

# Global Challenges... *en Español, por favor!*

In Advanced Placement Spanish Language and Culture classes, instruction is organized around six interrelated contemporary themes defined by the College Board: *Global Challenges*, *Personal and Public Identities*, *Science and Technology*, *Beauty and Aesthetics*, *Contemporary life*, and *Families and Communities*. The objectives of these standard and performance-based courses are to develop student communicative, critical thinking and problem-solving skills in authentic contexts.

This term, in Señora González's two AP classes, twenty-three Spanish students have been working on a special project linked to the *Global Challenges* theme. This comprehensive unit trains and engages students to reflect on economic, environmental, social and contemporary philosophical issues. Students develop their understanding and critical thinking skills about current events and important concepts relating to demographic, immigration, work, social welfare, and globalization by reading, writing, and discussing – in Spanish - a wide range of contemporary articles, literary pieces, and multi-media resources. In order to develop students' awareness of the rights and responsibilities of all citizens in a global society, Ms. González asked her AP students to envision and create a model of their ideal community. The *Mi Comunidad Ideal* Project required students to build a model city that would enable them to identify, represent and discuss some of the major economic and environmental challenges of urban life. The project included three tasks: the actual building of an ideal city, the writing of a Spanish text presenting the issues at hand (education, transportation, poverty, nutrition, pollution, lack of water or resources, safety, among others) and a way to address them efficiently, and the oral presentation of the project as a whole to the class in Spanish. *Mi comunidad es ideal*, wrote Paisley Murray, *porque resuelve los problemas del tráfico, la polución [...] y del déficit de espacio para los peatones y los autos. Las bicicletas en esta comunidad son similares a las bicicletas en Boston; sin embargo, son gratuitas y no tienen un tiempo límite.* (My community is ideal because it resolves the problems of traffic, pollution and lack of space for pedestrians and cars. The bikes in my community are similar to the ones in Boston, however these bikes are free and there is no time limit). Annabel Botsford indicated that her city is ideal *porque tiene muchos aspectos que ayudan a resolver problemas con el medio ambiente, la violencia, y la falta de recursos naturales. Hay un embalse para la comunidad en caso de que haya contaminación del agua. También hay diferentes animales y plantas que ayudan con la biodiversidad* (because [the city] has several elements that help solve problems related to the environment, violence, and lack of natural resources. There is a reservoir for the community to be used in case of water contamination. There are different types of animals and plants that support biodiversity).

For Arthur Garcia, access to *energía renovable como la de los molinos de viento* (clean energy such as windmills) and *viviendas ecológicas con un sistema para recoger el agua de la lluvia y de los ríos para el consumo* ("green" houses that have a system to collect runoff water and rainwater for consumption) ensure sustainability and reduction of pollution.

In both classes, all students have demonstrated an impressive array of creativity, higher order thinking, linguistic proficiency and genuine engagement during this project. By leading her advanced students in a series of meaningful interdisciplinary activities in authentic real-life settings, Ms. González is training them to develop an informed understanding of the challenges of our time and to think creatively about solutions for a better future.