

# IBWorld Conference Special



**IB GLOBAL  
CONFERENCE 2017**

26–28 October • The Hague, The Netherlands

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**“Their excitement for learning makes you forget what they’ve endured”**

A teacher’s remarkable story of education amid the daily struggles in a refugee camp

# 5 IDEAS FOR GLOBAL PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

**Erin Dowd**, former PYP teacher and coordinator, provides tips on how educators can help develop the next generation of leaders who will inspire world change



**A**ny community or school problem can be turned into an authentic and meaningful learning experience. But how do you enthuse students to feel part of the solution and empowered to make a change?

Teachers are getting creative when designing globally relevant, interdisciplinary, problem-based units. Erin Dowd (pictured), former Director of Curriculum for Level Up Village (LUV), which runs arts and science courses, shares some ways IB teachers can make 'global problem solving' an effective learning tool.

## 1. Use SDGs as a lens

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a popular entry point for inquiry. The 17 goals and 169 targets are a call to action for everyone "to take the bold and transformative steps, which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path" by 2030. Educators can connect the goals to the IB Learner Profile and pose questions that spark thinking, such as, "Which leaders are principled in their decisions about climate change or the refugee crisis?"

## 2. Link local to global

Students should be able to clearly see the connections between global and local issues, and how they can have an impact on solving them through research and community action. For example, for their Primary Years Programme (PYP) exhibition project, students at Freedom 7 Elementary School in Florida, US, chose an SDG that they were passionate about and determined how the goal connects to their local community, which helped to bring about change.

PHOTOS: IJUNEWIND/123RF, OASIS, LINCOLN COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Students at Lincoln Community School helped create a new library (above) for a local middle school

## 3. Try design thinking

Princeton Junior School in New Jersey, US, implemented an LUV course called Global Inventors. PYP students connected with a school in Honduras, Central America, to address unequal access to electricity and how solar energy could help. By following the design process steps of Ask, Imagine, Plan, Create and Improve, and using a computer-aided design program, they designed a solar-powered flashlight that could be used during power outages, or in areas with limited access to electricity.



Students participating in the OASIS Solar Jam race, organized by Princeton Day School

## 4. Let students lead

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) personal project is a fantastic opportunity for students to discover a passion and make a difference in their world. MYP student, Adoma Addo, at Lincoln Community School in Ghana, led a group of 15 students in her Global Issues Service Summit (GISS) club to organize a project to fund and build a library for a local middle school. The school had to share space with the elementary school, and this was preventing students from accessing age-appropriate resources, limiting their inquiry and learning. Adoma and her classmates arranged fundraising activities, held book drives and fixed broken shelves.

## 5. Start small

Global projects don't need to be overly ambitious. Rather, by linking community problems to the larger issues with which they are connected, students will realize they have a voice and can make a valuable contribution to society. They will learn that their actions, no matter how small, can move the world closer to peace and sustainability for all. **IB**