



## BRIDGES AT A GLANCE

### OUR PHILOSOPHY

The development of empathy—that unique ability that helps us understand one another—is a key ingredient in creating a more peaceful, just world. Yet how can we do this across cultures and in a systemic way so we can make a real difference?

Bridges to Understanding believes it starts with the children of the world. Our program connects youth around the globe from fundamentally different backgrounds—giving them the opportunity to build relationships with each other and solve problems together.

- *Bridges in action is a classroom of Tibetan refugee students in the Indian Himalayas sharing garbage elimination strategies with indigenous local youth working to clean up Lake Atitlan in Guatemala.*
- *Bridges in action is a single teen-age mother in South Africa sharing her story with a single-parent child in the Puget Sound.*

Using the emotional power of photo images, sound and voice, combined with face-to-face student exchanges, Bridges connects thousands of students in Puget Sound to students in Africa, India, Guatemala, Peru and the Middle East. We use the newest, most powerful communication tools of technology to make a real difference in promoting cross-cultural understanding.

We are changing the course of the future—child-by-child, community-by-community.

### WHAT WE DO

We enable children to share their cultures and issues in their communities using technologies such as digital storytelling, live video conferencing, in-person student exchanges and teacher-guided online communication.

Our program is based upon three education strategies:

**Classroom-to-classroom exchanges.** Classrooms in Puget Sound (Washington state, USA) partner with classrooms in six other countries. Currently, our exchanges focus on “Understanding Culture and Traditions” and “Climate Change.”

Bridges provides curriculum, a password-protected interactive Web site, teacher coaching and classroom volunteers to help deepen the learning. Additionally, we advise teachers on how to encourage global perspectives within their existing curricula.

**Workshops in digital storytelling.** Bridges offers local and international workshops to help train teachers, classroom volunteers and students in the creation and use of digital stories to promote cross-cultural understanding. Volunteers travel with us to work with our partner school students and teachers at each Bridges site.

**Face-to-face interactions.** To enhance and deepen the electronic student exchanges among Bridges classrooms, Bridges conducts an annual student exchange with partner sites. Each year, selected students and teachers from Bridges international schools travel to Seattle for up to three weeks. Students stay in homes of Bridges students and attend Bridges schools. In addition to learning alongside students in their partner classroom, the students visit other Bridges' schools, engaging in powerful presentations and discussions about their lives and perspectives.

## WHERE WE WORK

We have partner classrooms in the following countries:

- USA (*Washington state*)
- Guatemala (*Santiago Atitlan*)
- India (*Dharamsala*)
- Peru (*Cuzco*)
- Canada (*Cortez Island*)
- South Africa (*Capetown*)
- West Bank (*Middle-East*)

## HOW IS BRIDGES TO UNDERSTANDING FUNDED?

Bridges to Understanding is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, funded through the generous donations from the public. Currently, our 2007-08 budget of \$469,000 is provided by:

- Foundations, *25 percent*
- Corporations, *34 percent*
- Individuals, *22 percent*
- Schools, fees for service, *19 percent*

## MEDIA CONTACTS:

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