

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

6-19-2008

How can elementary educators use multicultural literature to help prepare students for life as a global citizen?

Kathryn Oleksy
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Oleksy, Kathryn, "How can elementary educators use multicultural literature to help prepare students for life as a global citizen?" (2008). *Theses and Dissertations*. 709.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/709>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

HOW CAN ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS USE MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE
TO HELP PREPARE STUDENTS FOR LIFE AS A GLOBAL CITIZEN?

by
Kathryn Oleksy

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 19, 2008

Approved by _____

Date Approved June 19, 2008

© 2008 Kathryn Oleksy

ABSTRACT

Kathryn Oleksy

HOW CAN ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS USE MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE TO HELP PREPARE STUDENTS FOR LIFE AS A GLOBAL CITIZEN?

2007/08

Professor David Hespe
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which elementary educators can use multicultural literature to help students learn about the world they live in. The study was based on the implementation of a unit in which students were introduced to four countries using multicultural literature. Students then learned about the culture, citizens, geography, history and so forth through multiple strategies and approaches to enhance the learning process. Upon completion of the unit, student writing samples and exit interviews when compared with pre-unit interviews, revealed students had made significant gains in relating to people in other countries as well as naming locations across the globe. The results of the study also indicated student interest and enthusiasm were high in studying the world when lessons incorporated multicultural literature. Implications for incorporating global education for teachers and curriculum planners at the elementary level are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables and Charts		iv
CHAPTER		
ONE	Introduction	1
	Story of the Question	2
	Statement of Problem	4
	Purpose of the Study	6
	Research Question	7
	Significance of Research	8
	Organization of Thesis	8
TWO	Review of the Literature	10
	Introduction	10
	Defining Global Understanding	11
	A Strong Need for Global Education in the Classroom	12
	The Role of Multicultural Literature	15
	Merging Global Education and Multicultural Literature	17
	Examples of Multicultural Literature and Global Education Integration	18
	Conclusion	21
THREE	Methodology	23
	Introduction	23

	Context	23
	Research Design	25
	Analyzing the Data	30
FOUR	Findings	31
	Review of the Data	31
	Difficulties and Surprises of the Study	39
FIVE	Discussion	42
	Significance of Data	42
	What I Learned	44
	Limitations	47
	Recommendations	48
	References	50

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

Chart 1: Initial Interview Responses	32
Table 1: Writing Evaluation	33
Chart 2: Exit Interview Responses	34
Table 2: Samples of Exit Interview Students Responses	36

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“Who can tell me where Kazakhstan is?” I stood patiently waiting for just one hand to go up. “Class, I just went over this with you. Your teacher even left a note stating that you had just studied the country yesterday.” How could they not remember? Were they paying attention as I read? Did they simply not care?

As their substitute, I was not sure if they were playing games with me or if they seriously did not know the answer. As seconds became minutes, I became frustrated. “Alright then, who can tell us all a little about the citizens of Kazakhstan?” I asked with a slight tone of irritation in my voice. I heard a student murmur, “Who cares!” followed by numerous sixteen and seventeen year olds giggling. It took quite a few minutes to calm the rambunctious crowd of twenty-five down. Finally, a hand shot up from the back of the room. “Ms. Oleksy, the lesson yesterday was boring and today was even worse. The book just goes on and on. So does our teacher. This is boring. Isn’t there something *different* we could do to learn this stuff?”

I could not believe what I was hearing. From my future teacher’s perspective, I felt the geography book contained excellent information. How could the students be so naïve about studying the world? Are they seriously associating aspects of culture with *stuff*?

As I looked between the students dulled expressions and the three inch thick geography book filled with endless facts and figures, I had come to realize the lesson and

the book were not engaging to this teenage audience. They doodled on paper and participation was slim to none. The next two days in the classroom proved just as difficult as the lesson plans followed the same format.

I did not know what to think. So many thoughts ran through my head over the course of those three days. I first blamed myself but as a substitute teacher and having only recently completed my sophomore year of college, there was little I could do to. This responsibility rested in the hands of their teacher. However, between the lack of enthusiasm on the students' part and the teacher's monotonous lessons, the students were the ones who were ultimately suffering. The students did not seem to care about a course so necessary for their understanding of the world.

Story of the Question

I had always been told substituting was great experience for future teachers. It never occurred to me however that one experience would lead to my graduate research. The comments I heard from the students shocked me and specifically, "isn't there something different we could do?" remained in the back of my mind. As I contemplated numerous thesis topics and read various articles, I kept coming back to the geography class I was a substitute teacher for. At the time, more than anything, I wanted to excite the students and engage them in the subject matter. I immediately thought of my teachers and what they did to draw me in.

Unlike the students in the vignette, I was fortunate to have teachers in high school who inspired me to learn about the world and, in turn, helped build my knowledge base. My world geography teacher was quite the opposite of the one in the vignette. Mr. "C." never used the geography books, but instead used the internet, guest speakers and his own

experiences, visiting many of the countries we studied. Although we did not visit the countries, we felt as though we had joined him on the trips through pictures and exciting stories. We were engaged whereas the students in the vignette found doodling in their notebooks far more interesting.

In college, as part of my American Studies degree, I was required to take quite a few global/multicultural courses. I developed a passion for learning about cultures from nations oceans away. My International Relations class could be described as simply phenomenal. I looked forward to the course and enjoyed reading current events from around the world as part of my weekly assignments. As the articles spoke of specific nations, I developed a mental image of where the country was located and applied the background I had gained of that nation throughout my years of schooling. The class discussions were stimulating and you could not help but want to share at least one comment. Above all, I had come to understand how people from around the world are interconnected through every day politics, economics, and even war but cultural differences make each nation unique. In a world becoming smaller by the minute due to technology, I realized I now had the role of a global citizen to fulfill. I only wished I could have had this epiphany at an earlier age.

As I took my own schooling experiences and the students in the vignette into consideration, I began pondering what I could do as a future elementary teacher to prepare my students for life in a global society. More importantly, as the student pointed out, what could I do differently with the materials and information to engage my young audience? With this objective in mind, so begins my adventure.

Statement of Problem

Exactly how much do American students know about the world outside our national borders? According to recent studies, the students I encountered during those three difficult days were not an isolated pocket of students who failed to have a grasp on the importance of global education (Sanders & Stewart, 2004). Simply stated, American students are significantly lacking and uninformed in terms of global knowledge and cultural understanding. However, as many teachers hear from students on a daily basis, why study foreign countries and cultures? How will this apply to students' lives?

This question can be answered in one word: globalization. Students need to understand that nations around the world are interdependent. Countries no longer rely solely on their own resources to produce material goods and ability to raise food products. As interactions amongst nations have increased, regional and local economic lines have faded and a global economy is rapidly expanding. The development and continued improvements in the use of satellites, internet and modes of transportation have brought the world together. As time progresses from the twenty first century onward, communication methods have opened the doors, and will continue to do so, for nations to exchange goods, services and link communities across oceans (McJimsey, Ross, & Young, 1999). Now more than ever, there is a need to understand cultures and people from around the world.

Nonetheless, the idea of global education is hardly a new concept. Since 1987, there has been a push for global education in the classroom. The purpose of global education was recognized then, and continues to be so now, as an initiative "to help individuals see the world as a single and global system and for students to see themselves

as participants of that system” (Evans, 1987, 546). Students must be given the opportunity to gain background knowledge that will enable them to understand issues around the world and cultivate an attitude of acceptance towards ideas, beliefs, values and customs outside their own. However, almost two decades later, American’s continue to have mixed feelings on incorporating global education into the classroom. While many support it, the vast majority considers it a “luxury” and feels as though it is not essential for students. Instead, many feel educators should focus on the basics, such as reading, math and science, being that many students are at risk in these areas based on yearly test scores (Bales, 2004). It is important to note that while the Federal government has increased it’s involvement in improving test scores, it has yet to make global education a priority.

Instead, many states have taken the initiative to adopt social studies standards and policies on international education. Despite the strong need in schools, much of the emphasis and available studies conducted on global education continue to take place in the upper grade levels (Sanders and Stewart, 2004). This begs one to consider that perhaps the root problem lies within current curriculum models since most states and school districts develop curriculum following the “expanding environments model” (Evans, 1987, 548). This model begins looking at the neighborhood/family during the elementary years and by the high school level, exposes students to the world regions. Researchers argue that there must be a shared responsibility among the other disciplines and with teachers in the lower grade levels if students are to realize the value of global education (Evans, 1987). However, are students in the elementary grades developmentally ready to learn about the world?

According to researchers, current curriculum models strictly limit students' view of the world during years when they are quickly developing their base for cognitive, social and moral skills. Children in this age group cannot be underestimated as they constantly reconstruct what they know about the physical, social and cultural environment in which they are developing (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). Studies have found that social studies programs incorporating a global perspective in the elementary classroom impacted students' attitude toward people from other countries. Allowing students the chance for cultural experiences in the elementary classroom is essential if they are to learn about people and cultures from around the world in the course of their academic career (McCarty, 2007). Global education has the possibility, just as the states are currently exploring, to be integrated into almost all content areas and across all grade levels.

Purpose of the Study

Perhaps, the greatest opportunity to integrate global knowledge on the elementary level occurs during language arts instruction. Using literature that incorporates a multicultural perspective provides students the opportunity to learn about individuals from all over the world and more importantly, it can help build student understanding of history and geography (Steiner, 2001, xix). In selecting books that are well written, teachers allow students to see a world that exists outside of their community. Students can also be given numerous opportunities through the use of different works to develop the empathy and understanding necessary for living in today's global society (Steiner, 2004, 3). Many middle school and high school teachers have already found ways to do just this by pairing social studies curriculum with language arts instruction.

For example, one middle school teacher conducted a unit entitled “Around the World” (Wilson, 2004). Throughout the thematic unit, the students kept a journal where they jotted down feelings or connections they felt as they read literature including biographies, poems, and plays from over thirty nations. By the end, all students had learned that “despite differences in lifestyle and appearance, there is a deeper thread of humanity that binds everyone together” (Wilson, 2004, 25). In another district, high school educators designed a parallel curriculum which incorporated World Literature and World Cultures courses. The teachers’ goal was to expose students to as much information, in as many ways as possible, in order for the students to make connections. When students were actively engaged during discussion and written reflection regarding the literature, they were pulling information obtained from the cultures course to make sense of it all (Kerschner, 2002). As the studies came to an end, researchers found that multicultural literature served as a bridge for the students to explore the world around them.

Research Question

Little is available in terms of what elementary school teachers can do to promote global education in the classroom. Taking both the fact that multicultural literature can enhance global knowledge and the research that acknowledges elementary school age children as developmentally ready to embrace it; the question of this research is “How can elementary educators use multicultural literature to help prepare students for life as a global citizen?”

Significance of Research

Current research indicates American students are limited in their understanding of the world upon graduating high school. Although many states are attempting to remedy the situation, there is little guidance available from the state and national government. Educators around the nation, specifically in elementary schools, are left to their own devices in finding ways to counteract this fast growing problem in the classroom. As stated earlier, studies have shown elementary school students develop rapidly during these crucial years (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). Where better to begin building a global knowledge base than in the elementary school classrooms using literature as a spring board.

According to Freeman and Lehman (2001), literacy development in children of elementary school age develops at a fast pace as they learn to independently read, write, and understand how spoken and written language connect. The abundant use of literature already has a home in the elementary classroom as educators continue to reinforce this development. In using multicultural literature, educators allow students to connect with children around the world. They have the chance to see peers from around the globe experience problems, encounter challenging situations and enjoy new experiences (Landt, 2006). This study hopes to find ways for elementary students to do just this while also building knowledge of a world in which they will eventually become global members.

Organization of Thesis

The remaining four chapters explore the use of multicultural literature in the classroom as a means of exposing students to the world around them. Specifically, the second chapter presents literature currently available on the topic of using multicultural

literature to promote global education. Studies, findings and arguments for integrating international education using multicultural literature are presented. The third chapter presents the methodology for this study and with whom the research will be conducted. In the following chapter, data from the study are presented. Lastly, chapter five discusses the effects of the study and in what ways the literature can be used to promote global education in the elementary classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The need for students to be educated in the field of global education is crucial if students are to eventually become members of the global society. Students in the classroom today will be tomorrow's business leaders, political candidates, teachers and so forth. What each of these jobs has in common is the need to understand people and places around the globe. Unfortunately, there is little research available as to strategies elementary educators can use in the classroom to promote global understanding through the use of multicultural literature. This study hopes to find ways to connect elementary readers with the world around them while also developing their global understanding. The study aims to provide elementary educators with a foundation for designing strategies to promote global education using appropriate literature.

This chapter reviews literature discussing the issue of global education in American classrooms. Section one defines global education, identifies the benefits and importance as well as the current situation of global education in United States. Section two describes multicultural literature and how educators can use literature to supplement social studies lessons in the classroom. Section three provides information on tactics and strategies that teachers in the upper levels have done to further world knowledge. Lastly, the final section discusses how this study could help elementary school teachers narrow the knowledge gap in the lower grade levels to better prepare students for a global future.

Defining Global Understanding

There are two terms used to describe the study of the world around us; global education and international education. According to the National Council for Social Studies, “global education emphasizes the interrelated nature of condition, issues, trends, processes, and events while international education places its emphasis on the study specific world regions, problems and culture” (McJimsey, Ross, & Young, 1999). Although the purpose of each is seemingly different, many use both terms to describe achieving the same purpose: expanding world knowledge. Many teachers intertwine international and global education content into daily lessons. In doing so, students develop the necessary skills, perspectives, attitudes, and knowledge to participate in today’s global arena.

Perhaps Steiner (2001) explains this global arena best. “Evidence of a growing interdependence among nations can be seen in the summits and gatherings such as the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle and the activities of the World Bank Organization, including international protestors who remind us daily of that we still have much work to do in reaching global equity” (Steiner, 2001, p. 3). Students, and adults alike, need to understand that nations are interdependent. Countries no longer rely solely on their own resources to produce material goods and raise food products. As interactions amongst nations have increased, dividing regional and local economic lines have faded and a global economy is expanding daily. The development and continued improvements in the use of satellites, internet and modes of transportation have brought the world together. As time progresses from the twenty first century onward, communication methods have opened the doors, and will continue to do so, for nations to exchange

goods, services and link communities across oceans (McJimsey, Ross, & Young, 1999). Now more than ever, there is a need to understand cultures and people from around the world.

To address the above issue, the National Council for Social Studies (McJimsey, Ross, & Young, 1999) has identified four objectives to guide educators as they teach global and international education. The objectives are as follows:

- Gaining understanding of world cultures;
- Understanding historical, geographic, economic, political, cultural, and environment relationships among world regions and peoples;
- Examining the nature of cultural differences and national or regional conflicts and problems;
- Acting to influence public policy and private behavior on behalf of international understanding, tolerance and empathy.

The difficult task of preparing the nation's young to be responsible, peaceful and productive in the global society (Wan, 2007), while also meeting NCSS objectives falls heavily upon the shoulders of educators.

A Strong Need for Global Education in the Classroom

Globalization is without a doubt a powerful influence in today's society. However, change to the American curriculum has not been able to keep pace with the rapidly developing technology. Sanders and Stewart (2004) found that American students are lacking in their knowledge of the world upon graduation. A survey conducted by the National Commission on Asia in the Schools (cited in Sanders & Stewart, 2004) released a report indicating that American students are misinformed about

global issues. For example, 80% of the students surveyed failed to identify India as the largest democracy in the world and 25% could not name the ocean that separated North America from Asia. It is important to note that the students surveyed were college-bound students. These are the same students who would be sitting in lecture rooms across America with students from across the world.

According to a National Geographic/Roper survey (cited in Sanders & Stewart, 2004), American students are at a disadvantage. The survey involved students from nine countries and the findings indicate Americans were significantly lacking in their understanding of current affairs and geography. Over 80% of American students could not identify Afghanistan on a map. The same great majority could also not find Israel on a map. The two nations students were asked to identify appear on the news almost daily as a result of the turmoil in the Middle East (Sanders & Stewart, 2004).

Researchers have also found that not only do students lack in their understanding, but the attitudes they had in general about international/global education further compound the problem. Bales (2004) found many Americans consider international education a “luxury” in a time when American students are struggling in the basic areas, such as reading and math. The participants in the study indicated that the emphasis should be placed on helping students succeed in those areas before they study international education. Bales found that this too was a misconception held by Americans when defining global education. Many consider global education to simply encompass exotic languages and geography. Bales stated, “The sketchy picture of international education is partly a result of the fact that it is perceived to be all over the map – an endless list of things student might learn with no endpoint – rather than a basic

competency” (Bales, 2004, p. 208). As Bales, Sanders and Stewart argue based on their findings, much needs to be accomplished in the American school system to turn this problem around.

Stewart and Sanders (2004) support the need for strong national policies on international education if students are to be better prepared. Sanders and Stewart agree with the participants in Bales (2004) study in that students need to improve reading and math scores. However, to deprive students of international/global education will not adequately prepare them for a successful role in the 21st century. Sanders and Stewart (2004) have taken the objectives of global and international education as listed by the National Council for Social Studies one step further to help emphasize this crucial fact. The goals of international education across America should be integrated into content areas and need to focus on:

- “Developing citizenry and work force knowledge about world regions, cultures and international issues;
- Preparing experts and leaders in business, politics, and all major professional fields who are capable of addressing international opportunities and challenges;
- Increasing our ability to communicate in languages other than English.
- Connecting youth in America to peers across the world so they may learn to build their common future.” (Sanders & Stewart, 2004, 201).

While the federal government has yet to take a firm stand on the issue, many states have recognized their role in developing global citizens in public schools. For example, Connecticut is exploring strategies to integrate international education into

content areas from kindergarten through twelfth grade. New Jersey students must take one year of world history and cultures, and any student graduating after 2003, must demonstrate world language competency. Vermont's Governor's Council on International Education had been mandated to assess international education in public schools across the state and will make recommendations to the state board of education, legislature and state department of education (Sanders and Stewart, 2004).

However, the districts themselves have been ultimately faced with finding ways to expand global understanding. One example can be seen in a study of fourth grade students in a New England school district who recently set out to achieve global education objectives through the use of an internet pen pal system (Charron, 2007). In the study, the students used e-mail communication as a means to further their understanding of Australia. The students corresponded on a weekly basis to pen pals thousands of miles away about themselves, their homes, etc. Students were extremely motivated and enthusiastic as they participated in the 3 month long correspondence. The findings were positive as the students learned about everything from the wildlife in Australia, to the different time zones and seasons. Researchers found that the motivating factor for the students was connecting with peers through e-mail. The students enjoyed "talking" and "meeting" new people through the system (Charron, 2007). This particular study allowed students to practice essential writing skills while building cultural understanding.

The Role of Multicultural Literature

As the research conducted by Charron (2007) found, reading, writing and cultural learning occur at the same time. Connecting students to any lesson is essential if they are to achieve the objective because time and again, students ask "Will I use this in the

future?” Students continuously seek to find meaning and relatedness of topics to their own lives. If educators are struggling to improve students understanding of the world, according to Landt (2006), literature, just like technology, serves as an excellent bridge to do so.

Multicultural literature in particular connects students to the world and expands narrow perspectives. Steiner (2001) argues that through the use of multicultural literature, students begin to understand one another as they build upon their tolerance and knowledge of other cultures. Fact filled books are of course excellent tools for studying the differences of the world’s many cultures, but students need to see peers across the world experiencing the daily obstacles they encounter if students are to truly “connect” with them. “Unfamiliar aspects of other cultures - dress, language, beliefs - are less foreign when viewed through the lens of familiar issues” (Landt, 2006, p. 691). In short, students learn to appreciate the qualities that separate everyone around the world, while also realizing they share many common bonds.

Multicultural children’s literature not only exposes students to new cultures, but it serves as a powerful tool to help children understand past and present global issues. Multicultural literature incorporates and exposes students to poverty, ecology, health, and natural disaster situations found around the world (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). A key component in multicultural children’s literature is that it is in a child’s perspective. The literature thus allows students to make sense of their world in terms they understand. As students put themselves in the character’s shoes, they recognize commonalities in the characters as they progress through the story’s challenges and problems (Landt, 2006). Students may feel empowered to take action, just as the characters, to make changes to

improve the world around them. Perhaps they may decide to read further into issues of poverty but above all, children become aware that there is a place larger than their local community. Barriers that separated “us” from “them” are removed both culturally and geographically as students begin to develop an understanding of how they fit into the “big” picture.

Merging Global Education and Multicultural Literature

Researchers argue that textbooks should not be tossed aside. The continued use of these books allows students to learn about the geography, history and people who live around the world (McCarty, 2007). However, McCarty (2007) explains that using multicultural literature to supplement social studies units serves as a means for students to “really get to know” neighbors in their global community. Textbooks simply do not compare to the motivation, excitement, or enlightening characteristics found in children’s books. Trade books stimulate interest by acting on the reader’s emotions, personal associations, imagination and attitudes, but selecting such books is no simple task. McCarty (2007), a member of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Notable Book Award review board, explains that before educators can begin to excite students using these books, a great deal needs to be taken into consideration.

As the NCSS Notable Book Award considers titles, the review board ranks the books in content, genre and high literary quality. The board looks to see whether the book accurately reflects diverse cultural groups and contains accurate information (McCarty, 2007). Lehman and Freeman (2001) indicated as well that when selecting and evaluating multicultural children’s literature, it is extremely important to consider

authenticity. As the selection process occurs, Landt (2006) urges one to consider the following:

- Does it contain an accurately portrayal of the culture in terms of intra/intercultural relationships, dialogue, clothing and food?
- Are there any stereotypical representatives?
- Are the issues at play in the story realistic?

Not only does one need to evaluate the authenticity, but McCarty suggests considering how the text fits into the NCSS Core Curriculum Standards in areas such as global connections, location, individuals, groups, power, and governance (2007, 50). It is important for educators to evaluate titles using such criteria if they are to achieve global education objectives and use supplemental text appropriately.

Examples of Multicultural Literature and Global Education Integration

With the objectives of global education in mind and careful selection of supporting literature, many educators have taken on this difficult task. These educators have recognized the value of preparing young students to become global citizens and while the goals to achieve this remain the same, the strategies to do so vary based on the ages of students.

At the high school level, curriculum easily lends itself to successful global education integration. Most states and school districts develop curriculum following the “expanding environments model” (Evans, 1987, p. 548) which begins looking at the neighborhood/family during the elementary years and, by the high school years, exposes students to the world regions. Students in high school also take world literature, world language and geography courses in an effort to further their understanding of the world.

As Kerschner (2002) discovered, one school district decided to merge its high school social studies and literature courses. The school district designed a parallel curriculum that incorporated the World Literature and World Cultures courses high school freshman were required to take. While the students learned about geography, class, politics, beliefs and economics in the World Cultures course, students simultaneously read works by authors from those regions in World Literature. The teachers wanted to expose students to as much information, in as many ways as possible, in order for the students to make connections. It was found that when students were actively engaged during discussion and written reflection to the literature, they were pulling information obtained from the cultures course to make sense of it all (Kerschner, 2002). It should also be noted that the students began the year questioning unfamiliar traditions and cultures. However, over time they became curious about other cultures and accepted the differences.

Students who participated in an “Around the World Unit” in one middle school also experienced success as they studied multicultural literature and international education. The teacher presented students with stories, poems, and plays from over 30 nations which the students had expressed an interest in studying. The students kept a journal in which they wrote down connections and emotions they felt as they read. In fact, as a result of connecting to the text, many students went to the library on their own to conduct research on specific regions and countries. By the end of the unit, some students had over 60 pages of maps, illustrations, reflections and facts they had gained (Wilson, 2004). Students then selected a country of their choice to present to the class. Based on the units’ success and students’ enjoyment, Wilson (2004) concluded “students are inherently interested in the limitless diversity of the world,” (p. 24) and it is simply up

to educators to introduce them to it. Just as Charron (2007) indicated earlier, reading, writing and cultural learning occurred simultaneously and the students benefited.

In both studies, success was achieved as a result of pairing global education and literature. Students' made connections through the text and as a result, were eager to learn the facts and figures found in textbooks. But what happens when students are simply exposed to multicultural literature? According to a study of 123 eighth graders responses to multicultural literature, students do not make the same advancements (Dressel, 2005). The goals of this particular study were to have students enjoy the text, learn about different cultures and understand their own cultures. As the students read, they were to respond to the story in their journals but could not summarize the story. Instead, they had to focus on cultural conflicts, characters, themes, etc., and develop a presentation to model what they had learned about the culture for the class. While the students were found to have liked their books, the students did not gain in their understanding of others.

If students are to gain in their understanding of places and people around the world, teachers need to help students learn about the "differing worldviews" that exist (Dressel, 2005, p. 761). Teachers must remain active members in discussion as students read multicultural literature, because if left to their own devices, students may never clarify cultural misunderstandings. When this occurs, the objectives of global education cannot be met and students remain at a disadvantage. Dressel (2005) raises one final, but very important point. Students in this particular study needed much more experience with multicultural literature. This begs one to consider, should global education and

multicultural literature have a place in elementary school classrooms? Are students ready for such exposure at this young age?

According to available research, the argument for global education in the elementary classroom has existed for at least twenty years. Evans (1987) found that primary school age children are developmentally ready to handle such exposure and that it is probably a great age to introduce students to global perspective. At this age, they are open to learning about people who are different from them. For example, a study found children under ten were far more receptive to learning about other people than students who were four years older (cited in Evans, 1987). Freeman and Lehman (2001) agree with these findings because younger children are constantly restructuring their understanding of the world they live in. Specifically, using literature with global or multicultural perspectives furthers the cognitive, social and moral development of children. But if current curriculum does not integrate international content, in what ways can elementary teachers use multicultural literature to expose elementary school children to the global society? This questions serves as the basis for my study.

Conclusion

As a review of the literature suggests, global knowledge is essential for students if they are to succeed in the 21st century. The world has gotten smaller thanks to advancements in technology and transportation. Interactions between nations which used to take weeks now occur within seconds. Students need to learn, now more than ever, to interact with people from across the world. However, American students are at a disadvantage in that they are not being adequately prepared. Upon graduating, many do

not compare favorably with their peers from across the globe in terms of identifying nations, major landforms or cultural groups.

Educators need to connect students' lives with the world around them if they are to learn interdependence in this global society. The best way to do so is through the use of multicultural literature which encompasses many global issues prevalent in today's society. When teachers select appropriate and authentic multicultural literature, the students benefit. As the studies have shown, the students who have participated in global education and multicultural literature integration have succeeded in expanding awareness of the world around them. In this way we can begin to reverse the current trend in global education statistics and point America in a positive direction toward developing successful global citizens.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

Many districts and upper grade level teachers around the nation have integrated global education content into the curriculum. Educators have done so in an effort to help today's students become tomorrow's global citizens. This study aims to provide educators with a foundation for designing strategies to promote global education in the elementary classroom using appropriate literature.

This particular study will involve the use of teacher research through qualitative methodology. I intend to implement a unit study integrating social studies and language arts which will focus on the use of multicultural literature to enhance global education. I will collect data through a variety of means including my own teacher research journal, pre and post unit interviews, writing samples, and discussion sessions to determine if multicultural literature helps expand global understanding amongst elementary school students.

Context

School

Oak Elementary School is located in the city of Mill, New Jersey (in order to maintain confidentiality, location and school name have been changed). Mill is located in the state of New Jersey and has a total area of 44.5 square miles with a total population of about 27,000 people. The breakdown of the population is as follows, 76% white, 15%

African American, 4% Asian, 11.5% Hispanic and the remaining 5% is comprised of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and other ethnicities. The Mill City School District enrolls more than 5,550 students and has six elementary schools, one middle school and two high schools (New Jersey School Report Card, 2007).

Oak Elementary is a Title 1 eligible school that houses grades kindergarten through fifth. According to the New Jersey School Report Card (2007), the district spends approximately \$13, 517 per student. There are 308 students in the building and the breakdown by grade level is as follows, 40 kindergarteners, 54 first graders, 47 second graders, 48 third graders, 66 fourth graders and 53 fifth graders. The student population is comprised of 3 American Indian/Alaskan, 1 Asian/Pacific Islander, 57 Hispanic, 154 African American and 94 White (non-Hispanic) students. Of the total student population at Oak, 18% of students are classified and receive special education services.

The teachers, faculty, and administrators are an important part of the learning community at Oak School. There are 162 students per administrator and class sizes are small with a student to faculty ratio of 13 to 1. Approximately 88% of the faculty and administrators hold a bachelor's degree and 13% hold a master's degree.

Participants/Subjects

There are approximately sixteen second grade students involved in this study. The students were solicited from the researcher's student teaching setting, however only those students who returned a permission slip signed by their parent or guardian were eligible to participate. The participants were male and female, ages seven to ten years old. Approximately 85% of the participants were African American, 13% were Hispanic and

2% were Caucasian. Of the total participants in the classroom, 25% are classified with a disability.

Research Design

The research driving this study is qualitative in nature. It is important to note the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, which are the two primary research methods. While quantitative research focuses on analyzing statistics, “qualitative research describes and explains what is important to know about a particular topic of interest” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, 43). When a qualitative study is implemented, the researcher’s participants are people involved in everyday situations and settings which are usually social in nature. In order to collect data, researchers use “participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews and collection of relevant documents” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, 46) to capture the participants’ thoughts and behaviors. Teacher research, which is the primary research tool of this study, is categorized as qualitative methodology for several of the aforementioned reasons.

Educators conduct research on issues that relate directly to their profession (Charles & Mertler, 2002). Teacher research is “intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical, and contextual” (Mohr, 2007). It aims to provide insight and allow teachers to critically reevaluate their teaching, environment and learners. Not only is the research useful for the teacher researcher, but it can extend beyond the classroom walls throughout the school or district. Perhaps this is because educators know far better than any traditional researcher of the problems and situations that exist in the classroom setting (Charles and Mertler, 2002). Thus, educators find the results of teacher driven research relevant and helpful. In this study, several qualitative methods will be used in

order to help elementary educators develop strategies to incorporate global education through the use of multicultural literature.

Data Collection

The research was conducted over a period of four weeks, each week focusing on one specific country. The methods of data collection in this study included my teacher research journal, interviews, and review of students' work. The first and most important source of data collection in this study was the teacher research journal. Student behaviors and comments were noted in my research journal during each lesson to determine which activities were above or below their ability levels. Observations from lessons were also noted in order to compare which activities were engaging and which activities simply did not captivate the students' attention. The journal also served to record information and comments provided by students during whole group discussion. During the group discussion sessions, the teacher prompted the class through the use of quotes or facts obtained from the story/lesson. Observations from discussion groups examined connections students made between the story and lesson as well as connections across lessons.

The second method of data collection involved the use of interviews designed by the researcher. Subjects will answer a series of interview questions focusing on what they know and would like to know about the world they live in. The following questions were asked:

1. Do you think it is important to study places around the world?
 - a. Why or why not?
2. Could you tell me what a country is?

3. What is the name of our country?
4. Do you know names of any countries in the world?
5. Where have you heard the names of those countries?
6. What do you know about people who live in other countries?
7. Do you think you have anything in common with people in other countries?
 - a. Why or why not?
8. Have you read or heard books about characters living in different countries?
9. Do you think characters in books can teach you about a country?

The pre-unit interview helped to indicate what students knew about the world and also allowed them to voice their opinion. What did they hope learn? Which countries or regions did they want to learn about? The pre-unit interview was vital to the study as it helped determine where the students were coming from in regards to their understanding of world regions and issues. Upon completion of the multicultural unit, students met with the researcher to complete the exit interview indicating activities they found interesting and effective. Students answered the following:

1. Do you think it is important to study places around the world?
 - a. Why or why not?
2. Can you name some of the countries you studied?
3. Which country did you enjoy studying the most?
 - a. The least?
4. Did the stories help you learn about each country?
 - a. How?
 - b. Why do you think it did/did not help?

5. Can you explain the activities you liked from the unit?
 - a. Why did you like them?
 - b. How did these activities help you learn?
6. Do you think you would like to visit any of the countries we studied?
 - a. Why or why not?
7. Would you like to read other multicultural books?
8. Do you think you have anything in common with people who live across the world?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. Can you give examples?

The post-interview also allowed the students to describe in their own words what they learned, and to indicate which activities they found most engaging and beneficial to the learning experience. After each student completed the post unit interview, the data was analyzed to contrast students' comments before the unit began and upon completion of the unit. The teacher researcher examined the interviews to determine commonalities among students.

The third source of data in the study was a checklist to rate student writing samples. Upon completion of the pre-unit interview process, the students took part in a series of four read aloud sessions, each focusing on a particular country. After each read aloud, the students returned to their seats to engage in a group discussion on the country introduced in the read aloud. The researcher exposed students to the geography, cultures, history, etc., of that country through a variety of strategies utilizing the internet, textbooks, newspapers, maps, globes and photography. Students then provided a written

response to the information obtained from the group discussion and literature. The researcher provided the students with a prompt as to ascertain if the students could connect the literature and informational session to their own lives. Each student was instructed not to put their name on the writing sample and the sample was immediately collected as each child completed the writing activity.

The researcher then reviewed the samples after each lesson and rated the work using the following ten point checklist designed by the researcher.

1. ____ Student correctly identifies name of country.
2. ____ Student describes physical features of country.
3. ____ Student compares and/or contrasts country's physical features to United States.
4. ____ Student provides a description of the people and identifies the language(s) spoken.
5. ____ Student describes scenes from the setting of the literature.
6. ____ Student describes physical characteristics *and/or* personality traits of the character(s) in the literature.
7. ____ Student connects examples of culture found in the literature to the informational session.
8. ____ Student acknowledges differences and/or similarities in daily routines of their lives to those who live in other nations.
9. ____ Student describes common bonds (i.e. emotions, problems) shared among people across the world.

10. ___ Student compares *and/or* contrasts aspects of country's culture to the United States.

The checklist was created as a means to determine whether students were making connections between the lessons on culture, geography, and so forth with the literature. Using the checklist, the anonymous writing sample could receive a maximum of ten points. The researcher examined the samples and created a class tally to discern overlapping points students included in the writing sample after each lesson. The researcher recorded such findings in the teacher research journal.

Analyzing the Data

The researcher analyzed the data in a predominately qualitative manner. The researcher first examined the data as a whole looking for overlapping themes. The researcher then examined each type of data separately to further understand the findings. Lastly, the data was compared and contrasted to seek out significant similarities and differences. All data was kept in a locked filing cabinet when not being used and will continue to be so for the next three years.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

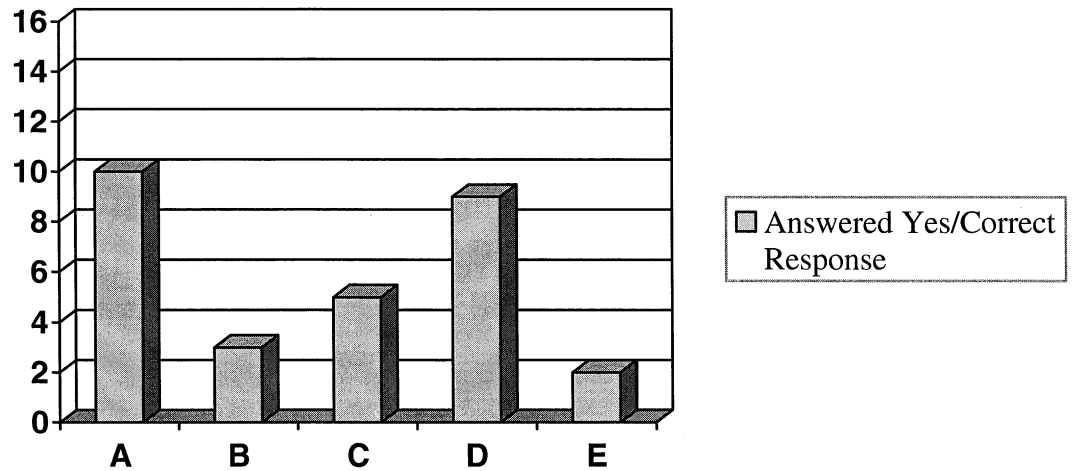
Review of the Data

Pre-Multicultural Literature/Global Education Unit Interview

The following graph breaks down select questions from the interviews which were used to determine what students knew prior to the global unit implementation. The questions that were selected to represent the sixteen students' knowledge base are as follows:

- A: Do you think it is important to study places around the world?
- B: What is the name of our country?
- C: Do you know the names of any countries in the world?
- D: Do you think you have anything in common with people in other countries?
- E: Have you read or heard books about characters living in different countries?

Chart 1: Initial Interview Responses



When students were asked to explain why they believed it was important to study places around the world, twelve of the sixteen students felt it was important to learn about the culture and language spoken in those countries. Many students also felt it was important to study locations around the world because someday they could travel there and “you can learn now about the cities, how many people live there and how far it is from our country” (Student A response). Of the total students in the class, only three were able to name the United States as the country they live in as the remainder named New Jersey. When asked to name other countries, responses included Texas, Alabama, New York, California and Oregon. The majority of students identified games, sports, school, and food as commonalities with people across the world. In terms of children’s literature about characters and settings from around the world, the students have had little exposure. For example, three students named “George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Johnny Appleseed” as characters from other countries. However, all students felt that reading multicultural books could help them learn about countries around the world.

Writing Samples

The unit included studying Great Britain, Spain, Egypt and Australia. The students completed the writing samples immediately after the informational session of the lesson. The students were prompted to write as if they were journaling or sending a letter home describing their adventure. Students were encouraged through the process to include as much information as possible from the story and informational session.

The following table breaks down each country visited and has the corresponding writing evaluation checklist. A checkmark is placed next to each checkpoint that more than ten of the sixteen students included in their writing samples.

Table 1: Writing Evaluation

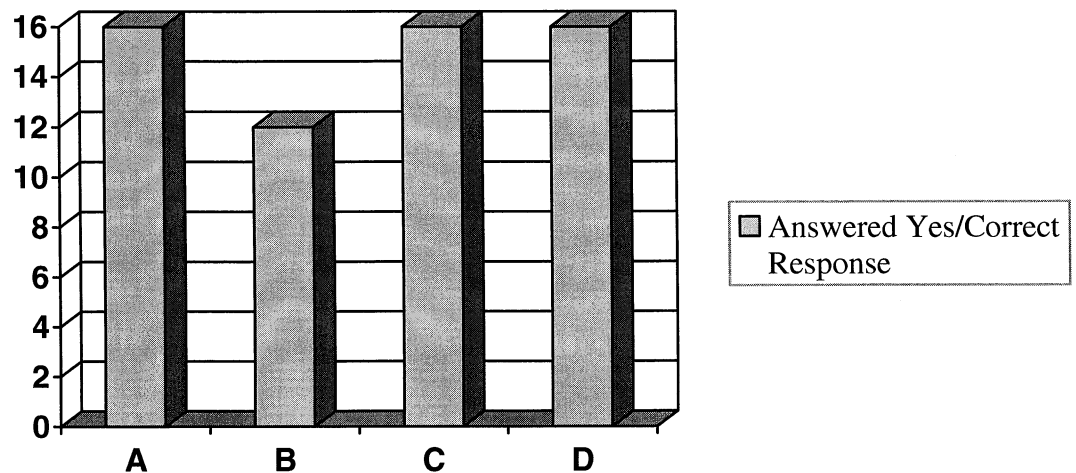
	Great Britain	Spain	Egypt	Australia
Identifies name of country	X	X	X	X
Describes physical features/landmarks of country	X		X	X
Compares and/or contrasts country's physical features to United States				
Provides a description of the people and identifies the language(s) spoken				
Describes scenes from the setting of the literature			X	X
Describes physical characteristics <i>and/or</i> personality traits of the character(s) in the literature				
Connects examples of culture found in the literature to the informational session	X		X	X
Acknowledges differences and/or similarities in daily routines of their lives to those who live in other nations		X	X	X
Describes common bonds (i.e. emotions, problems) shared among people across the world				
Compares <i>and/or</i> contrasts aspects of country's culture to the United States	X		X	X

Multicultural Literature/Global Education Exit Interview

Upon completion of the unit, the students were interviewed to determine knowledge gained and personal feelings about their experience studying the world. The following graph illustrates the success of implementing the unit in the second grade classroom when compared to the results found in Chart 1. The following questions were asked of the students again to demonstrate their growth:

- A: Do you think it is important to study places around the world?
- B: Can you name the countries you studied?
- C: Did the stories help you learn about each country?
- D: Do you think you have anything in common with people around the world?

Chart 2: Exit Interview Responses



Upon completion of the unit, all sixteen students responded that it is necessary to study places around the world as compared to only ten students prior to implementation of the unit. It is also important to note that when the students were asked to name the countries they studied, twelve of the sixteen students named all four accurately and approximately nine of the students went on to name countries they had seen on their map.

The table on the following page contains questions selected from the exit interview as well as responses given by the students in an effort to further demonstrate growth from the unit, if and how the children's literature helped, and the activities the elementary school students enjoyed the most.

Table 2: Samples of Exit Interview Student Responses

Question	Samples of Student Responses
<p>A: Why do you think it is important to study places around the world?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You get to learn what they eat, do for fun, and where they go to school. -Where there country is located in the world. -How they live every day. -Learn about famous places, people, and old buildings to see that are cool.
<p>B: Did the stories help you learn about each country? Why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Helped us learn about what children do for fun. -I got to see that they have feelings just like me. -The characters are just like real children and I have things in common with them. -Gave us the name of country we were going to learn about and saw what the country was going to look like. -We knew what to expect and what we were going to see in the country and it was still a lot fun!
<p>C: Can you explain the activities you liked from the unit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Writing about our trip. -Having our own map and passport. -Using the globe. -Reading the stories, they were fun! -Looking at the cool pictures in the atlas. -Playing the fun games and using the smart board. -Pretending like we were on the airplane flying to get to the country. -Having our tea part and guest come in from Great Britain
<p>D: How did the activities help you learn?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We got to see and hear about the places so it felt like we were really there. -The book (children’s literature) talked about some things and then we really talked more about it as a class. -Even though I had to read, write and listen, I really learned so much. It felt like I was there and I had so much fun! -I got to see actual pictures and talk about what actual kids there do. I felt like I could go there tomorrow and be friends with a kid there.
<p>E: Do you believe you have anything in common with people around the world? Can you give examples?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They have feelings like being sad, shy, happy, and mad like me. -We eat some of the same foods. -We play some of the same sports but just a little differently. -They go to school just like me but where uniforms in some countries. -They use trains, planes, boats, and cars to travel.

Teacher Research Journal

The teacher research journal aided the researcher throughout the unit's implementation. As lessons concluded, the researcher immediately wrote down observations of student behavior and involvement in the lessons. The excerpts below are some samples that demonstrate successful strategies and important findings from each country during the unit.

April 10, 2008: We used the Smart Board to view a slide show of photos from Great Britain. I stopped to discuss each picture and related it to the piece of children's literature we had read. The students were really excited that the character from our story wore a uniform and so did some of the children in the photos from Great Britain. The students had so many questions that my twenty minute lesson turned into a forty minute adventure. The students were very engaged and even thanked me for a great trip at the end of the lesson.

April 15, 2008: Based on how well the strip went, I decided to bring in a guest speaker. We had a tea party and the students asked our guest speak excellent questions about life in Great Britain. They inquired as to why they drive on the opposite side of the road and what activities children do in and out of school.

April 16, 2008: The students enjoyed pretending to take off on a plane for Great Britain, so I decided to take a pretend to take a cruise to Spain. They loved it! We mapped our cruise from Great Britain to Spain and we discussed the type of landform Great Britain and Spain are. The students loved the fact that the character in the literature from Spain skates just like them. Some of the students related to the character in that they were shy just like him.

April 21, 2008: I decided that I would split the class into four groups. The students were given the topic about Egypt that they were going to present to the class. Some had the Nile River while some had the culture of Egypt. I prepared the information for the groups and informed them to keep their topic and country a secret, although they were all studying the same country. Some students wrote their information while other drew pictures to model the information they had gained.

April 22, 2008: The students did an awesome job with the group work. I reviewed their work and they hit on very important information. I feel they benefited from this method as they were held accountable for presenting and listening to the information from each group. After each group had gone, I read the piece of children's literature which was absolutely fabulous. As I read, the students remarked on the pyramids and how the boy was dressed just as the group who wrote about every day life in Egypt had described. The students were shocked to find out that not everyone goes onto high school and that many young people have to work. They related this point to the main character in our story who had to drive his cart around Cairo to help support his family.

April 29, 2008: The book I selected was perfect! It described Australia through the eyes of a young girl on a family vacation. The students loved that it was a student just then having fun with their family. They found the illustrations really interesting and they laughed as the character embarked on her journey. The class chimed in as I came to the end of each page and the main character's little brother asked, "Are we there yet?"

April 30, 2008: The students loved the natural wonders and animals from the outback in Australia. They related information from the literature to the informational

session. For example, when we came to a slide of fish and sharks, the students shouted Great Barrier Reef! This really told me they had paid close attention to what the character had described in the literature. As the students wrote, they spent a considerably longer time writing which I feel demonstrates their interest in the country as a result of being able to easily connect the literature to the informational session.

Difficulties and Surprises of the Study

During the course of the research study, a few difficulties were encountered. First and foremost, the students in the classroom were weak writers. They perform below average for second graders according to state testing (New Jersey School Report Card, 2007) which hindered the writing component of the research study. Whereas in other schools, students would write with little help from their teacher, this group of students required significant support especially in terms of motivation to begin. Quite a few had difficulty spelling and forming sentences which made it difficult at times for the researcher to score the writing sample. Clarifications had to be made immediately as the researcher called each student up individually to discuss their writing sample. Each child read their sample aloud to the researcher. This allowed the researcher to get a true understanding of what the student was trying to convey.

As a result of the considerable time spent reviewing writing samples with the students and block scheduling of specific subject areas as per the district, the unit of study which initially intended to focus on five countries around the world had to be shortened to only four countries. The time constraint was difficult in that the enthusiastic and inquisitive students wanted to spend more time studying each country. Lastly, conducting the exit interviews proved challenging as some of the students were being

pulled for grade level testing. It took much longer than the pre-unit interviews because the researcher had to come back to the room to pull students at different times throughout the week.

Aside from the few challenges, the study yielded many surprises. First and foremost, the students did respond favorably to Spain. As indicated from their writing samples and behaviors noted in the teacher research journal, the students were not as excited in comparison to the other countries studied. This could possibly be due to the fact the students receive Spanish twice a week and have already become familiar with Spain and its culture.

Another interesting surprise was how excited the group was during the writing process. Although they have extreme difficulty with the mechanics and grammar, once the students got started, it was difficult to stop them. Initially, the students received about twenty minutes to write about the trip but by the end of the unit, the students took about forty five minutes to complete their writing samples. Some were writing two pages and the researcher noted that many students began writing in a voice as if they were really traveling in that country instead of just writing general facts.

Lastly, after reviewing the writing samples, students did not discuss common bonds or relate to the emotions of the characters in the literature. They did however make this connection during the exit interview. The students were able to verbalize this to the interviewer but most likely as a result of their weakness in writing and young age, the students had difficulty writing about it. The researcher had also anticipated that some of the students would use the scenes of literature as their sole basis for describing the country being studied, but the students did not do this. Instead, the students were far

more taken by the actual photography and atlas pictures used during the informational session.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Significance of Data

The pre-unit interviews support current research that children in this age group are limited in their view of the world. Just as the literature has stated, current curriculum models are the reason for this limited view. As the findings revealed, only three students were able to correctly name the United States as their home country while the remainder identified New Jersey. The fact that the students also named states within the United States as foreign nations also supports current research. Students in this particular classroom did not have a world map and instead have spent considerable time viewing the map of the United States as per their district curriculum. As a result, the students had associated each individual state with being its own country. However upon completion of the unit, more than seventy-five percent of the students were able to name all four countries studied as well as other countries they had seen from interacting with world maps.

Despite the majority of the students being unable to name countries around the world prior to starting the unit, more than half of the students surveyed did believe that they have common ties with people around the world. The children named the obvious ties such as sports, games and school, however, when asked the common ties during the exit interviews, students dug deeper. They began to realize that people around the world, despite living on separate continents and speaking different languages, experience

emotions just as they do. This was a direct result of being exposed to the children's literature.

All sixteen of the children had cited in the exit interviews that they related to the characters, just as research suggests, as being children just like them. They put themselves in the shoes of these characters and realized how similar they were in terms of emotions and what they do for fun. Above all, the students looked past differences, such as language, dress and physical appearance. The literature not only helped them make a connection with children their age, they explained that they enjoyed being told a little about the country in the literature and then moving on to talk about it during the informational session. The literature truly served as a spring board into the class discussion while arousing student interest and excitement about the topic.

Throughout the unit, the literature also served as a point of comparison. As the researcher conducted the informational sessions, the literature was constantly discussed and reviewed. The researcher modeled how to use the literature as a reference source to trigger recall. Students eventually began doing this on their own as was evidenced in their writing samples. As the unit progressed, the students begin making connections from the literature to the informational sessions in terms of comparing culture and daily life. They showed a deep interest and a fascination in learning about the locations and people across the globe as a result of using the literature.

The greatest benefit of tying the literature to the informational sessions was the constant reinforcement of new concepts. The student body had to view the information through a variety of activities, each driving home the importance of learning about the world the students live in. The literature served many purposes in each lesson, such as

introducing the topic or as a reference point, and slide shows, smart board presentations, web quests, personal world maps, passports, and letter writing were incorporated to assist in the learning process. The students had indicated on their exit interviews that listening, reading and writing about the countries helped them learn. Students were immersed in information vital to understanding that a world outside of New Jersey exists but it was done so through age appropriate methods. Using imaginative techniques, such as creating passports and pretending to fly on a plane to visit the characters homelands was a means of appealing to elementary students while also providing them with essential information. When they were made to feel as if they were truly visiting each country, they opened themselves up to taking in as much as information as they could while enjoying the learning process.

What I Learned

Overall, the study was a huge success. I obviously decided to do this research study as a result of my own experience in the classroom and I had set out to make the lessons engaging. However, I was still very surprised by how much the students enjoyed learning about countries and cultures around the world. On several occasions, the students would try to brainstorm what country they were going to visit next. They would take out their personal world maps and hunt for a place they wanted to learn about. They were captivated by the stories read to them and I was surprised to find that many of the students would read or look at the illustrations from the multicultural literature during their recess or free period.

I learned that students in this age group cannot be underestimated. They are more than capable of studying the world around them while also learning the basics

subject areas. From the very first lesson, they were not the least hesitant to question what they were hearing. When told that people in Great Britain drive on the left, they asked why this was so. The students were naturally curious and therefore more open to take in what I had to offer. They applied their new found knowledge not only when writing, but also when learning about the preceding country. They compared and contrasted the information through class discussion and, on several occasions, shared this information with visitors in the classroom.

Initially, I thought I was going to have to be the one to teach the class about each country we visited. When the class was getting ready to study Egypt, the thought popped into my brain to allow the students to take over my role. When the roles were reversed and they were placed in control of their own learning, they did an excellent job. I treated them as I would a middle school class in that they were given information and they had to decide what was important to share. While some of the higher level students wrote a considerable amount of information, others opted to draw what they feel the information presented to them. As each group presented, I stood waiting and ready to chime in with information they forgot, but this did not happen. They were so anxious to learn and share, that they included all information I would have taught.

The students also never viewed studying the countries as simply part of their regular school day. Instead, they treated this portion of their day as a special treat immediately after being introduced to our first country. When they saw me walking across the room with the passport box and a children's book in hand, they knew they were going to have fun. I had not anticipated them to make this type of wonderful connection so early on. They were thrilled to see the photos on the slide show and

sharing the atlas was not always an easy task. The excitement and energy radiating from this group of second grade students was simply amazing. Even after the unit had ended, the students continued to discuss their trips and as a class, decided they wanted to mail postcards to teachers in the school about their trips. Some students drew cathedrals they had seen in Spain while others drew the pyramids of Egypt. Each and every child was just ecstatic to share what they had gained from the unit that I was just completely taken aback.

The students in this research study taught me that learning about the world can occur at any age. The multisensory activities and approaches used in this study in association with developmentally appropriate children's literature helped create a desire for this second grade group to learn about their world. They are prime examples of the current research studies and literature that support global education at young ages. The fact that many named the countries they studied along with other countries not studied, demonstrates how sponge-like their brains are at this age. Elementary educators can indeed use multicultural literature to prepare students for life as global citizens regardless of curriculum demands. Teachers can use ten minute read aloud times to showcase multicultural literature while a fifteen minute social studies period can delve deeper into student questions about foreign countries. The opportunities to include such units of study are limitless and can be as creative as one likes without every taking away from the basic needs of student learning. This study also demonstrates for teachers and curriculum planners around the country that global education can occur simultaneously when following mandated curriculum.

In many instances throughout my unit of study, I tied in our trips with many subject areas. For example, when the students were learning elapsed time in math, I provided word problems calculating estimated times of arrival. The students eagerly completed the activity because it was a real world application. The students also had a great time calculating the time of day in time zones across the globe. Another subject that was easily tied to the unit was science. The students were captivated with the wildlife and climates found across the world and had they been slightly older, I could have easily integrated a unit of study on the biomes. Educators and curriculum planners must be made aware of how easily a global study in the elementary grades can be implemented. With careful planning and a supportive team of educators, students at the elementary level will truly reap the benefits of studying the world across the curriculum. In doing so, they will come to understand the extent to which they are not only connected to people, but how studying locations across the globe connects subject areas while providing them with opportunities to test skills in these areas using real world applications.

Limitations

Throughout the unit, the greatest limitation was time. There never seemed to be as much time as the students or researcher wanted. Often, the ability to explore certain concepts deeper had to be pushed aside as the students needed to move onto the next subject. Students would also get so excited about what they had that they would engage in conversation amongst themselves thus slowing the progression of the lesson. Also, as stated previously, the unit only explored four countries during the four week unit due to time constraints.

The second limitation of the study were the students' ages and ability levels. This particular group of students had a twenty-five percent disability rate which hindered the writing component of the research study. These students often had difficulty forming sentences the researcher could understand. Thus more time had to be taken to clarify what the students were conveying. The students in this study also were unable to achieve a deeper level of writing. They failed to make connections in their writing to the literature in terms of understanding the emotions expressed by the characters and how it relates to people around the world. Had the students been somewhat older, this would have been seen in their writing samples and would have made a stronger case for students connecting aspects of everyday life and culture to literature from around the world.

Recommendations

In the future, studies should allot for a longer period of time. Time was the enemy of this study and the students truly craved for knowledge about the countries and the people who live there. Time to allow them to research answers to the questions they posed would be beneficial for all students in the classroom as they could present this information to the class. Students also need considerably longer time to complete the writing sample as the younger students require significant assistance in brainstorming and putting into words what they had learned throughout this study. Students of all ages would also benefit from a longer period of time to explore the country being studied as it would allow the information to sink in deeper.

A second recommendation would be to locate and order the literature as soon as possible. There are several databases that allow researchers and teacher to select the countries being studied, however not all books are readily available in libraries and on the

internet. Most of the books used in this particular study had been translated from a different language and this made it somewhat difficult to get it to New Jersey in the time needed. The researcher also had to opt to study different countries than originally intended because the literature would have taken too long to arrive. It is strongly recommended that in future studies the researcher take the time to locate the materials and then decide which countries the class may want to study. Lastly, allowing the students to take more control of the learning process is recommended. Having the students work in groups or act as researchers on more than one occasion would benefit the outcome of the study in that it is yet another approach to presenting the information for the children to take in. Above all, using different pupil demographics would allow the researcher to broaden the scope of the study in terms of student responses and unit outcome.

REFERENCES

- Bales, S. (2004). How Americans think about international education and why it matters. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(3), p. 206-209.
- Charron, N. (2007). I learned there's a state called Victoria and he has six blue-tongued lizards! *The Reading Teacher*, 60 (8), p. 762-769.
- Dressel, J. (2005) Personal response to social responsibility: Responses of middle school students to multicultural literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 58 (8), p. 750-764.
- Evans, C. (1987). Teaching a global perspective in elementary school classrooms. *The Elementary School Journal*, 87(5), p. 544-555.
- Freeman, E. & Lehman, B. (2001) *Global perspectives in children's literature*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kerschner, L. (2002). Teaching world literature: preparing global citizens. *The English Journal*, 91 (5), 76-81.
- Landt, S. (2006). Multicultural literature and young adolescents: A kaleidoscope of opportunity. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49 (8), p. 690 – 697.
- McCarty, D. (2007). Using multicultural national council for the social studies notable books in the elementary classroom. *The Social Studies*, 98 (2), p. 49-53.
- McJimsey, M., Ross, B. & Young, S. 1999. What are global and international education? *National Council for Social Studies*. Retrieved October 15, 2007 from <<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/global/whatisglobaled>>.

New Jersey School Report Card, 2007. Retrieved December 10, 2007 from

<<http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc07/index.html>>.

Sanders, T. & Stewart, V. (2004). International education: From community innovation

to national policy. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(3), p. 200-205.

Steiner, S. (2001). *Promoting a global community through multicultural children's*

literature. Edgewood (CO): Libraries Unlimited.

Wan, G. (2006). Teaching diversity in the classroom: a thematic storybook approach.

Education, 127 (1), p. 140-154.

Wilson, A. (2004). Windows to the world. *Voices from the Middle*, 12 (1), p. 23-25.