

Global Diversity:
Using Four Perspectives to Build Empathetic Global
Citizens in the Anchorage School District

October 14th, 2008

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Global Diversity is a three part project intended to prove the need for a curriculum unit on globalization and diversity in elementary education classrooms to build empathetic global citizens of Alaskan students. It consists of three parts: a literature review on the importance of globalization, multicultural education, and social-emotional learning in social studies curricula; the creation and implementation of a curriculum unit based on teaching students the four perspectives – personal, academic, pluralistic, and global – outlined as necessary for excellence in social studies by the National Council of the Social Studies; and an ongoing analysis of the success of the curriculum unit including pre, during, and post assessments by the researcher. If found successful, the research will be presented to the Anchorage School District, the College of Education in the University of Alaska Anchorage, and the UAA diversity fair to take place in the spring.

The primary goal of this unit is to build compassionate students who can look at the experiences and perspectives of people of diverse backgrounds with an open mind. There are four sub-goals set up by the researcher that are intended to lead to the success of this primary goal. First, the students must develop a personal perspective by exploring and assessing their own personal history and background to become aware of the biases and misconceptions that affect their global perspective. Second, students must develop an academic perspective by researching and studying six demographics that affect diversity in their fellow human beings. Third, they form a pluralistic perspective by applying the information they have learned about the six demographics to how they see the people in their school and community. Finally, students use the first three perspectives to form a healthy, empathetic global perspective. By completing these four steps, it is hoped that the students will attain the ultimate goal of this unit, to become compassionate, democratic citizens.

I. Project Description

A. Community Problem

Students growing up in the 21st century are coming of age in an era where people are more globally connected than ever before. Through technology and migration, countries all over the world are experiencing increasing diversity in their homes, on the streets, and in the classrooms. In Alaska this trend is especially evident. In the past, Alaskans were isolated from the rest of their country and world. Today, things have changed greatly. People relocate to the state of Alaska from all over the world bringing diversity to the community and school systems. Schools are benefitting greatly from the developments caused by globalization. Classrooms are filled with students from a wealth of backgrounds thanks to migration. Technology has made a difference as well. Though schools and town may not be connected by roads they are now able to communicate, discover, and learn much more easily through the internet.

This is a wonderful new movement with great promise for Alaskans. It creates the opportunity for building peaceful relationships among previously alienated individuals, groups, and nations, but it also potentially comes at a price. With the distinction of cultures, comes the possibility of separation – a fear that is felt by nations all over the world. It is vastly important to commemorate diversity; however, it is also necessary to build unity among the masses (Banks, J. & Banks, C., 2007; Johnson, D. & Johnson, R., 2002). People must learn to make connections and care for the common good if we are to survive in this world where our fates are now undoubtedly connected.

In the United States, multicultural education is slowly gaining ground as a tool for developing that much needed unity. It begins by fostering equity in schools for students of

varying ethnicities, cultures, genders, social classes, etc (Johnson, D. & Johnson, R., 2002). Students as well as their peers in various school systems of differing situations benefit from increased multicultural education, particularly in the social studies curriculum. Through units and lessons that build off of authentic experiences they learn the importance of democratic citizenship. These lessons help them view the world through multiple perspectives.

Children coming of age in the twenty-first century have the opportunity to experience a greater global connection than any preceding generation. No longer may they view the world only from their personal perspective, they must also be a part of an international family. It should be the job of the school system to prepare students for this vital role by teaching empathy and respect for diversity in the human population. Teachers of this generation have the combined blessing and challenge of helping students make the most of a world that is rapidly changing. No longer can educators teach students to merely accept the increasing variety in demographics in their classrooms, community, and country, they must also help these children become familiar with and learn to understand the diversity they see in the world. Through research, activities, discussion, and real-life experiences, children must learn that diversity can be positive and socially enriching. Students must develop the perspective that cultural and philosophical differences are necessary and desirable qualities of a democratic community (NCSS, 1994).

B. Purpose of Project

The purpose of this study and curriculum unit is to help Alaskan students learn to appreciate and utilize the global relationships they will undoubtedly experience in their lifetime. To do this they must learn to adopt the four perspectives outlined by the National Council for the

Social Studies: personal, academic, pluralist, and global. The learned personal perspective would allow students to explore emerging events and persistent issues while considering implications for one's self, family, nation, and world community. An academic perspective develops through the study and application of social studies in real-life experiences. A pluralist perspective involves students' building unbiased, open-minded views towards diversity among their fellow human beings. Finally, a global perspective requires the ability to view the world and all of its people with consideration and concern. These four perspectives will be the framework for building and implementing this unit.

The primary goal of this unit is to begin the foundation for building compassionate global citizens of Alaska's children. Students who participate in the unit developed for this project will be elementary-level children of a diverse population. To become empathetic citizens, students will use social-emotional learning to look at their own personal perspective. They must dissect their own history, beliefs, culture, and biases before they are able to understand and explore the background of others (Locke, 1998).

Once this phase is completed they will participate in various authentic activities to help them understand and treasure diversity among their peers. To do this, students will explore six demographics – race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and special needs. By researching these social studies discipline-based concepts defined by the National Council on the Social Studies, students will begin to develop an academic perspective.

The next step of the unit is to utilize what the students have learned about the six demographics to build a pluralist perspective. "This perspective involves respect for differences of opinion and preference; of race, religion, and gender; of class and ethnicity; and of culture in

general,” (NCSS, 1994; 6). They will engage in various lessons using the six demographics to build empathy and understanding for individuals in their own school, community, and country.

The final portion of this curriculum unit requires students to begin developing their global perspective. They must participate in activities that will enable them to expand their academic and pluralistic knowledge and apply it to information about emerging events and persisting world issues. Students must develop knowledge, skills, and dedication to a world with limited resources and many different groups of people with varying wants and needs. A global perspective requires the ability to view the world and its people with educated consideration and concern. This is the culminating section of the curriculum unit on global diversity.

C. Significance of Project

Researchers have supplied a great deal of information and made various lesson plans based on the three subject areas – globalization, multicultural education, and social-emotional learning – that will be used in this project. Joel Spring has contributed work on globalization, James & Cherry Banks and David & Roger Johnson have developed programs for multicultural education, and Don Locke, Linda Lantieri, and Janet Patti are recognized for their work in social-emotional learning. Their research has had a major influence on the goals of my thesis. What makes this project special, however, is that rather than using just one of the subjects like my predecessors, it is an attempt to combine all three areas to help students develop the four perspectives. Also, it will be implemented in an actual classroom where its success can be tested. I am currently doing my student-teaching at Russian Jack Elementary School in a diverse, fourth-grade classroom in the Anchorage School District. This is where I will employ my curriculum unit during my residency in the spring from January 19th through March 6th.

After its completion, I will complete an analysis of its effect in that specific classroom and school environment. This unit will eventually be intended for various groups and grade-levels.

This project is a significant contribution to educational literature because it attempts to show the benefit of teaching students from assorted backgrounds to trust and identify with one another while learning the importance of connections with their international brothers and sisters. It is my sincerest hope that this project will not only be beneficial to my students, but will be useful to other teachers who may implement it in their own social studies curriculum.

This project is also significant to the University of Alaska Anchorage because it is the first Undergraduate thesis to be completed by a student in the elementary education department and the first thesis completed by an elementary education major in the Honors Program.

D. Methods

The success of this project will be analyzed by data collection throughout its implementation. Students will be engaged in activities created by the researcher as well as others recommended by experts in the field. For each sub-portion of this unit, students will complete documents – individually and in groups, participate in discussions, and watch and read various books and movies related to the topics. I will use these activities as opportunities for assessing the success of the unit. Informal student interviews will also take place to gauge learning. Also, throughout the unit, I will observe the students during the implementation of the unit with specific questions in mind to monitor the effectiveness of the unit.

Documents - Students will participate in individual and cooperative-learning lessons creating documents that can be analyzed by the researcher. These include but are not limited to:

Observations - I will spend a great deal of time observing students' participation.

Analysis will include four specific questions that will shape observation:

- How do students interact with their peers?
- Do students have an automatic tendency to divide themselves by specific demographics?
- Do students seem to make automatic attempts to check behavior they know is not right?
- Are any prejudices or biases visible in student interaction within the classroom and school?

These questions will be the same throughout the unit, but how they are answered and the expected results will vary as the unit progresses.

Informal Questions - Students will be interviewed informally by the researcher before, during, and after the implementation of the curriculum unit. Questions will be centered on discovering students' background knowledge, assessing students' understanding of the subject matter presented, and determining the success of the unit.

Journal of Researcher - I will keep a regular journal throughout the unit to document the progression of the subject matter. This will be used primarily for assessment and reflection; however it will be a good guide for perceived accomplishments in the unit as well as areas that require differentiation for future uses.

E. Analysis

Assessment of the unit will be implemented throughout. However, at the end of the project I will have specific questions I intend to answer. These will be reviewed in a final

analysis of the student's documents, observations, interviews, and the researcher's journal. This analysis, along with a review of the specific questions outlined by the researcher will be used to determine the effectiveness of the outcome of the global diversity curriculum unit.

- Have students' developed a clearly visible global perspective in their research activities?
- Have students' views and opinions evolved since the beginning of this unit?
- Overall does the classroom environment seem to have benefitted from this unit?
- What changes should be made for use of this unit in the future?

F. Anticipated Results

There are three specific desired results for this project. First, students will complete the unit with clear indications of their understanding and developing the four perspectives which are outlined by the NCSS and used as a framework for this project. The assessment of these perspectives will be completed throughout the project. Second, Students will be able to compare, contrast, and identify the six demographics. Third, students will complete a final project on current persisting global issues using the four perspectives and the six demographics to describe the problem's beginning, current issues, and finally come up with possible solutions.

II. Project Budget

A. Project Budget

Type of Expense	Expense Justification	Amount Required \$
Video Media	Authentic Video and Photo Media will be used to inform students on the demographics.	200
Literature	Various levels of readers related to the unit will be read by the students and teacher throughout.	200
Cultural Artifacts	Objects will be shared with the students to increase learning and motivation concerning the six demographics.	200
Composition Notebooks and Filing Folders	Students will be keeping a regular reflection journal throughout the project. Other documents completed will be kept in individual student files.	150
Professional Printed Copies of Unit	This is intended to be a resource for the Anchorage School District. Copies will be made to share with school personnel at ASD, Russian Jack, and UAA.	200
Unforeseen Expenses	For any unexpected expenses that may arise during the development of the project.	50
Total Expenses		1000

III. References

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- Tompkins, Gail. (2005). *Language Arts Essentials*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey & Columbus, Ohio: Pearson, Merrill Prentice Hall

IV. Project Timeline

- November 1st, 2008 IRB Certificate Completed
- November 1st, 2008 Literature review rough draft due
- November 15th, 2008..... Literature review final draft due
- December 1st, 2008Curriculum unit rough draft due
- December 10th, 2008.....Curriculum unit final draft due
- January 19th – March 6th, 2009.....Curriculum unit implemented in the classroom
- March 15th, 2009.....Final project rough draft due
- March 30th, 2009.....Final Project due
- April 2009.....Present Project at UAA Diversity Fair
- April 2009.....Present Project to UAA KDP Education Honor Society
- April 2009.....Present Project to ASD administration