

# A Global Perspective

by *Stacie Nevadomski Berdan*

Globalization, nearly everyone agrees, is here, now, and happening faster every year, so all of us – and especially, all of our children – will need to figure out how to cope with it. As a professional and a parent, I know that I must help my children look down the road to a time when globalization will no longer even be seen as a trend, but will be part of the fabric of how we all live. Our ever-more complex world demands that we raise our children with the mental agility, emotional stability, and personal and social skills needed to operate successfully in a multicultural global economy.

As important as global awareness will continue to be for career success, global-mindedness goes beyond financial advantages. Many globally-focused families like mine enrich our children's lives by sharing in the joys of the vast and interesting beauty of the world. In the most obvious sense, expanded travel opportunities have opened the globe and all its cultural and ecological richness to middle-class families. Trips that our grandparents could only dream about – or read about in *National Geographic* – are being taken by so many children today. My twin daughters, now 12, have already swum with whale sharks in the Philippines, seen some of the tallest skyscrapers in the world in Hong Kong, tasted warm crepes on the streets of Paris, eaten traditional Polish food with their first-generation immigrant grandmother in Warsaw, and climbed Mayan temples at sunrise in Guatemala.

But exciting as it is, international travel is only the icing on the cake of global perspective-building. The main ingredients are the many global experiences that can be incorporated into any family's daily life. Our kids' cross-cultural curiosity has been encouraged by going to ethnic restaurants and having Indian, Thai, Italian, Mexican, Greek, Lebanese and Chinese foods cooked periodically at home; by doing puzzles and playing board games involving geography, animals, and people from around the world; through friendships with kids from other cultures; and by scouring libraries for books and music about faraway people and places. Most kids love to try new and exciting things, and variety is truly the spice of life for parents as well. Mixing global adventures at home with tried-and-true traditional and local favorites is a great recipe for getting kids interested in the broader world.

Adding language to the mix creates an even richer experience. Every parent who shares more than one language with a child knows the joys of bilingual jokes, rhymes that cross linguistic boundaries, and the special "secret code" thrill of being able to share intimacies

in a language inaccessible to others. Journalist Roya Hakakian, the mother of twin boys who are bilingual in English and Farsi, is fond of saying "double the language means double the fun."

A focus on global citizenship, approached with a spirit of adventure and starting from infancy, can add interest and joy to the life of any family. The benefits of raising open-minded, kids ready to see global interconnectedness as both opportunity and welcome challenge also pays off in resulting resiliency in our children.

Instilling a global perspective also combines parenting skills and appreciation for the global world to raise children with the mental agility, emotional stability, and personal and social skills needed to operate successfully in a multicultural global marketplace. A child raised with a global perspective is a child to whom the world seems exciting, boundless and full of adventure. Global citizens are not afraid to extend hands in welcome and friendship to the world. And never have such people been more important to their own country and the world as they are today.

For many people, globalization is a source of nervous fear: fear that they won't be able to compete, that all that is known and familiar will somehow be swept away. Global-mindedness, at its most fundamental level, is about not being afraid of other cultures or people. It is about feeling confident that we have our own strengths to share and stories to tell, even while respecting the strengths and stories of others. Global worldview replaces fear with curiosity, rigid adherence to old habits or views with open-mindedness and flexibility, concern that old doors will be closed with excitement about new challenges and opportunities. Mark Twain's commented, "The best cure for ignorance, bigotry and narrow-mindedness is travel."

A commitment to global-mindedness, together with a healthy grounding in local community and traditions, can provide a framework for raising kids who are cognizant and accepting of other cultures. Parents want for their children the true freedom from anxiety that grows from both self-confidence and an open mind.

## Parent's Corner