

The Global Classroom 2016-2017

Since its inception in 2010, the Global Classroom has played an important role in strengthening the 11th and 12th standard Science Curriculum of the Adivasi Ashram Shala in Chikhale Village, Maharashtra, India (near Mumbai). In May 2017, the school reported that 96.5% of the Science faculty students passed their 12th standard (HSC) year-end exams; 88% of the Arts faculty passed their HSC exams. During the 2016-'17 school year, in addition to providing for the basic educational needs of more than 600 students in grades 1 through 12, the Chikhale School, through its Global Classroom:

1. Conducted six international Skype calls to three high schools in North Carolina,
2. Hosted six students and one faculty member from Guilford College for a week during Chikhale's annual intramural sports program,
3. Upgraded the school's computer and science lab space and
4. Conducted a survey of recent graduates of the school through face-to-face visits.

Since the first Skype call between the students in Chikhale and Forsyth Country Day School in November 2011, more than 200 students have written, exchanged and discussed over 300 one-page essays dealing with their care for the ecology of their communities and schools. These essays and other background information about the Global Classroom is available on-line at www.EmergingEcology.org/global-classroom.html. During the 2016-17 school year, six one-hour conversations were held that included the students from Chikhale and students from Ayden-Grifton High School in eastern North Carolina and Grimsley High



School and Northeast Guilford High School near Greensboro, North Carolina. In addition to discussing their essays (photo left shows Chikhale students talking via Skype to students at Grimsley) the students shared various aspects of their personal skills like singing and dancing (photo above shows three of the Grimsley High School girls dancing in front of their Skype camera during the March dialogue).

Now that the technological capacity for international video conferencing is available both in Chikhale and in North Carolina schools, new ways to expand and deepen the conversations are being explored for the coming years. When the Global Classroom began in 2011, the internet access at the Chikhale School was sporadic at best, none of the students had any computer experience and the faculty had only textbook knowledge of electronic communications and word processing. During this school year, a consistent internet connection has been available to the school and several faculty members have

become confident of their skills necessary to maintain the service. Many of the students, and a large percentage of the graduates and faculty, have smartphones which can access the internet either wirelessly or through wi-fi connections like are provided at the school. The students, graduates and faculty are eager to find ways to enhance this aspect of the Global Classroom in the coming school year.

Since the school first opened in 1989, numerous international guests have visited the school; the students are experienced in hosting foreign visitors and business and government leaders from India. These international exchanges provide encouragement to the students at the school and expand their vocational horizons. For the past two years, Guilford College has sent six students and a faculty member to spend a week with the Chikhale School (photo right). This face-to-face interchange focuses on sports and physical activities as a common experience for crossing the cultural chasm between these two groups with diverse backgrounds.



At the end of the school year, the Chikhale School completed the renovation, relocation and upgrade of the computer center (photo left) and science lab to a larger space on the upper level of the school. This provides better facilities for these important assets to the upper grades and made additional classroom space available for elementary students on the ground floor of the school. Part of the renovation costs were provided by donations made through Emerging Ecology, an international partner of ICA India which manages the school.

The fourth major accomplishment of the Global Classroom Project during the 2016-'17 school year centered on reconnecting with over 200 of the recent graduates of the school. Will Sands, who visited the school with Guilford College in 2016, returned to India in January 2017 with the intention of beginning to reconnect with the graduates. Working with two of the graduates of the first batch of students to complete the 12th standard curriculum and who have now completed their degrees from Engineering College, Will visited the home villages of previous students. The insights from his work will help build a foundation for continued support of the graduates of the school. Will's detailed report of his trip follows this overview report.



The Global Classroom is a project of Adivasi Ashram Shala in Chikhale, a program of the Institute of Cultural Affairs India. Participation of groups in the United States, and some financial support for the school, is organized by Emerging Ecology, a non-profit organization committed to *promoting a worldview for the next generations' solutions.*



For additional information, contact Nelson Stover (NStover@EmergingEcology.org) or Vijay Lokhande (Vijay.Lokhande01@gmail.com).

Prepared by: F. Nelson Stover, June 1, 2017

Support for Chikhale School Graduates

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Traveling to India in 2016 sparked a notion within me to continue working on what the Institute of Cultural Affairs started in Chikhale during the 70s and 80s. Who knew that a village development project would later provide a school with a high school-level science curriculum in English for children in surrounding villages to learn and interact with other students. Ultimately, fostering great leaders that have, and can, continue developing their careers and surrounding villages. The ICA India's Adivasi Ashram Shala school at Chikhale has sent almost 600 graduates out into the



workforce to start their careers and continue their education since it began offering 11th and 12st standard classes in 2010. However, after speaking with some recent graduates, many could use guidance and support on the how to's of developing their careers and villages.

In 2017, Emerging Ecology spent most of a month-long trip visiting students and graduates from the Adivasi Ashram School in Chikhale in their home wadis and villages surrounding the Panvel area. Thanks to the help of graduates Janardan Wagh and Bharat Hawali (photo left with Will Sands), a database was created with over 200 graduate names, home villages and contact information (often including cell phone and Facebook page) that can be used as starting point for reaching out to graduates to understand their needs and how the school curriculum can be revised to attend to such.

In the United States, parents and teachers are often educated in choosing careers and excelling in the workforce, especially if they have been on the journey themselves. However, people like Janardan are exposed to new careers and obligations to society. Therefore, going to his father who is a lifelong farmer living near the forests on the slope of the Ghats (see photo at right) may not be the best option due to the perspectives and advice that may be lacking.



Thankfully, the Chikhale students, graduates, and faculty are surrounded by passionate and helpful people like the Lokhande family and their friends and supporters through the ICA India, Emerging Ecology, and a partnership with Guilford College. These networks continue to initiate projects and curriculum that can help each student reach their full potential and succeed in any chosen career. (Photo at the right shows Will Sands with Chikhale graduates in a nearby hostel as they continue their education and begin their jobs.)



Several things were learned during January 2017 in India. At the school, computer labs are planning to be updated. This will enhance the efficiency of the Skype calls and computer research skills which are vehicles for the students to learn English as well as increase their breadth of knowledge and interests. Pertaining to the graduates, Janardan specifically spoke of “guidance for career and developing villages.” What better way to improve quality of wadis/villages than to create leaders that have experienced life in those areas.

The Skype calls from students at Chikhale to high schools in North Carolina provide a great way to engage those from different cultures to improve English and awareness of energy use, food production, and various other topics within both societies. For the graduates, a similar system could be beneficial by providing online video calls monthly to monitor current involvements and progress in life and village development. In addition, this would provide a forum for answering any questions or discussing concerns the graduates may be facing in hopes of offering meaningful and effective solutions.

I look forward to continuing to work with the ICA and Emerging Ecology to provide long-term support for the Chikhale graduates.

For additional information, contact Nelson Stover (NStover@EmergingEcology.org) or Vijay Lokhande (Vijay.Lokhande01@gmail.com)
Or visit www.EmergingEcology.org/global-classroom.html.

Prepared by: Will Sands (willsands71494@gmail.com)
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