

Cushing Academy

LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**Developing 21st Century Curricula
for High School Students**

A Collaborative Project led by

**Dr. George Leeson
Deputy Director of the Institute of Ageing
James Martin 21st Century School
University of Oxford**

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The curriculum development project is one of many activities led by visiting scholars from the James Martin 21st Century School at the University of Oxford. These conversations are used as a resource for on-going curriculum development at Cushing Academy. The curriculum project is available, as open content, for use by secondary schools across the United States and around the world.

Source for attribution: Dr. George Leeson and Cushing Academy

Conversations with visiting scholar Dr. George Leeson of the Oxford Institute of Ageing

A group of Cushing students and teachers teamed up with Dr. George Leeson, Deputy Director of the Oxford Institute of Ageing and a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford, to explore issues surrounding aging in the twenty-first century. Dr. Leeson shared his work on the socio-demographic aspects of aging populations, as well as his thoughts on age discrimination. The group came to a quick consensus that prejudices toward older people, who are sometimes considered economic, familial, and cultural burdens, must be addressed and changed as we experience a marked change in global aging. More and more people are living well past one hundred years, and Dr. Leeson believes we will see life expectancies of one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty in the near future. The ramifications of a global population living longer must be carefully considered. The group explored the following questions:

What will be the impact of this trend?

How will the aging population affect society?

How will it affect families and individuals?

What will all this mean to the youth of today, their parents, and grandparents?

Would we want to live to 120 or more if we could have a quality of life of a 40 year old? What changes need to be made in order for that to happen?

Dr. Leeson and the group considered the changes in educational models across the globe. Perhaps attending primary and middle school, breaking for internships and other experiential learning during teen years, and then returning to education in the twenties, working for a time, and then continuing education in middle years may make more sense in light of emerging technologies, information, and longer life span. As people realize longer life spans, advanced education will be both necessary and desired; formal and informal life-long learning will be a must. Dr. Leeson raised the possibility that some traditional colleges may fail as more and more learners (young and old) take advantage of online learning.

The role of government support raises issues around the economic and administrative costs of an older population and effectiveness of social security. The group was split as to whether governments should provide a minimum amount of support to keep citizens above a poverty level or whether individuals and families should be responsible for themselves.

As a result of this discussion, the group decided to become actively involved with Dr. Leeson's research by assisting him in polling Cushing families to gain a sense of current thoughts and trends on aging.

Dr. Leeson's team developed a survey which has been vetted and which focuses on the following categories on aging:

Age, Health, and Gender Education

Cultural Behavior

Psychology

Employment and Career

Retirement

Working closely with Cushing faculty and administration, Cushing students will conduct this survey during the 2010-2011 academic year, analyze the results, and send the data to Dr. Leeson's group, The Complex Environmental Population Interactions Project, which "unites key demographers, economists, anthropologists, philosophers and environmentalists to address through research, modeling and scenarios, the range of complex interactions between environmental and demographic change over the first half of the 21st century."