



## VOICES FROM NESA 2010

### NESA Call for Papers — “An Oath for International Educators”

For the past ten years, NESA has invited educators from the region to reflect on a question of interest or an issue of importance and to share the results of that reflection in a short paper. The topics have ranged from the curricular to the philosophical to the sociological.

This year’s “Call for Papers” is very different. NESA invited teachers to compose “An Oath for International Educators”. Other professionals take public oaths or make public promises as a matter of course and as an open expression of their commitment—to their work, to their ideals and to their colleagues. (The internet has numerous examples, the most famous being the venerable Hippocratic Oath.)

In many countries — and most certainly in the United States — education has struggled for stature and legitimacy among the other professions. While societies profess the importance of education for the economic, political and moral health of their citizens, that doesn’t always translate into high regard for those who do the educating. There are many reasons for this lack of status; but among them, we believe, is that we educators have not advocated for our profession. While writing an “Oath for International Educators” will not be the solution to this concern, it could be a significant step.

Participants were asked to distill their reflections into a statement, written in the form of an oath or promise, no longer than one page.

The 2010 winner is CHRISTOPHER WAITE of Ras Tanura Elementary School-Saudi Aramco Schools, who attended the 2010 Spring Educators Conference in Bangkok last March as NESA’s guest (all expenses paid). He also addressed his peers at a conference plenary session.

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## 2010 NESA CALL FOR PAPERS – WINNER

**CHRISTOPHER WAITE**

**Ras Tanura Elementary School-Saudi Aramco Schools, Saudi Arabia**

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"An Oath for International Educators"

I promise myself today to be an effective international educator.

*Children are my first priority.* They are at the heart of learning, the central focus of everything I do in my classroom. I will be professional, open-minded and honest towards each child and will look for the goodness in each one of them.

*I will make every effort to create a respectful, caring and inclusive learning environment* where every child feels safe, comfortable and accepted. I will strive to ensure that the rights of each child are respected. I will offer an environment where there is equal opportunity and where diversity is welcomed.

*I believe that every child can learn.* I recognize that every child is unique and an individual with endless potential. I will ensure that he or she is an active participant in his or her own learning. I will demonstrate the ability to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs, interests and learning style of each child. I want to lead him or her to ask questions, inquire, think independently, explore, investigate and discuss. I am a teacher, a facilitator, a mentor, a coach and a guide.

*I am dedicated to bringing out the very best in each child,* helping him or her develop his or her sense of self-worth in a culture of continuous improvement. I will strive to help every child learn and succeed in his or her own way - the doers, thinkers, watchers, readers and everyone in between. I promise myself to think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best for every child.

*I remember my own teachers, past and present,* especially those who promoted my natural desire and curiosity to learn. I will continually strive to find ways to motivate every child and to help him or her become a successful life-long learner.

*I will create innovative and challenging opportunities that will help each child learn in a technology-rich classroom* to stimulate and enhance his or her learning. I will skillfully use media and technology for my personal development and for the academic growth of each child.

*I will embrace multiculturalism and diversity in my classroom.* I want to inspire each child to be an internationally-minded citizen and to encourage him or her to think both locally and globally. I will work hard to expand his or her cultural awareness. I value information from diverse viewpoints and cultural perspectives.

*I am committed to my own professional development and to teaching excellence.* I will keep abreast of new teaching strategies and new curriculum development. I will use best practices in education and continue to read and update my knowledge in all curriculum areas. I will work collaboratively with colleagues to enrich the learning of each child.

*I will communicate, on an ongoing basis, with parents* to help ensure that we are working in partnership to support and enhance their child's learning both at home and in school.

*I understand that teaching in an international setting is an honor and a privilege.* I will do my best to be accountable for the responsibilities that come with international teaching. I will be true to my values and my principles that underlie everything I do.

*I believe children are our most valuable natural resource.* They are our future. I am committed to tapping into each child's potential and to broadening his or her horizons.

I promise myself tomorrow to be an even more effective international educator.



**LAURI CARLSON**  
**American International School-Chennai, India**

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*As an international teacher, I pledge to recognize and accept all children from wherever they come, with whatever they come with.*

Each child carries his/her own backpack with experiences, expectations and preconceptions about learning and the world. I pledge to invite all children to open up whatever they have in there, and to cherish it as a part of themselves and a gift to humanity, without question or pause.

I won't be afraid, and I will quell the fear of children who might balk at the inevitable differences.

In international schools people with vast experiences from all walks of life unite in the challenge of teaching, learning, and creating new experiences together. I think it is the teacher's utmost responsibility to greet all children and celebrate the gifts they bring to the community.

It is critical that children learn to look past color, language, dress, and customs. This needs to be taught as explicitly as how to write a paragraph.

Children deserve an environment where they can learn how to listen to words one can't understand.

Everyone should be allowed to speak in a voice that has never been heard.

*That is our call, to invite all children to belong,* to offer their gifts, to participate in a way that they are successful.



**JONATHAN DuPONT**  
**Ras Tanura Elementary School-Saudi Aramco Schools, Saudi Arabia**

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*As an international educator, I promise to build relationships!* Can it be that simple? Do strong relationships lead to student success in international schools? I believe that relationships are the brick and mortar that educators use to shape the lives of children. My relationships with teachers, students, parents, and the community will be friendly, positive and help foster a commitment to life-long learning.

*I pledge to build relationships with my students to guide them to succeed in all endeavors.* The next time a child tells me about his/her family, I will listen then ask him/her to tell me more. When students come to me with their problems, I will show them I care by looking them in the eye and offer some ideas to help them work toward solutions. When I fail, I plan to draw attention to it and model how I learn by taking risks, making mistakes, correcting them, learning and moving on to the next risk. As children share their thinking and ideas, I'll value and act upon them. I commit myself to laugh at children's jokes and try to make them laugh at mine.

*All relationships with children will be positive,* all words will be kind and encouraging, all compliments and encouragement will be sincere, and smiles will be frequent and easy to come by. Students will learn how to form relationships with not only me, but also with their peers and other adults. As they develop relationships with each other, they will learn to appreciate differences and value peaceful interactions. I will show students how to respect and appreciate the environment. Through relationships, I will instill the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, kindness and respect. I will not only teach, but also will model and exemplify outstanding citizenship.

*I promise to establish positive relationships with all of my colleagues.* When my coworkers need someone to listen, I'll be there with an empathetic ear and only offer advice when solicited. I will share knowledge, time, and materials with others. I'll breathe a collaborative spirit into the school culture leading by example.

*I offer parents a partnership in the education of their child.* Parents are the ultimate teachers of their children. When teachers and parents combine their knowledge of a child and work together, anything is possible. The dialogue between parents and teachers needs to be positive and ongoing, full of achievements, possibilities, and aspirations. When learning issues surface, parents and I will discover how that child can best access knowledge.

*I instill world peace by encouraging relationships* between Muslims and Jews, between Christians and Hindus, and between Buddhists and Sikhs, all the while in my classroom. It's my hope that students transfer their knowledge of relationships to all future interactions with all types of people. Kindness, tolerance and respect have little to do with differences in faith and nationality, and everything to do with relationships.

*The simple answer is that I commit to make the world a better place through the relationships I forge as an international educator.*



**SEEMA FARUQUI**  
**Al-Bayan Bilingual School, Hawalli, Kuwait**

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I swear in the presence of the Almighty and on everything I hold sacred that I will uphold this oath to the best of my ability.

*I will respect my teachers, stay in touch with them and be of assistance to them,* or theirs, in any way I can. In times gone by, my teachers have passed on the torch of knowledge to me and now I will hold this torch aloft and pass it on to any student who comes to my door seeking knowledge.

*I will immerse myself in the culture in which I am teaching* and never voice criticism of the traditions that surround me. I will respect the differences and take this opportunity to enlighten myself about the society in which I am teaching.

*I will instill in my students the value of integrity in every action they undertake.* I will teach them the wrong of plagiarism and the joy of original thought. I will teach them to reach for the stars while acknowledging the giants on whose shoulders they stand.

*I will teach them to love all other human beings* and not to judge others on the basis of color, creed, race, physical appearance or mental abilities. I will teach my students to be independent thinkers and Global Citizens and to celebrate, not just tolerate, each other's differences.

*I will teach my students respect for the planet* and make them environmentally aware; to take joy in Nature's wonders and realize that they are the custodians of the world which they have borrowed from future generations.

*I will teach my students to never be passive bystanders to injustice* whether it is towards him/herself or any other human being; rather, they should raise their voices in protest and be active in spreading justice.

*I will teach my students the quality of empathy;* not to judge anyone until they have mentally walked in his shoes for a mile.

*I will teach my students the joy of reading* and make them aware of the treasures hidden in books.

*I will teach them to communicate with confidence and creativity* in all the different modes of communication.

*I will teach them to learn for the sake of learning* and encourage them to become life-long learners.

*I will teach them to think critically and become independent thinkers.* They will learn to look at a problem from different perspectives and make decisions based on shared human values.

*I will teach them to never be afraid of anything new* but to approach it with the optimism that accompanies forethought and planned action.

*I will model every value that I try to instill in my students:* I will be honest and fair in my treatment of every human with whom I interact; I will view every student through the eyes of a parent and never be romantically involved with any individual that I have met as a student; I will be the safe-keeper of secrets and never share any confidential information about my students with anyone who does not need to know.

*I believe that teaching is a vocation* and I will approach it as mission and not merely as a paid profession.



**ROSSANA FAVERO-KARUNARATNA**  
**The Overseas School of Colombo, Sri Lanka**

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As an International Teacher,

*I will respect the different cultures and backgrounds in my class* where diversity reigns and came to be.

*I will open my eyes and ears to the different perceptions of our world* and avoid closing them to the unknown. I will welcome questions more than answers.

*I will see my students as fellow brothers and sisters* who share my classroom to learn and explore on the dynamics of human relationships; as their experiences and words fortify my spirit, I will be able to fortify theirs too, especially during hard days. I will avoid the traps of tiredness and boredom and bring brightness where I teach.

*I will work to share various views based on inclusion and not on exclusion*, learning to understand the difference.

*I will not tolerate discrimination but build a space of communication and common understanding*, so my classroom can become part of an environment of peace and motivation for learning. I will not forget that it is through me that students perceive the world around them; the responsibility to teach them lies with me on the basis of appreciating their skills and ways of communication. I will not be ashamed of recognizing shortcomings. I will combat mediocrity and will embrace the challenge of teaching for the future. I will not be overwhelmed with the number of resources available to teach.

*I will encourage my students to take risks and believe in themselves*; they must take steps ahead within their learning process, discussing and enquiring about what they see and hear.

*I will remember to live according to what we teach*; in so many ways we can live showing so many contradictions.

*I will show my students the values of teaching* so they can learn to consider teaching as a professional option for themselves. I promise to show them the challenge and opportunities of a teacher's way of life where different facets interconnect with each other.

*I will embrace the idea of technology as a valuable tool* for teachers and believe in the wonders of human networks. I promise to share with my colleagues in many different parts of the world what we already know and what we want to know, opening the doors of my classroom to others to be able to exchange and reflect together.

*I promise to be a kind human being*, ready to recognize and accept mistakes, but most of all to be a firm believer in the promise of change that our students represent. I will always remember human resources come first of all. A learning environment is what we build together — teachers and students.



**DAGNE FURTH**  
**American International School – Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

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I promise to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant. While teaching internationally, I vow to be completely transparent, to assist my students in striving for excellence, and to demonstrate how to become a more efficient world citizen. With that being said...

I will emphasize the importance of learning as a rewarding and challenging process, and ensure that my students understand it's okay when you don't know the answer. When I don't know the answer, I vow to stall the class creatively, while I "Google it."

I will promise to make all Discovery Streaming resources and video tutorials available in Swedish, French, Korean, Arabic, Mandarin, Thai, Vietnamese, English, Australian, South African, British, and of course, Canadian.

I will accept that when I ask a student to restate the learning objective in class, I am also committing to pointing out that very same objective, already posted on the white board, smart board, virtual online Blackboard, on a piece of paper in front of them, as a cryptic .pdf file downloaded onto their iPod, and as a mantra emblazoned on their foreheads.

I will challenge my students when they tell me that they are proficient in five different languages, by questioning them, "Sure, but can you read, write, and sign?"

I will forgive my students when directions get lost in translation. When I remind them to "please bring required materials to class" and they infer "do not bring paper, pencil, and required textbooks to class, instead go grab your half-eaten Krispy Creme doughnut from out of your locker and cool new tech deck you have been meaning to show your friend," I will still praise their efforts.

I will persevere, as I memorize the names of my multinational students. I will strive to properly pronounce and accent the various syllables with due emphasis and accurate timing until it becomes painfully obvious that I cannot accent the various syllables with due emphasis and accurate timing. And so, I will give them new names, names that they can relate to, like Beckham, Britney, Jonas, and Brothers.

I will refrain, during Parent-Teacher conferences, from making any incriminating statements, such as, "It's impossible to speculate whether your child will be accepted into Harvard because he or she is only twelve."

I will be forthright when students inquire about my childhood and educational background, and will not attempt to embellish my life story. I will simply share that I am a Seattle, Washington, native and during a fluke third grade summer internship, I invented Starbucks. A year later, upon graduating as valedictorian of Princeton, I was appointed president of Boeing, and soon became Bill Gate's financial advisor. But upon turning eighteen, I realized how superficial my life had become. Cave spelunking, shark diving, and base-jumping all seemed so empty when compared to the daily vigors of international teaching.

So, when my students ask, "Was this the epiphany that made you want to go into education?", I will tell them the truth, "Actually no, it was the money."



**ROBERTO TOMAS OLLIVIER**  
**American International School – Chennai, India**

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"Educators Oath"

On this, the thirty-first day, of the twelfth month of the year 2009,

I, Roberto Tomás Ollivier, a member of the International Educator's Alliance, empowered by my charges and endowed by my responsibilities as an educator and architect of tomorrow's global leaders, do hereby solemnly swear the following:

*I swear to provide to the fullest extent of my professional ability, an environment of peace, patience and serenity.* One that allows all students, regardless of age, color, creed or religion, the opportunity to learn; free from fear, discrimination or repudiation.

*I swear to provide all students, irrespective of geographic locale, political ideology or social affiliation with the basic universal educational skills* to which all human beings have a fundamental right.

*I will encourage, enliven, and endeavor to provide access, acquisition, and acceleration of student learning cycles* whilst simultaneously ensuring the conveyance of accurate content knowledge, universal humanity/morality and the tempering of the steel of student mental discipline to ensure that students progress and mature into life-long learners.

*I swear that to best provide the guidance necessary, I will don as appropriate, the mantle of guide, coach, mentor, teacher, friend or parent;* in order to ensure that all students can meet, manage and master the multitude of obstacles they will face in their lifetimes.

*Ultimately, I will provide my students with access to all I know, all I am, and all I have learned,* so they will depart from my charge into the world armed with the wisdom and maturity they require to ensure that they become the professional, responsible, and moral pillars of tomorrow's global community. Thus, by extension, they become the very model citizens I hope will educate my own children.



**JAMES PEROVICH**  
**American School of Kuwait, Hawalli**

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When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for educators to advocate for their profession, they should declare the causes that impel them to pledge an oath to their profession.

*As international educators we will remember that first, we are teachers...* and never forget the instruction we learned that got us to this point. We may not have our college or local bookstore close by, but we will seek out ways to improve our instruction by remaining proactive to the trends that shape our content fields via conferences, internet, online book purchases, or whatever means necessary.

*We will remember that our students look to us as a source of knowledge,* and the eyes that watch our every move are seeking to gain from the unique perspectives we make in a diverse environment. Therefore, we will be confident in the instruction we impart, and dedicate ourselves to leading by demonstrating the value of our content areas and how it can contribute to our students' worlds. We will seek out exciting lessons that are diverse while being practical. Never is the pursuit of academic excellence fun, but we can remember that we as teachers can make it accessible for our students, meeting the diverse needs of a diverse international community.

*We will create a learning environment for our students to feel comfortable in.* We will post school information and display student work to show the full value of the instruction given. We will keep personal mementos on our desk to remind us of our personal joys.

*We will share the experiences of where we come from, while being respectful to the culture we choose to work within.* We will commit to not only the educational well-being of the student but also the character of the student, taking the time to listen...taking time to care...taking time to help. We will remember our upbringing in values in conjunction with the students in our diverse academic community.

*We will commit ourselves to making the student and school community a better place* by attending school functions. We will further lead by example by involving ourselves in activities of personal interest for the students and us. We will act, chaperone, coach, monitor, or volunteer.

*We will take time for ourselves.* We will maintain healthy, positive lifestyles. We will seek out new friends and foster positive relationships with our peers. We will learn about the culture we work in. We will visit historical sites. We will shop at malls.

*We will take advantage of the unique travel opportunities that our positions present* to unseen locations, but use some of that time to visit what is still important: our family.

*Finally, we will not ask to be held in high regard, earn commendation, or attain higher status.* But we will believe that by following this oath, students will see the legitimate nature of our profession. If we believe in this oath and ourselves, the community—starting with our students—will become a better place full of contributing global citizens.



**ZAI WHITAKER**  
**Kodaikanal International School, India**

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**Introduction:**

It is important to recognize that international schools are not a-cultural but that, increasingly, they have a strong and vigorous context. It is also important that international educators maintain an active engagement in local and global affairs but without overt partisanship. It is important that educators in international schools have a strong sense of mission and purpose. A teacher's oath may help sustain and achieve this goal.

**An Oath for International Educators:**

- I will continually try to develop the following values in myself, and consciously encourage and validate them in my students:
- *A cultural openness* that goes beyond tolerance and acceptance but which pro-actively seeks knowledge and experience from different cultures;
- *A sense of ownership of the global and local environment* and an appreciation of the effects of irresponsible actions;
- *A seriousness about our physical health* and the many temptations that can endanger and curtail one's potential;
- *An awareness about the tremendous potential of the electronic media* and also its inherent limitations and dangers;
- *An engagement with the pros and cons of nuclear energy*, and the development of alternative energy sources;
- *An ability to differentiate between leadership and domination*, and between influence and control;
- *An active empathy for the poor and dispossessed*, and the political and spiritual refugees of the world;
- *An understanding of the rich heritage of indigenous people* and of the need to respect, protect, and study these cultures;
- *A conviction of the power of language and dialogue* over military engagement, in the pursuit of global peace;
- *An acceptance of authority* within the context of dialogue and difference of opinion;
- *A knowledge of human rights* and of some universal infractions such as child labor, bonded labor and state/cultural oppression;
- *A perspective about the "global village"* and the fact that globalization should not submerge or undervalue cultural identities;
- *A sensitivity towards modern gender perspectives* and the limitations, intimidation and violence suffered by the girls and women of many communities.
- And finally, I will continually try to encourage in myself and my students the *broad human values* of integrity, empathy, generosity and self-discipline.