

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

The essence of education

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.

I awoke and saw that life was service.

I acted and behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore
Nobel Prize in Literature,
1913

At last week's Pottstown School Board meeting, several high school students described a service-learning trip they took with two of their teachers to Costa Rica last summer.

Together with others from New Hampshire and Canada, our students worked to reforest mangrove trees, planting stalks in a nursery and more mature trees along a river bank to help prevent erosion.

They donated items they had collected for a rural school they visited, run solely by one teacher for 23 pupils aged 6 to 13.

They also visited lakes, forests, and toured the capital of San Jose.

The students held their own fundraisers to pay for the trip.

I'm delighted that in recent years Pottstown students have been able to travel to Italy, Greece and other far-away countries, which provide experiences they'll remember long after classroom lessons are forgotten.

Hands-on learning

But it's particularly gratifying to see them doing something hands-on to protect the planet in a developing country.

Sustainability

Costa Rica is perhaps the most enlightened country in Latin America, ranking high in literacy and human rights.

Costa Rica is also committed to environmental sustainability, which we're trying to do here in Pottstown. A few years ago, Costa Rica pledged to become by 2021 the world's first carbon-neutral country.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

One world

As we discussed last week, the greatest threat to civilization as we know it is climate change. The earth cannot sustain 7 billion people burning ever more fossil fuels.

The United States and China are the world's worst emitters, but India is moving up fast. It recently announced plans to double its production of coal, the world's dirtiest fuel, in the next five years.

India has among the poorest people on earth. Nearly 300 million Indians have no electricity, and 600 million have no toilets.

In fact, as hard as it may be to comprehend, the poorest five percent of all Americans are wealthier, on average, than the richest five percent of all Indians (notwithstanding a handful of Indian super-rich). India naturally wants to lift itself up.

Dramatic challenges ahead

We can't invade other countries to prevent them from burning fossil fuels. Long term, global security will only come when all the world's people have achieved a decent standard of living, and we have to help.

That's why I'm so pleased our Pottstown students are getting involved, first-hand, in making a better world. Kudos to our staff for making it happen.

World income distribution

