

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 153

No. of entries: 12,937 (Children's category: 4,353 / Youth category: 8,584)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Taming the Jungle*
Sizhe (Sophia) Liang (Age 14, China)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Dreams and Abundance*
Chiharu Konii (Age 17, Japan)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Education Across Endless Clouds*
Carrie Hsu (Age 13, USA)
- *Education and Character*
Honoka Kato (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Education System in My Utopia*
Ece Sevenay (Age 16, Turkey)
- *Education for Awareness*
Haley Payet (Age 16, Seychelles)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- Anghel Maria (Age 9, Romania)
- Hiroki Kimiwada (Age 10, Japan)
- Kinley Khamsum Lhendup (Age 13, Bhutan)
- Alina Lascu (Age 14, Romania)
- Chinatsu Ueno (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (5 entrants)

- Maaya Ito (Age 15, Japan)
- Miyo Hataoka (Age 16, Japan)
- Preethika Raviraja (Age 18, India)
- Pitou Keo (Age 19, Cambodia)
- Ying Qin Tee (Age 25, Malaysia)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Haruka Nakamura (Age 9, Japan)
- Mariyam Dhaniya Ageel (Age 9, Maldives)
- Audrey Cherilyn Ilham (Age 10, Indonesia)
- Yuan Tseng (Age 11, Taiwan of China)
- Aaditya Singh (Age 12, India)
- Adolfo Mandujano Lara (Age 12, México)
- Jacky Khiani Suhana (Age 12, Indonesia)
- Muhammad Salim (Age 12, Pakistan)
- Yuma Takasu (Age 12, Japan)
- Zainab Hassan (Age 12, Pakistan)

Youth category (24 entrants)

- Sujin Cho (Age 15, Korea)
- Alicia Marie Goeckel (Age 16, Germany)
- Chulan Rishikesh (Age 16, Mauritius)
- Emily Han (Age 16, Korea)
- Kanae Imaoka (Age 16, Japan)
- Pratik Kafle (Age 16, Nepal)
- Risa Sato (Age 16, Japan)
- Johannes Lang (Age 17, Austria)
- Linh Do (Age 17, Vietnam)
- Hiromu Kasahara (Age 18, Japan)

- Dhanieya Ganeish (Age 13, Malaysia)
- Hashan Jayathilaka (Age 13, Sri Lanka)
- Ito Kikuchi (Age 13, Japan)
- Joel Andrew Mallari (Age 13, Philippines)
- Manuela Faldini Malheiro de Oliveira (Age 13, Brazil)
- Soewon Lee (Age 13, Korea)
- An Sasaki (Age 14, Japan)
- Marcelo Rainer Román Abstoss (Age 14, Colombia)
- Margaret Zheng (Age 14, USA)
- Mariam Bint Imran (Age 14, Pakistan)
- Naoki Yamaguchi (Age 14, Japan)
- Rajashree Choudhury (Age 14, India)
- Ryotaro Yamazaki (Age 14, Japan)
- Toko Oba (Age 14, Japan)
- Kana Seiki (Age 15, Japan)
- Renato Valentim (Age 18, Brazil)
- Jiménez Ahumada Delia (Age 19, México)
- María José Brenes Álvarez (Age 20, Costa Rica)
- Maria Hizza (Age 21, Tanzania)
- Dima Samaro (Age 22, Palestine)
- Kim Tho Le (Age 22, Vietnam)
- Olena Sytnyk (Age 22, Ukraine)
- Rahma Febrianti (Age 22, Indonesia)
- Sandra Ruiz Llamas (Age 22, México)
- Anna-Liisa Chuykin (Age 23, Estonia)
- Anastasiia Kandaurova (Age 24, Russia)
- Melina Neophytou (Age 24, Cyprus)
- Syeda Zeenat Junaid (Age 24, Pakistan)
- Neo Moeti (Age 25, Lesotho)

Best School Award

No School Applicable

School Incentive Award (43 schools)

- Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (México)
- Colegio Horizontes, La Paz (Bolivia)
- Federal Government Girls' College, Kabba, Kogi (Nigeria)
- Fukushima Prefectural Asakakaisei Senior High School (Japan)
- Gymnasium 12, Minsk (Belarus)
- Hiroshima Nagisa Junior High School, Senior High School (Japan)
- Instituto Nicholas Roerich, México (México)
- Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee (USA)
- Johor Bahru Religious National Secondary School (Malaysia)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School, Illinois (USA)
- Escuela Preparatoria No. 8, Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
- Fuji Sacred Heart, Shizuoka (Japan)
- Gymnasium #1, Brest (Belarus)
- Highland Lutheran International School, Enga (Papua New Guinea)
- Ibaraki Prefectural Koga Secondary School (Japan)
- Iskandhar Schoolv (Maldives)
- Japaniche Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)
- Jonan Gakuen High School, Osaka (Japan)

- Kinki University Wakayama Junior High School (Japan)
- Kokushikan Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
- Okinawa Shogaku High School & Junior High School, Okinawa (Japan)
- OOU Lazo Trpovski, Skopje (Macedonia)
- Preparatoria 23, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (México)
- Roots Millennium Schools, Islamabad (Pakistan)
- Sadhu Vaswani International School For Girls, New Delhi (India)
- Setagaya Junior High School attached to Tokyo Gakugei University (Japan)
- Sigaram Academy of Excellence, Tamil Nadu (India)
- Sugiyama Jogakuen University Affiliated Primary School, Aichi (Japan)
- Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School (Japan)
- Waseda Shibuya Senior High School (Singapore)
- Kokugojuku KURU, Tokyo (Japan)
- Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)
- Meijo University Senior High School, Aichi (Japan)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Paderewski Private Grammar School, Lublin (Poland)
- Rikkyo School in England, West Sussex (UK)
- Sanonihondaigaku Secondary School, Tochigi (Japan)
- Satri Withaya School, Bangkok (Thailand)
- Showa Women's University Junior-Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Sjkc Kong Min Cawangan Kedua, Penang (Malaysia)
- Teikyo Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Tshaphel Lower Secondary School, Haa (Bhutan)

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Children's Category – 1st Prize】

Taming the Jungle

(Original)

Sizhe (Sophia) Liang

(Age 14, China <Living in USA>)

Cherry Hill High School East, NJ

For seven hours a day, five days a week, I live in a jungle. Not the kind with towering trees and tangled vines, of course— my jungle is made of red-bricked walls and ivory tiles. Instead of monkeys and pythons and parrots, the ecosystem bursts with aspiring doctors, budding lawyers, soon-to-be engineers. These animals hoot and screech and caw to each other, comparing Calculus test scores and English essay grades. As in any jungle, there's a pecking order. Students do not hesitate to cheat, plagiarize, and tear each other apart in the bloodlust to reach the top of the food chain. When I gaze around this vast untamed wilderness, my heart aches for my classmates who toil to the breaking point at ungodly hours of the night, who are forced to quit guitar and painting in pursuit of tutoring and Honors Chemistry, who are taught to believe that their intelligence and talent is determined by a collection of percentages, percentiles, and government-mandated tests. When I look around my school, I can't help but wonder, how can we change this?



Albert Einstein's famous quote comes to mind: "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." If Einstein's words hold true, then our current education system is wasting a considerable amount of resources trying to stick flounders into forests. Like items on a production line, students are molded until their grades and test scores and extracurricular activities fit a cookie-cutter standard. Class rank, standardized tests, and other narrow measures of achievement all perpetrate the idea that there is only one type of intelligence, only one way to observe and reason. Students with skills and passions that cannot be measured by filling in bubbles are uprooted from their natural aptitudes. As a result of this assembly-line education system, the

world loses the unique, unconventional young minds that are essential to solving the complex challenges we face as a global community.

Thus, rather than forcing fish to climb trees, we should recognize how critters of varying shapes and sizes and abilities all play a vital part in maintaining the balance of the jungle. In the classroom, this means fostering collaboration instead of pitting kids against one another. Much like wild creatures who all depend on each other to survive in an interconnected web of life, students rely on their classmates so they can learn and grow from each other. Schools should remove class rank, which encourages children to think of their peers as nothing but competitors and enemies. Instead of basing learning on textbooks, lectures, and rote memorization, educators should assign projects that require a diversity of talents to be conglomerated. Multimedia, interactive demonstrations, and hands-on experiments can be incorporated into memorable, creative lessons. With all the readily accessible technology today, there is no longer a reason to limit students to PowerPoints and worksheets. We can give kids the opportunity to build models, design inventions, and communicate with experts in the field— all with a few swipes of a finger. Likewise, assessments should be comprehensive, involving problem-solving and real-world applications, instead of merely requiring a choice between A, B, C, or D. This holistic education cultivates passion, critical thinking, and out-of-the-box reasoning, and it gives all types of learners the opportunity to contribute their one-of-a-kind talents.

Our world is changing, and the old standard for education can no longer keep up. The twenty-first century is the age of inventors, engineers, and entrepreneurs, all of whom can only be successful when they communicate instead of clash, collaborate instead of compete. Only a generation that is diverse, curious, and creative could be capable of tackling the many problems we face internationally. A brighter future starts within the classroom, with dedicated educators and originative students. It is indeed, as they say, a jungle out there, but our schools have the power to raise the next movers and shakers to tame it.

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Youth Category – 1st Prize】

Dreams and Abundance

(Original in Japanese)

Chiharu Konii

(Age 17, Japan)

Suginami Sogo High School of Tokyo

“What is your dream?” the interviewer asked me during my high school entrance examination. As if I had been waiting for the question, the words I had prepared flowed smoothly out of my mouth. But in contrast, my heart was saying: “You don’t really have a dream like that, do you?”

There are about 35,000 suicides a year in Japan, the highest of any developed country. If Japan is so wealthy and prosperous, then why are so many people taking their own lives? I had been asking this question since I was a child. But after entering high school, I felt that I understood the reason why. I had no dream.

In junior high school, when I said to my teacher, “In the future I want to be a doctor and help children in developing countries,” my teacher answered, “Good. That’s wonderful.” But I didn’t fail to catch the little scornful laugh he made as he said it. Time after time, I gave up on an occupation that I aspired to, thinking that it was impossible for me. I threw away my dreams, and gradually my heart became hollow.

That was when my turning point came. In grade 11, I saw a poster advertising volunteer work at an orphanage in Indonesia during summer vacation. Since I was a child, I had always dreamed of participating in international cooperation efforts, and I immediately decided to go.

When I got to Indonesia, I found an environment very different from that of Japan. But my enjoyment of the time I spent there far outweighed the harsh conditions. For me, living in Indonesia was everything that my life in Japan wasn’t. Whereas in Japan, my parents were



often late coming home and I would eat by myself, here, my 'family' of 60 people sat together around a big dining table. Waking up in the morning used to be a bother, but now I woke up with a good feeling, listening to the children's beautiful hymns.

The 50 children in the orphanage each had their own circumstances that brought them there, and they were living their lives as best they could. I learned more things from those children than I can possibly count.

However, after a good deal of time had passed during my stay, something happened that gave me quite a shock. It happened when we celebrated the Star Festival (Tanabata) with the children. The children were asked, "What is your dream?" and they were given cards on which to write their answer. I was very surprised when I looked at the cards that came back. Among the 50 cards the children handed in, only five occupations were written. When I asked an orphanage staff member why this was the case, he replied, "The children's world is very small, so they can only choose from occupations that are familiar to them. And even for the occupations they know, their dream won't come true, because they are too poor." He also told me that 30 percent of the children in the orphanage go on to commit crimes.

This is what poverty is, I realized. It was quite a shock to learn this, after I had been living with the children for a month. I realized that being poor meant that the children would have very few dreams to choose from, and I was taken aback by this.

How about in Japan? Certainly, Japan is a very wealthy country. It would seem that we have unlimited choices for our future. But is that really the case? When I talked about my dream, I was told that it was impossible for me. When we are growing up, we are told that 'happiness' means going to a good school, getting a good job, getting married, and growing old.

When I went to the orphanage and met the children there, I felt a kind of happiness that I've never felt before. The happiness of sitting together with the entire family to eat meals. The happiness of being able to share even what little you have with your brothers and sisters. The happiness of giving our full attention to the people in our lives. Could these things be called 'happiness' in Japan, I wonder?

Both Japan and Indonesia are poor, because in both countries, the choices for one's dream are narrow. In Indonesia, it's because of money. In Japan, it's due to our narrow concept of

happiness.

At present, I am writing a book. It's a book that introduces 200 different occupations and all the countries of the world, and it's written in Indonesian. I'm planning to have this book reach the orphanage in August of this year (2016).

After that, I want to open a 'classroom of dreams,' to teach children how big the world is and introduce the vast number of options available to them. I think this kind of 'dream education' is the education that is needed to build a better future—a future where children can have a dream and make progress toward achieving it. This, I think, is needed in both developed and developing countries.

I now have a dream—a dream to broaden the choices available to children. And for the first time in my life, I am spending every day filled with hope.

Education Across Endless Clouds

(Original)

Carrie Hsu

(Age 13, USA)

The foundation of a better future lies within the youth, within the next generation, within education. There are many complex problems in the world, one of which is the human ideology to spread their own thoughts and to be heard; this need raging throughout their blood, causing them to do hateful things unto others. All of these problems begin with a simple human state -- a state of being unsatisfied, a state of being not at peace.

Every child should be at peace. Many people tell others that their dreams aren't realistic, and that they cannot happen; thus, so many live in a state without inner peace with themselves. What if the future holds a place where any dream is possible, and that no child is told that they cannot be what they want, that their future is fully in their hands? In poverty or in wealth, no child should be inferior because of small issues like money. Dreams are clouds in the future of education. The truth is, reality and dreams are not all that different. In fact, dreams are like fog that kiss reality, softly like a mother does a child. Every dream can come true for the future; the future always has an infinite amount of doors and roads to take.

An ideal education system is incredibly varied, so that each student can find their passion. Instead of waiting until college and having only a limited time to decide on what each student will do for their adulthood, why not start at childhood? Yes, childhood is a place to learn the ABC's, go out and play, and eat popsicle sticks, but isn't it also time to ponder about the future? As children, we are so innocent, never thinking about what the future will hold, but what if that innocence is preserved? As we grow older, we learn about reality and tragedy that begin to weigh each child and their dreamy clouds down one by one until there is nearly none left in the sky.

Yes, students should eventually grow out fantasies, but they should never forget them. As Paulo Coelho said, "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear

of failure.” Children encounter fear and failure; all of their dreams get stuffed into a tiny corner of their heart until that storage is overtaken by fear, failure, and harsh reality. Education should dig into that corner and expand their views and dreams; humanity will advance to solve local and global problems everywhere in our lives. Reality will serve as motivation for students and children to better the world and promote the ultimate goal: for the world and everybody in it to be at peace.

This education system should encourage self-discovery whilst still being a blend of innocence and interest. They will be able to choose the subjects they are passionate about when they feel ready to do so. Education will be a basic human right, no matter the color, race, ethnicity, gender, or wealth of each child. This education includes hands-on activities, patience without the pressure of many deadlines, and interaction with adults of their chosen profession or other students. Students will be able to develop their own intelligence by fully understanding and promoting creative, self-thought, and individual ideas. There will be many levels of each profession, and qualified people in the field to teach it and interact with the students, instead of the students reading from a textbook everyday, like the education system I experience today.

Today I am not at peace. I do not know what my future holds, nor what I want it to hold. People have told me that my dreams are unrealistic, or forced their ideas for my future upon me. Our education system today has not encouraged me to find my passion; instead, I must go through this searching journey alone and afraid. No child should ever fear their future; they should look to the future with hope and happiness. I hope for the future generations that education will improve to a state of happiness, and that every child gets to be a child and taste the dew dropped by the petals of peace.

Education and Character

(Original in Japanese)

Honoka Kato

(Age 14, Japan)

Fuzoku Shizuoka Junior High School

In the past, when I saw news about a terrorist incident, I would be shocked by the images, and I felt sympathy for the lives that were senselessly taken away. But time would pass without my doing anything about it, and I would return to my peaceful life.

In February, I participated in a peace program for the Middle East. A delegation of family members bereaved by the Israeli Palestinian conflict came to Shizuoka, where I live. I listened to the stories of young people around 20 years old. There was a person whose parents were killed before his eyes, and another who, when she was just nine years old, saw her sisters captured and killed. Living in Japan, I could not even imagine such devastating experiences.

Israel and Palestine are enemy countries. Yet, a few brave youth from both countries were willing to be paired up and do a homestay together. I would have thought that even if they acted in a friendly way toward each other, a moment would come when events from the past would resurface in their mind, and they would be unable to contain their feelings of hatred and grief. But after spending so long at the limits of chaos and disorder, they had true strength and a sense of reason. They had the courage to overcome and reach out. There is something we can learn from this example.

One of the people whose family was affected by the war told us: "We have no dreams or hopes for the future. All we want is to live a peaceful life, without being afraid."

Why do so many people have to die in this way? It is not just because of wars. Lives are also lost because people cannot get vaccinations or medical treatment, and there are children

struggling in poverty and suffering from hunger. Many of the extremists who carry out suicide bombings are not so far from me in age.

Recently, I have been thinking about these issues more than I did before. I think the greatest threat to peace is our apathy toward those who are suffering. We turn away from realities that we don't want to face, and return to our everyday lives as if it is someone else's problem. This apathy creates a gap between wealthy people and poor people, and leads to terrorism and war.

I believe that solving environmental issues will make a better future for the planet, and since I was young I have participated in various activities for this cause. However, that alone is not enough. It is just as important to build a world in which people all over the world can say, "I'm happy to be born."

My school's mottos are "truth, goodness, and beauty" and "independence." Our goal is to pursue a better world and create it together. In classes run by students, we sometimes have disagreements, and things can get out of control. Even at those times, we fully share our opinions, and we work hard to find the beginnings of a resolution to our disagreement. As we deepen our thinking and try over and over to understand what the other side wants to say, we feel fulfilled and enriched. However, the people educating us are adults who have a great deal of knowledge and experiences. I think that the way we are educated also forms our character. It is education, I think, that fostered young suicide bombers who believed it was the right thing to do. Like the answer to a math question, some answers are universal. But right now, we are learning without questioning the educational policies of our respective country.

A world without war and terrorism. A world of acceptance, where we can lend a hand to very young people, elderly people, sick and disabled people, and people who think differently than we do. A world where we have the courage to stop destroying nature for profit.

I am unaware of many of the problems happening in the world. I want the adults who run today's world to firmly face one another and talk to each other, with the courage to overcome their antagonism. I want the adults of today to teach us what we need for the future. Then, when we become adults, we will put what we have learned into practice, transferring our ideas and knowledge to the next generation.

We are all one family living in our beautiful, clear blue home—the 4.6 billion-year-old planet Earth. The home is the family’s schoolhouse. For the future of Earth and the peace of humanity, I would like us to make our schoolhouse a place where we work together, use our imagination, and advance our learning.

Education System in My Utopia

(Original)

Ece Sevenay

(Age 16, Turkey)

Cevre College

Imagine a colossal, frosty swamp that does not have an end. With a pathetic endeavor, you raise your head to see the end. However, it is so powerful that no matter how hard you try to struggle, the swamp swallows you more.

Our world is an insatiable and cruel swamp which is fed and expanded by the pain, poverty, starvation, racism and ignorance. For most of us Utopia is just a fairytale still being told to small kids not to kill the last sources of true innocence. In a world where humans are categorized by their skin colors, languages, religions and money; we still hope that one day, humanity will change.

So, why does it have to be like that? Is there really a chance for us to purify from our lurking savagery and ignorance? I think it is so unnecessary and ill-considered to ask that question. Do you know why? It's because we already know the answer; the keystone. And we name it: education. Education should be the water that put out the ongoing fire. It should enlighten our minds and hearts. And, it should make us love each other. Nevertheless, when I look out, all I see is pain and suffering.

As a teenager, I don't want to live in a world without a future. I don't wish for a too complicated education system. Firstly, stop classifying us by asking for the things that not everyone can do. Start to understand us and try to look more deep inside. Because, somewhere deep inside, we are all blessed with fascinating talents. As Einstein says: 'Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.'

Secondly, stop teaching us the conventional formulas, ideas and systems. Teach us where they are coming from. Teach us the roots of the problems. I shouldn't be memorizing the things you

put in front of me and tell me to memorize for the next exam. What I truly need is to question. Again, as Einstein says: 'Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.' So, don't put barriers on me while I'm questioning why there is a huge rock in the garden. The greatest ideas come out from the simplest questions and thoughts. What I wish to know may not be in our books, but don't stop teaching me by using this as an excuse.

As an individual, I want to be useful to the world. Unlike the song, I don't want to be another brick in the wall. I should paint my own character and world to the empty canvas. I should be the one choosing the colours. Yet, my teachers should be the ones who teach how to draw.

Dear adults, please teach me toleration. Tell me that, colors can compose the harmony of rainbow and do their dance only by uniting. Before telling me that I am not capable of learning a new language, realise the fact that all babies speak the same language when they are born. Nothing is impossible. Teach me the religions. Teach me that they are not things that break us apart. They are there to unite us. And then, let me choose what I believe myself.

Most importantly, before teaching Physics, what we all need to learn is being *human*. If this was taught and engraved in childhood, the discovery of atom wouldn't be a tool to homicide. You should teach that all living things, from the bird soaring in the sky to the worm inside the soil, mean something and must be respected. Teach me that hurting is the most horrifying game of the devil. Rather than taking, giving life is more important. Teach me to donate.

Lastly, before educating us, please educate yourself. Restrain the furious monster inside you. Heal yourself from the illness of destroying. By hiding behind the mask of civilization, stop proliferating guns and technologies to threaten one another. Don't forget that students are sculptures and teachers are the sculptors who give the shape. We learn what we see from you.

Education for Awareness

(Original)

Haley Payet

(Age 16, Seychelles)

Independent School, Mahe

Education is a fundamental part of society. Younger generations inherit the world, and treat it according to the knowledge, policies and opinions they have learned. Therefore, what we teach our children today, decides the fate and future of our world.

Currently, the world is in a state of controversy. Our generation is considered the most advanced, having done a lot to lessen prejudices such as racism, gender inequality, homophobia and anti-Semitism. Yet, women continue to have inferior standing to men worldwide. The drugs menace, according to the UN, is a 320-billion-dollar-a-year industry that causes over 200,000 deaths per year. Additionally, global warming and pollution remain serious issues, with ecosystems being destroyed and important species going extinct; in other words, human activity is accelerating natural degradation. On another note, technology, while making work massively easier, has resulted in mass global unemployment. By 2020 up to 500 million new jobs will need to be created to cater for the unemployed and new workers. Food security is another glaring problem; annually 3.1 million Sub-Saharan African children die of malnutrition, but we are still wasting about one third of the food we produce.

This is our unfortunate present reality and it is difficult to say whether it will improve any time soon. However, the human race is capable of a more meaningful existence. Through learning and teaching peaceful co-existence, open-minded unanimity, tolerance, respect, caring and consciousness, we would stand a chance to challenge these issues.

The question "How would education and learning help us address these challenges and create a sustainable world and a better life for all?" made me wonder what could have been done differently in my own education to better equip me to address such challenges. Then I realized that my education has completely ignored the part that I as a human being have to play in this

world; that my learning should serve a purpose greater than my own life. The main focus has been my own academic success, leading to a good career and life for me and my family. My eyes were never opened to the fact that my life and purpose are not reserved for only myself.

Therefore, for a better and sustainable world, we must create a generation who are aware and involved in what occurs around them.

I would implement this through education by introducing a new, compulsory subject to promote a humane and aware attitude in future generations. It should have same attention and weight as other academic subjects and be influential in deciding a student's acceptance into universities and colleges. Such acceptance should require qualification in academics, extracurricular activities *and* humanity (they are qualified as humans, not only as individuals). This subject would be graded according to overall approach, interest and result.

The subject would be broken down into sectors such as the environment, gender inequality, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty and so on. The advantage is that they are already exposed to them through their other studies; this subject would help them better understand them as realities.

This subject would include programs allowing students to gain hands-on experience. For example, students looking at the environment would go on field trips to ecologically endangered locations, to expose them to that reality and enable them understand the importance of preservation. They should then practically use this learning to maintain an existing ecological area, or raise funds for a preservation cause. For addiction, students would visit local rehabilitation clinics to observe the patients, to open their eyes to the realities of drug abuse, prevent them from falling into the trap and perhaps motivate them to work and help further in this regard. The students could make presentations regarding what they have learned from these experiences; these could then be shared as widely as possible.

Such a subject would be vital; it would grant students awareness of the world around them and involve them in something greater than themselves from an early point in their lives. Moreover, it would prepare them for an adulthood in which they would encounter such issues frequently. Through this, we would be creating the most efficient, humane and truly advanced generation that has ever existed.

The Magic Question

(Original)

Anghel Maria

(Age 9, Romania)

Ever since we were very little, we, children, used to look around us and keep asking the same question: “Why? “. All we had to do was ask and, somehow, by magic, true and wise answers were coming, first from our parents, then from our teachers. That’s how our problems and concerns were solved.

In my country, Romania, we spend most of our time in school where we learn everything we need to know to become educated people. Educated people are kind and generous and they work for the benefit of others.

Unfortunately, I’ve seen on TV news about children who don’t have enough food, who live in war areas or in much polluted areas. Their mothers were holding them tight in their arms and were crying with them and their fathers were carrying guns. Nothing seemed to work for them and I don’t think they could go to school.

So I asked the same question again, but this time the answers weren’t magical anymore. They were full of sadness: disadvantaged geographical area, fight for resources, religious conflicts, all very hard for me to understand. What surprised me even more was the fact that in all these answers there was no solution for any of the problems. I didn’t know why, but it was very clear for me that the magic question had suddenly lost its power.

Something must be done! We can’t leave things like that!

After a lot of thinking, I knew how I could help. I just needed all my friends to help me build up a team and to start a project to transform the planet into a better place for all its inhabitants. Every one of us should gather many colleagues and friends and together we must protect the environment, reduce its pollution, recycle and not waste natural resources. That’s how our

side of the planet will provide resources for disadvantaged areas.

Still, to persuade people to stop fighting each other I needed more help. I talked to my parents and I realized that there is a great connection between people and their kind and noble actions, and that this connection implies love, friendship and understanding. Sadly, it is difficult to share this all over the world. Again the magic question "Why?" brought the solution: to improve yourself and the ones around you. It will take a lot of will and commitment to do this, but, in time, will help spreading the improvement all over the planet, changing other things too.

Now, I know what we have to do! And I think that school plays a key role in helping us achieve that.

We already use books and computers to discover new information, to acquire new skills and understand new facts.

I think that organizing field trips will increase our knowledge and understanding of a subject and will add realism to the topic of study. Also, integrating us in working groups or teams will improve our communication skills and will help us understand and accept others' points of view.

The curriculum should also include religion, where all the major religions of the world must be explained and the differences and similarities between them must be taught; and we will become more understanding with each other.

Education for health is also very important. Children must know how to eat healthy, how to give first aid to someone and that they need to help, not to harm other human beings or animals.

To find the harmony between physical and mental growth, sport classes should include Aikido – a Japanese form of self-defence martial art that does not hurt the opponent, which develops the coordination of mind and body.

Also, art will help children understand each other and will give them an opening towards new ways of seeing the world.

This project is a really big challenge for all of us, but I think that it will have more and more followers all over the world.

I also think that is very important to continue asking ourselves “Why?” even when we are grown-ups and we are capable of doing the best in everything, because we will become better people just by searching for the answers.

Overcoming Our Differences to Work Together

(Original in Japanese)

Hiroki Kimiwada

(Age 10, Japan)

Yahata Elementary School of Setagaya City, Tokyo

Have you ever felt that it seems impossible to work together? I have. When I was living in the United States, I entered a science competition. I was in a group with people from different countries and ethnicities whom I'd never met before. The project for the contest was to make a model volcano. However, the members of our group couldn't agree and we started arguing, and in the middle of making it our volcano erupted. I felt very frustrated and disappointed.

Two years later, I had another chance to take part in this kind of competition. This time, the project was to build a tree house. Like in the previous contest, I was in a group of people of many different nationalities and ethnicities. At the beginning, we couldn't agree on how to build it, and everyone was getting annoyed. But then someone said, "Let's just do the best we can to work together toward the goal of finishing a tree house." I agreed with this comment, and called out to everyone, "Let's all work toward the same goal." We went all-out to join forces, and after a few hours we had completed our tree house, and we came in first place in the competition. And after that, I became friends with the other members of the group. From that experience, I learned the importance of overcoming our differences to work together for a common goal. It was a very valuable educational experience for me.

I think the same thing can be said about larger scale challenges. On March 11, 2011, an enormous earthquake hit Japan, causing a tsunami that washed away homes, livestock, and bridges, as well as many, many people. Watching the events on television in the United States, I was extremely surprised and saddened. Time passed, and in 2016, I visited places that were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami. Some of the damage could still be seen, but the area had largely recovered. It seemed to me that the people of Tohoku did not despair, but worked with a lot of other people to try and rebuild the region. In such a difficult situation, I imagine that there would have been many different opinions. And yet, it seemed that they had

worked together to accomplish their common goal of restoring their towns and returning to normal life. I felt the power of what they had done, and it touched my heart.

What I learned both from my experience at the science contest in the U.S. and from seeing the rebuilding after the Tohoku Earthquake is the importance of overcoming differences to work together. When many people work together, we can achieve great things that we could not do on our own. Not only that, I think that working together deepens the bonds between people. Today, the world is facing many serious problems, such as war, climate change, and terrorism. I think these problems might also be caused by people's inability to accept each other's differences, and what is needed is to overcome our differences and work together for a greater common goal.

The importance of overcoming our differences and working together is something that I think should be taught to all people in their education. It can be difficult for adults to change their thinking quickly. But if children are educated about the importance of this, then in ten or twenty years, I think we will be able to create a better world. In order to create this better future, I would like to continue broadening my knowledge, gaining more experiences, and learning.

Education to Build a Better Future for All

(Original)

Kinley Khamsum Lhendup

(Age 13, Bhutan)

Drukgyel Lower Secondary School, Paro

When we think about education, the first thing that comes to mind is the range of subjects we are taught every day at school from morning to evening followed by tests and exams. We believe learning these subjects and scoring good marks in exams are the only way to earn ourselves a reputable future. Many say a good education is the key to a bright future. But what type of education? The kind that prepares you for a sit-at-the-desk-and-work-on-your-computer? Or the kind that will not fetch you a job that needs literally dirtying your hands? If the future is a building, education is the foundation. Education should not only be about preparing someone to make a good living in the future but it should be about creating an ideal world where all living beings can live in harmony with each other.

Education in schools has been largely academic and not wholesome but with the onset of researches and debates, educationists have introduced extra-curricular activities in schools. However, the focus is still on academics and we believe that academic excellence is the only path to a wonderful future. Children should pay equal importance to wholesome education for their physical, mental and emotional development. It will also allow us to explore a variety of options when we are trying to figure out what they want to do in life. The most important thing is helping us figure out what we want to do and make us work towards realizing that goal.

While wholesome education is the best way to develop a child, it is also important that we are allowed to learn and not just be taught. We learn best when we learn it ourselves, be it through mistakes or experiences. Teachers should not only teach whatever there is in the books, but also work on building mindsets that prepares them for whatever future awaits them, mindsets that respects all kinds of people and jobs so that each person can do what he is best at. A good education must enable a child to grow physically, emotionally and socially so that when

we become adults, we not only know how to read and write, but also know how to deal with people. Development of social and interpersonal skills will better prepare us to face reality and other challenges when we enter the real world. Education should be inclusive in that it should be available to all children irrespective of functionality, gender, caste and status. Children of different abilities should be taught to accept, respect and grow up alongside each other as is the right of every child. This will not only bring a positive academic outcome, but will build social adaptability for a socially harmonious future, too.

Having said that, education should not only be about building a comfortable future for oneself, but about making the world a peaceful and healthy place to live in. Today, there are so many problems in the world as shown in news channels—wars, natural disasters, inequality, poverty, discrimination, etc. The world would be a much better place to live in if people were taught to be more accepting, respectful, caring, and compassionate to each other and the environment we live in. Children should be educated in such a way that they become responsible humans—responsible towards humanity, towards the world and towards the environment for a sustainable future. It should teach us how every individual can make a difference in the world.

Today, education is all about preparing for work; it is about time we change the concept of education. While work is an essential part of life, peaceful coexistence is all the more important and education should help us achieve it. It may be too late to change the present but it's not late to change the future.

Letter to My Younger Self

(Original)

Alina Lascu

(Age 14, Romania)

Colegiul National "Mircea cel Batran", Constanta

Dear little me,

I know this world is rough. I know it's not as you thought it was. I know it's hard to understand. You know, this happens to everyone. When you reach your teen years, you start to realize that nothing is as pink as you thought it was. People are constantly trying to show off their power, and they have been fighting for so long they even forgot what they were fighting for; it became their way of living.

But, little girl, you must realize that you're one of the lucky ones! You can find someone to answer all of your questions. It would be a pity to waste all these things you are offered; these things that seem normal to you, but are a dream for too many other people: a home, a family, a chance to education.

Oh, darling, have you ever wondered how this world would be if everyone was as lucky as you are? Maybe we wouldn't fight anymore. Maybe we would have evolved enough, as humans, to realize that we need to stand together as one to find change. This is what education is for: to help us understand what it takes to live peacefully, to communicate, to grow.

But it's never too late! You can't go on pretending everyday that someone somewhere will soon make a change; but you can be that 'someone'. It all starts from the inside.

Firstly, you need to educate yourself. Use your imagination, read as much as you can, ask questions and never be afraid to try to do more than you are asked to in school. Don't fear failure and always challenge yourself; in this way, you will be able to grow and evolve and eventually reach the stars.

That's what school should do: train your mind, make you think and help you understand. Challenge you to find the answer yourself when it's not given to you. Because, at the end of the day, it's about wisdom, not only knowledge. And, most of all, it's about accepting you and those around you as they are; it's about teamwork, communication and understanding one another.

Of course, the process of education lasts a lifetime. But, one day, sooner than you're expecting, you'll feel that you've had enough to start sharing it with the world. Communicate. Share. Never be afraid to tell the world what you think, how you feel. This is, again, a great thing: to be able to speak your mind and share your soul with the world, to do this peacefully and without hurting anyone. That is what shows you're an educated individual. This is what everyone should be taught to do. Because it seems to be a little thing, a common one; but if it were like that, we wouldn't live the way we do now.

All of us get education, when you really think about it. The lucky ones - like you - are granted the opportunity to go to school. But it's not only the school which shapes us as humans. You see, honey, it all comes from the surroundings you grow up in. The people you see around you as a little kid, the things they do, they say: everything gets stuck in your mind, even though you don't realize it. People tend to imitate what they see around them. That is why this world is so cruel.

I know it's hard to believe, but you - yes, you! - can change that. It can all start from you. If you start helping others, people will take you as a model. They will spread the help and kindness everywhere. It's a process of learning and, gradually, the whole world will become better. That's what education means.

And, lastly, little self, always remember that you got to choose the way you're going to rule your life. It's *your* choice. So take advantage of all these things that are offered to you and start growing. Educate yourself! Begin to build a better world for you and those around you.

Because if you do so, this huge world will be yours, little girl - if it isn't already.

*Love,
your future self*

Choosing What We Need

(Original in Japanese)

Chinatsu Ueno

(Age 14, Japan)

Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano

Who is it that receives education?

I think it's obvious that the answer is: we, ourselves. Education will go on for a long time to come, and many people will receive an education, but from each person's perspective, the one who receives the education and does the thinking is none other than our own self.

Then, who is it that gives education?

The first answer that comes to mind is teachers and parents, but that is only when we are at school or at home. After all, even when we become adults and grow older, education is taking place everywhere, all the time. In that case, it would seem that there are countless people who educate us. But if we change the question to *Who chooses the kind of education we get?* I think the answer is the same as before: we, ourselves. How much we listen to what someone has to say and how much we pass it off is up to our own free will.

We are the one who receives education, and we are also the one who decides what kind of education we get. It seems to me that when we think about education, for some reason this point is easily forgotten. When we think about what kind of education is best, we are probably imagining the person receiving the education to be someone far away.

For example, it is often said that it's good to learn everything through actual practice. I think this is an important idea, and it's something that everyone can understand. But I also think that few people would carry out this kind of learning without being forced to do so.

I once went by bicycle to visit a friend of mine who lived in the mountains. At a certain distance

from the mountain, the slope suddenly became steeper. I wondered if it was what you call an alluvial fan. As it said in my textbook, the higher up you go, the more the surroundings change from fields to orchards. I remember thinking, “So this is what that looks like.” That moment has stuck firmly in my memory.

This happened completely by chance, but I experienced firsthand that, while it’s easy to say we should learn through experience, it requires a lot of work to actually do it. There are also some things that you do need to experience in order to really understand them.

We also tend to think that if someone teaches us something, we and all the people listening are learning the same thing. But actually, even when listening to the same thing, people are in all different states—some are enthusiastic, some are not paying attention, and so on. Because everyone’s level of interest is different, giving everyone the same talk does not result in the same understanding.

We hear a lot about ‘individualized education’. However, when each person’s level of interest is different, I think each person is already getting an education that reflects their own individuality. What is important, therefore, is not for the person giving the education to adapt it for each individual, but for us to create an educational environment in which we can pursue our own interests. Most of all, I think that the person receiving the education should not hold view that it is *being given* to them, but rather that they are seeking out the things they want and need for themselves. People choose and decide for themselves what kind of education they receive. This decision-making ability is very powerful.

The theme of this essay contest is “to build a better future”. Who is it that builds a better future? The fact of the matter is that we build it ourselves. It is easy to imagine a better future, but we might think that it will be fulfilled by someone in the distant future. That is wrong. All of us who are living today have the privilege of creating the future.

We are not receivers. Have we unconsciously given up on building the future? Are we waiting for someone else to do it? It is certainly an enormous task, but if we don’t try, there are things that will never change, and things that we will never attain.

In my opinion, education to build a better future is education that emphasizes the decision-making power that we have, and the importance of taking action on our own. But

more important than anything else, I think, is having positive intentions to decide and act for ourselves. That, I think, is the foundation of everything. Although it seems an extremely difficult task to accomplish, that is how I would like to be.

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Youth Category – 3rd Prize】

Unity in Diversity (Original in Japanese)

Maaya Ito

(Age 15, Japan)

Meijo University Senior High School, Aichi

In my school, we have a class called Unity in Diversity. It's not the kind of class where we sit in chairs and take notes while listening to the teacher talk. Rather, it's a class where we get out of our seats and form teams and play games to think about and discuss world issues and other topics.

I enjoy this class very much. The reason why is that we have fun learning about issues that we normally would not think about because they are so difficult. We have the chance to think deeply about how to solve these problems, and how to make things better than they are at present.

The other day, we had a brainstorming class. In groups, each of us wrote down on sticky labels ten phrases that came to mind about a certain topic, and we stuck our labels onto a large sheet of paper for the whole group. The topic that day was "what I would do if an earthquake strikes." I put forth a lot of ideas about things to do immediately after a disaster occurs, such as securing water and taking refuge in a safe location. However, my friend who was in the same group offered ideas from the viewpoint of living in an evacuation shelter after the earthquake, such as "I will play with the little children." In our groups, we shared and collected ideas that we wouldn't have thought of on our own. I felt that being able to look at the same topic from various perspectives was worthwhile, and that it was a fun lesson.

Because I am usually very shy, it's hard for me to assert my opinions and ideas. But in this class, we have a rule that we don't put down other people's ideas, so it's much easier for me to communicate my ideas, and I'm able to talk a lot about what I'm thinking and feeling. Through this class, I've learned the importance of articulating my ideas to others, and of listening to other people's ideas.

I have a friend from junior high school who now goes to a different high school, and I told her about our Unity in Diversity class. She said, “We don’t have a class like that in my school. It sounds fun—you’re lucky.” I had thought that this class was being taught in other schools, too, so I was surprised, and I also felt a bit sorry that my friend couldn’t take a class like this.

Recently, I saw on the news that many young people are becoming uninterested in politics. Voter turnout in national and local elections is low enough that if things continue this way, the existence of Japan’s democracy is at risk. I think this kind of problem, too, can be solved in the Unity in Diversity class. If we all discussed questions like why we need to participate in elections and how we can get people interested in participating in politics, I think we would better understand our current political situation, we would think about the future of Japan, and more people would participate in elections.

However, based on what I heard from my friend, it seems that the Unity in Diversity class is not becoming common in schools. I think that by conducting this kind of class in many more schools, we could solve not only domestic issues but also international issues that require a broader view and many different perspectives.

There are many issues and problems facing the world today. Within Japan alone, there are countless issues, like our aging population, decreasing birth rates, the situation in Okinawa, American military bases, pensions, and so on. But right now, I know most of these issues only by name, and don’t know anything more about them. On the contrary, I’m not even making an effort to know more about them. I think that if the Unity in Diversity class could spread to more schools, everyone would take an interest in these issues and think deeply about them, and we would try to come up with solutions. In this way, many more people would be thinking about and envisioning the future of our world, and we would endeavor to make things better. Together, I think, we can create a safe and peaceful future.

Education to Foster Understanding

(Original in Japanese)

Miyo Hataoka

(Age 16, Japan)

Hiroshima Jogakuin Junior & Senior High School

I believe that ‘positive peace’ is the most important factor in building a better future. To achieve this, we need education that teaches each person to value both themselves and the people around them, and to have their own opinions.

I think that when we learn to like ourselves, we learn to value ourselves. And what makes us like ourselves, I think, is finding a special skill, or something that only we can do. Therefore, from the time we are young, I think we need to accumulate as much learning and experience as we can, including our studies, so that we expand our potential. It’s my view that education means both acquiring knowledge and also finding and polishing our individuality.

In order to better understand and value other people, there are three main aspects of education that I think are needed.

The first is education through books. Through books, we have the opportunity to imagine different worlds, come in contact with a wide range of values, and ponder all kinds of things. If we have this kind of experience from the time we are very young and while our brains are malleable, I think that we will develop a wealth of sensitivity and will be able to consider the feelings of others. Therefore, when we are very young and cannot read yet, it is important that we are read to, and once we can read on our own, we need make it our regular practice.

The second aspect is thinking about the future by learning about history. When I was in Grade 8, in order to learn different views on the atomic bombing of Japan, I had the opportunity to read textbooks from Asia, the United States, and Europe. In the Asian and European textbooks, there was almost no mention of the atomic bombing, and the American textbook talked mainly about the Manhattan Project, with no mention of the damage and suffering that took place. I

realized then that history is perceived differently in each country, and I was very surprised. It also occurred to me that each country might be choosing not to publish certain things in its textbooks that are not to its benefit. In order to avoid making the same mistakes again, we should learn about our country's darker history.

Therefore, I propose that we create international standards for history textbooks. From a wide range of viewpoints, I think we should compile the ones that seem necessary, and publish who holds which opinion. We should not only learn these points of view, but also make time to think about our own views.

The third aspect is expanding our learning of different cultures and languages. In our rapidly globalizing world, we will likely have more and more opportunities for exchanges with people from different cultures. It can be difficult, at times, to understand other cultures, and discrimination sometimes results from the differences between cultures. Culture is not something to be judged as superior or inferior. If, from the time we are young, we have contact with and become familiar with people from many different cultures, then we will have no trouble living together in a multicultural society.

I envy kids who are bilingual. From the time they are babies, they are brought up hearing two different languages, and they have no trouble learning and switching between them. I am only studying English. It has been four years since I started learning it, but I still have a long way to go. Also, because culture and language are closely related, I think they should be studied together.

I think that one of the cornerstones of education is being open-minded. While our minds are still open—in other words, while we are young—the most important thing, I think, is to learn good habits and practices. In order to achieve this, the understanding of adults in our lives is indispensable. To gain their understanding, I think we should create something like a model district to demonstrate a concrete example.

An education that fosters individuals who can value themselves and others is, in my view, the kind of education we need to build a future world of positive peace.

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 3rd Prize]

Educate to Integrate

(Original)

Preethika Raviraja

(Age 18, India)

Tipsglobal Institute, Tamilnadu

Things we do are either out of compulsion or out of interest. But there is a huge disparity between them that grows with our indifference. The only way to integrate the need and the interest to do things that matter is through education.

Today's educational system, especially in a country like India, is more of a business rather than a beneficial service. It is mostly about rote learning and scoring high. With the number of perfect scorers getting inflated year after year in the board examinations, the quality of learning is falling steeply. The teachers want their students to score, for it would improve their salary package, the schools want their students to score; for it would promote their admission demand; the parents want their children to score, for it would make them proud in the society. Ultimately, the kids are lost in this vicious background. How can we expect such kids to contribute to the societal well-being and global challenges when they grew up, if they had already been stressed into the world of themselves? This shows the need for integrity with the outside world.

Few months ago, I was on an educational trip to the US, it is where you could find carbonated drinks at half the cost of tiny bottled water. For someone like me, who doesn't enjoy carbonated drinks, it is a curse. I was given the choices to either suffer extreme thirst after long hours of walking or dig a deep hole in my wallet every now and then. That's when I truly felt the depleting water resources on this planet. I have been writing essays on 'Water Conservation' for years and won prizes too, I also made lot of posters for my school on 'SAVE WATER', but none of it made me care for the leaking taps and overflowing water tanks until when I experienced the real thirst and the need for water. Now I use only half the amount of water I previously used for bathing, also I don't wash off the last sip of water in my bottle. It might be a small step, but I believe that a few liters of water I save each day would make a

pond of fresh water for my grandchildren. I cannot blame my education for my earlier indifference towards water depletion, for it had been yelling at me about it for more than a decade. So, it is all about self-realization that fulfills the educational needs. It is the exposure to the thing that needs change brings in the solution.

It is not just about foreign exposure, but there are a lot of issues that could be felt at our closeness. We can start from our home and neighborhood. Let the schools teach children about global warming not with mere paragraphs of text but by having a couple of classes under the tree shade and couple others under the sun. It would make them think ten times more deeply on the problem than any texts could ever do. Exposure integrates us to the issue; it makes us personally responsible for the problems we are exposed to, which in turn bring in the solution that can never be so thoughtfully realized with compulsions or incentives; it is done only when we feel the need for it and take steps to change it.

This form of education would encourage our exposure and would significantly reduce our indifference towards issues that matter. Not just to address global challenges and local issues, but also the subjects that would predominantly shape the attitude and behavior of the kids could be taught this way.

The methods could get better with practice, but the primary notion is to expose the kids to the problems so that they would discern the needs and fill in the gaps. Let the issues be global or personal, none of it would get a solution until we feel the need for the change and change it. Let us bring in the change.

Wisdom Education is the Key to Better Future

(Original)

Pitou Keo

(Age 19, Cambodia <Living in UK>)

Cambridge Tutors College

Humans have the aspiration to be moral and build a sustainable world for all beings with whom we share this home planet. Throughout history, we always attempt to perfect our educational system because we believe that education is an effective tool to actualise this dream of ours. Yet, we have placed great emphasis on being intelligent, particularly in the areas of technological know-hows.

Our intellectual based society still faces challenges, from local to international scale. Wealth distribution inequality, conflicts, resource exploitation and unsustainable development practices are the evidence of the fragmentation of humanity. We have adopted drastic tactics of violence and discrimination against one another, lost sympathy for our fellow human beings. We seem to have forgotten the purpose to share this planet for thousands of years to come and instead, intensively focus all our might and potential on the now. Even though through education we manage to bring about technological advancement, it is obvious that we still lack in human affairs. My image of an ideal education is that which focus on fostering wisdom in the mind of people in order to direct people's aspiration for the right causes.

Aspiration is a very dangerous force. It drives the individual to accomplish tasks and it is the fuel, when accepted by the mass population, bring about social change. Aspiration is what saints and warriors share in common, the motivation to commit to a cause greater than them. Therefore, it is crucial for wisdom to integrate in education system to direct the efforts and time of commitment to the right cause.

In order to achieve wisdom, education should foster the self and surrounding awareness and the empathy toward one another.

Self and surrounding awareness enable the individual to make better decision on their actions. From early age, children should be encouraged to observe the action of themselves and others and analysis the impacts of the consequences on themselves as well as the society as aggregate. They ideally should ask questions and exchange their insights with their educators. This insightful nurturing will develop intrinsic curiosity and compassion for our world's issues in the hearts and minds of the next generation.

Similarly, empathy would enable people to better understand each other's actions and reasons for such deed. Interestingly as we get older, we would inevitably be exposed to so many stories, opinions and ideology. We can sometimes become too involved and absorbed in our own belief that we find it hard to listen to their reasons. It also happens to be the age where we get to make impactful decision for our aggregate future. Therefore, it is crucial that people are able to listen and understand one another, see the world from each other point of view without the temptation of ignorance. Empathy will help us embrace the freedom of existence of others as much as we would like ours to be. By discovering suffering we all have experienced, we will be able to come to common agreement and solution and seal the fracture in our perception of each other.

Through awareness and empathy, we would be more efficient in understanding our world's limitation and formulate wiser aspiration for life. I believe we will be able to set more sensible and righteous life purposes, which we know, will benefit ourselves and our world as aggregate.

The next step I believe is to diversify wisdom education to larger population of the world. Some are trapped in hunger, poverty, discrimination and warfare and are obviously prone to anger, fear, grief, revenge and pursuit of the demerit short term satisfaction. However, deep within our unconscious minds, I firmly believe that there are innate hopes of many souls longing for a wise, peaceful and sustainable future. And the fact that we come together to explore this matter of education would initiate our journey toward a better world for all.

Envisioning a futuristic education in a metamorphic world

(Original)

Ying Qin Tee

(Age 25, Malaysia)

University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur

Education is the key and perhaps the panacea to the many global challenges we encounter today and in future. In the face of wars, terrorism, crimes, depletion of energy sources, global warming, natural disasters, epidemics and economic crises today, and a myriad of future challenges pressing upon us tomorrow; how has education played a part? In a metamorphic world where change is constant and substantial, what and how should an ideal education be that would ensure a sustained world of peace, harmony and well-being in the long run?

As a young novice educator, I envision an ideal education as a holistic process of growth as a person in an interdependent community. It is providing a conducive platform where each individual is given opportunities to develop their innate talents, and to use these unique potential to collectively contribute to the good of the world. A school should be a micro society, a transition that links home to the real world. In this miniature community, students would have the opportunity to exercise leadership, make decisions and solve problems collaboratively for the betterment of the entire community. Even today, there are still students who fail to achieve their potential in life and live a life of meaningless toil after years of education. Without passion in their work, it is uncertain how far these individuals could be valuable contributors to the world around them.

Furthermore, in this process of growth, character should be continually developed and nurtured. Today's education system across the world place a great amount of emphasis on cognitive development of students, be it critical, innovative or creative thinking. However, the significance of character development has often been neglected and thrown out of the window over the focus on brain or knowledge development. One clear example of this is the overemphasis of test results as a reflection of students' success in school which is still deeply rooted within the culture in many parts of the world. This approach to education is obsolete

and lopsided, as it has little power to empower students to be advocates of truth and integrity in order to help formulating practical solutions to tackle complex issues of the world. What is conventionally considered as “success” should be relooked at. How far can we go with such illusive misconception?

Especially in a world where wars and hostility are a norm, I strongly contend the importance of developing positive values and virtues among students of both today and tomorrow through education at all levels. Virtues and values should be upheld in the world today where morality seems to be neglected and even trampled. This can only be achieved through education. Only with good values can the global citizens around the world preserve and value global peace; only with good that overflows from our hearts can we overcome evil and challenges together. Love will be the strongest catalyst that spur unity amongst global citizens and to build a world of peace and well-being together. Love will be the basis of all decision-making that is for the good of the world, where the well-being of every individual and the state of our mother earth is a shared responsibility of all in the interconnected network. Love will be the force to propel students to be aware, to empathize and to act upon the pressing issues that the world is facing today and tomorrow with resilience.

To strive towards a sustainable education also means providing equal opportunities for all. It is a unifying, global education that is blind to race, social status, political ideology, faith and citizenship.

Only when the borders between nations no longer are a cause for political dissension but for
partnership;

when we view each other as comrades in collaboration instead of rivals in competition;

when our hands and hearts are joined together in unity and love;

when we take on a global instead of merely a national perspective;

when the entire world becomes one;

then can we ensure an education is sustainable—one that will be a means to fulfil the needs of
people today and overcome the challenges of tomorrow as one.

This might appear ambitious, but together, we are one;

and together, nothing is impossible.

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People Entries by Region

Region	Children's Category	Youth Category	Entries	Percentage (%)
Japan	1,954	976	2,930	22.6
Asia (other than Japan)	972	3,049	4,021	31.1
The Pacific	86	65	151	1.2
The Middle East	62	98	160	1.2
Europe	337	985	1,322	10.2
Africa	220	1,394	1,614	12.5
North America	151	185	336	2.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	571	1,832	2,403	18.6
Total	4,353	8,584	12,937	100.0

