



# Elementary School Students in Alaska Send Love Around the World



**TUDOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL/ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, AK**

## Follett Challenge 2018 Grand Prize Winner

A single student from an isolated school in the mountains is ready to progress to calculus, but none of the other kids are prepared. A group of high-achieving students at a small, rural school are eager to take aerospace engineering, but there are no qualified teachers in the region to teach it. Aspirational students at an under-resourced, inner-city high school are ready to take an advanced STEM elective, but their school is unable to fund it.

## Making a Difference...One Step at a Time

Tudor Elementary is a school of 346 Grade K-6 students in Anchorage, Alaska, which can at times feel pretty far removed from the lower states and other countries. "I think our lack of exposure to the world has limited how successful our students can be," said Carton. "I developed this project as way to expose students to the wider world and to inspire them to really think about what peace means to them personally, what peace means in Alaska and what peace means to kids in other locations and cultures."

The impact on the children has far exceeded her expectations. “All age groups have embraced the project more than I originally expected,” Carton explained. “Younger students love learning things that blow their minds, while older students are grateful to have a unique life perspective that most young people haven’t yet developed.” Part of what makes the project so successful is that Carton draws on the students’ unique interests and ties them to global education tenets as she works with the students to plan the learning, projects and lessons.

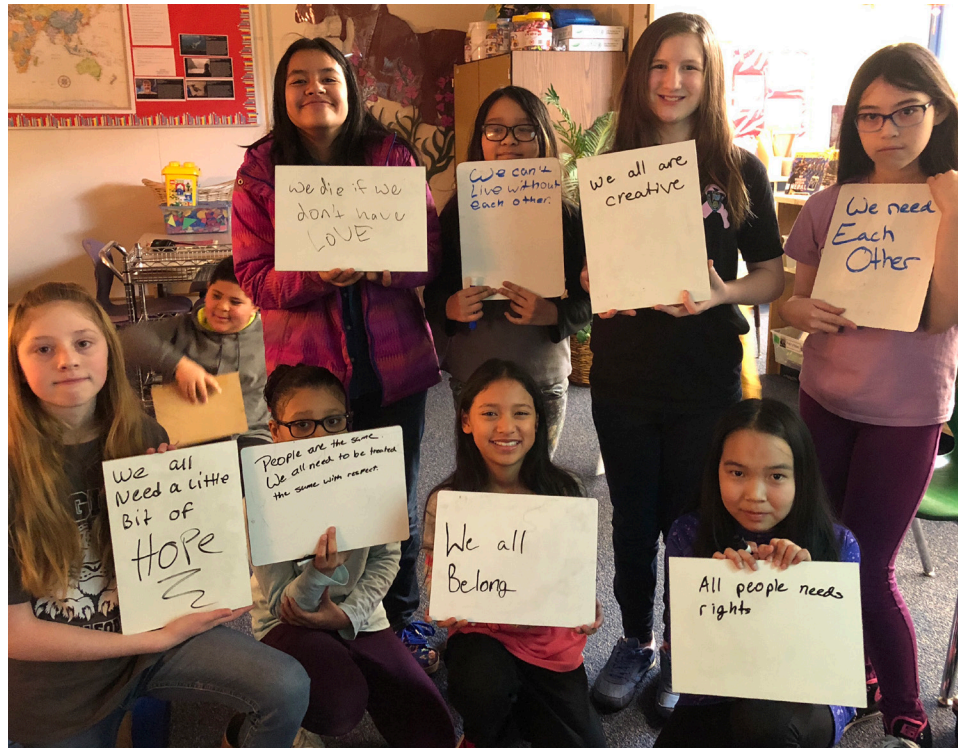
“My students are doing far more than just thinking about peace. They’re taking action by creating songs, books, videos and posters, and connecting with other schools throughout the world to talk about peace,” Carton said. “They are thinking critically and creatively about issues that matter to them and deciding how they are going to make a difference.”

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**Michelle Carton**  
Tudor Elementary School Librarian

## The Capacity for Kindness in all Students

Students share their thoughts about how they are going to make their mark on the world with students from Canada, the United States, Argentina, Pakistan, Brazil and locations in Europe, Africa and Asia. Their ideas are diverse and heartfelt. They pledge to “make my mark on the world by...picking up trash and helping the environment,” “encouraging others and helping others,” “saving trees,” “leaving no one behind,” “building houses for homeless people” and simply “giving and not taking.”



## 21st-Century Skills for a Better World

“Changes in our students have been immense,” said Carton. “The way they engage with each other now is much more intentional. They listen to each other’s ideas and feelings, often completely without judgment. The perspectives they have gained are a major building block in everything they do.”

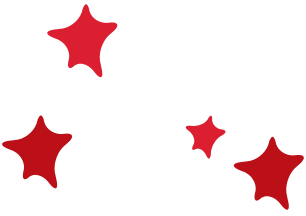
Carton shared how her students are now more passionate about their world. “They check out books on subjects across the spectrum, think about the role they play in the world and aren’t afraid to encourage each other. When an incident comes up, they’re willing to have honest and have intentional conversations to create resolution. It’s so powerful to see our school culture change.”

With primary students, Carton’s goal is to expose them to the world through learning about global schools (ideals, needs and how culture and environment affects school designs), global homes (why and how they exist as they do) and global celebrations (including ties to culture and challenges in perspectives). With early intermediate students, she focuses on perspectives and relating those perspectives to students’ lives and experiences while showing them what it means to be a global citizen and why it matters. At the upper intermediate level, she dives into global issues and why it is imperative that they, as global citizens, become information agents to be change agents. At every level, students teach about Alaska as they learn from people around the world – other students and teachers, as well as global biologists, astronauts, authors, environmentalists and engineers who share their knowledge and perspectives via live video conference.

“The skills our students are learning as they become young global citizens are completely aligned with the Follett Challenge mission,” Carton says. “They learn communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and technology skills while they practice empathy, kindness, openness and compassion. Their renewed sense of self and the altered relationship they have to their world is impressive.” As a result of the project, more students are exploring their interests on a global scale, from fashion and climate change to wars, endangered animals and plastic pollution. In addition, they are developing new interests and passions that they are eager to share with others.

“Our kids learn that, at the end of the day, they really aren’t all that different from other kids around the world. They really get that for our world to prosper, we all need to do our part, learn about the challenges and solutions, and take action,” Carton said. “They truly believe that the future of their world is in their own hands.”





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## Winning the Follett Challenge

When Carton first heard about the Follett Challenge, she didn’t think the global citizen project had a chance of winning. She knew that what they were doing was vitally important but assumed it was something that must be happening in other classrooms. However, when she looked at her students’ projects, videos and websites, as well as the feedback given by global peers, she realized what they had accomplished was something truly incredible.

When Carton heard the global citizen project had won, she was elated. “You would have thought I just won the lottery!” she exclaimed. “I was literally screaming, running down the halls and jumping around. I couldn’t even speak.

“My office wanted me to announce it over the intercom, and I sounded like I had just survived a major disaster. I could barely get the words out. In the end, it feels that we are getting the deserved validation for all the hard work we do.

“I couldn’t be more thankful for Follett for recognizing the power in creating young global citizens! It encourages me and my students to do even more, stretch even farther and continue to think deeply about the impact and relationship we have with the earth and its people.”

Carton and Tudor Elementary plan to share the Follett prize money with other schools in rural Alaska and around the world, creating a positive impact on the world the students have come to love. They will also spend a portion of their winnings on new books and video production equipment to help them continue their mission.

