

November 2008 Forum Recap
Ensuring Success in a Global Society
Presenter: Christine Schulze

On November 10th, 60 people attended the PCN Forum Ensuring Success in a Global Society at Creek Valley Elementary School. The speaker was Christine Schulze, the executive director of Concordia Language Villages and vice president for International Development of Concordia College. Ms. Schulze entertained the audience with a combination of informational games, interesting facts and advice about how we can embrace a plurality of visions to make the world a better place to live.

A popular part of the talk imagined the world as 100 people. Ms. Schulze began her presentation by showing a video from <http://www.miniature-earth.com>, which depicts the cultural and economic makeup of the world's population by shrinking the world to 100 people. If the total world population were 100, according to the scenario, 61 people would be Asian, 8 North American, 5 South American and Caribbean, 13 African, 12 European, and one would be from the South Pacific. Included in the statistics were some sobering facts: 13 of 100 people would be hungry or malnourished, 14 wouldn't be able to read and one would have HIV/AIDS.

Cultural understanding through language acquisition is critical to help solve world problems such as hunger and disease, as well as acid rain, climate change and global warming, all of which need to be analyzed across national borders. Further, we need to integrate capital and technology across the world to deal with the recent global economic crisis. Learning languages makes people better citizens which contribute to the world. Closer to home, business, national security and diplomacy, and school performance all benefit from language education.

Despite the clear need, the United States is the only developed country that doesn't have a comprehensive language program as a core component of education. An understanding of global languages is important for many reasons. Language instruction fosters an understanding of identity. When a learner takes a new name in a language class, he or she absorbs a new personality with a new set of cultural values. This leads them to break the mold and be more open-minded, Ms. Schulze said.

Other benefits of language education, Ms. Schulze pointed out:

- Language education often facilitates an understanding of place by incorporating information about the culture and history of other countries.
- Stories from native speakers make a place come alive.
- Language acquisition increases empathy, allowing people to make friends, to listen and hear what others are saying.
- Travel makes people realize that everyone is alike.

Sharing languages leads to a feeling of interconnectedness with other cultures, which in turn, promotes a world vision of peace, justice and sustainability.

Ms. Schulze left the group with the following list of suggestions for enriching lives through cultural diversity:

1. Use your language.

2. Invite people who speak another language into your home.
3. Experience cultural events.
4. Prepare your children for educational experiences abroad.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."