

Chicago-based Nonprofit Tackles Scientific Literacy Both in the US and Africa

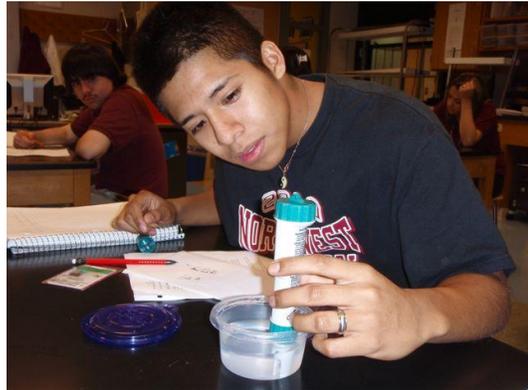
Who is The Innovative Science and Technology Group (ISTG)?

CHICAGO, IL (ISTG News) October 24, 2012—Founded in 2006, ISTG is a Chicago-based non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization committed to the promotion of scientific educational development in urban communities within the US and in Africa. ISTG has a number of programs aimed at helping it achieve its goals including Project AFARA, Project UJAMAA, and Project Africa Tomorrow.

A well-established fact is that African-Americans and Latinos are seriously underrepresented in the United States in fields pertaining to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Similarly, African nations strive to develop their overall technological and scientific infrastructure in order to fully participate on the world stage. This is critical since success in the 21st century is more reliant on a basic understanding of science and technology, perhaps more than any other time in human history. In the last few years, ISTG has worked on addressing a slice of this grand problem through the development of novel science and technology educational programs that span two continents.



Christ School Students – Ado Ekiti, Nigeria – AFARA Fall 2011
Copyright © 2009-2012 ISTG, LLC. All Rights Reserved.



North Grand High School Student – Chicago, IL –
AFARA Fall 2010. Copyright © 2009-2012 ISTG, LLC. All
Rights Reserved.

ISTG's Science and Technology International School Program: Project AFARA

Since its inception and launching in 2009, Project AFARA, ISTG's flagship program, has been a resounding and unmitigated success. Hundreds of students from various cities in the US and Africa have participated in this international science and technology program created and implemented by ISTG. Participating US schools have included Perspectives Calumet Middle School and North Grand High School in Chicago, Illinois, Plymouth Educational Center in Detroit, Michigan, the Environmental Charter High School in Lawndale, California, and the Cornerstone Academy for Social Action Middle School in New York, New York; likewise, participating African schools have been Christ's School Senior in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, Kalanso School in Bamako, Mali, and Kayamandi High School in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The demand for this program is high with several US and non-US schools on the Project AFARA waiting list to participate in this exciting program in the near future.

Project AFARA's success can be attributed to several factors. First, Project AFARA complements and supplements the instruction provided in schools. In fact, ISTG often customizes all of its programs to accommodate the needs of each individual participating school. As a result, Project AFARA is often integrated as part of the daily curriculum and the day to day teaching of schools. It is also frequently utilized as an after-school extracurricular activity, which becomes opportune for school district requiring longer days for their students. The decision to use Project AFARA during regular class time or as an afterschool program is left to the discretion of the participating schools.

Secondly, Project AFARA's success can also be credited to its stringent academic rigor. Throughout the project students are required to conduct various experiments, write weekly reports and at the end of the program they have to submit a final report and presentation that includes data from all participating schools. Moreover, from gathering the feedback from student participants and schools, ISTG can also attest to the academic rigor of project AFARA and can assert that the program has positively contributed to their experience with science and technology as well as promoting students' academic growth, achievement and success.

Finally, Project AFARA offers the opportunity for students from different cultural backgrounds to interact with each other. As such, students in different cities, countries and continents become "virtual pen pals" by sharing personal letters and videos---communicating in real time as much as possible even with the challenge of the vastly different time zones from participating cities. A key difference between Project AFARA and others that address STEM education is its unique international component that intrinsically affords a culturally enriching dynamic and greatly contributes to its success and desirability. Indeed, this program is as much about cultural awareness and diversity as it is about science and technology. ISTG strongly believes that in order to be competitive and knowledgeable in this global economy, critical thinking, scientific literacy and acumen as well as cultural awareness are crucial skills to acquire.

Undoubtedly, AFARA is academically rigorous and challenging as well as culturally engaging. Students will use this perhaps life changing experience as a stepping stone for the rest of their academic life by building their portfolios now and in college and hopefully by generating a continued interest in science at local and global levels. The students participating in the Project AFARA initiative learn to apply communication, technology, team building, and problem solving skills to a common scientific goal – on a global scale – while forging long-lasting connections with students of differing cultures and backgrounds.

ISTG as a School and Community Partner

ISTG, as a school partner, has the ability to create affordable, novel and groundbreaking international science and technology programming such as Project AFARA, for school districts throughout the country that are for the most part experiencing unprecedented financial difficulties. Indeed, ISTG is fully cognizant of financial challenges experienced by schools, and thus strives to provide high quality and low cost programs, which is in itself one of the essential tenets of ISTG's mission *to provide educational scientific literacy to underrepresented communities here and abroad.*

Furthermore, ISTG also recognizes the importance of forging strong alliances and has a keen interest in partnering with other organizations that share similar vision, values, and commitment to local and global educational scientific literacy such as the official AFARA sponsors Extech, Inc. and Soudasworld.com. In addition, to receiving the support of several individuals and businesses, ISTG also enjoyed the support of former Chicago-based South African Consul General, the Honorable Yusuf Omar.

What is Next for ISTG?

In the near future ISTG hopes to expand its international science and technology school program Project AFARA, in order to provide this unique opportunity to more students across the US and abroad. ISTG also eagerly looks forward to expand Project UJAMAA, its international technology and business initiative and Project Africa Tomorrow, a U.S.-sponsored African-based program geared towards the advancement of scientific research and development within African universities. Finally, ISTG hopes to continue to positively impact the lives of students, to keep on assisting schools in their educational endeavors, as well as to continue partnering with a greater number of likeminded individuals, community partners, and businesses that share similar values and a common goal of providing scientific literacy through school programs to primarily underserved communities here in US and overseas.

For inquiries or donations, please go to:

www.istg-africatomorrow.com

Media contact:

Dr. K. C. Toussaint, toussaint@istg-africatomorrow.com