



Global Education at Blake

During the early years at Blake, students studied Latin and French or German; Greek was optional. Spanish was added to the curriculum in 1943 and Russian in 1970. At Northrop, students studied Latin and French.

Starting in the 1930s, faculty led trips abroad for students. Blake headmaster Eugene Alder led a European tour in 1936 that ended with attendance at the Olympics in Berlin, where students saw Adolf Hitler. Beginning in the 1950s, Latin teacher Beatrice Blodgett led a number of Northrop student trips to Europe, while German teacher Heinz Otto took boys to Europe. Spanish teacher Russ Hilliard took Blake boys to Mexico, and then in 1973 Russian teacher Chuck Ritchie started leading trips to Russia.

In 1953, both Blake and Northrop began to participate in the American Field Service program; both schools welcomed a foreign student every year from then on and the tradition continues today at The Blake School.

Curriculum

Today, Blake's curriculum is much more international than it used to be. As Blake's Head of School John Gulla puts it, "An education that spans the grades of pre-kindergarten to 12 must help guide children on an ever expanding journey to a broader temporal and geographical worldview. Through the history we study, the literature we read, the art we make, and the cultures we explore, Blake's curriculum reflects this global orientation."

Now students are introduced to the French language and culture in kindergarten and first grade and to the Japanese language and culture in second and third grades. In fourth and fifth grades, students learn to read and speak Spanish while studying the culture and geography of Spanish-speaking countries around the world. In Middle School, students study French, Spanish, Latin, or Mandarin Chinese. In Upper School students continue advanced classes in their chosen language, literature, and culture.

The social studies curriculum has also been revised recently. Now Blake's youngest students learn about the world around them through the lens of cultural universals. Students in pre-kindergarten through first grade compare and contrast the concepts of basic human needs and wants, community, shelter, weather and climate,

and family structures by considering local, national, and international examples. In second grade, students are formally introduced to geography, though they study maps and globes starting in Pre-K and continuing through fifth grade. Third and fourth graders learn how to study the history and geography of Minnesota, North America, and South America. In fifth grade, students investigate the role of national and international governance through a study of the U.S. Constitution and the United Nations. From kindergarten through fifth grade, language studies of French, Japanese, and Spanish are closely aligned with social studies.

Students in sixth grade study the culture (including religion) and geography of North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, and then in seventh and eighth grade, they explore the roots of western civilization and democracy in Greece, Rome, the Renaissance, and Enlightenment Europe before turning their attention to the role of the United States in the world.

In ninth grade, social studies and English classes focus on current issues and the literature of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia; the two courses are interdisciplinary and, at times, team taught. In eleventh and twelfth grade, students must take at least one elective international course, and most take more than one. The current offerings are courses on China and Japan, comparative religion, early European civilization, global community (which is a Model United Nations course), human geography, Latin American studies, modern European civilization, African studies, and South East Asia studies.

Faculty

Many Blake teachers travel abroad to teach or to study language, culture, and other subjects to gain knowledge that they bring back to their students. Often these teachers seek support for their travels by applying to the School or to other funders for a faculty development grant.

Recent examples of faculty experiences abroad include a trip that Modern and Classical Languages Department Chair Roberto Lazo led, taking seven of Blake's language

teachers to Chile for cultural immersion, language study, and an international conference on multimodal language teaching and learning. Spanish teacher Lynn Baete attended the University of Costa Rica on a summer sabbatical. Art teacher Jim Spector studied ceramics in Japan, and science teacher Karen Phillips studied high-energy physics in Oxford, England. Mandarin Chinese teacher Shirley Johnson went to China to study, and social studies teacher Raina Green went to Germany for language classes and cultural immersion. Music teacher Woody Woodward went to Norway for a world music conference and to study a Norwegian composer. All four of Blake's fourth grade teachers went to Iceland to study geology together last summer. Spanish and social studies teacher Jon Dicus received a grant to learn about sustainable development and environmental conservation in the Galapagos and then helped develop a series of environmental education lessons to be taught across the disciplines.

Students

Today's Blake students live in homes where more than 40 different languages are spoken. In order to foster appreciation for the richness of these different backgrounds, Blake hosts a biennial event called Celebration of Community, which showcases many facets of the diversity within the Blake community as families share their special ethnic rituals, food, dress, dance, music, and arts.

Blake offers a variety of off-campus programs to pursue knowledge and experiences that build global understanding. Every other summer, Spanish teacher JJ Kahle takes a group of Blake students to Cuernavaca for four weeks of immersion in Spanish language and culture; this experience includes boarding with local families. Upper School drama teacher Diane Landis takes a group of students to London in the summer to study drama, and this year some of the eighth graders are going to Quebec with one of Blake's French teachers. In 2008, an intergenerational group of 21 people, led by Blake teachers, traveled to China to visit schools, have briefings with journalists, and study the social and political issues of the day. In addition, Blake has offered service trips over the last few years to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Kenya, and Sierra Leone.

The School also encourages students to spend a semester or year studying abroad. Every year a group of Blake students enroll in Swiss Semester, a coeducational program of academic, personal, and physical challenge in Zermatt, Switzerland. This year Blake sent its 100th student to Swiss Semester. During the 2009–10 school year, five students are enrolled in Swiss Semester, another student

is studying for a full year in a Swiss school, and four students are participating in the School Year Abroad program — two in China and two in Italy. In most of these programs the student lives with a local family. During the summer, some Blake students participate in the American Field Service program.

Many Blake students take part in international relations programs like the Model United Nations. The 16 students from Blake who went to Model UN in Montreal this year were assigned to a particular country and a specific committee (ranging from disarmament to the environment), wrote a position paper, made speeches, and lobbied their colleagues, who came to Montreal from around the world.

For their senior program, a number of Blake students study abroad in such countries as Chile, China, Costa Rica, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and Spain.

Special Programs

Blake brings outside speakers with broad global perspectives to the School. Greg Mortenson, author of the best-selling *Three Cups of Tea*, came to speak about his work building schools for girls in Afghanistan, and Dr. Eboo Patel addressed religious pluralism at a recent diversity symposium.

In the Middle School, special assemblies have included a featured speaker on Indian culture, a performance of Taiko (Japanese drumming), a Mixed Blood Theater performance about a Mexican family's move to Minnesota, a performance of Caribbean music, and a Bharatanatyam classical dance from southern India.

Some Blake service projects connect students with children around the world. For example, Blake students have developed a sustained relationship with the Light of Hope Children's Home, a school and orphanage in Kenya, which has included pen pal and photo exchanges. Lower School students have raised funds to help these villagers buy four cows. On Legacy Day, groups of Blake students, faculty, and staff made blankets to send to Light of Hope, and Blake's eighth graders contributed their Business Day "taxes" to pay for a transformer and its installation in order to provide electricity to this village.

As Head of School John Gulla says, "That the future of today's students will continue to witness an acceleration of this globalization seems to me a certainty. Our increasing economic interdependence, the central importance of our planetary ecosystem, and the ongoing telecommunication transformation, all make it a necessity that we educate our students to be citizens of the world."

