

AFS Awards - March 25, 2024

Remarks from Rick Swanson, Principal at Hingham High School

Thank you, and good morning, everyone. On behalf of my colleagues, Erica Pollard and Kara Roth, who have been here with me throughout this excellent conference, and on behalf of everybody else in our school community, most of whom are back home in Hingham, Massachusetts, just starting another school week, I want to thank AFS for this great honor.

Hingham High School lists “global citizenship” among its six core values. And, although those core values are not listed in any kind of rank order, many members of our school community would recognize “global citizenship” as a particular hallmark of our school; as a distinguishing, even defining, characteristic; and as something that sets our school apart. At Hingham High School, “global citizenship” is much more than a catch-phrase; it’s more than two words that are tacked on to a mission statement and posted on a classroom wall; it’s an ethos that finds genuine expression in the lived experience of our students and our staff.

The *forms* of expression are many:

- An insistence on the study of world languages and cultures for all students;
- a wide range of courses in literature and social studies that prioritize diverse voices and topics;
- a curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking and promotes empathy;
- wall murals and flag displays that illustrate our commitment to global education;
- a robust certificate program that enlists more than ten percent of our student body in advanced global study;
- school-sponsored travel opportunities; and
- ongoing, longstanding, participation in student exchange programs like those delivered by AFS.

Erica, Kara, and I have all worked at Hingham High School for approximately two decades. Throughout that time, as our school has steadily and relentlessly increased its commitment to global education, we've been part of a movement that has brought the three of us, like others in our community, a great deal of joy. I think each person in this room knows what I'm talking about. Each of us is a champion of global education, and we've all made it a central part of our life's work; that's why

we've all been here for three days, and it's why we'll be traveling to Capitol Hill in a few hours.

What can we say when we get there? How about this: Through its exchange programs, AFS is doing something incredibly profound and meaningful. It's true on a small scale, one student at a time, and it's true on a grand scale, too. At a very basic level, we all want to be happy, and there is no better predictor of happiness than the quality of our connections with one another. AFS continues to build those connections, even across barriers of geography, language, and culture. This is how they advance their mission of building a more just and peaceful world. It's a beautiful mission, it's an *essential* mission, and it must be our own. Joining with AFS in this work, therefore, becomes an act of hope, an act of belief, and even an act of patriotism. Best of all, it's a joyful act that delivers, through real connections, a sure ticket to happiness for every one of us. My school has been enriched, even transformed, by its partnership with AFS. What if that could be said for every school? Let this be our goal: May it someday be said for every school, both here in our own country, and throughout the world.