UNPACKING THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD’S VISION FOR LEARNING: RESEARCH BRIEF ON GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER

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UNICEF*, defines a global citizen as someone who understands interconnectedness, respects and values diversity, has the ability to challenge injustice, and takes action in personally meaningful ways.  
(Crawford, 2013, p. 2)

INTRODUCTION

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is committed to preparing all learners to succeed in the ever-changing competitive global environment. As such, the TDSB has identified five foundational skills and competencies that are important for student success. They are: (1) global citizenship and character, (2) communication, (3) critical thinking and problem-solving, (4) collaboration and leadership, and (5) creativity, inquiry and entrepreneurship. These skills and competencies are also supported by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the TDSB research discussed in the recently published 21st Century Competencies: Foundation Document for Discussion (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016) and Global Learning and Teaching with Educational Technology in the TDSB (Sinay, 2014). Often, these skills are referred to as global competencies (see Figure A).

Figure A: TDSB’s Vision for Learning which Highlights Global Competencies at the Core of Student Learning

Source: (Malloy, 2016, p. 11)
In this research brief we are targeting recent practices and policies regarding Global Citizenship and Character.

In doing so we will briefly answer the following questions:

- What is Global Citizenship and Character?
- What are the Skills and Competencies in Global Citizenship and Character Development?
- What are Effective Instructional Strategies to Achieve Global Citizenship and Character?
- How can we Measure students’ Skills and Competencies in Global Citizenship and Character?
- What Resources are Available?
- What are the Next Steps?

**WHAT IS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER?**

Communications technology has eliminated the physical distances and borders making our planet a community on a global scale. We can engage with people anywhere in the world virtually; we can offer services, perspectives, and solutions instantaneously. New global tensions, issues and problems along with many remarkable innovations have materialized within this burgeoning landscape. *Global* is a word that suggests scale and perspective; we contemplate matters on a global scale and view the health of our planet globally. We learn about global warming and human viruses such as Ebola and Zika, which demand global responses via worldwide frameworks, intersections, and organizations. We now know how the educational performance of Finland compares to Canada and New Zealand. We can access and begin to understand how a war in Syria affects France. “Understanding those forces constituting and shaping the outcomes of intersections could be of great value to the students of society” (Khondker, 2013, p. 530) hence the need to grasp, comprehend and engage in global citizenship and education (Wang & Hoffman, 2016).

Admittedly, a term such as Global Citizenship (GC) in 2016 is commonplace as most nations have demarcated this term. The term GC carries multiple meanings and this suggests there is no agreement on one definition of GC. Global citizenship is a “layered citizenship” (Banks, 2008) that includes your local, regional, national, and global
identities (Wang & Hoffman, 2016). Global citizenship can be viewed as a metaphor (mindset) suggesting, “that the inherent dignity and well-being of each human person warrants equal respect and concern” (Schattle, 2009, p. 3). Global citizenship includes skills, attitudes, and knowledge in action, as GC unfolds as reactions and pro-actions.

**Figure 1: Global Goals for Sustainable Development**

![Global Goals for Sustainable Development](image)

*Source: (Jackson, 2016, p. 1)*

Global organizations such as OXFAM GB (2006) add the term *Education* (GCE) which is centered upon “the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes that learners need both to participate fully in a globalized society and economy, and to secure a more just, secure and sustainable world than the one they have inherited” (p.1). Conceptually, global citizenship arises from interdependency as nations reach out for help or accept assistance in times of need. It is a perspective shift from domestic to international that includes global commerce, an ancient activity that continues today creating wealth for some nations and poverty for others, along with “environmental damage” (Jean-Yves & Lo€ic, 2013).
Global exchanges habitually create issues and questions of fairness as imbalances and discrimination, prejudice, bias, and injustice sprout from globalization. We need to redefine and refocus citizenship to tackle social responsibilities globally (Noddings, 2005). Abowitz and Harnish (2006) believe,

Critical and transnational discourses of citizenship raise basic questions about identity (who we are as citizens), membership (who belongs, and the location of the boundaries), and agency (how we might best enact citizenship) - questions debated in political life across the globe by scholars and activists, political thinkers and neighborhood organizers. However, the critical and transnational civic reconstructions are marginalized in the curricular texts that define the standards and prominent meanings of citizenship taught in schools. The diminution of these discourses in the taught curriculum means that much of our schooling in citizenship fails to reflect the continual struggles of democratic politics (p. 657).
Global citizenship education “aims to develop in children and young people a sense of responsibility ‘towards each other and the wider world’ to enable them to ‘take up their place in the world, contribute to it confidently, successfully and effectively’” (MacKenzie, Enslin, & Hedge, 2016, p. 128). A person, whether a teacher or student should possess three beliefs: First, they “consider themselves as fellow citizens, even if they were not; and two, they care about fellow human beings, even those beyond our political community; and third, they borrow good ideas from around the world, not just from our own society” (Appiah, 2008, p. 86). Holding these beliefs and acting in a way that demonstrates these beliefs may indicate good character, which is really “. . . knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good” (Lickona, 1991, p. 51). By examining GC in schools, character can be shaped and values (enduring beliefs) strengthened as GC is respected and appreciated via instruction. The Ministry of Education for Ontario has made 21st century competencies a high profile area by noting them on the first few pages of all new curricula guidelines and incorporates creativity, innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, effective communication, building character, culture, ethical citizenship and comfort with technology (C21 Canada, 2012).

**Skills and Competencies in Global Citizenship and Character Development**

As humans move away from what is familiar and known and immerse themselves in unfamiliar communities/cultures they learn about their own identity. They reflect upon what is known and compare that to what is new, resulting in growth, development and self-knowledge (Wang & Hoffman, 2016). This self-development is part of “. . . the journey of better knowing oneself and others, cultural humility and the transformative learning process may support the emerging development of a global citizen identity” (Farrington Padilla, 2016, p. 18). Global citizenship and its associated character merge in a transformative journey that includes, “valuing multiple perspectives and a
commitment to equity worldwide; knowledge includes understanding of global conditions and current events, the interconnectedness of the world and an experiential understanding of multiple cultures . . . (Tichnor-Wagner, Parkhouse, Glazier & Cain, 2016, p. 5).

Transformative self-development unfolds via “critical awareness of bias [and] can be seen to go well with the critical global citizenship education, critical literacy and the study of privilege” (Mikander, 2016, p. 76) in society. The growth of a student is somewhat dependent upon teacher skills such as their “ability to communicate in multiple languages, to create a classroom environment that values diversity and global engagement, and to facilitate intercultural conversations” (Tichnor-Wagner, et al., 2016, p. 5). Global citizenship education aims to enable learners to:
• Develop an understanding of global governance structures, rights and responsibilities, global issues and connections between global, national and local systems and processes;
• Recognise and appreciate differences and multiple identities, e.g. culture, language, religion, gender and our common humanity, and develop skills for living in an increasingly diverse world;
• Develop and apply critical skills for civic literacy, e.g. critical inquiry, information technology, media literacy, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, negotiation, peace building and personal and social responsibility;
• Recognise and examine beliefs and values and how they influence political and social decision-making, perceptions about social justice and civic engagement;
• Develop attitudes of care and empathy for others and the environment and respect for diversity;
• Develop values of fairness and social justice, and skills to critically analyse inequalities based on gender, socio-economic status, culture, religion, age and other issues;
• Participate in, and contribute to, contemporary global issues at local, national and global levels as informed, engaged, responsible and responsive global citizens. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 16)

What are Effective Instructional Strategies to Achieve Global Citizenship and Character?

To achieve GC and C development requires learning which may be defined as “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing” (Illes, 2007, p. 3). To achieve GC requires capacity change and it has been suggested that a “maximal approach to citizenship education is characterized by an emphasis on active learning and inclusion, is interactive, values based and process led, allowing students to develop and articulate their own opinions and to engage in debate, dialogue and encounter” (Miedema &
Global citizenship and character educators also, engaged students in learning tasks related to “contemporary global issues or real-time global experiences. These tasks were authentic in that they required depth of knowledge, higher order thinking, and an audience beyond the classroom” (Tichnor-Wagner, et al., 2016, p. 45).

The actual instructional modes may include service learning, role-play, simulations, and modeling. Miedema, & Bertram-Troost (2015) foster the belief that,

> it is desirable that children already in the embryonic society of the school, experience, are confronted by and become acquainted with the other children’s religious or worldview, cultural, ethnic, economical backgrounds, ideas, experiences, practices, situations, and contexts. Seeing the impact of religious/worldview and the influence of the political, cultural and economic domains both locally and globally, children can also benefit from such experiences and insights when they encounter religious/worldview, cultural, ethnic and political ‘others’ in society at large, and around the globe. (p. 45)

Educational efforts to achieve GC need to be infused throughout the school experience and not be an add-on but a mode utilized to teach everything so that the “problems and perspectives that students will encounter in our interconnected world will not occur in isolation but will be deeply rooted in areas such as the humanities, social sciences, technology, and the environment” (Tichnor-Wagner, et al., 2016, p. 26). Addressing global issues daily in the classrooms via ethical and value-laden discussions support the development of the GC (Moffa, 2016). The following table shows a few quality online resources:
Table 1: Quality Online Resources on Effective Instructional Strategies to Achieve Global Citizenship and Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Dimension: The World in Your Classroom</td>
<td><a href="http://globaldimension.org.uk/">http://globaldimension.org.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can we Measure Students’ Skills and Competencies in Global Citizenship and Character?
The notion of measuring something suggests it can be measured, however, when we consider GC and C education we realize that appraisal of these traits (constructs) is less straightforward. Schools aim to foster citizenship via fair and equitable processes, routines and practices; some schools may offer service learning, role-play, simulations, and model GC via global connections with Oxfam, World Vision, Save the Children, or the Red Cross to name but a few. To gauge (measure) these actions requires regular description, observation and documentation, however, “there are no globally agreed indicators for monitoring global citizenship education learning outcomes as yet, it is expected that a proposed measurement framework and potential indicators will become available soon” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 57).

Like many topics and foci in education, GC should be introduced into “early childhood education, using open-ended and active methodologies . . . . Children are able to develop prejudice against gender and race at an early age, therefore education for global citizenship should begin also at an early age” (Jett, 2013, p. 4). As well the “effective assessment of global citizenship education programmes should be integrated into assessments that are already present, where possible, and requires careful attention to a range of factors” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 58).
The display of worldviews, respect for human rights, mutual respect in schools, and empathy are evidenced via social skills and behaviors that may at times go unnoticed since they may be the norm in most schools. What is required is a deliberate effort to value these behaviors and acknowledge GC behaviors as they appear in halls, classrooms, and our communities. Drawing attention to human rights issues and the formation of attitudes is not easy and arguably may be difficult and unnecessary to measure. Instead, the actions are reported in stories and detailed in school news. The aim is simple, to improve the global and sustainable dynamics within schools and society. In sum, UNESCO (2015) concluded that educators are using a mix of “traditional methods of assessment and of more reflective and performance-based methods, such as self-assessment and peer assessment, that capture learners’ insights on, for example, personal transformation, deepened understanding of critical inquiry, and engagement and civic agency” (p. 57).
What Resources are Available?
At the school level there are several steps an educator can take to infuse GC and C into the curriculum. For example, Moffa (2016) suggests teachers should:

1. Connect students’ local actions to an established global organization whose mission promotes critical justice, social equality, and empowerment of the communities served.

2. Develop a global citizenship rationale with club members that represent commitment to social change (not charity) and convey it to others (i.e., teachers, administrators, donors).

3. Be creative in local actions to develop a school and community culture of global citizenship.

4. Keep students focused on the global community they are serving and on that community’s desires. Plan events that educate others and reduce the physical divide between local and global.

5. Connect service experiences to a global citizenship curriculum or critical learning pedagogy so issues of power and privilege can be analyzed, the root causes of problems understood, and social change (not only personal change) can be promoted. (p. 151)
To enact these steps, educators need to become familiar with specific resources such as the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) foundation and the following (for additional information click on titles):

**Table 2: Teaching and Learning Resources Available**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alberta Council for Global Cooperation</strong></td>
<td>Designed to be an educational kit to be used by educators Development in a Box aids in the incorporation of global issues into the curriculum and classroom. Lessons address global issues and are linked to curriculum objectives in the Alberta Program of Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridges that Unite</strong></td>
<td>AKFC Bridges that Unite: An Exploration of International Development. A teaching resource for use in Grades 5 – 8 Social for Science, Social Studies and Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief Educational Resources</strong></td>
<td>Free, downloadable resources for Canadian high school teachers who bring global development issues into the classroom using integrated, teacher-friendly lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizen Kid Central</strong></td>
<td>A hub for accessing multimedia tools for kids to explore global issues such as children’s rights, food security, water access, biodiversity, microfinance, access to education and to health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contemporary Voices: Films for Global Education</strong></td>
<td>Film playlist from National Film Board of Canada (NFB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing a Global Perspective for Educators</strong></td>
<td>Teachers’ resources, lesson plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GC Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>Road to Global Citizenship: An Educator’s Toolkit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NEXT STEPS**

Within Canada, the *Global Citizens Program* “aims to engage and mobilize Canadians as global citizens to participate in international development initiatives in three significant areas: public awareness, education and knowledge, and youth participation” (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 1). The Government of Canada (2016) has several opportunities such as, the “International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) is part of the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy, which provides Canadian youth with the tools and experience they need to launch successful careers” (p. 1). Also, within Canada one can also find the “International Aboriginal Youth Internships (IAYI) initiative provides opportunities for Aboriginal youth to participate in international internships in developing countries” (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 1).
Oxfam New Zealand (2016) concluded that GC education enables “young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place. Global citizenship is not an additional subject, it is an ethos” (p. 1). Students become aware of the guiding beliefs of educators and peers, resulting in influences that can change a person. Concurrently, GC and C is best implemented through a “whole-school approach, . . . It can also be promoted in class through teaching the existing curriculum in a way that highlights aspects such as social justice, the appreciation of diversity and the importance of sustainable development” (Oxfam, 2016, p. 1). The Learn-Think-Act process is a centerpiece of this whole school approach (Oxfam, 2016). Technology has united us, therefore, we need to use technology to maintain and enhance these connections to remain informed and social. Social media is a tool to be used and it helps us remain up-to-date. The social media user needs to be able to sort and decide on the validity of each message. Sharing and discussing what is learned online can be a useful exercise and having people from other countries visit classrooms can also be a means to learn about issues and perspectives related to GC and C.
REFERENCES


