The Impact of Becoming a UNESCO ASPnet School in Alberta and Manitoba

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Table of Contents

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

In 2008, Alberta Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association (the ATA or the Association), the Manitoba Ministry of Education, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and the University of Alberta jointly funded a study that examined how the decision to become a UNESCO Associated Schools Project network (ASPnet) school had affected five schools in Alberta and five in Manitoba. The principal researcher and author of the study was Lynette Shultz, from the University of Alberta.

UNESCO launched ASPnet in 1953 for the purpose of strengthening the role of education in promoting peace, international cooperation and democratic values in all UN countries. ASPnet schools have pledged to adapt their policies and practices to incorporate what UNESCO defines as the four major pillars of learning: (1) learning to know, (2) learning to do, (3) learning to be and (4) learning to live together. ASPnet schools also agree to undertake educational and social projects that focus on one or more of four teaching themes:

- human rights, democracy and tolerance;
- world concerns and the role of the United Nations system;
- environmental sustainability; and
- intercultural learning and diversity.

Currently, ASPnet involves some 8,000 schools in 177 countries. Canada has 24 nationally accredited ASPnet schools, of which 12 are located in Manitoba and 5 in Alberta. In Manitoba, ASPnet schools are coordinated by the provincial ministry of education; in Alberta, they are coordinated by the Association.

Data for the study was collected through more than 100 interviews with public school board trustees, administrators, teachers, support staff and parents associated with the schools. The researchers also observed activities that these schools undertook related to being ASPnet schools and reviewed information about the schools' education plans, policies and curriculum. The interviews were conducted between May and December 2008.

The study revealed that ASPnet schools are unique in their willingness to cross the traditional boundaries between school and community, curriculum and subject area, age and grade, ability and disability, local focus and global concern. Such a willingness to move beyond accepted thinking gives ASPnet schools the potential to transform students into actively engaged citizens. ASPnet schools are also set apart by their approach to accountability, which tends to focus less on externally mandated, outcomes-based measures and more on values and principles that assess the school community with respect to its relationship to a larger world.

The Four UNESCO Teaching Themes

Much of the study was devoted to exploring how the participating schools understood and attempted to put into action the four UNESCO teaching themes. With reference to the first theme—human rights, democracy and tolerance—many of the schools focused on implementing democratic processes within the school. One school developed a "respect agreement" affecting students, staff and parents. Another began surveying students on a regular basis. Other activities

included undertaking projects related to the rights of the child, sending students to conferences on global citizenship, participating in local human rights campaigns and holding classroom discussions on individual rights and stereotypes in relationships.

In approaching the theme of world concerns and the role of the UN, most participating schools focused on teaching students about rights and responsibilities and about how local issues can have global manifestations. Most of the projects related to this theme involved raising funds for, and offering support to, humanitarian and development organizations working in the areas of cultural identity, human rights, poverty, health and hunger. Teachers at the higher grades focused on helping students learn to think critically, and to understand current affairs and the political aspects of global issues.

Activities undertaken with respect to the theme of environmental sustainability included establishing environmental clubs, researching and making biofuels for the community, and carrying out water-quality studies. Some schools even undertook an environmental audit to help students understand the impact of environmental factors on human health.

Most participants interpreted the theme of intercultural learning and diversity to mean raising awareness of the issues and building intercultural relationships at both the local and international levels. Several schools focused on celebrating multiculturalism by sharing traditions of dance, food, language and music. Others held annual multicultural days during which students set up booths to share information about their cultural backgrounds. Still others arranged to have members of a particular culture dance and cook for the students. Many participants emphasized that these activities help students not only to appreciate the richness of other cultures but also to understand some of the systemic factors that fuel racism and prevent a society from becoming fully inclusive.

The study also invited participants to describe how their school had benefited by joining ASPnet. Among the benefits identified were

1. improved student achievement,
2. adoption of new ways of thinking, planning and doing,
3. a shift from individual to shared decision making,
4. an opportunity to explore cultural education beyond what is offered in the curriculum,
5. development of a student declaration of rights and responsibilities,
6. more participation in the school by the Aboriginal community,
7. increased credibility and status for the school,
8. more opportunities to partner with other schools,
9. more partnerships among students in the school,
10. more success in finding speakers,
11. the chance to set common goals for staff and students,
12. the creation of a sense of solidarity,
13. an opportunity for teachers to set broader goals than basic academics,
14. an improvement in student behaviour,
15. the emergence of a more positive atmosphere, and
16. an opportunity to teach students to think critically.

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

Six Recommendations to Improve ASPnet Schools

Finally, the study invited participants to suggest how ASPnet schools could be improved. Six recommendations emerged.

The first recommendation had to do with improving communications, not only within participating schools but also among Canadian ASPnet schools and throughout the wider international network. Suggestions for improving communications included holding more frequent gatherings based on particular themes and interests; organizing national and international conferences (both video and face-to-face) for students and staff; and providing more opportunities for teachers to carry out collaborative teaching and learning with other UNESCO schools.

A second recommendation concerned the need for more professional development for teachers. Participants noted that, to educate global citizens, teachers need to have a deep understanding of local and global issues and of how to introduce social issues into the curriculum. As a result, ASPnet schools must create a collaborative environment that encourages teachers to speak up about their professional development needs and choices.

A third recommendation was that ASPnet schools should place even more emphasis on the global human rights agenda by teaching students how engaged citizens can help prevent human rights abuses locally and beyond.

A fourth recommendation was that ASPnet schools give students a greater role in planning, implementing and evaluating projects. Many participants acknowledged that giving students a greater voice would require shifting the hierarchical structures that have traditionally characterized nearly all aspects of school culture—from the way committees are organized to how staff and students are selected to lead activities.

A fifth recommendation was that ASPnet schools pay more attention to the ethical implications of the projects they undertake, especially those intended to alleviate poverty. Participants noted that the best projects are those that, in addition to raising much-needed funds, give students an opportunity to forge genuine friendships with people from other countries and cultures. These projects must be handled in such a way as to avoid implying that the poor are somehow deficient, incapable of understanding their own situation or unable to make choices affecting their well-being. Otherwise, these projects could end up undermining the rights and dignity of the very people they are intended to help.

A sixth recommendation concerned the need for a process of formative evaluation to help schools sustain their work over time. Formative evaluation would identify exemplary practices, including strategies to help schools explore UNESCO pillars and themes more deeply and to engage more students in activities related to these themes. Developing an evaluation process would also help to strengthen the presence of ASPnet in Canada. Ideally, the evaluation should be developed collaboratively within the network.

Introduction

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

In an increasingly globalized world, parents, policy makers and civil society organizations in Canada are seeking a system of education that can produce proactive, responsible and critical-thinking citizens capable of promoting social justice not only locally but also nationally and internationally. What kind of education is needed to ensure that Canadian youth become ethical and active citizens willing to take the lead in cultivating a culture of learning, community, responsibility and democratic participation? What values and pedagogical approaches must be embedded in school policies and in the curriculum to help students, teachers, principals and parents better understand and participate in their local and global community? Where can one find innovative educational projects that can improve the school community? Starratt (2003, 89–90) has this to say about the importance of educational leadership in cultivating meaning, community and responsibility:

> *The kind of citizenship we need to promote is not a self-centered focus on my rights as a member of such and such a community but rather a citizenship that stands for the values and ideals of his or her communities.*

This report describes how some schools in Alberta and Manitoba have found, in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), a way of using education to foster social justice both locally and globally. UNESCO launched ASPnet in 1953 for the purpose of strengthening the role of education in promoting peace, international cooperation and democratic values in all countries belonging to the United Nations. Currently, ASPnet involves some 8,000 schools in 177 countries. ASPnet spread to Canada in 1997 after Canadian educator Gareth Neufeld visited Europe and learned about UNESCO Associated Schools in Germany. Neufeld was inspired by the project and helped to implement an ASPnet school project in Manitoba, the first Canadian province to become involved.

Through the efforts of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and of Canadian educators who seek innovative and ethical ways of educating global citizens, the number of ASPnet schools in Canada has grown during the last five years. Today, Canada has 24 nationally accredited ASPnet schools and several more in the process of becoming internationally accredited. Manitoba has twelve nationally accredited ASPnet schools, Alberta has five, Ontario has three, Saskatchewan has two, and New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador each have one. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Yukon have named a provincial coordinator and are starting the accreditation process. In Manitoba, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Yukon and Quebec, ASPnet schools are coordinated by the provincial ministry of education. In Alberta, they are coordinated by the ATA, and in Ontario, by the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association. The Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador ASPnet projects are still under the coordination of national coordinator Alysouk Lynhiavu.

In Canada, the first step in becoming a designated school is to apply. During the candidacy period, the school is expected to adapt its policy and practice to reflect UNESCO pillars and themes. After two years of candidacy, the school can apply for acceptance as a national ASPnet school. If the school continues to demonstrate a commitment to the UNESCO pillars and themes and to develop innovative projects that promote social justice at the local and global levels, it can apply for international

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

accreditation. At all levels, schools are expected to produce annual reports describing the kind of education they are providing. To support these projects, ASPnet names coordinators at the international, national and provincial levels. ASPnet schools are strongly encouraged to network with other schools around the world, to promote quality education as defined in ASPnet's strategic framework and to endorse the four major pillars of learning as defined by UNESCO:

- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to be
- Learning to live together

Schools are also encouraged to undertake educational and social projects that focus on one of four broad themes: (1) world concerns and the role of the United Nations system; (2) human rights, democracy and tolerance; (3) intercultural learning; and (4) environmental concerns.

> Awareness of the world, which makes awareness of myself viable, makes unviable the immutability of the world. Awareness of the world and awareness of myself make me not only a being in the world, but one with others. It makes me a being capable of intervening in the world and not only of adapting to it. (Freire 2004, 15)

This report presents the main findings of a qualitative research projected funded by Alberta Education, the ATA, the Manitoba Ministry of Education, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and the University of Alberta. The research examined the impact on five schools in Alberta and five in Manitoba of becoming UNESCO ASPnet schools. (Alberta and Manitoba were selected because they have the most ASPnet schools in Canada.) The data was collected through more than 100 interviews with public school board trustees, administrators, teachers, support staff and parents associated with the schools. The researchers also observed activities that these schools undertook related to being ASPnet schools and reviewed information about the schools' education plans, policies and curriculum. The interviews were conducted between May and December 2008. All participants were asked to respond to five main questions (see Appendix A for a complete list of the interview questions):

1. How do members of your school community understand UNESCO's Associated School Project Network?
2. What process did you use to implement your ASPnet School project?
3. What changes have you observed in your school's policy, program, learning and/or relationships since becoming an ASPnet school?
4. What long-term results do you expect to achieve by being an ASPnet school?
5. How could the ASPnet School Project in your school be improved?

Following the interviews, the researchers summarized their observations with respect to each school, sent each school an individual report and asked the school to respond to the observations and analysis. The researchers then collated the data from the 10 participating schools and produced this final report.

> *A society whose schools do not equip its younger generation with the expectation that its current understanding of itself in relationship to the physical, social and human worlds is limited and continually needs to be re-imagined, re-fashioned, reformed is preparing itself for a dysfunctional future. (Starratt 2003, 55)*

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

What Makes UNESCO ASPnet Schools Unique?

A Focus on UNESCO Pillars and Themes

Except for flying a UN flag, ASPnet schools are like all Canadian schools. The significant differences are to be found within the school and are embodied in policies and practices based on the four UNESCO pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. ASPnet schools also strive to incorporate the four UNESCO themes: (1) world concerns and the role of the United Nations system; (2) human rights, democracy and tolerance; (3) intercultural learning; and (4) environmental concerns. Striving to create a schoolwide culture that embodies these pillars and themes is what makes ASPnet schools unique.

> *For me, "learning to be" is the most important pillar. It involves preparing a student to be a problem solver and to see the world not as a dangerous place but as a place to grow, a place to experience things. (Manitoba)*

According to Starratt (2003, 55), "the educator-leader has to be responsible for nurturing and sustaining a learning environment characterized by authenticity and responsibility." In Starratt's view, schools that successfully address the complexity of the social, political, economic and environmental conditions and issues in today's world do so by (1) cultivating meaning through the dynamics of teaching and learning, (2) cultivating community as the everyday work of the entire school and (3) cultivating a commitment to responsibility within the entire institutional life of the school.

> *Why are schools becoming more involved in these areas? Given where the world is going, we as educators are not as concerned with basic knowledge anymore. There are big and powerful issues that define how the world will go, and teachers are involved in understanding those issues. So are kids. They want to know. (Alberta)*

> *From my perspective, the biggest opportunity we are giving those kids is to see different cultures and recognize that people are people are people; that regardless of our skin colour or religious background or our wealth system, we all have the same kind of relationship issues; and that we should be able to look at someone with empathy and understanding. I think that's what we do—we expose those kids to that [view] on a regular basis so they're not as "me centred." [We] try to make them aware of the bigger picture, the bigger world. The sense of community that we try to build at the school can be expanded into the larger community, into Alberta, into Canada and, of course, right across the world. (Alberta)*

In what ways can ASPnet schools be considered leading schools? Are they places that cultivate meaning, community and a commitment to responsibility for students, staff and the community? The study revealed that schools in which the majority of teachers, students, support staff and administrators (school-based and district) actively work toward implementing the UNESCO goals and pillars tend to create and

communicate shared frames of reference. Although school coordinators play a central role in creating ASPnet schools, they need the help of school principals and district and student leaders.

A Values-Based Approach to Accountability

Many educators (including Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Leithwood and Earl 2000; McEwan 1995; and Ranson 2003) have described and critiqued the practice of using performance indicators, outcomes-based assessments and standardized tests to measure educational productivity. After more than a decade in which accountability was increasingly based on outcomes, the pendulum has begun to swing the other way. Realizing that outcomes-based models miss much of what is important in teaching and learning (including students' social development), many educators are now switching to a values-based approach. This trend is apparent in the comments of the many participants who emphasized the ethical and values-based aspects of education:

> *There is very little you can do in a UNESCO school that doesn't take the moral high ground. (Alberta)*

> *If we have issues of racism or sexism or discrimination of some kind, we say no, that's not what we stand for; that's not why that [UN] flag flies here. It's one of those teaching-for-meaning kind of moments. (Manitoba)*

> *Every teacher incorporates the world here, including rights and responsibilities. It's creating the message as to why this is a good place to be and the values that we hold. (Manitoba)*

In their policies as well as in their teaching and learning processes, ASPnet schools tend to be committed to creating a culture of peace, instilling an understanding of human rights, taking a justice approach to environmental concerns and fostering an understanding of inclusivity and global awareness that transcends the barriers of race, gender and poverty. The schools involved in the study reported undertaking activities with respect to these commitments that ranged from the introductory to the highly transformational. All schools demonstrated that they were pursuing these educational goals and were sorting through the related ethical and practical considerations. One district administrator described the importance of a values-based approach this way:

> *There is a lot of pressure [about standardized tests]. But really, our goal is to grow kids. If we only teach to the test and don't do projects and labs and trips, then what have we really done for them? (Alberta)*

Each school involved in the study was striving to create a rich learning environment designed to help students understand and learn to function in a complex, globalized world.

> *UNESCO is an organization that promotes a culture of peace. A UNESCO school is a school that cares about human rights, democracy, peace and tolerance, and that teaches students about these ideas. (Manitoba)*

Some schools seek to become accredited ASPnet schools because they want to formalize the UNESCO-related work that they are already doing:

9

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

When the idea was brought to us, I remember having a conversation with our then principal and saying, "What an amazing fit!" We were doing so many things it would be really neat to have this umbrella—and that's how I've continued to refer to UNESCO—to pull it all together and have a guiding focus for what we do. (Manitoba)

We were already doing a lot of things that were part of the UNESCO ideal with the four pillars (to do, to be, to act, to live harmoniously together). They are the life of [our school]. It wasn't taking on something new; it was about getting a designation for something we've always done. (Alberta)

By contrast, other schools see value in the processes of *becoming* an ASPnet school and in the potential changes that such a process will bring about:

I think every school creates its own mission and its own culture … Often you have to take initiatives and manage them along and keep them going because they don't have their own momentum. This was one of those things that takes quite a bit of work, but it had its own momentum, and it did not need to be driven. From that perspective, the concept of democracy, the concept of rights and responsibilities, those things just sort of manifested themselves in the whole project. It's a ground-up project. It's not driven by the principal. It's not driven by the administration. We have equal partnership in it. We don't throw a lot of money at it. It's just one of those things that takes work but comes along. (Alberta)

Regardless of why they join ASPnet, schools need to focus on the project and create shared frames of reference. Many of the participants in leadership roles described the strong sense of vision and purpose that helped them sustain their efforts:

If I had a dream, it would be that we have this new building in place with all those sustainability features we would like to have and kids from many cultures who would not only coexist but enjoy and respect each other and feel comfortable in interacting with adults from different cultures and play within the community and the bigger world. I think it would be an amazing thing to give kids that sense of self-worth and tolerance and respect. (Alberta)

Building a strong community helps a school culture. It makes a great place to be. It is a caring school—a school that values compassion, that wants to help and be a part of a community, that allows students to find a place and participate in an activity that they find important and challenging. (Manitoba)

When a group shares values and norms, its individual members tend to make choices based on what the group deems appropriate. Over time, this kind of shared vision creates a kind of invisible structure that shapes potential actions. Participants remarked that the themes become so ingrained in the school culture that the goal became less one of external accreditation than of recognition for the important work being carried out.

I think a UNESCO school is one that really embeds the themes into the school culture….We are not sure if other people know what a UNESCO school is. It is so embedded that it is almost unconscious…. People are not really conscious of the UNESCO definition. We have a culture here:

we don't do things for the recognition; we do things for the impact. (Alberta)

Becoming accredited is not as important as maintaining the ASPnet school [designation]. If you put it in the proposal and don't continue or don't embed it, then it isn't worth it. UNESCO is so embedded in what we do and where we're going next. The staff has become [very] attuned to being an ASPnet school and to embodying the program. We wanted to develop a culture in which the kids feel connected to a group of staff. We call these "task groups." There will be a group of four teachers who work with a group of students and stay with them for their whole time in high school. There will be key teachers. Building relationships is foundational to the ASPnet school. (Alberta)

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

How Does a School Become an ASPnet School?

All schools involved in the project emphasized the importance of meeting to discuss the principles of ASPnet, school activities related to ASPnet and the school's relationship with other ASPnet schools. In Alberta, the ATA serves as a provincial coordinating body and arranges for ASPnet school coordinators to meet once or twice per year. In Manitoba, a core group of principals and teachers meets regularly. Here's how one participant described the importance of building a supportive network:

> *Coming together with the 12 principals, we try to keep track of what we do here as well, and [we also have] 12 teachers [who have] done something in education that doesn't normally happen, and that is how we are communicating outside of our box. We're not isolated. So someone talks about something that's happening at one school, and the whole network knows about it and they ask, "Can we do something? Can we watch?" Now we've created this network but it's more than a network, it's a family … because we know everybody and look forward to seeing everybody. Students get to know each other because we have these forums, and kids get to participate in planning and implementing the forums once a year, so it's grown. The support comes provincially and it also comes from the government. Our minister [of education] is very, very in tune with what we are doing and very supportive, and whenever we've needed assistance, she's there to assist us. (Manitoba)*

When everyone—administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents and community members—gets involved, the effect on the school can, as one community member put it, be magical:

> *The word I use to describe what was happening is "magic." When I arrived at the gym, it was full—students, teachers, assistants, parents. They were welcoming, and the community, even members who did not have children in the school, was there and felt part of the project. What I saw was that the children were given the opportunity way beyond what we would consider curriculum and book learning. (Alberta)*

Most interviewees mentioned that, in undertaking their ASPnet school project, they had received support from everyone—staff, students, parents (individually and through parent councils) and the community as a whole. Broad-based support appears to be a hallmark of ASPnet schools and a source of the energy that these projects generate. What turns a school into an ASPnet school is not just one teacher, administrator or student group, but all participants working together to form a strong network capable of challenging and transforming existing structures. Such a focus on relationship building is exactly what would be expected in a school based on the UNESCO ideals of equity and social justice. At their best, ASPnet schools give participants the legitimacy and encouragement to cross the traditional boundaries between school and community, curriculum and subject area, age and grade, ability and disability, local

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

focus and global concern. And it is their willingness to move beyond safe and accepted thinking that gives ASPnet schools the potential to transform students into actively engaged citizens:

> *We are looking at tying [our project] into the community learning campus with [the local] college. The goal is for global citizenship and environmental education there. The college kids are really interested in making a global difference, especially with the agriculture and environment focus there. The college does projects with many other countries, and we can see how [our] school kids will really be part of this. There will be formal links. (Alberta)*

> *What we are trying to do as a school is have each of the themes represented at different grade levels. (Manitoba)*

> *We are discussing problems that are common not only in our community but in other parts of the world. It is important to discuss with our students how to find solutions to these problems and how science can help. (Manitoba)*

Noting that crossing boundaries is not without problems, some participants mentioned that their schools cautioned staff and students to critique their actions, even those (such as travel) done with good intentions.

> *We need more than exchanges. We need to develop deep relationships and long-term partnerships on projects. Exchanges can be nice, and you can learn things when you meet people like that, but it is not the deep understanding. [Exchanges] are limited and often end up being just for kids who have money to go on these trips. (Alberta)*

> *We feel here that one of the ways that western society works is to throw $20 at an issue to appease [society's] conscience. What we want to show kids is that there are ways of making a much more significant impact that involve more commitment and time. It involves our time, our energy, our understanding; it means getting involved and being active on an issue. It is important in an affluent place like Alberta not to just throw money at an issue; we have to be aware, educated and involved. (Alberta)*

These schools demonstrated that the transition from "learning to do" to "learning to be" and "learning to live together" involves making connections between actions and their impacts. The activities that are most effective in helping students make these connections are ones based on UNESCO goals and themes.

Although some schools provided good financial support for field trips, substitute teachers, student materials and teacher professional development, others struggled to find the resources to engage fully in activities that would help realize ASPnet goals. Embedding the pillars and themes in the school culture clearly requires a commitment of time and funding.

13

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

How Do Schools Incorporate the UNESCO Themes?

Many participants described their ASPnet school by describing the activities undertaken rather than talking about the relation of those activities to the school culture. These participants tended to list many activities but were often unable to articulate the interrelationship between those activities. Other participants, by contrast, demonstrated a clear understanding of how, in order to realize UNESCO goals, activities must be connected. The range of responses exhibited by participants parallels the findings of other research on global education. Educators approach the topic of social justice from different entry points. These entry points are often teaching activities. Shultz and Abdi (2008) note that the more engaged an educator becomes, the more likely he or she is to achieve the broader and deeper goals of social justice education.

Human Rights and Democracy

For many participants, incorporating the theme of human rights and democracy involved implementing democratic processes within the school. One school, for example, developed a "respect agreement" affecting students, staff and parents. Another began surveying students on a regular basis. Schools in both provinces have attempted to improve students' decision-making ability and deepen their understanding of citizenship:

> *Led by the leadership team in the school, students have a say in how school funds should be used, what prospective events should happen, and what they should learn during class time. (Manitoba)*

As many participants observed, introducing authentic democratic practices into a traditional school organization is challenging and calls on the creativity and commitment of the whole school community:

> *[Our student group] raises awareness on these issues. We have an antibullying program and volunteering. Students also vote during the federal election. This raises awareness of rights. However, I don't know if I would call this school a democratic school. … Voices are heard, but we need more. (Alberta)*

Most schools organized activities related to the themes of human rights, tolerance and antiracism. Many of these activities were a response, in one way or another, to the increasingly diverse student population found in today's schools. Participants emphasized the importance of the entire school community coming together to address the needs of students arriving from countries in which they often faced very difficult conditions:

> *We have students here who were in concentration or refugee camps or who were living in extreme poverty. (Manitoba)*

Some participants noted that hearing first-hand accounts from immigrants about the conditions they faced prompted their school to undertake projects promoting human

14

**The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba**

rights and tolerance. In other schools, these encounters helped students became more aware of the diverse nature of Canadian society and of the importance of living together in harmony.

As school communities struggle to understand diversity, they begin to realize that the process is not an easy one. In Canada, the legacy of colonialism and its racist foundations are still evident, for example, in the plight of Canada's Aboriginal people. Canadian women, like those in other countries, tend to be more affected by poverty than men. And people who express a nonmainstream sexuality are still often the target of violent personal attacks. Such realities pose difficulties for educators as they attempt to make schools places that encourage diversity in all its forms. Research shows that some forms of diversity education can actually exacerbate tensions by reinforcing the normalcy of the dominant group and portraying all others as diverse and therefore not fully part of the community. Racism is evident, for example, when a white person regards him- or herself as normal and nonwhites as diverse. Likewise, sexism is sustained when masculine social interactions are deemed the norm and the experiences of girls and women are portrayed as diverse. This study suggests that schools—in many cases, courageously—are beginning to raise awareness about cultural, political and social diversity by holding discussions and by emphasizing that everyone in the school community has a role to play in creating a place where everyone feels safe. Several schools made an effort to extend students' awareness of current and historical instances of human rights abuses and to link these situations to the students' own experiences:

> [To teach students about] human rights, democracy and tolerance we brought in speakers from Chile who talked about what happened, about why they left their country and about what it is like to live in a country where you can be judged for something [the government] thought you might say. You haven't even said it, and yet you can be in prison for it. It's about bringing in a Holocaust survivor and exposing kids to that, thereby making them aware of some of the injustices that have occurred and are occurring in our society. Letting our kids know that this is happening in our world and that, as small as we are, we can take a stand and can help these people out. (Alberta)

Other activities that participants reported having undertaken in relation to the theme of human rights and diversity included developing curriculum units on culture and disabilities in physical education, linking student projects to such United Nations initiatives as the rights of the child, sending students to conferences on global citizenship, participating in local human rights campaigns, and holding classroom discussions on individual rights and stereotypes in relationships.

World Concerns

In approaching the theme of world concerns, many participants focused on helping students understand how local issues can have global manifestations. Others focused on teaching students about rights and responsibilities. Still others made it their goal to teach their students to become global citizens by educating them about global issues, globalization and current affairs. Participants reported having undertaken a range of activities related to the theme of world concerns, including raising funds for, and offering support to, humanitarian and development organizations working in the areas of cultural identity, human rights, poverty, health and hunger. Teachers at the

15

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

higher grades also described the importance of helping students to think critically and to understand current affairs and the political aspects of global issues. To deepen their students' understanding of global issues, many participants attempted to go beyond the classroom by, for example, arranging for their students to attend a UN-sponsored conference on indigenous peoples, fostering relationships with members of First Nations communities, developing a partnership with the local Sudanese community to build a school in Sudan, starting leadership programs and organizing conferences featuring international guest speakers. Of all the themes, *world concerns* was, for many participants, the one that tied everything else together:

> *[The themes] all relate to each other under this one; you're promoting social justice and ideas of peace. [By] promoting peace and exploring the human rights that we have, we understand that there isn't the same understanding around the world. World concern is about the things that are going on in the world; things happening outside our backyard. (Manitoba)*

Many participants mentioned the importance of equipping students not only to be aware of world concerns but also to understand how to work actively for change. Others discussed the importance of teaching students to examine world concerns critically rather than just from the perspective of offering charity:

> *I have students look at worldwide events and at the difference that they can make worldwide and in our city. We look at it not from the charity perspective but at what factors lead to poverty…. It's more than [organizing] food drives; it's about looking at the issues and developing critical skills that will influence our future leaders. (Alberta)*

> *We are really stressing a sense of awareness of what we can do. The kids need to know what the issues in the world are and what we can do. We are really active in the citizenship end of things. We really try hard. We are not fundraising. It is not to raise money; it is to raise awareness and [to provide] education. (Alberta)*

Some participants observed that Canada, which is involved in many UN projects, has an important role to play internationally in creating a better world. At the same time, participants noted that students need to be encouraged to inform Canadians and Canadian politicians about Canada's international role.

> *We need to question the role of these agencies and how they make the world a better place. (Manitoba)*

Environmental Sustainability

> *[Being] a UNESCO school is not just a hope and a dream, it's a philosophy. (Alberta)*

Nearly all participants spoke eloquently about the theme of environmental sustainability and about the many projects and activities that their students had undertaken at the local level. These activities included forming environmental clubs, researching and making biofuels for the community, and carrying out water-quality studies. In some cases, the theme of environmental sustainability was studied in relation to a major building project:

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

We intend to make the new building as sustainable as possible. We're looking at alternative energy sources. We know we're going to be limited by finances, but we also know that we will have a demonstration model on site and, at the very least, we will have a small wind turbine, solar panels or photovoltaic panels that will generate energy to power some device in the school, be it a water fountain or a fan. That will give the kids some indication of what we can do to generate electricity from alternative sources. We have to teach them how to live in a post carbon economy. (Alberta)

They are also developing the "Green Building Project," [which was] … designed and operated with sustainability in mind. This project has the support of parents, students and teachers. This project was started by the environmental school committee that also works together with the UNESCO committee. The science teachers took the lead in planning and implementing this project, inspiring students to be part of the plan. They are also building a science laboratory and hope to address local and global environmental issues. (Manitoba)

We are working with the community to have kids participate in bringing a recycling centre to the community. Our ideal location would be attached to the school. We'd like that to be part of the school so we can have the kids in there. We certainly anticipate including a garden space on the next site and doing at least a small green roof if not an entire green roof on the school. You know, things like automatic lights and those sorts of things. It has been a lot of fun from my perspective to look at a new building and work at it from the whole UNESCO perspective. I think it's something that more and more people are aware of and are attempting to do.(Alberta)

Most participants were enthusiastic about environmental issues and agreed that they are of great importance. They also agreed that a coordinated approach to understanding local and global environmental issues is needed. Some schools even undertook an environmental audit to help students understand the impact of environmental factors. All these activities support UNESCO's education for sustainable development initiatives.

Intercultural Learning and Diversity

Most participants interpret the theme of intercultural learning and diversity to mean raising awareness about and building intercultural relationships at both the local and international levels. Participants viewed diversity as involving a wide range of issues:

[We focus on] intercultural learning, which may be a strange thing in a homogenous community like this. If you walk down the hallway, you won't see many different ethnicities. We think, then, that it is even more important for us to do that part of educating because the students aren't getting that just from being at school and mixing with others. So we are really working to be involved in this piece. (Manitoba)

We haven't been able to address the issue of homophobia yet, but we did bring in a mom to talk about her son who is gay here in this school.

It is one issue that we are worried may cause backlash. We just need to be courageous. It is the one thing that, right now, doesn't seem safe. We work with kids all the time, but we don't address it directly like we do racism. (Alberta)

The interviews revealed that schools take a variety of approaches to the theme of intercultural learning and diversity. Several schools, for example, focused on celebrating multiculturalism by sharing traditions of dance, food, language and music. Many schools held annual multicultural days at which students set up booths to share information about their cultures. Participants who organized these activities noted that sharing the riches of their culture helped students to better understand one another and to live peacefully in the world.

The more we learn about each other's culture, the more we are going to find out that we are people and that we should not be judging people based on religion, clothing or colour of skin. (Manitoba)

Other activities that participating schools undertook to advance the theme of diversity included having members of a particular culture dance and cook for the students, fundraising and celebrating Christmas around the world. One participant noted that "we do different cultures." Participants in both Alberta and Manitoba emphasized the importance of instilling in students "an awareness about other cultures" and cited as a reason for engaging students in a study of this theme the fact that threads from "different cultures are woven into the curriculum."

Many of the participating schools incorporated this theme by engaging students in some of the larger social issues of the day. In Manitoba, for example, four ASPnet schools had all students participate in an interfaith dialogue, an initiative that involved bringing together students from Islamic, Jewish and Christian backgrounds:

We worked with three other elementary schools involved in our cultural diversity workshop last year. This year we have our Grade 6 kids going. We went to an interfaith workshop with those same schools. Kids got on a bus and went to the synagogue, and it was really quite an interesting event. Even the minister of education was there. (Manitoba)

Part of the process of understanding others—an essential step in creating a more just world—is learning to locate oneself culturally:

We want them to have a cultural understanding of who they are as people and where they are in the world. We want them to have that rich knowledge and that rich feeling of participation. (Manitoba)

When students understand cultural diversity at a deep level, they can engage in activities that focus not just on appreciating the richness of other cultures but also on addressing the structural factors that fuel racism and prevent a society from becoming fully inclusive. Making such a shift is not easy because it exposes a community to possible discord and conflict. Participants who were engaged in making this transition were clear-sighted about both the urgency and the importance of the work they were doing—work that, ultimately, has to do with educating citizens. An understanding of the UNESCO pillars and themes and the presence of a strong network of community members and educators clearly helped these participants carry out their task.

18

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

What Are the Benefits of Becoming an ASPnet School?

According to participants, becoming an ASPnet school brought the following benefits:

- Improved student achievement
- Incorporation of a new way of thinking, planning and doing
- More in-depth work
- A shift from individual to shared decision making
- An exploration of cultural education beyond what is offered in the curriculum
- Development of a student declaration of rights and responsibilities
- Involvement of the Aboriginal people who originally inhabited the land on which the school is situated
- Increased credibility and status for the school
- Enhanced opportunities for partnering with other schools
- More partnerships among students in the school
- More success in finding speakers
- The creation of global citizens who are connected and able to interact with people outside their immediate surroundings
- The realization that what the school is doing has an impact well beyond the walls of the school
- The opportunity to replace ignorance with knowledge
- The chance to set common goals for staff and students
- An opportunity to explore an exciting area of the curriculum
- The creation of a sense of solidarity
- An opportunity for teachers to set broader goals than basic academics

Many participants noted that becoming an ASPnet school had empowered the school community to build a special place for learning:

> *I think students are becoming more aware of global problems. In our case, it is important to show that we are a Muslim school and that we are also involved with the principles of UNESCO. It is important to teach about human rights and social justice. I think the students will see that we are not isolated in the world. (Manitoba)*

> *We have the freedom to introduce new ideas and approaches to how we relate to the kids and bring information to students. (Alberta)*

> *Student behaviour has improved. We used to have a room with a camera for monitoring students. By keeping students occupied with worthwhile projects and giving them a voice, we no longer need the camera. (Alberta)*

Because ASPnet projects challenge the school community to think about and discuss the broader societal purposes of education, staff in participating schools tend to communicate better than those in other schools, where such discussions seldom take place. Furthermore, ASPnet schools tend to employ a system of accountability that

19

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

focuses less on externally mandated, outcomes-based measures than on values and principles that assess the school community in terms of its relationship to a larger world.

Accountability to the UNESCO Pillars and Themes

Several participants noted that becoming an ASPnet school had led to better leadership and to a greater sense of ownership, confidence and pride among students. Students in such schools are also better behaved and exhibit a greater sense of social responsibility. In some schools, these improvements were especially evident in the behaviour of students from historically marginalized groups such as Aboriginals, immigrants and the economically deprived. Some schools noted a decrease in aggressive behaviour and the emergence of a more positive atmosphere. Many participants also reported that as students became more committed to the school and the community, they also became more curious and accepting.

> *UNESCO schools [help students make] connections beyond their school and beyond their community and eventually give students—who are going to be young adults—the tools to communicate and make this a better world. I don't think that schools always do that. We're so busy focusing on outcomes as part of education that we lose track of the humanitarian aspects. A UNESCO school makes that a part of their focus. But it is not graded; it's not a pass or fail thing. It is something that people don't usually get, that's taken for granted. Here we don't take it for granted; it's a part of the educational journey. (Manitoba)*

Accountability to the Community

As Starratt (2003) points out, leading schools take a highly ethical approach to education, one that incorporates an ethic of care, an ethic of justice and an ethic of critique.

> The conversations within a learning community are meant to take place within an empowering environment in which both teachers and students can own and express who they are and are becoming in the work of making meaning together. Such work is seen not only as academic work but also as a moral work of communal concern for their world (p 225).

Leading schools attempt to mitigate such factors as individualism and competition that have eroded community and to build authentic school communities that facilitate rich and deeply meaningful learning. The interviews with school staff, students, parents and community members involved with ASPnet schools, as well as with other educators affiliated with the UNESCO network, provided many insights into how to build inclusive places for education.

In Canada, ASPnet schools are found in both urban and rural communities. In smaller communities, people often share a common cultural, socioeconomic and political heritage. One participant noted that becoming an ASPnet school in a rural community can be a way of "opening minds in a small town to what is out there"

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

(Alberta). Another observed that the affiliation with UNESCO "helps to decrease racism, to get students to realize that people learn in different ways and to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses" (Manitoba).

Educators in both Manitoba and Alberta observed that ASPnet schools helped to bring about the following changes:

• Generate a feeling of solidarity
• Enable teachers to focus on broader issues than basic academics
• Give students a stronger voice
• Help students to think critically

As a result, such schools are welcoming, dynamic and creative sites that help students and teachers build a sense of community:

> *People that come here say they always feel welcomed. They are met
> with smiles [from] staff and students [and] the artwork is beautiful.
> People get a feeling that it's a peaceful place. (Alberta)*

Accountability to Educating for Citizenship

Graham Pike (2008, 225–27) observes that educating students for citizenship, including global citizenship, involves expanding their awareness to take into account perspectives other than individual and local. Unfortunately, few schools in Canada undertake activities that truly educate students to become engaged citizens. Pike suggests that the task of education is to "weave a new legend" that is more inclusive and visionary and with which more of the world's people, including future generations, can identify (p 226). To realize this goal, schools need to impress upon students the importance of loyalty, fairness and justice—qualities that engaged citizens must possess to understand and respond to the social, environmental, and economic complexities of today's world. One aspect of this awareness is understanding how local actions and realities have global implications and how global realities and processes affect local affairs. To become truly accountable, schools must be able to assess the extent to which students have achieved the kind of expanded awareness— the ability to hold multiple world views—that characterizes global citizens (Shultz and Abdi 2008). Unfortunately, accountability in most Canadian schools is limited to assessing the extent to which students have achieved external, mandated outcomes that measure scientific and technical literacies.

Judging from the interviews, the ASPnet schools involved in this study are clearly embarking on the journey to global awareness.

> *Students are more aware and have an increased sense of social
> responsibility. Students have a voice in the school community. …
> [Instead of remaining neutral,] both staff and students have more of a
> desire to express their views. (Manitoba)*

> *At our UNESCO school, we can bring the issues and ideas forth and do
> something about them. (Alberta)*

> *This project gives me a chance to participate in my own community and
> to volunteer and participate. It gives me an avenue to incorporate these*

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

things into my social studies curriculum and teaching and to encourage kids to get involved to make a difference. Some of the kids think that, as individuals, they can't, but we've had so many kids who have done something and [have learned] that they are not helpless to make these changes. They can bring about change in people's lives. (Alberta)

ASPnet schools share the goal of creating globally responsible citizens:

[We teach] students to become citizens who understand that they are not in an isolated community. As critical citizens, they are aware that what they do here has implications all over the world. At the personal level, the majority expect to continue participating in their own community and also to learn more about other cultures. (Manitoba)

The impact is not only cognitive: students become more aware of global issues. Students learn that they can make a difference, that they can resolve problems. You don't see this in a lot of schools out there. That is a big part of this project. Being affiliated with and committed to UNESCO affects teachers and students in every aspect. (Manitoba)

As Shultz (2008) explains, responsible citizenship also entails being engaged in current social issues, an engagement that has three aspects:

1. Deliberative agency: the ability to engage in social issues and to speak about the impact of social structures and conditions personally and also for society as a whole
2. Critical agency: the ability to understand the historical and social contexts of social issues; how these issues are perpetuated and what needs to be done to transform the social situation
3. Constructive agency: the ability to take action and to create change

How Can ASPnet Schools Be Improved?

Better Communication

Participants were asked what they would do to improve ASPnet schools and the network that supports them. The recommendation that surfaced most frequently in both provinces had to do with improving communications, not only within participating schools but also among Canadian ASPnet schools and throughout the wider international network. Although the decentralized structure of the Canadian network and the distributed leadership model has worked well and provided flexibility, more attention must be paid to supporting communication among the many sites and actors in the network. Suggestions for improving communications included holding more frequent gatherings based on particular themes and interests; organizing national and international conferences (both video and face to face) for students and staff; and improving existing websites, listservs and electronic information exchanges. All participants recognized that becoming an ASPnet school means making a commitment to something larger than the local school by building strong and lasting partnerships with other schools.

Participants also expressed a strong interest in building international partnerships, which they viewed as a way of enriching their understanding of issues and realities outside their own communities. One way that teachers can foster international partnerships is to carry out collaborative teaching and learning with other UNESCO schools. Many participants also stated that they wanted to feel more connected to UNESCO as an international organization.

More Professional Development

Providing teachers with professional development not only improves the quality of education that they offer their students (Day and Leitch 2007; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004) but also enhances their ability to undertake innovative projects in the school. The likelihood that an ASPnet project will succeed is closely related to the extent to which teachers, support staff, administrators and other members of the education community focus on their own professional growth. As Wilson and Berne (1999, 194) point out, professional development for teachers should "not be bound and *delivered* but rather *activated* [italics in original]." To achieve change in teaching and learning, teachers require more than new tools, a new curriculum or new educational theories—they need help to adjust their thinking to take into account recently acquired knowledge.

To educate global citizens, teachers require a deep understanding of local and global issues and of why teaching certain complex and potentially controversial topics is sometimes necessary. ASPnet teachers, for example, need to understand such issues as human rights, democracy, peace, racism, poverty, environmental sustainability and social justice. They also need to know how to introduce social issues into the curriculum.

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

Because teaching methods directly affect students' ability to learn, school principals and ASPnet school coordinators at the local, provincial, national and international level have a responsibility to support teachers in their quest for high-quality professional development. According to Borko (2004, 7), "professional development leaders must help teachers to establish trust, develop communication norms that enable critical dialogue, and maintain a balance between respecting individual community members and critically analyzing issues in their teaching." To succeed, ASPnet schools must create a collaborative environment that encourages teachers to speak up about their professional development needs and choices. Only in such an environment will teachers acquire the skills necessary to educate responsible, global citizens capable of exercising their democratic skills in the pursuit of a more just world. Such citizens will understand the importance of respecting diversity in all its forms and will work to eliminate poverty and protect human rights everywhere (Guimaraes-Iosif 2009).

More Emphasis on the Global Human Rights Agenda

According to Evans (2008), the struggle for human rights and justice throughout the world has evolved over four generations. During the first generation, the focus was on individual civil and political rights; during the second, on economic, social and cultural rights; and during the third, on collective, environmental and developmental rights. The world is now entering the fourth generation, during which the goal is to use education to "make real" the rights won in the three earlier stages. This education agenda is evident in all parts of the world as educators strive to make the teaching of human rights one of the goals of education. Interestingly, few of the ASPnet educators participating in this study explicitly identified their work as constituting part of this wider human rights agenda. Doing so would involve reframing many of the local and global issues that they are studying as human rights issues and emphasizing that, by advocating and acting, citizens can help prevent human rights abuses locally and beyond. A deep understanding of human rights issues constitutes the foundation for teaching students about citizenship, inclusivity and building a culture of peace.

A Deeper Level of Student Participation

According to study participants, ASPnet schools could also be improved by encouraging students to participate more fully in planning, implementing and evaluating projects. After all, knowing how to participate is an essential skill for citizens in a healthy, democratic society. Giving students a greater voice requires shifting the hierarchical structures that have traditionally characterized nearly all aspects of school culture—from the way committees are organized to how staff and students are selected to lead activities. Participants observed that one way that students learn about and practice active citizenship is by forming student clubs. Many participants expressed an interest in extending such leadership opportunities to include the entire student body.

Roger Hart (1992), an expert on child and youth participation, has identified eight levels of participation that constitute what he calls a "ladder of participation." The lowest three rungs, which he labels "manipulation," "decoration" and "tokenism," are not really forms of participation at all because, at these levels, adults make all the

decisions, carry out all the activities and essentially tell students what to do. Examples of these lowest forms of participation include asking students to create posters or paintings without explaining to them why they are doing so; directing students to sign petitions without explaining to them the issues involved; and expecting students to mirror adult processes of participation rather than develop their own approach. The next three rungs on Hart's participation ladder correspond to situations in which students are "assigned tasks but informed," "consulted and informed" and "allowed to share in making decisions about adult-initiated tasks." At these intermediate levels, teachers make an effort to take the ideas and abilities of their students into account when undertaking projects. Students, for example, might be involved in identifying issues, drafting questions, and analyzing and presenting the results. At the two highest levels on Hart's participation ladder—"child-initiated and directed" and "child-initiated with shared decisions with adults"—students work alongside adults to fully plan and implement activities.

Shier (2001, 111–12) suggests that educators can assess their willingness to involve students by answering the following questions about the openings, opportunities and obligations for participation:

- Openings: Are you ready to let children and youth join your decision making? If so, where are these openings?
- Opportunities: Do your processes enable you to take children's views into account?
- Obligations: Is children's participation a policy requirement?

By encouraging students, teachers, administrators, support staff and interested community members to participate at the highest levels, ASPnet schools can become models of democratic citizenship.

More Attention to Ethical Considerations

All participants noted that organizing activities and projects helped their schools become more committed to UNESCO pillars and themes. Individuals and small groups tended to decide whether or not they would participate in the opportunities that presented themselves. Most such opportunities were associated with short-term projects. Some projects involved working with local and/or international nongovernmental organizations. Others consisted of fundraising initiatives in the community. International projects tend to fall into three broad categories: (1) development projects (for example, ensuring a good water supply, building schools and providing health care); (2) emergency assistance (providing shelter, food and education after a natural disaster); and (3) campaigns and advocacy (such as the Global Campaign for Education and the Global March Against Child Labour). Most of the participating schools were involved in numerous projects, and the level of commitment by staff and student volunteers was extremely high.

Although such participation is commendable and is generally done out of a sincere desire to do good, becoming involved in these projects raises some ethical questions. Most experts agree that overcoming poverty is about achieving justice, not about providing charity. Therefore, when selecting projects, educators should look for initiatives that focus on making the world a fairer place for poor and marginalized people. Educators should question how the fundraising initiative supports the work of individuals and communities at the local level. The project should also help students

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

challenge stereotypes about who is poor and understand how poverty has both local and global implications. Furthermore, students must be taught that being rich or poor is not a matter of luck but a consequence of longstanding historical, political and environmental factors. Above all, educators must make an effort to ensure that projects intended to help people in need don't take on colonial overtones by implying that the poor are somehow deficient, incapable of understanding their own situation or unable to make choices affecting their well-being. From an educational point of view, the most valuable projects are those that, in addition to raising much-needed funds and materials, give students an opportunity to forge genuine friendships with people from other countries and cultures.

The Canadian Council for International Cooperation (2008, 1) has developed a code of ethics to guide organizations interested in pursuing international development partnerships. Part of the code addresses ethical issues related to fundraising:

3.5.3 Any and all communications to the public by the Organization shall respect the dignity, values, history, religion and culture of the people supported by its programs. In particular, the Organization shall avoid the following:
- messages which generalize and mask the diversity of situations;
- messages which fuel prejudice;
- messages which foster a sense of Northern superiority;
- messages which show people as hopeless objects for our pity, rather than as equal partners in action and development.

3.5.6 The Organization will ensure that the content of the messages sent out in disaster appeals does not undermine the work of development education which calls for long-term response.

The projects carried out in ASPnet schools can teach students that, as active citizens, they have an important role to play in creating a stronger community and a better world. However, educators must ensure that these projects are based on a sound ethical foundation. Otherwise, they could undermine the rights and dignity of the very people they are intended to help.

Development of a Process of Formative Evaluation

This study highlighted the exemplary work taking place in some schools in Alberta and Manitoba that have achieved ASPnet accreditation. What is needed now is a process of formative evaluation to assist schools in sustaining this valuable work over time. Formative evaluation would identify exemplary practices, including strategies to help schools explore UNESCO pillars and themes more deeply and to engage more students in activities related to these themes. Developing an evaluation process would also strengthen the presence of ASPnet in Canada. Ideally, the evaluation should be developed collaboratively within the network.

26

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

Conclusion

The study revealed that ASPnet schools vary as much within each province as they do between provinces. The differences between ASPnet schools in Alberta as compared with those in Manitoba are not surprising, given that ASPnet schools in Alberta are coordinated by the ATA whereas in Manitoba they are coordinated by the provincial ministry of education. The influence of the ATA, which endorses a distributed leadership model, likely explains why assistant principals, teachers and teacher assistants tended to play a more significant role in leading ASPnet projects in Alberta schools than they did in Manitoba. Study participants in Alberta tended to identify the designated ASPnet coordinator as the key leader in sustaining the project. In Manitoba, by contrast, participants tended to identify school principals and curriculum experts in the ministry of education as key leaders. Despite these differences in coordination, ASPnet schools in both Alberta and Manitoba demonstrated a deep commitment to the UNESCO pillars and themes.

One of the challenges facing schools today is to graduate proactive, critical citizens capable of functioning in the complex social world. UNESCO ASPnet schools offer an excellent opportunity for producing global citizens. What differentiates these schools from others is the extent to which, over time, they have adapted their policies and practices to incorporate the four UNESCO pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. These pillars, in turn, are closely linked to four UNESCO study themes: world concerns and the role of the United Nations system; human rights, democracy and tolerance; intercultural learning; and environmental concerns. Incorporating these pillars and themes can help schools realize, with respect to their organizational structure, one of UNESCO's goals, namely, "creating a culture of peace." By working together, educators, students and community members in these schools build a respectful education community in which students receive innovative and high-quality learning experiences. ASPnet schools are also exemplary in their approach to accountability, which tends to focus less on attaining measurable outcomes than on instilling values. Focusing on values helps teachers and students make a link between the school curriculum and local and global realities. To be accorded ASPnet status, schools must demonstrate that they are deeply committed to achieving educational excellence in the areas of human rights, democratic and global citizenship, environmental sustainability and global perspectives.

The study also revealed a number of ways in which ASPnet schools can be made even stronger. First, ASPnet schools could benefit by focusing on improving communications not only within the school community but also among ASPnet schools in Canada and throughout the world. Second, ASPnet schools should strive to deepen their commitment to human rights by developing policies and procedures that facilitate community engagement. Third, ASPnet schools should attempt to create more opportunities for students to take on authentic leadership roles. Fourth, ASPnet schools should make more of an effort to provide their teachers with adequate professional development. Fifth, ASPnet schools should collaborate on developing an evaluation process to help identify exemplary practices.

*The Impact
of Becoming
a UNESCO
ASPnet School
in Alberta
and Manitoba*

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Introduction and Demographics

1. How are you involved in the education sector? What is your current position? How long have you been at your position?
2. How did you learn about UNESCO's ASPnet schools?
3. What is a UNESCO ASPnet school?
   a. What are the purposes and objectives?
4. What is your understanding of the issues that UNESCO is attempting to address and ameliorate? Address the four core themes:
   a. World concerns and the role of the UN system
   b. Human rights, democracy and tolerance
   c. Intercultural learning
   d. Environmental concerns

Processes of Involvement

5. Does your school/district have a working definition of a UNESCO ASPnet school? If so, how was it developed?
6. In what ways are you involved with ASPnet schools? Provide examples.
7. How, and by whom, is this ASPnet school supported?
8. What process was involved in implementing ASPnet schools?

Changes Resulting from Being an ASPnet School

9. What changes have you observed with regard to policy, program and/or relationships since ASPnet schools were implemented?
   a. How has the project affected student learning, student behaviour, the staff, the community, others?
   b. If nothing has changed, why do you think that is the case?
10. What are some of the strengths of being an ASPnet school?
11. What are some of the weaknesses of being an ASPnet school?
12. What are your own long-term professional and personal expectations with respect to being involved with ASPnet schools?
13. What are the long-term benefits to the school of being involved in the ASPnet program?
14. How can your school improve its involvement in the ASPnet school program?
    a. With respect to planning?
    b. With respect to activities?
    c. With respect to evaluation?
    d. How would you go about making these improvements?
    e. Do you have other recommendations?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything else we should know about your school and community?
2. Do you have any other comments?