Starting up a new school is, to say the least, an exercise in extreme multi-tasking. It is perhaps best undertaken partnering a team of both the experienced and the enthusiastic. The enthusiastic team can benefit enormously from the experienced team by borrowing the credibility of an already existing program. This goes a long way in relieving the lack of a solid reputation.

But there are many other reasons to partner. Established schools have worked hard to develop and refine their programs and can benefit from “sharing the wealth.” New schools need to spread the load of start-up tasks, one of which is exactly this: developing curriculum. As Sally Carless, the director of Global Village School, notes: “It takes a lot of time, energy and money to create the infrastructure of a school, and by the time the founders realize how involved it is they may be despairingly overburdened.”

Providing curricular support allows young schools to focus on getting organized while adopting a temporary, immediate curriculum that is in line with their own philosophy. This allows the new school time to slowly implement its own courses and teachers. Also, small schools may need to associate with an established program in order to provide official accredited transcripts to their college-bound students.

Such is the case at Full Circle Teen School, which partners with Global Village School (GVS) for official transcripts and record keeping. Full Circle teachers submit course descriptions and student portfolios to Global Village for review, and GVS then provides official transcripts.

Global Village School is an accredited, international, K-12 homeschool diploma program with a creative, flexible approach and an emphasis on peace, justice, diversity, and sustainability. Our goal is to provide children with an atmosphere that nurtures their individual gifts and empowers them to become confident and capable stewards of the planet and each other. This philosophy resonated with the Full Circle founders who were drawn to the flexibility of GVS and the emphasis on peace, and peacemaker principles, which form the basis of the cultural mentoring model used at Full Circle Teen School (FCTS).

Donna Helene, co-founder of FCTS, says the two schools “are kindred spirits with shared values. It’s a blessing to partner with a sister organization that helps meet our needs. This way we’re not alone in the good work we do and we don’t have to do everything ourselves.” It’s a bit like receiving a leg up at a critical point on a steep climb. Donna
points out that “as an established and accredited alternative educational organization, Global Village adds credibility and experience to our new program.”

A wide variety of text and online courses become immediately available to young schools participating in a Global Village partnership. Themes such as sustainability and respect for diversity are woven into the core academic areas of English, science, math and so on, along with unique course offerings like Reflections on Peacemaking, Global Spirituality and Activism, Planetary Stewardship, Green Gardening, Technology Education and Service Learning. Students earn elective credit for many different kinds of life experiences, such as traveling, participating in cultural events, film-making, activism, performing in community theater, pursuing a career in athletics, or starting their own business.

With so many options, schools like Full Circle can gain some breathing room to create their own classes while continuing to supplement their curriculum with the larger course offerings of another program. This also allows new schools to open their doors without having to hire teachers in every subject and gives them the flexibility to accept inquiring students in grade levels outside the current scope of their program.

Beyond the more tangible benefits of partner schooling is the energizing aspect of working with other alternative educators who understand the nature of the endeavor and provide a sense of camaraderie along the trail blazer’s road.

Examples of other beneficial partner school pairings include K-8 schools wanting to:

a) offer a homeschool/ high school option by providing tutors and classrooms (during the day or after hours) OR
b) add a high school immediately by using Global Village’s courses, teachers, accredited classes, and transcript and diploma service.

This was precisely the case with the School Down Under, an abroad program in New Zealand that found a perfect match in working with GVS. The School Down Under staff provided classroom instruction and a high quality outdoor and elective program while Global Village supplied the structure for the academic courses, kept student transcripts, and granted diplomas. This allowed the School Down Under to focus on the challenges of establishing the campus, training the staff and teachers, developing the wider program,

and tackling all the business aspects such as immigration, marketing, and recruitment. The simple result was that the staff and teachers had more time for quality interactions with the students.

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For more information about Global Village’s School Partners program, visit www.globalvillageschool.org/partnerschool.html or call (805) 646-9792.

Wendelin Wagner taught science at the Santa Barbara Middle School for 11 years. She is co-founder of the School Down Under in New Zealand and recently joined the team at Global Village School.

Campfire at the Salmonberry School, Orcas Island, Washington
Photo by Paul Freedman