

Citizens Across Borders: The Student Initiative for Global Citizenship In the Wake of September 11, 2001

***“My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you,
but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”***

(President John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, 1961)

We propose a new initiative that will address the extraordinary challenges facing us as a people after September 11, 2001. It will ensure that the significance of the events is not forgotten and it will generate new beginnings out of suffering and loss. A core group of sixty high school students will consider and begin to answer some of the most critical questions for global citizens in the 21st Century. Among these questions are all the following: How is cultural diversity a lived reality in the United States and in other lands? How can the diversity of students and groups in the United States be conveyed to the world community? How can conflicts among peoples be resolved? What is the importance of inter-cultural understanding for conflict resolution? How are myths and stereotypes to be dispelled? How can youth across borders facilitate the necessary basis of understanding for a renewed and cooperative world order in the years to come?

Citizens Across Borders will explore three themes of *Understanding*, *Reaffirmation*, and *Global Representation* in an education/action project for high school students. Students will begin to *understand* complex world issues by studying what it means to be a citizen across borders. They will learn how to recognize and appreciate different narratives, and they will work together for common goals. By so doing, they will contribute to our nation’s healing process and commemorate those who so needlessly lost their lives in the tragedy of September 11th. Students will *reaffirm* our nation’s core values of freedom and strength through diversity, and they will explore how their own values have begun to change. Students will *represent* their thinking in learning projects, including literary and artistic creations, presented in their own schools and communities. A worldwide audience will have access to their work via the Project Website with translations of texts into Arabic, Chinese, French, Persian, Russian, and Spanish.

This Project will help students clarify the values which are necessary for understanding the events of September 11th, and it will provide meaningful ways for them to construct positive approaches to local and global renewal. By participating in this work, students will contribute to the Dodge Foundation mission, “to support and encourage those values that contribute to making our society more humane and our world more livable.” They will develop knowledge and activities to increase inter-cultural understanding among the many ethnic groups in their own schools and communities in New Jersey. Their work will demonstrate to societies outside the United States the commitment of America to cultural tolerance and unity through diversity.

Citizens Across Borders will benefit from its connection with *Global Citizen 2000*, a three-year teacher development project already funded in its first year by the Dodge Foundation, with ongoing funding from the U.S. Department of Education and Rutgers University. As stated in the Report to Dodge of first year activities, GC2000 teachers developed innovative, interactive, computer-based learning modules that promote the study and practice of global citizenship. Thirty GC2000 teachers met at Rutgers University on September 25, 2001 to discuss how they as educators could help students become knowledgeable and involved in the problem-solving process that the cataclysmic events of September 11th have forced upon us. The GC2000 framework is ideally situated to begin addressing these tasks. Students themselves will create new materials and develop

activities in collaboration with teachers and with the support of faculty and student mentors from Rutgers University. We are turning to the Dodge Foundation for funding of this new initiative.

A. Understanding: Acquisition of Knowledge - *Students will begin to understand complex world issues by studying what it means to be a citizen across borders. They will learn how to recognize and appreciate different narratives, and they will work together for common goals. By so doing, they will contribute to our nation's healing process and commemorate those who so needlessly lost their lives in the tragedy of September 11th.*

In each school, teachers will select students of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to work together. Teachers and students will collaborate to search for answers, to interpret change, and to define global citizenship in the wake of September 11th. This process will provide stimulating, creative, student-centered and project-based learning. Because we recognize that learners possess multiple intelligences, they will be encouraged to fashion a wide variety of learning activities. Their projects will include the preparation of essays and op-ed pieces, the creation of exhibits, videos and computer-based visual materials, and readings, poetry, songs, and dramatic pieces. A number of other learning areas and activities are listed in Attachment III of this proposal.

B. Reaffirmation: Clarification of Values - *Students will reaffirm our nation's core values of freedom and strength through diversity, and they will explore how their own values have begun to change.*

Some students have reported that the events have already begun to impact and transform their life decisions and choices. Many have affirmed a desire to work in public service in ways that directly build on concepts of global citizenship and the resolution of conflict. This presents an opportunity to assist students as they develop their own action-oriented responses to a public tragedy of a kind that they had never before experienced. By exploring these questions, students will become more actively involved in and conscious of their own social and emotional learning processes.

Global Representation: Action Projects - *Students will represent their thinking in learning projects, including literary and artistic creations, presented in their own schools and communities. A worldwide audience will have access to their work via the Project Website with translations of texts into Arabic, Chinese, French, Persian, Russian, and Spanish.*

Students will take the knowledge and insight they have developed in learning projects from November 2001 through January 2002 and represent their findings to a wider audience. With the goals of fostering understanding, pursuing creative conflict resolution among peoples, and making practical contributions to local and global renewal, they will present their knowledge to their own schools and communities, and then to the world. These steps are outlined below:

1. February 2002: Assembly of Students in Citizens Across Borders Project - All students from the participating school districts will meet at Rutgers University. There will be keynote speakers and students will exchange the knowledge they have developed in their own schools with their fellow students from across the Project. Some ideas for speakers would be recent immigrants from the Middle East; persons who have experienced and survived conflicts from World War II to the present, including the September 11th attacks; policy makers and peace advocates. Students will assemble in smaller groups to share materials that have been developed in the various high schools and highlight student work that is most representative of *Citizens Across Borders*. Mini-scholarships will be made available for students whose work is selected as outstanding. Students will devise a timetable they feel is adequate to present their collective work to their individual schools and communities. A third activity for the day will center on planning international communication

projects.

2. March-April 2002: Follow Up Meetings – Students will present and share the collective results of their work in *Citizens Across Borders* in their own local schools and communities. They will demonstrate how their learning has affected them and their own worldviews, and how it may affect their ideas about career and other life choices.

3. May-June 2002: Student-to-Student International Information Exchanges - A major component of this project will be the representation by students of their learning internationally. They will utilize contacts already developed through *Global Citizen 2000* in Poland, South Africa, Israel and the Palestine Authority, and in other parts of the Middle East and in China. By compiling and exchanging their thoughts and their learning materials via the Project Website and the Internet, they will be able to share and learn important lessons across cultures.