines mathematics and visual arts in order to help students recognize the math that regularly surrounds them and communicate that math through a creative media form.

By approaching their studies with calculators and cameras, students learned to appreciate the precise placement of lines and shapes that Indians have been applying to their grandiose architecture for centuries and centuries.

From a mathematics standpoint, the module presented an engaging manner for students to learn the concepts rooted in discrete mathematics, including integers and graphs, and geometry, including spatial visualization, translating geometric properties to different dimensions, and analyzing properties of shape, size, and space in art, architecture, design, or nature. The latter concept of analyzing properties allowed participating students to venture out into India and see the country in a new light, one where every angle held meaning and every shape was a thing of beauty.

From a photography standpoint, students started with its foundation in photosensitive film to inform how digital photography actually works. They received hands-on experience during market walks and our weXplore trip to Jaipur and Agra, during which they continued to look for visible manifestations of mathematical concepts to capture in a photograph. Throughout the module, they learned from experts on block printing, mandalas, astronomy, sarees, and photojournalism in order to engage further with our host country and all the ways mathematics can be seen through its handicrafts to architecture, even up to the stars.

Besides learning the technical aspects of photography and mathematics, students also had the opportunity to delve into India’s mathematical history. Through lessons, movies, guest speakers, and presentations, students taking part in the Zero to Infinity module became familiar with the contributions of notable Indian mathematicians like Brahmagupta and Srinivasa Ramanujan, and later incorporated their formulas and findings into their coursework and photography.

The final product was a professional-grade photography exhibition along with a process portfolio that demonstrated the depth and breadth of their investigations throughout the module. Many of the photos from that exhibition are featured on the following pages for you to enjoy.
I took the picture of the women the backyard of the Taj Mahal, where these women were in the garden, cutting the grass and cleaning the yard. One of them packed the fresh greens in a neat bundle before they started walking together. Buried underneath the ordinance of their everyday work lies the strength, these women have that goes unnoticed. I believe that every woman is a sign of empowerment and that we all have strong stories to tell, but most of the time their stories remain unheard and their great acts unrealized.

First when I saw the kids next to the Yamuna river washing their clothes. The fact that sparkle in my head that there are so many kids around the world that are forbidding from getting an education and instead they have to work for their family or either for their survival. Every time I see kids work I always wishing them having the opportunity that I have, however, my wish came true when everyone help and support those kids.
Vinod Kumar Shama has worked at Amber Fort as a tour guide for 20 years. His wife and family live in Delhi, and he visits them frequently. When I asked him about how long he has worked here at this historical site, he took out his wallet and showed me a picture of himself. Same mustache. This photograph captures his sense of wonder and energy. Vinod is a joyful person and is very passionate about his work.

I look down at a crowded city and wonder if the noise ever stops. Can someone sitting on their kitchen table for breakfast ever look up and hear nothing at all? Can they walk outside, breathe in deeply, and not have the urge to cough? Is it just because I am a foreigner and am not used to the pollution being an everyday reality? Do the natives know that the dust and clouds over the city that make the sunsets so beautiful, are actually just a result of pollution?
Shamsia is one of the most positive people I know. She’s enlightened my moody, emotional days in Botswana, she’s aspired me to fight for equal rights. She tattooed smiley faces all over my hands, but she also tattoos her own smile in everyone’s head.

Shamsia tells me all different tales; some about war, some about a pretentiously pacifist government, some about her beloved mother, and most about her personal experiences. She’s a ray of hope. I look at Shamsia, and I’m certain that things will eventually be okay... if not, then that’s okay as well.

Although it doesn’t seem like it, she didn’t pose for this photograph. She was giggling for about the past 3 minutes, and this picture was taken when she was cooling down. Believe me, Shamsia’s a comedy show herself.

The picture was taken at Nahagargh. The await for the sun to set, my experience with a furious monkey, the multiple photoshoots, the satisfaction and excitement all over my friends’ faces, all made this experience one that I cannot forget.

This photo’s taken in Mumbai, Bandra West. It’s the street I passed by the most often, and it’s the tuc tucs that represent my first glimpse of India. Although only Jess and some means of transportation are portrayed in this picture, I see my whole journey in India. I think of the clash between religions and beliefs, the overwhelming smells and stares, food poisoning and hippie thrift stores, the running route by the seaside, the sunsets in the afternoon, and the unimaginable peaceful state of mind within the chaos.
I told her she was beautiful
She didn’t believe a word
But the cloth brought out her deep telling eyes
And from her stride I saw her soul
Within an instant she was gone
But I watched as she left
Not only did I capture the smile
But the way she beautifully dressed

EXTREME BEAUTY
by Ryleigh Iverson

Buried in the depths of the beauty
Is the forgotten story of the pair
And how I must imagine
How her death brought his despair
With her 14 children and a pot of gold
He was left alone
She gave him all the love in the world
And for her a wonder of stone

EXTREME LOVE
by Ryleigh Iverson
Often, one of the things most emphasized in photography is light. In order to get a good picture, people will go above and beyond to get ‘perfect lighting’. However, many people forget that shadows are just as important as light – they are opposites that work together to create what could be considered a good photograph. This is why I decided to focus on shadows for my final exhibition. I selected photos from our trip to Jaipur and Agra that I thought both had very clear and defined shadows, and showed off Indian architecture.
UNTITLED
Photo by Ella Oudhof
HOW CAN WE PRESERVE CULTURE THROUGH ECONOMIC EMPowerMENT?

That’s the driving question 10 of our students sought to answer during TGS Gives with E-Commerce, a module led by Educators Adam Sturman and Nick Martino that focused on using e-commerce to slow urban migration by assisting rural artisans with economic exposure.

Throughout the module, students learned economic concepts, the principles of social entrepreneurship, and other 21st-century skills such as web design and product photography. They then put these skills to work by developing a web store highlighting the history and geography of the village of Jawhar alongside real-world products for sale from local Jawhari artisans.

Participating students traveled multiple times to the village of Jawhar to learn about its inhabitants, meet its artists, and learn about the tribal painting style known as Warli. Other field experiences included opportunities to learn firsthand from market visits, guest speakers, and a weXplore to Bangalore, India’s Silicon Valley.

The final project allowed students to pitch the e-commerce business that they developed to a panel of funders. By the end of the seven-week term, two companies emerged: The Kala Collection, a luxury but socially conscious art company, and EdArt, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving traditional art through rural educational empowerment.
Warli prints are left to dry in the sun

Salome helps beautify the village

Keo snaps a photo for the web store

Students had a chance to work side by side with Jawhar locals during the module.

Agriculture plays an enormous role in rural Indian life.
From a business pitch in India to selling out our stall in Japan, EdArt has come so far over the past few terms. With a mission to bridge communities through cultural art and handicrafts, over the past year the EdArt team have worked with a traditional Warli artist living in a village just outside of Mumbai, India, and a pair of Japanese women making high quality handicrafts out of vintage kimonos.

EdArt has allowed our team members to develop real world skills managing the finances, marketing, and logistics of running a small business, while doing our part to give back to the community. Thank you so much to the TGS staff, parents and students for supporting us in everything we do, stay tuned for EdArt’s new product lines in China, Oman, Costa Rica, and Greece!

- Amelia Andreas
Surfing in Goa

Kajo, Pauli, Oskar, Kay, Educator Emma Gleeson, and Helen
Surf’s up! Goa is known the world over for its golden beaches and laid back atmosphere, making it the perfect place for our seniors to take a break from their studies and enjoy India’s funkier side.
My parents moved to Valle de Bravo, a small cobblestone town outside of Mexico City, to start a different life before I was born. Their choice was considered bold at the time because they were defying one of the fundamental guidelines ingrained into Mexican society; Most people would never leave the city behind for small town life. When the question is “why?”, the answer is usually “because it has always been that way.” By choosing to move away from Mexico City and questioning the vitality of the traditional system, my family constantly demonstrated how to escape standardization while getting to the same place via a different route. They taught me to harness the potential of every opportunity, something I now strive to do as I travel the world with THINK Global School.

Many people strongly disagree with my nontraditional educational pursuits because they are atypical to this popular paradigm. In traveling to different countries, I now have a chance to experiment and learn to value unpopular beliefs rather than disregard the unknown as if it were something alien.

While living and studying in India with THINK Global School, I came across the concept of Shiva and Brahma, two gods in the Hindu triad. Learning about these gods helped me to develop a broader conceptualization of making bold, authentic moves.

Shiva is known as the destroyer. Despite being the third god, his significance yields any sense of hierarchy. His role is to destroy the universe in order for it to be recreated.
Applying the law of the conservation of matter, Shiva doesn’t destroy matter; instead, he deconstructs things by turning them back into their essential material, like a clay sculpture back into dust. In doing so, he provides materials and makes space for new things.

Brahma, the first god, is known as the creator. He generates value by molding ordinary materials into something contemporary. He is the definition of an artist at its finest.

These gods represent balance and emphasize the connection between the creation of beauty and the destruction of it. Their cycle of constant creation and destruction prevents the world from saturating and becoming stagnant, by allowing movement through transformation. The creator and the destroyer are collaborators, not enemies, and they are equally necessary. To evolve ourselves, we must learn to embody Shiva and Brahma, destroying structures in our lives to make time and space for innovation.

Knowledge is the way we structure our understanding of what we experience. This allows us to create what we’re lacking by transforming what we already have. Inevitably, knowledge that once empowered us will become limiting. When this happens we have to apply the concept of Shiva.

The most defining characteristic of Shiva is that his third eye is open. Through our two eyes we can only see the physical world, but Shiva’s third eye allows him to see something beyond this dimension, such as potential and possibilities.

To grow as humans, we have to pick our perceptions apart to make vacant space and material, to bring concepts into the physical world and forge value. Imagine you are an artist that molds sculptures out of clay. You are given one kilogram of clay to work with for the rest of your life, so you create a sculpture of the idea you find the most relevant and that seems crucial to communicate.

Let’s say you craft a sculpture of a butterfly emerging from a cocoon to represent that there are many chances to transform. Next, you put this sculpture on display. If your message lingers in the thoughts of at least one spectator, its impact becomes exponential. The essence of your art piece will survive on its own. Because a sculpture is only the medium, not the end in itself. Naturally you will imagine another idea that you desire to share.

You will need to prioritize the pursuance of bringing it into the world, and in doing so recognize the urgency of destroying your previous sculpture, in this case your model of the butterfly escaping its cocoon. To refine your dialogue with the external world, you have to believe in the value of destruction and be skeptical about the accuracy and current importance of past creations.

Don’t fool yourself and compromise your progress by conforming to think like most others: “If I had the clay, I would do it.” (E.g. “If I had the time I would do it.”) The clay is always there. To realize the possibilities that lie beyond what you can see with your own two eyes, you must be willing to feel the discomfort of detaching from what is tangible.

So shatter the shape of your sculpture and make it dust. In doing so you’ll gain a newfound freedom to imagine and create. This is why we should always challenge assumptions, so that our art doesn’t counteract our growth.

By challenging our beliefs, we defy expectations and harness our potential. This allows us to forge value by navigating change and to advance by adapting. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said: “The only thing that is constant is change.”

Let’s remember to be skeptical about the veracity of our perceptions so that we can prevent them from becoming restrictions. In this way, we will have the ability to adjust word and action, and refine their accuracy within a transforming world.

Through the hecticness of all this change, we should never lose sight of the Brahma in ourselves, fostering our capacity to generate value out of dust.
In Hinduism, there is the belief that if you bathe in the river, do morning and evening rituals, and cremate on the shore of the Ganga, for those who’ve passed away and had some of their ashes spread in the river, their karma will improve. This will bring them closer to god, making their next life better. These practices happen mostly in Varanasi because the four pillars of Hinduism are all present there at the same time. People pray to their god for life and for death in the same place. In Hinduism this god has many manifestations: he is The Creator, The Protector, and The Destroyer. This god is believed to have given life to one of the oldest cities in the world by providing the most essential resource for life: water.

Varanasi is also the place where Buddha shared his first teachings with the five monks. Everyday, people come to Varanasi from all around the world, people who practice a diverse range of religions, just to feel the sacredness of the city and appreciate the Ganga river. The river that has given life to people from diverse religions is now, however, at risk. Varanasi used to have another important river passing through the city but it disappeared because of water misuse and pollution, caused by the upriver dams system, general water misuse, and industrial waste amongst other things. This was a wake up call for many who are now realizing that even if water is considered sacred, it isn’t treated like it. Honoring god by polluting the greatest gift he gave to humans is not congruent.

Drinking the water that is used to wash clothing, swim, bathe, release ashes, and dispose of industrial waste is threatening people’s health. Some of these habits might seem irrelevant and incomprehensible for those who are unfamiliar with the culture of India and the important role that it plays, but there is no disputing that these practices are degrading the environment. That said, even if this is damaging for their health and is unsustainable, people have continued to do it. The cause might be a lack of awareness or a near future oriented mindset.

Professor Mishra gave a lecture to our module during our time in Varanasi. The presentation was titled “Think of Earth as a Bank: You Need to Deposit to Withdraw.” This quote may sound crazy, but I’ve found it to be very accurate. As an example, people are withdrawing water from the Ganga river and depositing back polluted water. The only outcome they should expect on their next withdrawal is what they last deposited: polluted water.

There are things to do. The most basic one is spreading awareness and teaching people about the effects of their actions, without completely changing their cultural identity, during the transition to a more sustainable water use. It isn’t easy, but it is necessary and possible.
PARA LOS ESTUDIANTES DE TGS, TAREAS DE ESCRITURA VIENEN FRECUENTEMENTE COMO OPORTUNIDADES DE INVESTIGAR Y COMUNICAR ASUNTOS SOCIALES DENTRO DE SUS PAÍSES ANTRIÓN. CHLOÉ FRASER, UNA ALUMNA DE GRADO DOCE, ESCOGIÓ DE EXPLORAR LOS PENSAMIENTOS DE UNA HIJRA, UN(A) MIEMBRO DEL GRUPO MINORITARIO TRANSÉNERO EN INDIA. CHLOÉ NO ES UNA NATIVA, PERO ELLA ESPERA TRANSMITIR LA RIQUEZA CULTURAL DE ESTE GRUPO, Y AL MISMO TIEMPO, LA DISCRIMINACIÓN QUE ESOS INDIVIDUOS ENCUENTRAN DENTRO DE LA INDIA.

Me llamo Kucha, y no sé como respirar como un hombre. No soy un hombre – esto está claro, si nada más. ¡Espéralo! De hecho, estuve mintiendo. También está claro que no soy una mujer, o cualquiera otra cosa que tiene ambas una etiqueta y límites jados. Cosa. ¿Sabes que mi nombre significa ‘cosa’? Estuve hablando de cosas, justo en ese momento. Verdaderamente, debería ser una historia de gente y no de cosas que yo voy a contártos.

¿Debería empezar de nuevo, no?
No me vas a responder.
Por supuesto. ¿Qué tanto de mi parte!
No sé cómo respirar ni como un hombre, ni como una mujer. Soy una hijra. Eso es exacto. Vale, la segunda toma era la buena.

Luego, soy una hijra. Si no sabes lo que significa esa palabra, no te preocupes, toma asiento y ponte cómodo. Empecé a tutearos, con la esperanza que eso no os molestase. De todas maneras, siempre puedes dejar de leer. Yó vago. Estoy perdiendo. Todavía. Entonces, soy una hijra. Junte a la comunidad de hijras Jaipur cuando tenía doce años, y fui iniciado a la tierna edad de catorce años. Si me miras ahora, no me podrías diferenciar de las otras como yo, con nuestro maquillaje extravagante, nuestros brazaletes, nuestros saris scintillantes, y nuestra reputación en cuanto a nuestros talentos en la cama. Ni siquiera se podría decir si tengo sentimientos reales, porque aparentemente mi apariencia alternativa me da derecho a una cantidad ignorancia de discriminación...

Espero que seas diferente de esos doctoras y agentes de policía que me rechazan cuando necesito ayuda, o de esos camaleones llamados políticos, los mismos que me regalan cada año nuevas promesas asquerosas. No me importa si eres blanco o indio, un hombre o una mujer, un Brahmin o un Parsee, pido que me escuches, que me des el respeto que merezco.

Te digo, no puedes comprender el alivio que sentí cuando cambiaron la ley el año pasado – al final, por suerte, soy del tercer género, y los documentos oficiales no utilizan la terminología horripilante de ‘eunuch’ o aún de ‘hermafrodita’. Espero que algún día tenga oportunidades diferentes de mis trucos de hoy; extorsión, mendiga, prostitución, y en algunas ocasiones especiales, un poquito de teatro y danza. ¿Aún no me hablado del sexo? Todo el mundo le encanta burlarse de mí con bromas sucias todo el tiempo, debería por lo menos mencionar el tema. Claro, podría hacer un retrato de mi vida sexual; tengo VIH, como el otro dieciocho por ciento de las hijras de Mumbai. Además, necesito ocultar mis actividades porque una ley en sección 317 del código criminal de la India prohíbe la homosexualidad. ¿Qué deslumbrante, no? ¡Qué brillante! ¡Qué fascinante!

Sé que nadie leerá este texto. Mis palabras van a desaparecer en el polvo de tus pasos, hasta el bendito día en que la India sepa distinguir entre su propia herencia y esos elementos culturales originados del poder colonial. Podría decir mucho más, pero estoy harto. Estoy harta. Estoy y harta, y no sé cómo respirar en las cajas de esta sociedad.
GRADE 12 gives back TO THE MUMBAI COMMUNITY

THINK GLOBAL SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE BEEN WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ACADEMY FOR EARTH SUSTAINABILITY (AN NGO THAT OFFERS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN MUMBAI) IN ORDER TO GAIN A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN MUMBAI, ESPECIALLY AROUND THE DHARAVI SLUM AREA.
The Grade 12s designed four different projects geared around environmental learning to benefit a local chapter of Save the Children India:

- **WEBSITE AND E-STORE DEVELOPMENT FOR AES**
- **CUSHION CONSTRUCTION**
- **GARDEN MAINTENANCE**
- **KNOWLEDGE BOARD PROJECT**

These four different projects, playing off of the skills of the students, was a way for us as a school to give back to those in need within our temporary home of Mumbai. Our work was focused on developing and servicing the garden of a School whose mission is to educate at-risk children with physical and educational impairments. We hope that, through these projects, we will be able to have a long-lasting, positive impact on the school and on the kids in their care.

**INTRODUCTION TO DHARAVI: SLUM TOUR**

Our tour group company, Be the Local, led us in small groups through the canals and small businesses that make up the Dharavi slum, one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

As we wandered through the trash-strewn streets that make up this square-mile city, our guides informed us that the slum, which contributes roughly USD 650 million to the local economy, hosts a number of essential economic and environmental industries such as recycling, leather tanning, soap production, clay pottery, baking and embroidering. “The city would not work if Dharavi shut down for a day” was a common sentiment shared by our host city specialist and guides as we walked through the throngs of people and waves of recycling stations, each being heavily attended to.

As we were invited to walk through the residential walkways and recreational areas, our Dharavi tour included a glimpse into the average housing unit of the local Dharavi family, where we met children playing in, with, and whatever they could. We walked through a few more of the outer and main streets, navigating past a few large intersections where cars run down the roads at all manner of velocities, announcing themselves with their horns and stopping only when forced to. Few, if any, places on earth exist like Dharavi, and it was quite the introduction to our CAS experience and what would be an exhilarating IB term.

**GARDENING GROUP**

Upon our first entrance to the school, none of us were entirely sure what we were planning to do. We were going to spend our first session investigating its current conditions to conceive ideas of viable projects. Luckily for us, the janitors came prepared with assignments, for the first week the entire group was essentially the maintenance group, splitting into two factions.

One group worked outside moving dozens of potted plants into the sunlight and constructing nurseries while the other group moved to the school’s garden rooftop and worked cutting and transporting pipes. Our intermediate session was the most physically gruelling, as we transported large pots and containers of soil from the fifth floor to the ground floor outdoors. We powered through the intense heat to move these items as it was necessary to clear the floor as the building was sinking due to its weight. Due to our efforts, we successfully moved what was described as “three weeks work” for the two employees in the three hours we had. And although we didn’t completely finish the task, we helped significantly. The final session comprised of the maintenance group splitting up to complete several smaller tasks. Part of the group worked to construct a container of healthy compost by removing dead organic matter, applying cow dung, and releasing a fair number of worms into the soil. The other parts of the group focused on drilling and decorating large plastic boxes and painting buckets of soil that will eventually hold larger plants. Finally, a small party concentrated their efforts on moving and organizing a variety of different plants on the pallets.

Overall, the maintenance effort was able to achieve our original goals of helping to sustain a practical environment in which disabled children can learn and relax.

Helen helps with garden maintenance
CUSHION CONSTRUCTION

When we initially toured the garden space, we noticed that though there were already chairs for the children to sit on during their classes, they were particularly uncomfortable. When sat on for long periods of time, the wood starts to irritate you and there were potentially dangerous nails and splinters coming from the chairs. We figured that it was likely that the children could potentially become distracted by this as well as it just being uncomfortable for sitting in during lessons. So we decided to construct some outdoor cushions to cater for this issue.

We measured the chairs to find the right dimensions, then purchased some fabric to create a prototype. Due to a lack of sewing machines, we hand sewed a pillow cover. We then filled it with newspaper to get an idea of how much stuffing we would need. We used this prototype to ensure the final cushions would be just the right size. Then we went on to make the final cushions. During our experience constructing the cushions, we learnt the reality of having to physically construct an item to solve a problem without the use of tools. Back home we would usually just purchase a cushion if we needed one, but physically constructing something from scratch is a whole other story. At times it was difficult to sew; we became tired, and because the cushions were large, it took a long time to sew them by hand. The whole experience was really worthwhile because we felt that we were able to make a positive difference towards improving the learning experience for the children of Save the Children.

WEB DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Over 90% of non-profit work involves some form of logistics. Oskar and I decided to help support AES by developing an e-store. Improving the garden at Save the Children India, which most of the grade did, must be paired with a platform to sell the plants for the project to work effectively. After an initial brainstorm with Kriti, our AES contact, we decided the website development platform, Wix, would be the best way forward.

We decided to go with Wix because it has a powerful e-store plug-in which can be set up within minutes. Furthermore, Wix’s platform can be used with ease allowing Kriti to make changes in the future. Kay then took photos of each plant and manipulated them in Photoshop to make them more presentable and pro-

Back home we would usually just purchase a cushion if we needed one, but physically constructing something from scratch is a whole other story.

Chido and Eden
Paula, Emma, and Chloë work on a knowledge board.

KNOWLEDGE BOARD GROUP

The three of us set (Uttie, Pauli, and Chloë) out with one idea in mind: making learning in the garden both useful and enjoyable. By enjoyable, it was understood that we would be making learning resources fun for both teachers and students to use.

We then agreed to build a ‘Knowledge Board’ project which would have two components. The first was researching information on plants, organizing it, translating it in Hindi, and printing both English and Hindi versions on small flash cards, which could then serve as an garden plant information database for the children to consult. The second part consisted of taking wooden boards and painting them with scientific/agricultural concepts which would soon be taught to students and for which it is useful to have visual resources. We came up with these ideas after a few brainstorming sessions, added to them, and planned for the materials and time we would need. Each of us brought something to the discussion, and our collaboration was particularly useful when we were able to recognize each other’s skills and distribute jobs evenly and accordingly.

Moreover, we wanted our “Knowledge Board” to have an impact in the overall learning process of the students. In order to do so, we had to go through the student’s curriculum, provided to us by the organiser of the gardening project, and then come up with three themes that we could creatively represent. After some discussions and sharing of ideas, the group decided that photosynthesis, the plant growth cycle, and the water cycle, were three concepts we could visually explain through diagrams, arrows, and colors.

The knowledge boards were a task that involved planning and collaboration, and I think that our team achieved that very well. We were able to distribute rules and help each other throughout the process. We undertook challenges together and we celebrated the accomplishments together, as well. Our aim of making interactive and aes-
A LOOK AT India

AAREY FOREST COLONY

For the latter part of the term, half of our group worked on the outskirts of Sanjay Gandhi National Park to directly aid members of the Warli tribe. The Warli tribe are an indigenous people that are facing pressure from the government and big companies for their land, which, although they have a right to be on, is some of the most highly sought after land for development in Mumbai. In an attempt to push the Warli people out so that the land can become part of the cityscape, the Warli are not given running water, electricity, or any sort of government benefits usually reserved for groups on the fringes of society. Developing here would not only force out these people, but it would encroach on a valuable forest ecosystem that provides refuge for thousands of species, and a much needed source of oxygen for the city of Mumbai.

We worked here on Fridays, helping out in whatever way we could. During our first session we were told the information provided above and introduced to the Warli’s forest garden. A primary source of their food, this permacultural garden needed another soil bed, so we spent a couple of hours digging, collecting detritus, stomping on leaves, tipping out manure, and layering it all into a wonderfully fertile creation. We were shown around, learnt about the Warli people and their style of painting, and told stories of how this group had inhabited the surrounding land for generations.

I think what really stood out to most of us was just how close this national park sits to urbanization. No matter how dense the trees were in the area where we worked, we could always hear the sounds of the highway; Or look up and see where the cityscape leered over the park, almost as if it were a stagnant promise of the area’s eventual development. Nevertheless, Kriti and the rest of the team coached us through the work and took special care to make sure we understood each of the natural processes that made their lifestyle work. Everything we did from plant nurseries to the spreading of cow urine was explained and elaborated on in a way which reinforced the innate ingenuity of the people that lived there. Sanjay Gandhi National Park should not be conserved for intrinsic reasons alone – the Warli people know the lay of the land best and are able to enhance the area’s natural capital.

A lot of the time, even though we were the volunteers, it felt as though they were the ones truly helping us. With the time and effort they put into teaching us and strengthening our understanding of the ecosystem, they probably could have dug another soil bed or two. But they were patient and kind despite their circumstances, offering a hospitality one would usually avoid with strangers. In the end, I guess we could describe the experience in environmental Students help develop land for use by the indigenous Warli tribe.
Japan
After embracing the whirlwind that is India, our students probably felt they’d arrived on another planet during their first week in Japan. Whereas India might be a “subcontinent of garbage,” city streets in this island nation are spick and span. It is a country of order and precision: Trains run on time. People bathe at home, not in rivers. Cows do not (typically) idle in downtown areas. In Japan, you have time to breathe. To take in your surroundings. To live in the moment and appreciate the unique beauty that encompasses you.

Invigorated by their surroundings, our students once again dove into their coursework, working on meaningful personal projects that allowed them to explore Japan’s culture in their own creative ways. They created claymation clips to learn about health and endocrine systems; they practiced their drawing skills to learn about the ancient Japanese art of tattooing; they created their own language curriculum and taught a new language to their peers; and they created a student-run newsletter to learn journalistic writing, editorial skills, and the English language itself. These are just a small sample of the many ways they chose to personalize their learning here, and a testament to the newfound freedom offered by the Changemaker Curriculum.

Hiroshima, our host city, proved to be just as beloved by our students this time around as in our previous visit. It also proved to be the ideal place for students to focus on their teacher-led modules, which included a look at Japan’s nuclear debate (including a discussion with several hibakusha [explosion-affected people]), the effects of advertising on Japan’s population, and the importance of conscious consumerism in the face of overfishing.

It wasn’t all work, however. This blissful term included a little bit of everything when it came to recreation. There was ice skating and snowball fights to go along with mochi making and anime binges. Students worked up a sweat and let off steam during aikido and kendo sparring matches. And a visit to Japan wouldn’t be complete without at least one visit to a karaoke bar and the world-famous Robot Restaurant, naturally.

Some terms come and go too quickly, leaving you wanting for more. Japan is one of them. For many of our students, it’s such a cultural wonderland they find it hard to leave, even when tempted with the familiar comforts of home. For them, we’re guessing it’s not so much sayonara as until next time.
Visitors to Hiroshima today are greeted by a thriving and cosmopolitan city, one that seamlessly blends tradition and modernity. For proof of this one need only look at the city’s tram lines, where restored antiques trundle up and down Hiroshima’s streets alongside the newer and sleeker Green Mover models.

And while few signs remain of the events that reduced Hiroshima to ash on August 6th, 1945, the fateful events of that day will forever dominate the city’s history. On that day, around 30% of Hiroshima’s population, some 70,000 to 80,000 people were killed in an instant, and another 70,000 injured by the effects of the Enola Gay atomic bomb. The Radiation Effects Research Foundation estimates that within the first few months after the bombing, between 90,000 and 166,000 died in Hiroshima, making it the single most deadly attack in history.

The suffering did not end there. In the aftermath of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, effects from the exposure to radiation took their toll on the survivors of the attacks, known as hibakusha (explosion-affected people). Higher
instances of leukemia crept up as well as other cancers. The hibakusha also found themselves subjected to intense discrimination due to public ignorance about the consequences of radiation sickness, leading to miserable marriage and work prospects. Of the estimated 650,000 declared hibakusha following the twin attacks, roughly 155,000 are still alive today. But as their numbers dwindle, their message is still clear: Never allow such a tragedy to occur again.

Today Japan finds itself at a crossroads. The country lacks significant reserves of fossil fuel and must import the majority of its crude oil, natural gas and other resources. Since the 1950’s it has utilized nuclear energy, but the Fukushima Daiichi Disaster of 2011 renewed deep concerns about the use of nuclear energy in this earthquake-prone country. So what should Japan do to sustain itself moving forward?

That driving question is what our Nuclear Debate module students set out to answer during their time in Japan. By the end of the term, their goal was to draw from their research and experiences and make an informed decision on whether they felt Japan should move forward as a nuclear state, or instead depend solely on renewable energies and fossil fuels.

To do so they began by exploring the events of WW2 from the Japanese perspective, both before and after the detonation of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Lectures were held at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, where the adjacent A-Bomb Dome provides a harrowing reminder of the horrors of nuclear weaponry. Students also toured the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where they witnessed belongings left by the victims of the attacks, photos, and other materials that further drove home the atrocities of war, and the human cost of such attacks.

The highlight of these historical lessons was a thought-provoking discussion with six surviving hibakusha, who were kind enough to share their stories and take questions from our students on the discrimination they had faced during their lifetime. Their message to our students was uniform and one that sums up Hiroshima’s philosophy: we should all strive for world peace and the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

For their weXplore, Nuclear Debate students spent five days traveling by bus around Nagasaki and its...
surrounding areas to learn more about the region’s history, and to gain a perspective of the current status of energy options in Japan. Students learned about renewable energies through a visit to the Kitakyushu Next-Generation Energy Park, where they saw firsthand the benefits of solar panels and wind-powered turbines.

The trip also included a tour of the Genkai Nuclear Power Station, where they viewed life-sized models and scale training replicas of the inner elements of a nuclear reactor. Actual crew members trained on simulators and provided students with a lecture on the state-of-the-art safety protocols put in place at Genkai. This session did a great job in presenting the pro-nuclear energy stance, and why its use is still prevalent throughout the country, even after the 2011 meltdown.

A few days after returning from weXplore, students heard the opposite perspective on nuclear energy from Bo Jacobs, a historian of nuclear technologies and a professor at Hiroshima Peace Institute, Hiroshima City University. During the lecture, Mr. Jacobs commented on the negative impact on the environment from any kind of nuclear energy generation, as well as the ongoing problem of nuclear waste. He provided an excellent counterpoint to what our students learned at Genkai, giving them a lot to think about before deciding on their final stance.

In the lead-up to the Showcase, students participated in two formal debates in front of a panel of the term’s guest speakers. The first debate, which focused on science and maintained a traditional 2 x 2 person structure, ended with the resolution that gamma radiation should be funded and prioritized over research on particle radiation. The second debate, which focused on history and maintained a parliamentary 2 x 3 person team structure, ended with the resolution that the United States had justifiable reasons for dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At the Showcase itself, students orchestrated a scripted debate for the audience so that the key elements of a debate were emphasized. The module team was very conscious of the hibakusha who were in the audience and their perspectives on the dropping of the bomb and nuclear non-proliferation, so they were careful to pick a debate topic where the outcome would be viewed positively, no matter what. The topic chosen was to determine the best way to preserve the Hibakusha’s experiences moving forward.

In this debate, there were 2 x 3 man teams, 1 person introducing the debate, two people narrating, and 1 person acting as timekeeper and monitor. The audience served as judges by a show of hands. The debate was introduced and narrated by the students, who also highlighted the different forms of rhetoric being used. After going back and forth, the participating students revealed that the best way to preserve the Hibakusha experiences is through recorded media, rather than new storytellers.

Time will tell if Japan will adopt the ideas that our students set forward, but it is heartening to see that Hiroshima remains committed to the concept of peace nearly 80 years later. Student reflections from our meeting with Hiroshima’s Hibakusha can be found on the following page.
Following the hibakusha event, many students from both THINK Global School and Hiroshima International School were asked to reflect on what they’d just seen and heard.

"Hiroshima isn’t a place that wants to show how it got stronger after the devastating atomic bomb. It isn’t a place of complete sadness nor revengefulness. It’s a place to reflect, mourn and commemorate the bombing, all its victims and effects. To make people and leaders remember, what the consequences of their actions are, and hopefully make better decisions for the present and the future."

"In normal class, it is about numbers and statistics, and not human experience. Today we saw the reality of the aftermath and life afterwards, and not just the event itself."

"The act of hearing someone and actually listening is important to peace. Conflict happens when we don’t communicate and share with each other."

"We were surprised that hibakusha were discriminated against for being survivors- the idea that people can be so cruel and prejudices against those who have already suffered so much."

"I think what I really took away is the importance of moving on in a positive direction, to see how Hiroshima as a city grew from such a tragedy."

"I don’t think I really understood the full influence of the event before I came here, I learned about it in school, but after being here, I see great importance in telling the personal story as it is back home."

"I was overwhelmed about how the city and everyone in the community were rebuilt."

"It is our responsibility no matter how geographically far from each other to be connected by heart and head as humans and carry on the message of peace."

"We must turn hatred into compassion and move forward from difficulties without acknowledging it."

"Hiroshima is an example of the cruelty of war. It is important to learn about the effects of nuclear conflict, and talking to survivors educates people."

"Everyone that comes to Hiroshima is a witness."
In relation to the hibakusha assembly, students from THINK Global School and Hiroshima International School were asked to share the words that came to their minds regarding the hibakusha and the bombing of Hiroshima by U.S Forces on August 6th, 1945.

We compiled their answers and placed them into the following wordcloud, with words that occurred at a higher frequency being assigned greater prominence in the scheme.
I made this drawing to commemorate a conversation I had at the end of my day in Nagasaki. I had been sitting on a bench in the park next to the harbor, rotating to observe towards all cardinal directions. I was jotting down notes on the general movement of people, and in some cases, I expanded on more precise behaviors that surprised me. During that time I was experiencing that progression as an outsider, there seemed to be a thick invisible barrier between me and the humans around me. Nevertheless Harumi Matsumoto’s French bulldog didn’t seem to perceive anything besides thin air filling the space between us. So the dog ran towards me hoping for a playful greeting, little did the puppy know that she had unlocked a pivotal experience for me as a stranger to that city.

Harumi Matsumoto briefly asked me where I came from and why I was there. I figured this meant the door was open for me to ask for information on her, and very kindly, she shared stories with me.

She told me about Nagasaki’s history, having been the only city in Japan with three open harbors for boats from the Netherlands and Portugal, back when the rest of county was closed to foreign exchange. She suggested that because of that, the city developed into adopting and adapting to diversity, and now the people of Nagasaki are very friendly and warm to foreigners.

“People here are open and kind, at least I think so.” (Harumi)

As I asked her about what made the place unique and what she would want me, as a visitor, to take away, she confirmed her own theory and opened up to me, telling me the story of her father who grew up in Nagasaki. Her father worked at a Mitsubishi factory in the center of the city, until one day a friend of his asked for a favor; to exchange facilities so that he (the friend) could be in the city. Kindly, the young man (yet to become her father) agreed, and so they went ahead with the deal. For that day the father went to work to the outskirts, “My father was in the other side of that mountain” she said as she pointed towards the mountain that can be seen in my painting. That day, August 9, 1945, the bomb was dropped in Nagasaki. The dear friend passed away as her father watched the mushroom cloud rise above the city.

As for more details, she couldn’t tell, “He didn’t tell a lot, only once that I asked him.”

I want to express my profound gratitude to my new friend for having shared her story with me.
For our business-savvy students, Japan presented an opportunity to explore one of the most unique consumer markets in the world, where the products being advertised are often overshadowed by the eye-popping imagery and bizarre narratives chosen for the advertisements. Since the Japanese are so famous for their humility and politeness, why do marketers choose to be so bold and brazen in their advertisements here? To answer that question, students did a deep dive into the world of Japanese marketing and advertising to learn why ads are able to draw emotional responses, and how failing to recognize your target audience can make or break a campaign here and around the world.

For their module project, students were tasked with developing a marketing strategy, including a product, for one of two Hiroshima-based companies: Mazda and the Radiation Effects Research Foundation. Each strategy was required to cover the company’s mission, objective, marketing goals, financial objectives, and targeting strategy in detail.

To learn more about these concepts, students engaged in a variety of marketing-themed field experiences, seminars, and lectures with guest speakers, each designed to build their knowledge of marketing and prepare them for their final project: a pitch presentation highlighting the marketing strategy behind their imagined campaign.

These lessons included a visit to Mazda’s Hiroshima Headquarters, where they toured the facility and learnt from Mazda’s marketing team how statistics influence the company’s campaigns; a visit to English-language Get Hiroshima magazine, where they discussed the pros and cons of targeting expats in a minority Japanese market; an exploration of Hiroshima’s streets to identify marketing strategies in products; and a visit to the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, where students took part in a workshop activity centered around learning more about the organization’s mission and vision, their marketing and social media presence, and the specific skills and outcomes RERF would like to see from their collaboration with students.
For their weXplore, students headed north by train to Tokyo, where many of the ad campaigns they’d seen throughout their time in Japan originated. The weXplore began with a visit to ZO Digital, where students reviewed marketing case studies to learn about the successes and failures of familiar brands. For a change of pace, students then paid a visit to the Tokyo Technology Marketing Fair, where they had an opportunity to see firsthand the new wave of gadgets and software being used by marketers worldwide.

Next, they headed to Shibuya, possibly Japan’s most famous neighborhood, to walk the streets with Marketing Consultant Ed Thompson, who pointed out the various strategies brands use to market their products. Finally, students met with the marketing head from EAT Creative, a consultancy who specializes in helping foreigners bridge the marketing gap and communicate appropriately to Japanese consumers. He shared with our students some of the projects they are working on, the thinking behind them, and the real-world challenges they face making them happen.

The Japanese people don’t see marketing as something like engineering or finance that can be taught in school. Sensitivity to customers’ desires is learned through hard work and experience.

-Zaki Ahmed

After returning to Hiroshima, participating students set out internalizing everything they’d learned and refining their final presentation, a five-minute product pitch that provided a description of process and rationale behind its target audience, mode of advertising, and how they will evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing commercial. Students who chose to work on the Radiation Effects Research Foundation project chose to market the radiation research done by RERF through social media posts and YouTube videos. Impressed by their work, RERF invited some of the students to stay on as social media “interns.”

The Mazda marketing team chose to create a two-minute commercial and worked on future-forward branding for Mazda, as we approach the age of the driverless car. Both projects showed just how much our students had learned during their time in Japan, quite the feat in a country that is notoriously hard for foreign marketers to crack. The final marketing strategies were more than 35 pages in length, and both Mazda and RERF came away impressed by the professionalism of our students in their written and oral communications.
“No idea is a wack idea in Tokyo, no article of clothing is considered weird,” and even if it was, weird is the new chic. It was the only place in the world where being eccentric and odd was the norm... It was the perfect blend of a modern city constantly changing and evolving, yet underneath all of the glitz and glamour laid culture, history and respect.

-Zara G.
Our Experience
Marketing in Tokyo: "Tokyo gives the most authentic glimpse of the future" student Zaki (Pakistan) reflects as we returned from our week of exploring the art of marketing in Japan’s capital. Throughout the past weeks in Japan, nine of us have been specifically studying global marketing as well as Japanese unique and diverse marketing tactics. Not only have we been studying these concepts, but we are applying them as marketing and branding consultants for Mazda and the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF).

The group traveled to Tokyo, the biggest city in the world, to sit down with local experts in the field and to witness firsthand the large-scale marketing and advertising techniques found everywhere you look. Tokyo is not only the capital of Japan, but also the capital of Japanese culture, unique advertisements, mass public advertising, and creative marketing techniques. By even just by walking down the street, we were able to identify so many different advertisements going on.

In our short trip, we had fun and learned a lot. In our first seminar, with Jeff Crawford from JC Digital, we learned more about characteristics of Japanese marketing, and went through case studies of success and failure of familiar brands. We gained a strong insight and clearer idea on what we’re dealing with as a marketing consultancy. Jeff’s talk made us think about...
We had a great meeting with EAT creative. EAT is a creative branding agency that consults with large organizations and businesses to allow for a smooth transition between different cultural markets. We had the privilege to meet with a couple of people from their team, and we got an insight of a real-life implementation of what we were learning about.

All of these experiences have helped us grow immensely, and truly understand the extent that differences in culture impacts what brands need to do in order to meet their target audience. From meetings with large, successful organizations to Robot Restaurants and marketing fairs; we have only caught a glimpse of what Tokyo offers.

We attended the Tokyo Technology Marketing Fair, and experienced cutting edge technologies being used in the field of marketing. It was difficult because most of the booths and presentations were in Japanese but we still gained inspiration for our showcase from the use of virtual reality in marketing.

We had the opportunity to meet Ed Thompson for a walking tour in the core of Tokyo. Besides passing through the chaos at the Shibuya crossing, we were able to identify the marketing tactics used subliminally in the advertisements around us.

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Reason number 148,949 why it’s good to be Japanese: With an average life span of 83.7 years, people in Japan continue to outlive those in every other country, and Japan has now ranked #1 in life expectancy for over twenty years. Most experts agree that the Japanese diet of fish, vegetables, and fruit plays a major role in this longevity, but this steady consumption of seafood comes at a price: many of the fish, oysters, and eels that are popular delicacies here have experienced devastating population reductions over the years, the result of decades of overfishing, pollution, and oceanic changes.

This term one of our project-based learning modules focused on conscious consumerism, giving our students a chance to explore the delicate relationship between Japan’s human geography and its aquaculture industry. As part of the module, participating students attended a variety of cooking classes that taught them how to prepare delicious yet environmentally conscious meals, like sushi, okonomiyaki, and washoku. At the end of the term, students put their newfound culinary skills to the test by preparing an environmentally conscious seafood meal for everyone in attendance at our Project-Based Learning Showcase.
Students learn how to prepare okonomiyaki.

Maxim prepares oysters during the end-of-term showcase.

The tasty pancakes are topped with bonito flakes.

Sablefish, sardines, and salmon are great alternatives to tuna.

Ryleigh helps prep ingredients.

Students learned how to roll sushi.

Ina gives a big thumbs up.

Maxim prepares oysters during the end-of-term showcase.
“The Conscious Consumerism module was wild. It was a chance to embark on some very non-vegetarian tours in Tokyo’s Tsukiji fish market, run errands for locally produced, sustainable products, and cook with expert (strict and traditional) sushi chefs. We learned a lot about the battle between an economy dependent on fish consumption and the growing environmental risk, all while eating delicious egg rolls.”

-Ina B.
Walking through the Peace Park, my soul would tremble due to the cold that was brought on by the horrors of war, especially August 6th, 1945, the day when the A-bomb, also known as “Little Boy,” was dropped on the city of Hiroshima. Among the thousands who were killed, a vast number were kids — innocent kids with dreams in their eyes and aspirations in their minds. This painting is not only my reflection of my time in Japan but also my perspective towards all forms of violence around the world.

The bomb represents war, violence, abuse, trafficking, poverty, and all forms of societal failures around the world. The child is the FUTURE: the future of our generation, every dream, every aspiration, and above all it is the characterization of humanity. Every year, thousands of children are killed in some form of violent incident, whether it be the refugee crisis or high school shootings. Living in Hiroshima and reflecting on the city’s past was the stimulus for me to express my voice. We need to initiate the change that we want to see in the world. Now is the time to break walls and start building bridges, to extend our arms, and to open our doors for those in need; to protect each other, to support each other and to live with each other.
DURING THEIR TIME IN HIROSHIMA, STUDENTS HAD A CHANCE TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN UNDERSTANDING JAPAN’S HISTORY BY EMBRACING TWO TRADITIONS THAT HAVE WITHSTOOD THE TEST OF TIME: MARTIAL ARTS AND KIMONOS.

MARTIAL ARTS

Under the instruction of 7th Dan Peter Goldsbur and fellow sensei Motooka-San, our students learned a very traditional style of the defense-oriented martial art aikido. Leaning on their combined decades of aikido mastery, the senseis taught our students how to throw, strike, and pin one another with precision. For those students more intrigued by weaponry and pursuing the warrior’s way, kendo senseis Murai and Shibukawa provided students with lessons in the sword-and-armor-based style. The training was as much an exercise in wellness as physical activity: students honed their Japanese core value of kaizen throughout their lessons, continually improving at their technique while being self-aware, responsible, and disciplined. Mastering the art of meditation was just as important as mastering reversals and counterstrikes. A huge arigato to all four of our senseis for their help during this module.

KIMONOS

Our Spanish AP students had a chance to learn about another famous Japanese tradition by engaging in a cultural experience involving the presentation of traditional kimonos. During the exercise, students learned about the history and complexity of the beautiful fabric dresses through conversations with two Japanese seamstresses.

Corinna, Paula, Julia, and Julia show off their traditional kimonos.
Kendo lessons helped reinforce our core values.

Kimonos are still common in Japan. Justin takes part in an aikido hold.

The Spanish AP students show their appreciation for the day’s lesson.
1. THE AVERAGE JAPANESE CONSUMES ABOUT 37 GRAMS OF ANIMAL PROTEIN PER DAY, 47% COMING FROM SEAFOOD

2. THE MODERN AND GLOBAL STANDARD OF SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD, MSC, WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO JAPAN IN 2006

3. JAPAN CONSUMES 6% OF THE WORLD’S FISH HARVEST AND IMPORTS MORE SEAFOOD THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY

4. JAPAN IS THE THIRD LARGEST AD MARKET IN THE WORLD

5. DENTSU IS JAPAN’S LARGEST AD AGENCY

6. JAPANESE ADVERTISING RELIES ON A SOFT-SELL, AS OPPOSED TO MORE DIRECT METHODS IN THE WESTERN WORLD

7. 36.8% OF JAPAN’S ELECTRICITY AND 10% OF ITS ENERGY ARE SUPPLIED BY NUCLEAR REACTORS

8. DUE TO A LACK OF NATURAL RESOURCES, JAPAN RELIES ON IMPORTS FOR APPROXIMATELY 80% OF ITS PRIMARY ENERGY REQUIREMENTS

9. OVER 100,000 PEOPLE WERE EVACUATED FROM THEIR HOMES FOLLOWING THE 2011 FUKUSHIMA DISASTER
Greece and Spain
With an array of profound life experiences in Asia and Africa under their belts, our students next descended on Europe to close out the year in two Mediterranean countries: Greece and Spain. This term, more than our other three, required students to draw upon the life skills they had learned throughout their time at THINK Global School and strike a balance between completing their personal project, participating in our teacher-led module on ethnic conflict & ethnicity, and for the many who chose to do so, preparing for and taking the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. To ensure their time in Greece and Spain was an enjoyable one, an array of fun activities were planned highlighting the rich cultures and beautiful terrains Greece and Spain are famous for.

Throughout their time in Europe, our Changemaker students focused on exploring ethnicity, identity, and conflict resolution as it relates to the refugee crisis in Greece, their own countries and identities, and the identity of the Basque region.
The final term of the school year allowed us to explore an issue that was just beginning to unfold during our 2015 visit to Athens: the European Migrant Crisis. Fueled by protracted wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and other countries, an alarming rate of refugees began crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 for a new life in the European Union, with thousands landing on Greece’s sandy beaches each day. That year, over one million refugees braved the tumultuous sea current to escape the horrors of their homeland, presenting incredible logistical challenges for a country already struggling to deal with an economic meltdown.

Time has passed and the number of refugees arriving on Greece’s shores has declined significantly, but a difficult question remains to be answered: How do we integrate in a world of different ethnic groups? To tackle this question, students used literature circles, research, and real-world experiences to better understand the ideas of ethnicity, identity, nationalism, and the conflicts that can arise due to them. Students divided into teams and were given the freedom to demonstrate their learning of ethnic identity and conflict as they saw fit through a summative project, with the requirement they decide on a concept in Greece and expand on it in Spain as their studies switched to the Basque identity.
To start the module, students began by looking inward. During the weeklong online learning session in the lead-up to Greece, each student created an identity chart and a five-minute video that showcased their hometown and provided information about their background, beliefs, personality type, sexuality, among many other categories, including what are some challenges you experience being who you are?

After all students had submitted their chart and video, the results were compiled into a presentation and students were remotely split into groups of three. Students then documented the similarities and differences they perceived in their peers compared to themselves, and took part in a group video chat to discuss their different ideas of identity. From there they collaborated on a textbook definition of what identity means, and passed it on to be shared at the THINK Global School Symposium.

To close out the online portion of the term, students participated in two activities. First, they curated a list of three texts related to global issues: one from a Greek perspective, one from a Spanish perspective, and one from the perspective of their own hometown. Second, they crafted a written response of why understanding ethnicity and identity is important to us as global citizens and THINK Global School students.
Upon arriving in Greece, students gathered to review expectations for the module and began “connecting the dots” of their understanding of global ethnic conflicts by creating a visual of their choosing based on the curated list of texts they had submitted during the online portion of the term. They also began splitting into literature circles, where they would prepare notes and talking points ahead of time, and then engage in a spirited discourse with their educators and classmates over what they had learned.

Literature circle talking points in Greece included “How does ethnicity, identity, and ethnic conflict affect us as individuals, travelers, and humans in a diverse world?”, “What effect does ethnicity, identity, and ethnic conflict have on domestic and international policy?”, and “What unique issues is Greece facing as a member of the European Union?”. Through this roundtable model, our students were able to draw from their own diverse backgrounds and curated texts to communicate and defend their ideas effectively.

Educators this term also relied on field experiences to provide a way for students to interact with the people fleeing to Greece for political asylum and physical safety. To accomplish this, they worked with two local non-government organizations, Melissa Network and Faros, both of which promote empowerment, communication, and active citizenship within the migrant community.

Through the Melissa Network our students heard testimony from an Iranian woman, Yassaman, who fled Iran with her husband, and, like our students, still maintains dreams and aspirations of her own. Students also had a chance to interact with unaccompanied Syrian minors, an experience that quickly made them realize just how difficult it is for migrants to integrate into their new community due to the communication barrier.

Through Faros our students had the chance to interact with displaced minors by leading them in team building activities, playing games, and engaging in gardening and art activities. These sincere interactions further helped put a face to the crises for our students, and further drove home the point that most refugees aren’t looking for handouts, but a pathway to becoming contributing members of Greek society.
After visiting with Faros and the Melissa Network, I have also realized how real these people are, as strange as that sounds. You read about the three-year old stranded on the beach or the children that are unaccompanied and fleeing from war torn countries and it never truly registers that these are aren’t just numbers -- they are real people.

-Ryleigh I.
Introduction to Athens

Our students were introduced to traditional Greek culture and folk traditions through the delightful Zafiro Experience, a family-owned restaurant in downtown Athens that offers sweeping views of the city and sea.

During the festive evening, students learned how to stone grind flour for making bread and create olive oil using a traditional press. And of course, an evening in Athens wouldn’t be complete without a little folk dancing and plate smashing, two traditions our students were happy to take part in.
A day at the Beach

During our time in Athens, educators Adam Sturman and Matt Cook organized a beach afternoon for our students where they were able to relax on the beach, participate in snorkeling, and - if certified - go scuba diving. One student in particular, Pakistani Zaki A., appreciated getting his first dip in the ocean under the watchful guidance of Matt and Adam.
Zaki and Max

Chelle Marshall and Jamie Steckart

Corinna helps Cullen adjust his goggles

Adam gives Zaki some pointers

Keo gets ready on shore
THERE HAVE BEEN 22,486 REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN 2018, DOWN FROM 174,000 IN 2016 AND 857,000 IN 2015

40% OF THE NEW ARRIVALS WERE UNDER THE AGE OF 18

IN 2018, THE MAJORITY OF ARRIVALS WERE FROM SYRIA (32%), IRAQ (20%), AND AFGHANISTAN (19%)

SINCE JUNE 2016, GREECE RANKS FOURTH IN NUMBER OF COMPLETED REGISTRATIONS OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN THE EU

GREEK AUTHORITIES MANAGED TO HANDLE THE UNPRECEDENTED REFUGEE FLOWS IN GREECE BY CREATING HOSTING FACILITIES FOR REFUGEES

THE GREEK ISLANDS OF LESBOS, CHIOS, KOS, SAMOS AND LEROS CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH OVERCROWDING

MANY REFUGEES ARE FORCED TO LIVE IN DANGEROUS CONDITIONS AS THEY WAIT MONTHS OR YEARS FOR THEIR ASYLUM CASES TO BE HEARD
Following their time in Greece, our students flew to Bilbao, Spain, where the module’s focus shifted to exploring the Basque identity. As the oldest surviving ethnic group in Europe, the Basque have spent hundreds of years fiercely protecting their cultural and linguistic identity, making them an intriguing case study for our module on cultural integration.

Students began their time in Spain by once again looking inward and answering questions about themselves. Paired up, they took turns interviewing one another, responding solely with one word answers. After the interviews were complete, they took their partner’s short answers and wrote a poem about them. Students next began preparing interviews questions for their upcoming homestay with Basque families, a way to learn about Basque culture firsthand in an authentic manner.

The literature circles begun in Greece continued in Spain, with students deep-diving into what it means to be a Basque person. In defining their answers, they were asked to consider who the Basque are, what makes them culturally unique, and what lies at the root of the Basque conflict. Once they’d contemplated their answers, they converted them into the form of a script and recorded a vlog of themselves personifying the Basque people, beginning their video with the simple line, “I’m Basque.”
TO GET AN AUTHENTIC TASTE OF THE BASQUE LIFE, A HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE WAS ARRANGED FOR OUR STUDENTS OVER THE COURSE OF A WEEKEND IN BILBAO, SPAIN. THROUGH CASUAL CONVERSATIONS EN ESPAÑOL OVER HOME COOKED MEALS, OUR STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST THEIR EXPERIENCES BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THOSE WHO CALL BILBAO HOME, AND FILL IN THE BLANKS ON EVERYTHING BASQUE ALONG THE WAY. A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR HOMESTAY FAMILIES FOR MAKING THE WEEKEND A MEMORABLE ONE!
This deep dive was done as a form of "preXplore" for our students ahead of their visit to the nearby town of Guernica. Like Hiroshima, Guernica was obliterated by bombs during the Spanish Civil War, this time at the hands of the Nazis and at the behest of Spanish general Francisco Franco. And also like Hiroshima, Guernica has reconstructed itself and become a global symbol of peace.

Students started the day with a walk around the town of Guernica where they viewed various monuments including a tiled replica of Pablo Picasso’s Guernica and the Agonía de fuego (Agony of Fire). They next moved to Gernika Gogoratuz, a self-managed research center for peace located in a former ASTRA arms factory. where they attended a workshop on the Elements of Peace Building led by Alex Carrascoa and Andreas Schäfter. Students considered the concept of society, the elements of peace building and the strategies that have been used by Alex through his artwork and a facilitated Circle of Dialogue.

In the afternoon they toured The Gernika Peace Museum, The Assembly House of Gernika, as well as the symbolic Gernika oak tree.
Before setting to work on finalizing their summative projects, students headed out for one final field experience: an exploration of the Basque traditions of agriculture, fishing, and mining. Students split into groups based on which centuries-old craft they’d like to learn more about and headed off in different directions, with the assignment of writing how their specific tour highlights aspects of Basque identity, including through quotes derived from interviews with their guides and locals. Each student also created a short video clip highlighting the sights and sounds of their tour, with the cumulative effort being added to our GPS Basque Country Map.

Students who chose to learn more about Basque agricultural techniques were invited by shepherds into their country homes in the inland Gipuzkoa province. Over the centuries, these shepherds have preserved the essence of the sheepherder’s job and the artisan tradition of Idiazabal Designation of Origin cheesemaking. Students took a hands-on approach to their lessons, joining our tour guide and his Border Collie in the field to round up latxa sheep and milk them. The experience was capped off with a tasting session of the famous Idiazabal Designation of Origin cheese, with our tour guides revealing the secrets behind its flavors and scents.
They next stepped outside and began a 45-minute guided walk through the steep winding streets of the town itself, learning about the innovative wave power project that generates electricity from the breakwaters of the Mutriku harbor, and the characters, stories, and legends that have been passed down about the historic port town through the generations.

Students who opted to visit Bermeo explored the coastline in a way that every Basque would approve of: by shoving off to sea in a country boat. After setting sail, students got a lesson on the town’s centuries-old maritime tradition, and how the bermeoterras (Bermeo locals) still rely heavily on fishing and canning as a source of income. The tour took students to the nearby seaside municipality of Elantxobe, known for its colorful houses and salt petre scent, and back again. Over the course of the hourlong boat ride, students had a chance to fill in the blanks of their Basque knowledge by posing questions to our tour guides, and snap innumerable gorgeous photos of the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve along the way.

Both groups had a chance to take part in a Basque pastime that has been enjoyed since the 13th century: pelota. Popular with all social classes throughout the region, pelota is typically played by two teams of two, who take turns serving the ball against a fronton (wall) and scoring points based on the team’s ability to continue fielding it while in play. Students were taught the basics of the game by seasoned pelota players in Bermeo, and then played one another to determine who was the txapeldun of the group.

An ivory tower should be built to protect the Basque people and their language, to ensure that this jewel does not disappear.

- Niko Marr

For our students who yearned to feel a sea breeze upon their face, exploring the Basque coastline was too tempting to pass up. This field experience revolved around two towns with deep ties to the whaling and fishing industry, Mutriku and Bermeo, and offered participating students a glimpse into just how important the surrounding Bay of Biscay has been to the Basque identity and economy over the last thousand years. Students who traveled to Mutriku began with a visit to The Bentalekua Museum, where they learned about the village’s history and long-standing ties with the sea, and the arrantzaes (Basque fisherman) who have made a living off the bay’s bounty for generations upon generations.

They next stepped outside and began a 45-minute guided walk through the steep winding streets of the town itself, learning about the innovative wave power project that generates electricity from the breakwaters of the Mutriku harbor, and the characters, stories, and legends that have been passed down about the historic port town through the generations.

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The final group of students traveled to the nearby town of Aizpitta for their field experience, a deep dive into the profitable Basque trade of mining. Through a guided tour and interviews with local workers, they set out to gain a better understanding of the industrialization of Basque country as well as the working conditions associated with the job. The day started at the Aizpitta visitor centre, where students got a chance to see the tools of the trade that have been used to mine iron, lead, and silver in this part of the Basque country since the sixteenth century. After learning about calcination furnaces, overhead cable systems, coal stores, and loading bays, students had a chance to walk into the “Iron Mountain” itself. At one time over 200 galleries were created inside of the mountain as miners searched for ore, but today only one tunnel is safe to visit. Submerged in the earth, our students continued their lessons on the lucrative trade and mineral processing, capping the afternoon off with a traditional alubiada, a hearty bean-based stew that has powered miners for centuries.
With their field experiences complete and a handful of additional literature circles undertaken, our Changemaker students began to reflect on everything they had learned in Spain and Greece about ethnicity and ethnic conflict, and tying it all together through the finalization of a summative project. Students were given creative leeway to express the outcome of their learning in any way they saw fit, provided it met a set of learning targets and relied on research gathered throughout the term. Students then had the option of presenting their project at the End-of-Year Student Symposium, which many of our students elected to do.

The dominant theme in these projects was Greece’s migrant crisis, and it was clear that seeing the effects of displacement firsthand and speaking with refugees who were trying, often unsuccessfully, to assimilate into a new culture had a profound impact on our students. Their summative projects often channeled the refugee’s frustration through provocative mediums, designed to get their audience thinking. These projects included:

- Ryleigh, Isabella, Amelie, and Ina chose to express their summative through a mixed media performance consisting of multiple forms of expression, including slam poetry, physical theater, and playwriting. The theme of their play was refugees, and how they find themselves without homes, political representation, and at times basic human rights after being forced to flee their country. The powerful performance provided a unique interpretation of the refugee crisis and ended up being one of the highlights of the symposium.
Zaki and Keo, from Pakistan and Poland respectively, turned to street art for their summative as a forum for expressing political views. They began by fabricating an image in Photoshop of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian boy who prompted international headlines after washing up lifelessly on a Turkish beach, which they then applied to a poster through stencils and spray paint. Alan’s image was accompanied on the poster by the words “Not just stats. People,” and viewers could read Zaki and Keo’s rationale behind the work, a condemnation of the European Union for failing to protect refugees, in an accompanying assessment.

The group consisting of students, Maren, Mak, Harry, and Cullen made an engaging text-based game titled Soare, where the player’s decisions direct the journey of an unaccompanied minor abruptly forced to leave her home. Presented in a “Choose-Your-Own-Adventure” style, Soare relies on facts to visualize the refugee’s journey to Greece. Alongside writing the logic for the game and creating its visuals, students participating in the project created a soundtrack and marketing plan, with intentions to later scale the project up into a robust role-playing game.

One student, Julia, chose to create a layered 3D map representing migration patterns and identity, nationality and ethnicity meanings based off of her research. The exhibition used a QR code to link to a website explaining her interpretation, analogy, and symbolism used in the map.
With their summative assessments complete and personal projects turned in, our Changemaker students’ academic school year was officially at an end. In the weeks following their departure from Spain, we followed up with parents and students and asked them to weigh in on THINK Global School’s switch from the IB Diploma Programme to a place- and project-based curriculum. The response was overwhelming: transitioning to a curriculum that asked our students to answer complex questions to real world problems led to a noticeable increase in their engagement and overall parent satisfaction.

Those students have since moved on to the next leg of their educational journey, which includes terms in China, Oman, Costa Rica, and Greece. And our freshly-launched Changemaker Cohort 2, consisting of thirty students from all over the world, all new to TGS, have begun exploring the modules discussed in this book themselves.

To learn more about a THINK Global School education for yourself or someone you know, visit www.thinkglobalschool.org to apply today.
On June 6th, the fourteen members of the Class of 2018 completed their TGS journey by crossing the stage and accepting their diplomas from school founder Joann McPike in Bilbao, Spain. Each and every one of them ingrained something truly unique into our school’s culture, and they collectively exemplified empathy, grit, ubuntu, and the rest of our core values. As the final IB class at TGS, they went out on a high note, achieving a 100% pass rate on the IBDP exams.

All good things must come to an end, but that doesn’t mean this is goodbye. We look forward to following each of our graduates’ journeys as they set out to make the world a better place.
ANDRÉS DE LA SIERRA RENIER

Year Joined: 2015  
From: Belgium/USA

Countries Andrés called home:  
Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote:  
“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not.”

- Henry David Thoreau

CHIDO NYAKUENGAMA

Year Joined: 2016  
From: Australia

Countries Chido called home:  
Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote:  
“If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?”

- RuPaul

CHLOË FRASER

Year Joined: 2016  
From: Canada

Countries Chloë called home:  
Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote:  
“I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about.”

- Hemingway

EDEN HENBREY

Year Joined: 2015  
From: New Zealand

Countries Eden called home:  
Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote:  
“Memory is an imaginative reconstruction of experience.”

- Frederic Bartlett
ELLIOIT WEIR
Year Joined: 2014
From: New Zealand
Countries Elliot called home:
New Zealand, Costa Rica, Greece, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote:
"Only thing you need to remember, don't run away."

HELEN RAMOS NUFIIO
Year Joined: 2016
From: Guatemala
Countries Helen called home:
Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote:
"The child is in me still and sometimes not so still."

JENNA RICE
Year Joined: 2015
From: New Zealand
Countries Jenna called home:
Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote:
"I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list."

- Tashi Mar
- Fred Rogers
- Susan Sontag

- Unknown

KAYMIN MARTIN-BURNETT
Year Joined: 2016
From: Singapore
Countries Kaymin called home:
Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote:
"Better an oops than a what if."
KOJO ADU-GYAMFI

Year Joined: 2014
From: Ghana

Countries Kojo called home: New Zealand, Costa Rica, Greece, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote: “The universe is infinite and your collection of cells made it, rejoice.”

- Self

WAJAHAT MIRZA

Year Joined: 2016
From: Pakistan

Countries Wajahat called home: Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote: “We don’t receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.”

- Marcel Proust

OSKAR KLONOWSKI

Year Joined: 2014
From: Poland

Countries Oskar called home: New Zealand, Costa Rica, Greece, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote: “Either I will find a way, or I will make one.”

- Philip Sidney

PAULO HERNÁNDEZ-MATOS MARTÍN

Year Joined: 2015
From: Spain

Countries Pablo called home: Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain

Senior Quote: “You did not choose the day you entered this world, and you will not choose the day you leave it, it’s what you do in between that makes all the difference.”

- Self
To the following people for contributing photos to our end of year lookback.

ADAM STURMAN
ADNAN MACKOVIC
ALICIA HUSSELIN
AMELIE ANDREAS
ANGIE TENIBRINI
CHARLOTTE STECKART
CHELLE MARSHALL
CHUNG MAN CHAN
ELLA OUDHOF
INA BICAJ
ISABELLE RICOTTA
JACKIE IPEGAMI
JAMIE STECKART
JEN BUCHANAN
JESS PEGRAM
JULIA GUIZAR GARCÍA
JULIA GWIO DZIK
KAREN KRAAL
KIEN NGO
LILY-WAI EDWARDS
LINDSAY CLARK
MELISSA NETWORK
ROWENA SPEED
RYLEIGH IVERSON
SAM NELSON
SHAMSIA DARYABI
SOUEN KIM
AND ANYONE ELSE WE MISSED!

PAULA CENDOYA CARRIL

Year Joined: 2016
From: Argentina
Countries Pauli called home: Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote: “Discipline is the fuel of achievement and kindness shows great self-discipline.”

- Self

UTKARSHA VYAS

Year Joined: 2014
From: India
Countries Utkarsha called home: New Zealand, Costa Rica, Greece, Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Peru, Morocco, Canada, India, Japan, and Spain
Senior Quote: “I’m not really funny. I’m just incredibly mean and people think I’m joking.”

- Anonymous