

Good evening, my name is Carol Bogash, and I serve as Education Director for the Washington Performing Arts Society (WPAS). This organization which was founded in 1965 has long believed in the importance of connecting cultures to further understanding and communication among peoples. WPAS has done this through presentation of artists from around the world and through its education programs. Washington Performing Arts Society, through its Women's Committee created the Embassy Adoption Program nearly 40 years ago in the DC Public Schools.

Several years after its creation, WPAS and DCPS began working in partnership and over these years have together engaged more than 45,000 5th and 6th grade students in the study of world cultures. Embassy Adoption Program pairs participating 5th and 6th grade classrooms each with a unique embassy, to provide what proves to be many students' first exposure to Global Education. Embassy officials and teachers design an individualized curriculum based on the culture of the country, the embassy's resources, DCPS curriculum standards, and needs of the students. Diplomats visit the schools to give students a personalized understanding of their nation's positions on various world issues. Our capstone event brings together all involved classrooms in a "Mini UN" event, where students discuss and convene on UN resolutions, each representing the perspective of their adopted country. At the conclusion of each year, the students prepare a presentation to show what they have learned about their adopted country. The students "visit" that country by going to the Embassy and proudly demonstrating their knowledge for the Ambassador and the staff.

This year's programming is well underway, with many wonderful Global Education events happening each day in our public schools. The Finnish Embassy hosted a Diplomatic tea for teacher and embassy representatives; Saudi Arabia has hosted a transitional Saudi-dress fashion show at Aiton Elementary; Oyster-Adams has visited the Mexican Cultural Institute and learned how to make pinatas with the Ambassador's spouse; tomorrow, the South African ambassador will visit with students at John Eaton Elementary to speak on South African Day of Reconciliation.

The Embassy Adoption Program annually connects over 1,500 fifth- and sixth-grade students in 60 classrooms, in all 8 DC Wards, with 51 embassies. It is a far-reaching and long lasting Global Education program that strengthens our connections with DC's international community, and exposes our students to global perspectives from an early age.

We believe that the Embassy Adoption program is unique in the United States and puts the District of Columbia in the forefront of global education beginning in middle school. In this ever more connected world, it is vital that our children understand about the world and its many peoples – the differences and similarities.