

# Community works: QSI International partnership in education

## Astute scholars make the best mentors. The ideal leaders for Slovak curriculum expansion are the students themselves.

I met with senior students following a busy day when most were involved in rigorous IB (International Baccalaureate) or AP (Advanced Placement) study and intense sport trainings or arts rehearsal. This was a time to share anecdotes in all areas from music to fashion. These young adults are active consumers with their spare time and thoughts. They are quick to gauge my preferences in order to make generational humor. Fortunately I present wide aim!

After the bruising I took for my devotion to tired brands in their opinion I began to see their astute minds make use of amazing business acumen in their words. Their comfortable and well-intentioned teasing reflects abilities with forward plans for strategy and business development. These are young adults thinking beyond introductory stock market investment games. They are a group with entrepreneurial experience studying the successes as well as the failures in global and local markets.

Not long after assessing their strengths, I was meeting in the Bratislava community to discuss school development. In this conversation I found time to exuberantly boast. I shared tidbits from my recent talk. This prompted everyone present to elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses in the emerging Slovak economy and agree that at the core is limited knowledge regarding economic theory and general business attributes among students. We agreed that students would benefit from

indirect exposure to economics.

### How might entrepreneurship be introduced to young students in Slovakia?

In the 2011-12 academic year QSIB "house" groups (students of mixed ages, nationalities and gender) organized for social development and competitions expanded their focus to partner with local schools and centers. An impressive range of projects were developed and completed from sustainable gardening for an adult care center to extended activities with identified needs children in a local school as well as to dog refuge and adoption center service.

Our current senior students were approached about service opportunities they have selected as individuals and as a group. We have spent time making them aware that the competitive USA as well as an increasing number of European universities expect from their applicants extended commitment to the local community. Our task is to inspire their selections so that this service contains:

- Focus – a single organization is served
- Commitment & longevity – a goal established with the organization for completion
- Sustainability – the project must continue after the student service plan is completed

A number in this class pulled from their house experience in the spring of 2012. Many took part in a massive kitchen renovation. The long serving Goodsports organization led

by Tom and Deb Johnson serving "damaged" children in Devinska Nova Ves is partnering with a local school to provide programs, tutoring and baseball skill development to children who might otherwise choose less safe avenues for entertainment. The kitchen represents a home for activities and potentially a place where a Goodsports "graduate" and now qualified baker might join a venture that would teach skills, friendship and an appreciation for baked goods!

Our senior students independently organized and established community teams. They combined the previous service commitment to Goodsports with a desire to teach entrepreneurship. They formed five QSI senior student teams and these teams joined Bukovcana Skola in Devinska. Together these mixed teams will independently develop a business model. The plans will be presented to professional group in May 2013. One or more of the plans will be for a unique bakery item for sustained commercial value to sustain a Goodsport apprentice program.

We are now witnessing organic learning through service program development in our

school with breadth of support and enthusiasm. Students are in the first stage of a program with simple attributes:

- Building Core Economics Knowledge - QSIB team leaders are year two IB Business Studies students and supported by year two IB Economics students co-developing a plan for business development.

**I have never witnessed genuine enthusiasm and such great energy for practical learning. Students know that teaching their acquired skill is an authentic method of performing mastery. Mastered skills represent higher order opportunities – successful business strategies demand higher order ability.**

Brian Dougherty, Teacher of IB Business Studies, QSI

- Teaching Reverence and Respect - Students from Bukovcana Skola are divided and have joined QSI teams. Initial meetings focused on relationship building. We have witnessed teams develop appreciation for the person regardless of nationality and without consideration of



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any relevance to a social or economic ladder.

- Seeking “Profitable Sustainability” - Each team is building comfort and knowledge with fundamental business language, the attributes of a business and the elements of business plan.

**Nothing has such power to broaden the mind as the ability to investigate systematically and truly all that comes under thy observation in life.**

Marcus Aurelius

## Identifying Prior Knowledge

QSIB joined the AmCham effort of taking an assertive role in partnering businesses with the Ministry of Education through a breadth of informational events designed to assist efforts to improve young Slovak readiness in the work place – particularly for creative and entrepreneurial leadership opportunities that will increase investment and expand employment in number and income. This process also uncovered a desire for local schools to broaden the implementation of economics and business studies in secondary, middle and even elementary curriculum. QSIB participates in this fact-finding

offering not only the significant differences of its mastery learning approach but also a commitment to business and economics impact study.

**I cannot predict the wind but I can have my sail ready.**

E. E. Schumacher

## Building Community

Brian Dougherty, teacher of IB Business Studies at QSI, relates this opportunity to similar projects with youth he has participated in when teaching in New Mexico. Brian is mixing into the demands of his course practical communication and application skills for the benefit of his students leading this initiative.

QSIB leader participant Vanessa Barthova not only transfers her emerging entrepreneurial acumen but also her passion for Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream. She shares the love not necessarily for ice cream but more for the commitment from those entrepreneurs to invest in people and for their financial sustainability. She sees opportunity to do the same in her native Slovakia.

## Sustainability

When the QSIB house team finished the kitchen remodel

in June 2012, a fitting spring mural was their final touch. This image is a commitment to further investment so that a business will be born there – ideally a bakery.

**If you need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of your arm.**

Yiddish Proverb

Goodsports leaders Katka and Roman are poised to welcome the business model that will emerge as this community works/service project.

Goodsports aims to open a bakery with an identified product and business model from this project. Bukovciana/Goodspports students and QSIB mentors will:

- Develop an entrepreneurial relationship
- Write a business plan
- Collaborate to attract investors
- Enlist Goodspports “alumni”
- Market an exclusive partnership product
- Reinvest profits into the bakery to fund continuity and expansion
- Welcome new “classes” of students annually who will refine the model

**To look backward for a while is to refresh the eye, to restore it, and to render it more fit for its prime function of looking forward.**

Margaret Fairless Barber



## Using Inquiry to Think Critically

Our students are spending time questioning their resolve, purpose and capability. They are asking themselves to grow their entrepreneurial knowledge in order to identify strengths and weaknesses to hone this social change opportunity.

This is a project that has achieved depth and is poised for greater service learning value as it compels participants to investigate their communities. It is a project that will practically identify consumer confidence and capacity for their products.

## Closure

The critical aspect of self-awareness (metacognitive development) remains. At this juncture there seems little doubt that participants will perform their learning in May 2013. The end result will be a demonstration representing synthesis of business development vocabulary and research.

The launch of a Cub Cookie or similar that will be baked by entrepreneurially empowered teenagers in the Goodspport kitchen under the guidance of their master baker may very well be the outcome. Regardless of the product, twenty-five young learners are business savvy. In turn they will join a 2013-14 QSIB group to introduce entrepreneurship to a second Bukovciana cohort.

Sustainability. Together our youth will grow and improve the Slovak Republic.



*Britt Brantley  
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