High School Principal

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There are few projects closer to my heart than finding ways to change student perception and increase buy-in. I believe that by engaging in work that is focused in this we transform the community around us and, eventually, the world. It is my belief that the changes we have made in social service will have impact long after our students have left CNG; for their actions will resonate within the community and will lead to transformation throughout Bogotá, Colombia, and the world. For the transformation I speak of is of the heart and the head – a change in our students’ ways of being.

When I arrived in August 2009 it was clear to me that CNG firmly believed in giving back to the community. The Hogar, Alianza Schools, and other projects around Bogotá such as Un Techo para mi Pais and began asking why our students didn’t have greater choice and involvement.

In August of the 2010 school year I pulled together Mr. Sheldon Guenther, HS Asssocate Principal; Ms. Gloria Russi, HS Social Service Coordinator; and Ms. Charlotte Samper, Director of Special Projects. We began dreaming of what the high school social service program could become and came up with many new options for our students. At HS Open House, students made their choices. Many of the options offered were led by Seniors accompanied by a faculty member. We noticed greater involvement on the part of our students and there were students who so enjoyed their experience that they continued on, after the required hours were completed. In fact, just yesterday a senior came into my office shedding tears of joy at the accomplishment of collecting sufficient funds for nine houses to be built for Un Techo para mi Pais the last weekend in April. Her tears signaled to me the change we have come to see in our students – personal involvement in a project that changes lives.

We have looked into other options and for the 2011-2012 school year students will have 12 different options from which to choose – and the number is still growing! Students who wish to propose a new social service activity for consideration, for inclusion in the high school options, just need to submit in writing a proposal for the activity to the Director of Social Service and High School Administration. Starting with the Class of 2013, students in both high school and Bachillerato (Colombian) diploma programs will complete a minimum of 120 hours of social service.

We believe that a vast majority of our students will complete far more than the requirement and that they will do so in a vast collection of projects that mean something to them on a personal level. Through that engagement, our students will begin to buy-in to social service, see the transformation it brings to individuals, communities, and themselves, and slowly, they will begin to change the world.

The “Activities for Bosque Calderón Children” help children of Bosque Calderón School (Simón Rodríguez) in their cognitive development, developing psychomotor skills, and improving their affective and behavioral needs. Children attend Saturdays from 8:00 AM – 12:00 noon and Wednesdays from 2:00 PM – 4:30 PM to work on English, Art, and choir.

"Dios es Amor" is a charity in Tenjo, a small town about an hour away from school. It is a home for some sixty girls ranging from ages one to fifteen who have been sexually abused by their families and now live in the home. As a group we get together to go visit them every other Saturday from 8 am (we meet at CNG at this time) to 1 pm (we arrive at CNG at this time), and we carry out different activities with the girls. We watch...
movies, play games, have water balloon fights, and help them with their English homework.

The “Bosque Calderón Adult Computer Class” is a program that is offered to adults of the neighborhood where they can acquire basic knowledge and skills on use of computer tools and programs. The classes are in Spanish and we are meeting every Monday from 2:15 pm – 4:30 pm in H120.

“Operation Smile” is a non-profit organization that has an objective to make free surgeries to people, especially kids, from low income families who suffer from cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities. The surgery is just the start; they accompany the patients and their families from beginning to end by preparing them psychologically and physically by having dentists, psychologists, phone audiologists and every kind of professional volunteer that can help cure the patient. The aim of CNG in Operation Smile is to lend a hand with anything they need: typing information into computers, cleaning and decorating the center, teaching kids and their families about different topics and some may even be able to go into the surgery room. We go on Mondays from 2:30 until 5 and our work has been pretty much appreciated. We have helped smiles grow.

“Art Social Service” – The students have the opportunity to work with the children of the neighborhood, Barrio Juan XXIII, in art activities. This Social service takes place on Tuesdays from 3:30 – 4:30 PM. The students are responsible for creating the activities and teaching them to the children.

“Santa Rita Foundation” – Santa Rita is an orphanage and home for children with mental and physical handicaps. Students go to visit and play with the children at the foundation. Students currently visit on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2:00 – 4:30 PM.

“Hogar Experience Project” – This is a project we are beginning in August 2011 in order to provide our Hogar students with the opportunity to use some of the CNG facilities to further enhance their education. We will be offering activities such as science labs and gymnastics after school hours. The activities will be led by CNG staff and students.

“Saturday Alliance Talentos Program” – The Talentos Program is offered to students from two of the Alliance schools: Santiago de Atalayas and Argelia. The best students between 12 and 14 years of age sign up for enrichment classes in one of three areas: technology, the arts, and English. Students come ten weekends a semester from 9:00 to 12:00 A.M. CNG students can fulfill their social service hours by helping teachers, or actually teaching these classes.

“Un Techo para mi País” – For the past three years, CNG has worked together with Un Techo para mi País, a non-profit organization that builds houses for those in extreme poverty here in Bogotá and throughout Colombia. Our students look for ways to raise money throughout the year, and then actually participate in the construction of the houses, usually on weekends. The work is extremely rewarding, and the relationships that occur between the students and the families for whom the houses are being built are very strong.

“Best Buddies Colombia” is a non-profit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Coprogreso” is a foundation designed to support the education of children of low income families. It is willing to open opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The year started out with many expectations for the improvement of CNG’s Model United Nations. Over the course of the year, we have formalized several processes and policies within MUN including those of officer elections, delegate promotions, and admittance to the organization. In addition, we democratized the process of selecting new participants to include the opinions and votes of veteran delegates. We have also worked hard to better prepare our students to successfully face the challenges of Model United Nations.

Through these steps of continuous improvement and our long history as a part of MUN, we have been able to send representatives to local and national conferences with pride and honor. Another course of improvement was the building of a more cohesive MUN culture within Colombia. Most notably, our partnership with Anglo Colombiano has strengthened the MUN experience and the relationship between our schools. Together, we organized one of the first joint models in Bogotá and this new model UMUN drew hundreds of students from cities around Colombia. In total, 22 schools were in attendance. This joint model experience is only the beginning as our two schools are already looking ahead and preparing for UMUNI and the 30th anniversary of CNG’s Model United Nations.

Like every model, students work together to debate, discuss and attempt to solve issues facing today’s world. The topics this year were designed by the students of Anglo and CNG and showed a depth of understanding of current events and overarching objectives of the United Nations. The delegates were confronted with important issues that generated analysis and debate as they searched for viable political, economical, and humanitarian solutions.

2010 and 2011 proved to be a great year for delegate participation. In total, students of middle and high school attended eight national conferences. CNG students participated a total of 128 times representing various commissions. Of the 128 representatives, 59 came home with awards or recognition. Still to come are conferences at Gimnasio Moderno, Universidad de Rosario, and Colegio Casobes de Bogotá. Even as the year draws to a close, we continue to work hard so that these upcoming conferences will be successful models for our CNG delegation.

Lastly, a special thanks is extended to everyone that made Model UN such a success this year. Thank you to all of the administrative team members that helped us organize our trips and logistics, to the student delegates who put forth their best effort, the board, and above all to our Secretary General Nicolás Zuleta for his leadership and commitment to the project this year.