

Global Academy

For North Star Charter School students, the world is their classroom.

On a typical morning at North Star Charter School, Alex Macdonald's ninth grade computer students are absorbed in a self-directed economics project to rival those offered by many colleges. To teach the students how

old, an Eagle High School graduate with a Master's in Curriculum and Technology, notes. "Understanding the context and perceptions of the international realm are essential to creating 'virtuous citizen-leaders'—North Star's goal."

reports. They share the information they've gathered with the entire class in weekly oral updates.

Jacqui W. and Lindsey K., who have both attended North Star for several years, chose Greece as their target country. As they clicked through screens accented with whitewashed, sun-drenched buildings, they talked about their experience with the charter school. "I could have gone to Eagle High. I have friends there. But I like the small school environment here," Lindsey says. "I feel like I'm challenged. Not everyone gets to have this kind of opportunity." "At North Star, we learn how to learn. Instead of just telling us, the teachers inspire us to do it on our own," Jacqui adds. Macdonald, who teaches Computer Applications and finance, loves the school's international focus and the camaraderie he shares with other teachers, including John Hansen, a former Ada County Deputy Prosecutor and twelve-year Capital High School Advanced Placement government and history educator who now teaches Social Studies at North Star.

Hansen, along with the high school's curriculum consultant Kali Kurdy, has been instrumental in the school's pursuit of the rigorous and highly acclaimed International Baccalaureate Diploma program. North Star is actively pursuing authorization as an IB World School. While candidate status does not guarantee authorization, North Star is committed to the goal of offering IB-approved courses to 11th graders beginning with the 2009-2010 school year.

Support among educators for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program is growing across the nation. Already, IB is offered at three schools in Idaho. Other Idaho school districts, including Meridian, have expressed a desire to offer IB. IB

students take rigorous exams, write an extensive research essay, and participate in community service to earn their diplomas, which can often translate into college credit. But Hansen notes that the program is not just for academic achievers. "This program can really benefit everyone," he says. "IB is about making students well-rounded and helping them to realize their potential."

North Star's new high school focuses on International Business and Economics. At a time when global concerns are increasingly affecting the way we live, students can learn invaluable skills to prepare them for life beyond the classroom. "We want our students to be truly college-ready," stresses Kurdy, who taught economics at Borah High School for 30 years before coming to North Star.

North Star's high school will have a new home, complete with full facilities, in Fall 2009. The school recently announced its purchase of a 15-acre parcel on Linder Road, near its current site on Park Lane. The new school will be located adjacent to the planned Legacy subdivision and will feature expanded K-8 capacity as well as the new high school. "We're excited about the opportunities for growth," said Principal Phyllis Smith. "This move will enable us to work with even more students while maintaining that 'small-school' environment that makes us special."

For students like Lindsey and Jacqui, that "small school" environment, combined with world-class educational opportunities and innovative, committed teachers like Macdonald, translates into an education they look forward to every day—and one they believe will ultimately help them reach their college goals.



to create and use Excel spreadsheets, Macdonald devised a creative approach that tests the kids' knowledge of global events and increases their awareness of the forces that shape international markets.

"As a product of public education myself, I was never made aware of the social and economic concerns of other countries; only the geographical aspects," Macdonald

For Macdonald's project, students work in groups, researching and updating an Excel template with current events and information gleaned from periodicals, newspapers, and of course, the internet. They chart financial data and map their country's economic progress, relying on indicators like gross domestic product (GDP), currency exchange rates, and even unemployment



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"At North Star, we learn how to learn."
—Jacqui W., North Star Charter School ninth grader

North Star Public Charter School is currently accepting transfer applications from ninth graders. For more information, call 947-0611, or visit www.northstarcharter.org.