Fords Focus Days:
Teaching Character Development through Nontraditional Methods

Mario Masso
Form I Science Teacher
The Haverford School
mmasso@haverford.org

Emily Lesko
Form I History Teacher
The Haverford School
elesko@haverford.org

Kori Brown
Form II History Teacher
The Haverford School
kbrown@haverford.org
OVERVIEW
Overview

- What are focus days?
- How did our focus days originate (and more importantly, how did we get everyone on board with the concept)?
- What do our focus days look like (and more importantly, how did we plan all of the moving components)?
- What challenges, changes, and successes have our focus days experienced over the past three years?
Overview

Focus Days (*noun*)

- 1. Nontraditional interdisciplinary instruction days
- 2. A series of “lifeworth” lessons that help each student recognize the role that he or she plays in this world
- 3. The answer to that age-old student question, “Why do we need to know this?”
“Preparing students for a time of unprecedented social, economic, environmental and digital global interdependence demands that we reconsider what matters most to teach.”

“[Lessons should be] lifeworthy, that is, likely to matter in the lives learners are likely to live.”

~ David Perkins, *Future Wise: Educating Our Children for a Changing World*
FRAMING

How did the focus days originate (and more importantly, how did we get everyone on board with the concept)?
Framing
(for the administrators)

- The Haverford School Motto
  *Preparing Boys for Life*

- The Haverford School Mission Statement
  *We are committed to developing the full intellectual, artistic, athletic, and moral potential in each boy, and we aim to graduate young men with strong character.*

- Circles of Responsibility
Framing (for the faculty)

- Minimester
- STEPs (Solving the Earth’s Problems)
- Xcursions
Framing
(for the students)

*Minimester* explores the following themes during four-day workshops:

- **6th Grade: Agents of Change**
  ○ What are the needs of my local community, and how can I contribute?
- **7th Grade: Leadership**
  ○ What qualities does it take to become a leader in a community?
- **8th Grade: Community**
  ○ What is my role in the Haverford community, the Philadelphia community, the American community, and the global community - and what are my responsibilities to each?
Framing (for the students)

*Minimester* explores the following themes:

- 6th Grade: Agents of Change
- 7th Grade: Leadership
- 8th Grade: Community
Framing (for educators)

Project Zero’s Global Thinking Toolkit

http://www.pz.harvard.edu/
Framing (for educators)

Project Zero’s Global Thinking Toolkit
http://www.pz.harvard.edu/
IMPLEMENTING

What do the focus days look like (and more importantly, how did we plan all of the moving components)?
To make learning during Focus Days more “lifeworthy,” students attend interactive, interdisciplinary workshops rather than classes.

Examples:
- My More Brave Workshop
- My Relationships: Challenge Courses
Implementing (workshops)

Examples
- My Local Community: Haverford Workshop
- My Local Community: Philadelphia Workshop
- My America Workshop
- My Global Workshop
Implementing (workshops)

Demo Workshop #1
Implicit Bias

1. Go through SEED rules
2. Take Harvard Implicit Association Test for Gender-Career biases
3. Reflect on and discuss results
4. Investigate how these results relate to current events
Implementing (workshops)

Demo Workshop #1
Implicit Bias

Project Implicit
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/blog.html
Implementing (workshops)

Demo Workshop #1
Implicit Bias

Newsela
https://newsela.com/
Implementing (workshops)

Demo Workshop #2
Global Community

1. Review history of refugee waves, associated definitions, and maps
2. Share stories, videos, etc.
3. Role play: choose possessions to take with you and others to leave behind
4. Role play: write a letter to a loved one
5. Role play: consider what future plans and other intangible things you would leave behind

Doctors Without Borders’ Forced from Home
https://www.forcedfromhome.com/
Implementing
(workshops)

Demo Workshop #2
Global Community

Forced from Home’s Education Resource Toolkit
UNHCR’s Stories
The Choices Program Refugee Stories: Mapping a Crisis
The Refugee Project
Implementing
(workshops)

Demo Workshop #2
Global Community
In addition to teacher-led workshops, we bring in members of the local community. The students are able to connect their personal experiences to those of people from the local community who can pass along their knowledge of the American community and/or global community.

Examples

- Women Leaders Panel
- Military Leaders Panel
- Citizenship Panel
Implementing
(off-campus experiences)

Off-campus experiences use the local and glocal communities to bring the outer circles of responsibility to life. They involve a mixture of service learning, exploration, and cultural tourism.

Examples:
- Project Share
- Project Home
- Cradles to Crayons
- Local Playgrounds
Implementing (off-campus experiences)

Examples:
- Chinatown
- Cambodian Buddhist Temple
- Mosques
- New Africa Center
- Taller Puertorriqueño
- German Society
Implementing (field trips)
Implementing
(projects)

Each grade has a culminating project that weaves together what the students have learned throughout the week.

- Change Project
- Leadership Documentary
- Community Art
Implementing
(projects)
Implementing (projects)
Implementing (logistics)
REFLECTING
What challenges, changes, and successes have the focus days experienced over the past three years?
Reflecting (lessons learned)

- Have organized point people…
- But play on the strengths, abilities, and specialties of all your teachers
- Be flexible in the moment
- Be flexible in the long run
- Use your local community members
- Use your glocal community spaces
- Focus on framework to make the lessons “lifeworthy” and “sticky”
STEPs
(Solving the Earth’s Problems)
Framing (for the faculty)

- Minimester
- STEPs (Solving the Earth’s Problems)
- Xcursions
STEPs
(Solving the Earth’s Problems)
“Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, weather events are becoming more extreme and greenhouse gas emissions are now at their highest levels in history. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is likely to surpass 3 degrees centigrade this century. The poorest and most vulnerable people are being affected the most. Affordable, scalable solutions are now available to enable countries to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies. The pace of change is quickening as more people are turning to renewable energy and a range of other measures that will reduce emissions and increase adaptation efforts. Climate change, however, is a global challenge that does not respect national borders. It is an issue that requires solutions that need to be coordinated at the international level to help developing countries move toward a low-carbon economy. To strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, countries adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in Paris, which went into force in November of 2016. In the agreement, all countries agreed to work to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees centigrade. As of April 2018, 175 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement and 10 developing countries had submitted their first iteration of their national adaptation plans for responding to climate change.”

Introduction
Drama

Explore the Broadway Green Alliance website and a few clips from Once on This Island. Think about how to implement more green in our school’s Theater Department.
Climate Action

How is Broadway shining light on environmental issues?

- The Great White Way Tries to Turn Green
- Broadway Musical Uses Real Trees for Touching 9/11 Lesson

Once on This Island

- We Dance/Mama Will Provide
- Rebuild, Reuse, Repurpose, Revive
- Set Designer Dane Laffrey on Creating the Resilient, Immersive World of Once on This Island
- Costume Designer Clint Ramos Turns Trash Into Treasure
Read the following comic book associated with your group’s Global Goal, and discuss questions in your packet.
Climate Action

Comic
Use the following infographic about your Global Goal to complete the questions in your packet, and make a timeline of the events that led up to the current state of this goal.
Climate Action
Language

Read the following personal narrative by someone who is currently impacted by the issues outlined in your Global Goal and discuss the questions in your packet.
Climate Action

“I don’t need to watch TV to know about climate change, I’ve seen it happen through my own eyes: coastal erosions are becoming faster and saltwater is intruding in our freshwater.”

Ibrahim, tailor & restaurant owner, the Maldives

For most of us, the Maldives is the ultimate tropical resort, but for the people living on the islands, it’s their home, which is now under the threat of rising sea levels, salination of underground water, and extreme weather events. The government of the Maldives and the UN Development Programme are working together to help Maldivians adapt to climate change, but it takes global actions to tackle the root cause of it.
Math

Look at the following statistics and use them to graph the problems and solutions associated with your Global Goal.
The year 2017 was one of the three warmest on record and was 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period. An analysis by the World Meteorological Organization shows that the five-year average global temperature from 2013 to 2017 was also the highest on record. The world continues to experience rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions (the North Atlantic hurricane season was the costliest ever recorded) and increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases. This calls for urgent and accelerated action by countries as they implement their commitments to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

- As of 9 April 2018, 175 Parties had ratified the Paris Agreement and 168 Parties (167 countries plus the European Commission) had communicated their first nationally determined contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat.
- In addition, as of 9 April 2018, 10 developing countries had successfully completed and submitted the first iteration of their national adaptation plans for responding to climate change.
- Developed country Parties continue to make progress towards the goal of jointly mobilizing $100 billion annually by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions.
Science

Look at the following examples of scientific and technological solutions for your Global Goal that are currently being implemented around the world, and use them to answer the questions in your packet.
Climate Action

Why It Matters

CLIMATE ACTION: WHY IT MATTERS

What's the goal here?
Taking urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts.

Why?
Climate change is caused by human activities and is threatening the way we live and the future of our planet. By addressing climate change, we can build a sustainable world for everyone. But we need to act now.

Are people's lives really being affected by climate change?
Yes. Severe weather and rising sea levels are affecting people and their property in developed and developing countries. From a small farmer in the Philippines to a businessman in London, climate change is affecting everyone, especially the poor and vulnerable, as well as marginalized groups like women, children, and the elderly.

A $6 billion USD investment in disaster risk reduction over the next 15 years would avoid losses of $360 billion USD.
Student Resources

Use the following resources to help you research and create a solution for your Global Goal.
Student Resources

Research

United Nations Background Information (click on “Links”)

World’s Largest Lesson Background Information

Solutions

The Lazy Person’s Guide to Saving the World

170 Simple Actions for Saving the World
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Mario Masso
Form I Science Teacher
The Haverford School
mmasso@haverford.org

Kori Brown
Form II History Teacher
The Haverford School
kbrown@haverford.org