

## Service Learning: Global Issues are Interconnected

by Mare Stewart

<b>Tool(s) used:</b>	Systems Mapping
<b>Purpose of using tool:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding Discussion</li> </ul> <p><b>Overview:</b> I introduced our High School GIN Club students to the "Making Global Connections" activity in the Facing the Future's Engaging Students Through Global Issues book. After leading the activity with the high school students and modeling how to lead this, the High School students took this to our school's newly forming Middle School GIN Club and used this activity to help middle schoolers understand how global issues are interconnected and understand what "leverage points" are. From this, the middle schoolers were able to brainstorm a list and narrow down to several global issues they were passionate about and would want to work on local projects to help address. The students had a better understanding that by working on a few of the issues that they had more of an interest in and could</p>
<b>Context of lesson/case study:</b>	Service-focused Club
<b>Participants (# and description):</b>	Twelve students: Middle School and High School GIN Club students
<b>Topic, Theme, or Key Understanding of unit/project:</b>	Global Issues are Interconnected
<b>Length of unit/project:</b>	Year-long projects will be developed
<b>Resources/materials &amp; setting required:</b>	Facing the Future curriculum and activities; global issues cards, ball of string/yarn
<p><b>Lesson Plan/Description of the Project:</b></p> <p>Students picked out a global issue (had a set of cards printed that had different global issues listed on each card). Students were instructed to simply pick an issue important to them they would be interested in working on. Students clipped their global issue card onto their shirt with a small clothes pin. Next, students stood in a circle so that everyone could see the global issues represented. The facilitator held the ball of yarn (the facilitator should also have a global issue and participate) and explained that the ball of yarn would be used to connect each global issue together. The facilitator asked students to pick 1 issue around the circle they felt was an important issue (alternatively, you can just start with any issue--doesn't matter which one you begin with). One student held the ball of yarn as the starting point. The participants were asked to identify another issue "connected" to the person holding the ball of yarn. The facilitator explains that the connection could be that one issue leads to another issue, they could be connected that one makes the other worse, or that by solving one issue, it also helps address/solve the other issue--they are somehow related. The first person holds onto the end of the ball of yarn and tosses it to their "connection". The ball continues to be passed with more yarn connecting each issue and person together until every issue has at least one triangulation (each person is connected to at least 2 other people). You can keep going around as many times as you want. After enough connections are made, students are asked to take a look at what they notice by observing the web of yarn. They are also asked to look and notice if some issues have more connections (this may be the case if you let the ball of yarn keep going around enough times). Ask students what this might indicate. Ask students to look at all the global issues represented and identify one they think is the MOST important or pressing issue to address in the world. The one that is identified is asked to tug hard on their string. The facilitator asks the</p>	

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student that tugged on the string to sit down. If a student felt that tug significantly, they should also sit down. Each person that sat down should now tug on their string. What should result is that every participant feels a tug and all eventually sit down. The facilitator then initiates further discussion about what this means in terms of solving global issues. For our purposes, we used this as a way to discuss leverage points and finding a few global issues that students feel deeply passionate about. We had students break into smaller groups and generate a list of issues they felt they could work on in their own community (school, neighborhood) that are both local and global issues. From there, students were able to narrow in on a few issues while still feeling they can make a difference on a global scale by working on just a few local issues. We used this activity to base our year-long service/action projects our club will work on for this year.

**Reflection**

**Plusses:**

It worked to have the cards clipped onto the front of students shirts so that each participant could clearly read/see the global issue each student had. Additionally, it worked better when we had the students continue making connections even after each student had at least 1 triangulation. When the ball of yarn had made its way back to some of the same students multiple times it was easier for students to visually see which issue seemed to be connected to a lot of other issues; and then when they identified a "major" issue and the person tugged on their string, more students felt the tug/impact. This helped facilitate a discussion about leverage points and finding an issue to work on that may have a broader or greater impact..

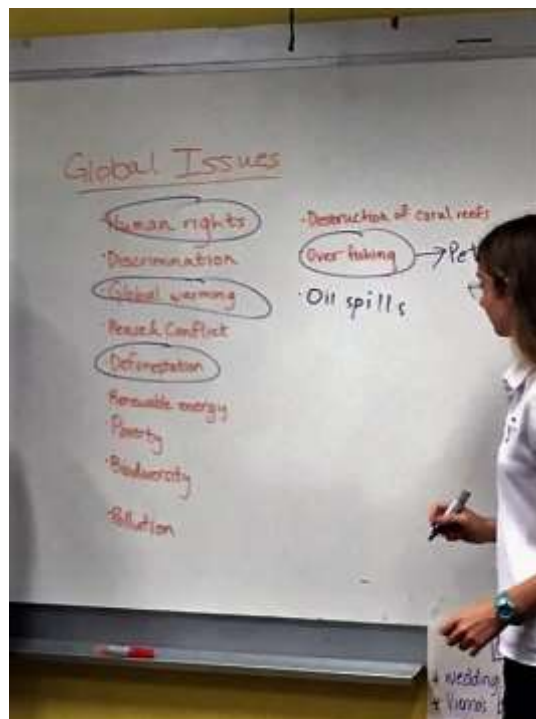
**Challenges:**

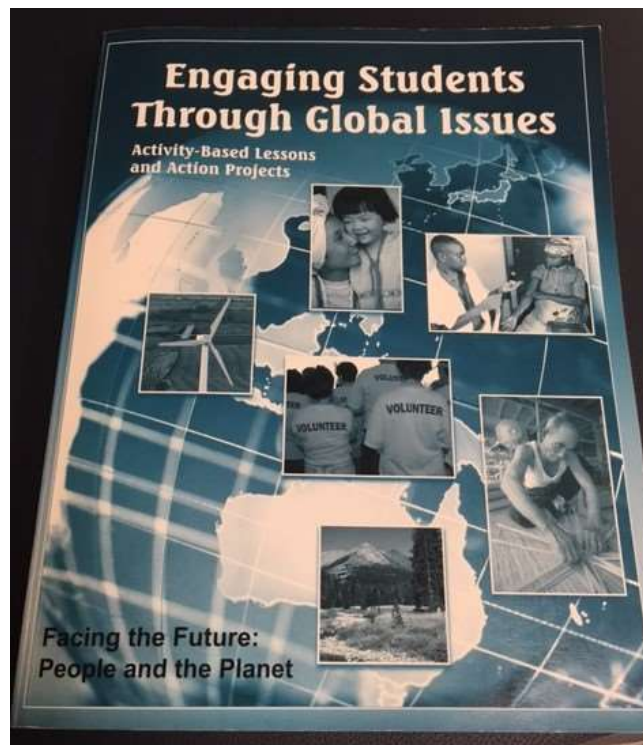
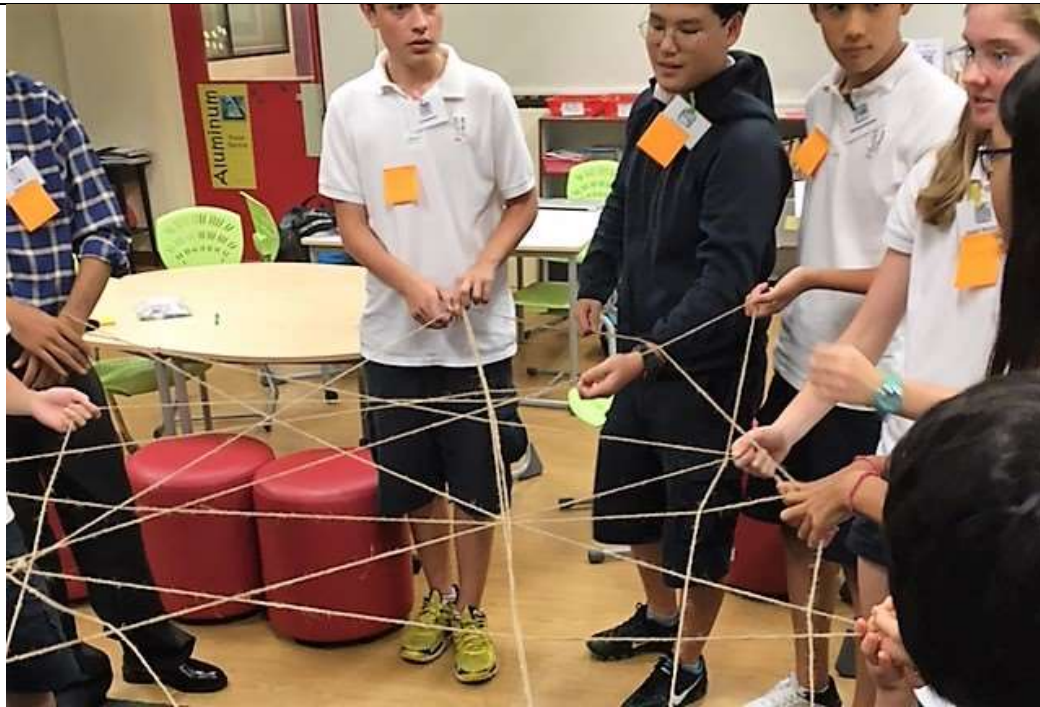
This works best with a larger group. When I did this activity with a smaller group of high school students (only 6 students) it was harder to really see as many connections. With the group of 12 students, we had more issues represented and it was more effective of an activity.

**Suggestions for other practitioners and educators:**

I've done this activity before with my Social Studies classes in the classroom setting and it works great as a whole-class activity. It is a great "introductory" activity when introducing the topic of global issues or when trying to help students who feel overwhelmed with too many problems in the world. They can begin to realize that by focusing on only a few (or even just one problem), they can still have a great impact. This would be a great activity to do prior to introducing students to the iceberg model.

**Evidence and Resources**





*Lesson plan submitted by: Mare Stewart, 2016, while serving as Teacher and Global Issues Network (GIN) Club Sponsor at Singapore American School, Singapore*