

ISSA Conference Highlights

Hello everyone!

My name is Jim Kidder and I am on the board of the CTIR. Last week I was lucky to be able to attend the International Studies Schools Association (ISSA) convention in Portland. Being my first ISSA event, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. On the professional side, I have a strong interest in International Studies and feel it is an important element for public policy, foreign affairs, international business, and just plain old harmonious human relations. (Thus my involvement with CTIR) But on the personal side, I am the father of two boys ages 7 and 9 and know they will grow up in a world far different from mine. The world is getting smaller and flatter and it will behoove us all to know a bit more about the outside world. So I headed to Portland with the belief I could at least find something beneficial for my children!

Well, not only were there things for my kids, but just about everyone else's as well! I am truly sorry if you were not able to make it, as you missed a wonderful chance to connect with like minded individuals and organizations from around the world. Those of us who attended heard:

- About video conferencing technology and the multitude of learning experiences that can be created for students. The technology has improved over the years and is dramatically less expensive than the last time I looked into it. And like a fax machine, each new connection increases the value of all the connections.
- What leading international studies programs in the Portland area are doing, including the nation's flagship K-12 Chinese language immersion program funded by the Department of Defense.
- An interesting speech by the 24 year old founder of TakingITGlobal.org, who has created a global on-line community engaging hundreds of thousands of youth in over 200 countries. He is proof that not all of America's youth are hanging out at the mall!
- A wonderful panel of educators discussing whether International Studies is worthwhile. An interesting hour of discussion that emphatically resolved that it is critical.
- About projects that connect students across the world, wither physically or virtually, and projects that provide meaningful international service-action.
- And about resource organizations from across the country and across the world that help effectively teach about pressing international issues.

The event closed with a keynote speech by Mr. Ron Elving, Senior Washington Editor, National Public Radio, talking about the current state of politics in Washington. His humorous presentation on the number and breadth of candidates entering the 2008 presidential campaign gave us all a bit of insight on the upcoming election right around the corner.

This was a wonderful conference with a cornucopia of resources and connections for everyone. My personal favorite, and something I will draw on repeatedly at home, was

www.thefilmconnection.org. The Film Connection is “a community of film lovers, social activists and lifelong learners who use our non-profit online film library to watch, discuss and act on compelling films from around the globe”. As they are a socially responsible version of NetFlix, we are sure to have a number of their films at our house!

If you were unable to attend the ISSA Conference in Portland, please contact the CTIR with any questions on how we may be able to help you better teach International Studies. We will expect to see you at the 2008 ISSA Conference next year.

Until next time,

Jim Kidder