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# WOW STORIES

CONNECTIONS FROM THE CLASSROOM  
VOLUME IX, ISSUE 3

Winter 2022

Global Literacy Communities: Developing Critical Thinking through  
Global Literature

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**WOW Stories: Volume IX, Issue 3**  
**Global Literacy Communities: Developing Critical**  
**Thinking Through Global Literature**  
Winter 2022

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Contributors to this Issue:

Erica Aguilar	Yvonne Howell	Tanesha Ross
Diana Botello	Denise Lancaster	Kahla Smith
Melissa Bradley	Ray Lawrence	Gwendolyn Usher
Yuan Chen	Melody Magor-Begay	Andi Webb
Jeanne Gilliam Fain	Molly Miller	Elizabeth
Elizabeth Farris	Rashid Murillo	Weisenfelder
Rebekah Gooding	Guadencio Muxul	Melissa Williams
Amber Gordon	Denise Neal	Sarah Williams
Kathryn Hall	Chang Pu	Yoo Kyung Sung
Alexandra Hammond	Ruth Reneau	

Editors:

Kathy G. Short, Guest Editor

Production Editor:

Aika Adamson, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



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## Introduction and Editors' Note

This issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* includes vignettes from six global literacy communities. Two of the communities are cross-cultural collaborations between educators in the U.S. and in China and Guatemala. The other four vignettes come from U.S. educators in schools located in urban and rural areas, stretching from the east coast to the southwest with many including multilingual students who were English language learners.

Each community contained educators committed to the use of global literature with students as a means of exploring language and culture across global contexts. These communities were committed to providing engagements with books to encourage critical thinking about global issues and cultures. Their focus included searching for books relevant to their communities and to global issues and engaging in inquiries around global issues to facilitate critical thinking.

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who engage in professional inquiry around innovative practices in using global children's and adolescent literature to build intercultural understanding. These communities meet regularly to consider global literature, world languages, and ways of using these books in preK-12 classroom contexts. Although the communities may be school-based, district-based, community-based, or university/school collaborations, they share a commitment to thinking together as professional learning communities and to transforming their practice in classrooms.

In 2020-2021, eight Global Literacy Communities received grants from Worlds of Words to support their work with global literature. The members of these communities shared their work on Padlet and were supported by Cynthia Ryman as the Global Literacy Coordinator. Many spent the majority of their year teaching remotely or teaching under strict safety protocols. Although their work was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, they found ways to connect with each other and with students. Each community has written a vignette for *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*. The Spring 2022 issue (Volume IX, Issue 1) (<https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/>) contains vignettes by the Vail Global Literacy Community and the TUSD Global Literacy Community. This current issue highlights the work of the six other global communities.

The Global Literacy Communities project is supported by CERCLL, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy (<https://cercll.arizona.edu/>), at the University of Arizona. This Title VI Language Resource Center supports research related to language teaching and learning and provides quality teaching resources and professional development to encourage the meaningful integration of culture, literacy and world language study.

The first set of vignettes focuses on two communities where educators explored global literature to support students in processing their experiences with the pandemic. The J.E. Moss Global Literacy Community in Tennessee created a text set of global picturebooks and used visual analysis to engage students in connections to global issues, including the pandemic. The International Charter School of Atlanta, U.S. and the Chengdu ISC Experimental School in Chengdu, China engaged in an inquiry around the impact of COVID-19 on their communities and an inquiry on their cities.

The second set of vignettes focus on two communities in which educators explored literature that encouraged students to connect to their own cultures as well as expand their perspectives to new cultures. The Belize Global Literacy Community was connected to Oklahoma State University and included educators in Belize who were concerned with the lack of global literature connecting to their lives and cultures. The Land of Enchantment Global Literacy Community consisted of educators in different locations who came together virtually to create text sets related to the theme of children's rights.

The third set of vignettes are communities who put their focus on locating global books to meet specific needs in their schools. The Startown Global Literacy Community researched literature to add to their library that fit their goals for global education and share their use in classrooms. The Forest Hills Global Literacy Community researched books related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and developed lesson plans around those books. They also added traveling books in English and Spanish and in American Sign Language to support family literacy experiences.

We invite you to read these vignettes and explore the innovative work occurring in schools that invite educators and children to build bridges across global cultures. These vignettes provide many examples of picturebooks and curricular engagements that encourage children to reflect on their own cultural identities and to engage in inquiries around global issues of concern both locally and globally.

Kathy G. Short, Guest Editor

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## Exploring Global Books Critically in the Classroom During a Pandemic

Jeanne Gilliam Fain, Kathryn Hall, Alexandra Hammond, Denise Lancaster, Molly Miller, Kahla Smith, Elizabeth Weisenfelder, and Melissa Williams

This project utilized reflective and inquiry-based work with K-4 educators for the 2020-2021 year at a Title I school with a high population of multilingual learners. We extended the work that we started the previous year (<https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/volume-viii-issue-2/4/>) that was supported by a Worlds of Words grant. A select group of teachers representing each grade level at J.E. Moss Elementary School, as well as a librarian joined me (Jeanne) in regular professional development group meetings after school. We met on Zoom to explore the critical use of global literature in the classroom in educator planning sessions.

The purpose of this professional development included an intentional focus to create space to facilitate critical discussions of global and dual language literature and to strengthen teaching practices. Teachers have been grappling with the institutional standards that focus on teaching to the test through a scripted language arts curriculum, finding ways to insert global books not currently on the list for the Language Arts Block, and dealing with an emphasis on teaching text evidence in the language arts curriculum.

Our project co-constructed equitable and critical teaching approaches to engage all learners as they used global books and literacy strategies to think critically about illustration and text. We extended our learning with visual analysis, especially with online platforms due to COVID-19. Teachers tried out their use of literacy strategies both online and, at times, in person with their students in a supportive environment. Our reflective and inquiry-based discussions supported teachers in considering how to adopt these literacy strategies for all types of learners as a means of encouraging students to think critically and enjoy learning about global literature, while making connections to their lives. Vertical work included thinking about teaching with literature across grade levels as we collaboratively problem solved our approaches from our various perspectives as teachers.

We piloted some of these approaches in a small group setting with three text sets that were supported by our grant and increased our after-school sessions. We engaged in the selection of books to be used for this project. This project allowed teachers to think reflectively and collaboratively and enhanced their strategies to use global books in the classroom. J.E. Moss Elementary is a Title I School in Antioch, Tennessee, with a high population of bilingual learners, including those whose native languages are Arabic and Spanish.

The team began by reading the books in a text set. Each participant carefully read each book and used post-its to take note of interesting features of the text and illustrations. We read deeply within a critical frame and explored the cultural contexts of the books. This method of reading and discussing books differs from how teachers have prepared to teach books in the past, allowing teachers more time as a team to explore books without immediately thinking about how to use them in their classrooms. Then, in several follow-up discussions with the text set, the group formed their own stances about a book.

Title of Book	Summary
<i>Outside, Inside</i> (Pham, 2021)	A thought-provoking story that carefully tells the story of members of a community coming together while grappling with the challenges of a pandemic.
<i>Journey</i> (Sanna, 2016)	This books powerfully relates the story of a family leaving their home due to war. The illustrations are vividly graphic in conveying the challenges of finding a new place to live.
<i>Tomorrow</i> (Kaadan, 2018)	Yazan is not permitted to go outside and play due to the perils of war. Set in the Middle East.
<i>Sulwe</i> (Nyong'o, 2019)	Sulwe has beautiful skin that's the color of midnight and she tries to find the space to fit in with her Kenyan family. She learns to see the beauty her skin.
<i>Lubna and the Pebble</i> (Meddour, 2019)	Lubna's best friend is a pebble and she ultimately shares the pebble with a little boy, who struggles with living in a tent as a Syrian refugee.
<i>Story Boat</i> (Maclear, 2020)	A lyrical story about the migrant experience that is told through the powerful lens of a child in the Middle East.
<i>Bilal Cooks Daal</i> (Saeed, 2019)	Bilal learns to make his favorite food, daal, a slow-cooked lentil dish from South Asia. The cooking of the daal becomes part of a community celebration.

Table 1. Overview of Global Literature Used in this Project.

Our research question was: What does teaching look like as teachers engage students in analyzing the illustrations and text in global literature (picturebooks), both online and in person? We took notes, documented our thinking about the books on post-its, and recorded our thinking in teacher reflection journals. Each teacher brought evidence of student thinking as documented online and from their learning journals to our regular meetings. Teachers used their reflection journals to document how they used the literacy strategies with students in their classrooms. We collected this evidence from the journals of students and teachers as part of our analysis of teaching practice shared at our group meetings. We analyzed students' use of strategies as readers and writers in our discussions. In this vignette, each teacher shares her story of how this professional development work looked in classroom settings.

### **Molly Miller: Predicting and Exploring the Pandemic through *Outside, Inside***

In a time when children need some excitement and a reason to read, I feel so lucky to be given the chance to use diverse global books in the classroom. My class consisted primarily of students coming to school knowing multiple languages and learning English as a second language, which gives them a unique perspective on the world. When they read, they see it through the lens of an immigrant or a child who is learning a new language and culture—and the beauty of this lens is the diverse ideas and values they bring. I have never read a book the same way twice because of the thoughts students continually bring to the table.

Figure 1: Class Demographics

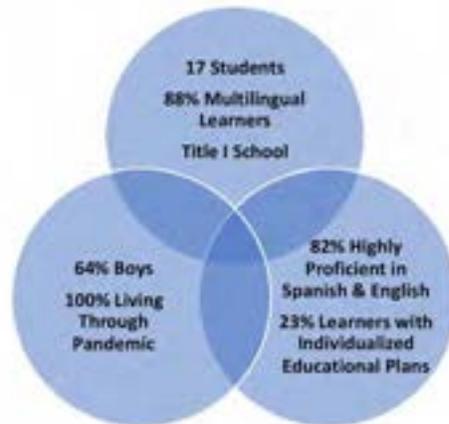


Figure 1. Demographics.

With global books, I worked to recalibrate their ideas that learning is not strenuous and is boring. I aimed to show them that reading can be an adventure and that they can learn and increase their knowledge and skills in new and exciting ways. One way we engaged with literature was to make close personal connections to a book and discuss how we can shape the future. In a world that often seems to value correctness over creativity, I aimed to show students that their experiences matter and that what matters is how they see the world and share their experiences.

In the second-grade class, we talked about biographies and history, focusing on the past and how knowing about the past and others' experiences can help us in the present. And then, we talked about how we are someday going to be a part of history! In the year 2021, we are making history. "How?" the kids wondered. Well, let's read to find out! I showed them the book *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham. I explained how this book is about right now, not about history yet, but it will be. We looked at the cover and tried to predict what the book was about. I looped with these children, so we have a good rapport and they trust me with their ideas. Our predictions ranged far and wide—in the eyes of seven- and eight-year-olds, this book could have been about anything based on the title and cover alone! Then, we began to read.

Before I opened the pages of the book to students, I read it and poured over the words and illustrations. *Outside, Inside* is a story of the world reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic—the shutdowns, emotions, separation, and changes that everyone faced. I attended an author talk via Zoom with LeUyen Pham where she described the process of writing the book, how she used the stories and images on the news to form her illustrations. She shared fun facts about the writing and her perspective on the pandemic and how it impacted her and her family. Armed with my

tidbits from the author's talk and some key ideas from the book that I thought would resonate with students, I started to show students the story. I worried that I had not prepared them quite enough to build their knowledge. I didn't know if students would figure out what the story was about or if they would understand enough of the words. I decided, though, to lean into their own experience and hoped they would make connections as we read.



## COVID-19: A KID'S PERSPECTIVE

How did second graders in Nashville experience the Covid-19 shutdowns?

**WHAT I EXPECTED**

I had the unique opportunity to loop with my group of students from last year to this year, so I knew a bit about their experiences during the school closures and the needs their families had during that time - but that was my perception of their experiences. After reading, I loved seeing their take on the pandemic and lockdowns.

**EXPERIENCE #1**

 Some of the students detailed their experiences in a way that was similar to what I'd felt - loneliness and a worry that the pandemic may never end. They couldn't see their friends, they couldn't go anywhere. Their families struggled financially because the parents couldn't work. This experience was what I'd guessed I would hear from the students.

**EXPERIENCE #2**

 Surprisingly, some of the students described actually enjoying the lockdown! They described cherishing time with family that they typically wouldn't have. Some of them learned new hobbies - one student was very proud of how good he got at playing video games. I didn't expect that they would find so many ways to see joy during lockdown!

**EXPERIENCE #3**

 Many of the students shared that their lockdown experiences were filled with a lot of emotions that they didn't like to experience. They took on the stress of their parents' unemployment and the high responsibility of being caretakers for younger siblings. They carried these stresses and worries back to school, too, and were trying to learn through these big emotions.

**EXPERIENCES SHAPE THE FUTURE**

 I used my expectations to predict what I thought the students would share, but their vast experiences, the lives they live, are often even more interesting than I'd ever imagined. Allowing them to express their voice, name their experiences, and really connect to the book and see the value of their own perspective.

Figure 2. COVID-19 A Child's Perspective.

The first question I always ask when we read is “What do you notice?” I want children to take their time, to look at the pictures and notice the nuances. I want them to see how the words align with the images. I want them to see something I have not seen. They are very good at this. On the first pages, they noticed that the images were of the same street, but that the colors changed from bright and busy to dim and lonely. Everyone went inside, and they wanted to know why. I started by saying that this story was about them but they didn’t yet make the connection. They noticed different things about the pictures and started forming more opinions about the book, its meaning and message, and how it related to us. Then, we turned a page and read about the people who continued to work while everyone was inside—the essential workers who kept serving and healing and protecting. Then, something clicked. One child, then another, then another looked at the pictures and noticed people wearing masks. “Oh,” one said, “it’s about COVID!” “How do you know?” another asked. Then, a ripple of connections occurred as students commented on how they had to stay in their houses. Some said they felt the way the pictures looked—gloomy and worried. They knew we had to wear masks and discussed who was allowed to be out and about and how that’s changed over time. They noticed similarities between the world they had been living in for a year and the world found inside the pages of the book.

We continued through the book, making connections, talking about our big emotions and what we had to do during shutdowns and quarantines. When we got to the end of the book, they became frustrated. The ending, they said, is fake. The rest of the story aligned with their reality, but the ending was happier than we were—the characters did not have masks and could play with their friends. A slow rage began to build in the classroom until one child said, “Well, we are getting better and we’ll be that way sometime!” She noticed that the book ended in a cheerful way and that our reality won’t remain gloomy forever. Then we thought about how we can let the world know what it’s like. I told the children about the author talk, how the author wanted to share her story of what happened during COVID and what she saw on the news. “This is what it was like for the author,” I said, “How can we show what it was like for second graders in Tennessee?” “Let’s write about it!” they cheerfully decided.

We talked about the importance of writing down what’s happening so that people in the future can read about how the pandemic impacted people. And we talked about how their stories are important. They are important, they matter, their words and ideas have value, and they are part of a global picture that is much bigger than themselves. Using books about a time we all may rather skip over, students felt empowered to speak, write, share their story with the world, and see their value as readers and writers.

### **Denise Lancaster, Kahla Smith, and Melissa Williams: Building Knowledge and Making Connections**

Last year, Kahla Smith and Denise Lancaster learned that we needed to continually find strategic ways to build upon the knowledge of all students while reading books in the classroom. Upon reading *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, first-grade students demonstrated many comprehension strategies as readers and were able to analyze the illustrations with great competence, while fourth-grade students seemed to let personal experiences interfere with comprehension. Last year, we were concerned by this and worried that we might be overusing connection strategies.

This year, with the assistance of our librarian, Melissa Williams, we focused on *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham, *Tomorrow* by Nadine Kaadan, *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong’O, and *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour. We observed that knowledge is critical in how we talk about a book and can shape how students interpret and analyze images and text. We observed that the order of the books we read and what students were learning currently influenced how they reacted and thought about new books.

Kahla found student responses particularly enlightening, “Students surprised me and challenged me to really think more about the books that I selected to read to my class. Being a mostly math and social studies teacher this year, I didn’t get many opportunities to read for enjoyment with my classes. We read mainly historical-based books. The students and I both enjoyed the days that we spent focused on reading global literacy books.”

Melissa was new to this project and became fascinated by the observations, expectations and thoughts of students and the idea that so much can vary depending on how a topic is introduced or the previous experiences of students. She found herself intrigued during the discussions with her co-workers on some of the differences in the responses on the level of analysis from their students, perhaps due to the difference in approaches. As a librarian, she often reads through the book with her patrons/ students and then holds a discussion afterward, sometimes including preliminary thoughts before rather than stopping throughout the book to discuss or using the book as a jumping off point for a discussion on a given topic. As the school librarian, she interacts with all of the students in the school, but her schedule can vary. Due to the adjustable nature of her schedule, the students she is with often change and may be limited in time frame, but she usually gets a chance to explore topics and books with multiple classes.

The first book we explored is *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham. In Kahla’s afternoon class, students’ predictions were literal, mostly stating their observations of the cover. Until about halfway through the book, their comments and observations remained literal with some students stuck on the idea that everyone in the story was going inside due to an impending natural disaster or weather-related incident. They were halfway through the book before the first student mentioned that the story might be about the coronavirus. They noticed an empty playground, similar to the school’s playground, and how everyone was distanced. While a few students agreed with this idea, many maintained that the situation was storm or weather related. It is important to note that our area had recently experienced a particularly bad storm and we feel that this experience impacted their interpretation of the book.

Kahla’s morning class read the book *Tomorrow* first, which we suspect altered their predictions. Students predicted someone can appear one way on the outside and feel another way on the inside. These connections may have been influenced by the fairy tale unit they had recently studied in their ELA class around the idea that beauty is only skin deep. We were about a third of the way through the book, when one student finally mentioned the coronavirus. They noticed that people were now wearing masks and that detail in the illustrations helped students make their first connection. By the end of the book, most students made the connection to a virus of some sort, maybe not necessarily coronavirus, while only one student still thought it was because people were doing bad things outside.

When Melissa read *Outside, Inside* with students in the library, she read through the book completely and then students went back and looked at the illustrations during their discussion. She knew many teachers at our school were excited about *Outside, Inside*, as it was one of the first picturebooks to come out about COVID-19. Since students had firsthand knowledge of this event, she couldn't wait to hear their thoughts. After reading, she asked, "Why was everyone inside?" Pretty consistently, in the three classes she read this book with, the first answers included normal reasons why people would go inside—it was raining, snowing, or it was winter. Even when someone mentioned COVID-19 as a reason, others disagreed.

Then students studied the illustrations carefully. They noticed there wasn't any snow on the ground. Most pictures of the outside were sunny, so they looked for what other hints the pictures provided. Since some of the images are very small and all of the students were spread out for social distancing, it took a moment, but eventually, they noticed the masks that many people were wearing. It was then that they realized the book was about COVID-19. Since children all had recent experiences with the pandemic, it was surprising that the children needed that much prompting to consider COVID-19. At this point, Melissa had students follow up by talking about how we are now firsthand observers and primary sources of COVID-19. She encouraged students to write or draw about their experiences with COVID-19 and share if they felt inclined.

In Denise's first group, students used the front cover to make predictions. One student predicted it was about love because of the picture. Other students tried to use the title to make predictions about why someone would be inside. Students could sense that something bad was happening. Denise's second group of readers immediately thought it might be about COVID, while another group did not make this prediction until the page with everyone wearing a mask. Both groups of students focused on the cat in the story and assumed that it played some type of significant role. Kahla's group noticed the cat and thought it might be the narrator. According to the author/illustrator, the cat didn't play a huge role in the story.

Students in Denise's class first noticed that the books were about the quarantine.	Students in Melissa's class questioned if everyone was inside because of weather and wondered what was the point of the hospital.	Students in Kahla's class noticed someone wearing a mask and started looking for clues to connect the books to the coronavirus.
	Both groups that worked with Denise consistently looked for a page that confirmed that the story was about Covid-19 or the quarantine.	

Table 2. Comparing Observations in *Outside, Inside* Across Classrooms

After reading the author's note, the children had great discussion about how something so recent, that we are still living through, can be turned into a story for people to read in the future. Students were actually shocked that something so recent was already in a book. Many cited this as a reason for not predicting coronavirus as the topic of the story. We talked quite a bit about primary sources and how at this time in their life, they are living what will become history.

Denise shared *Tomorrow* with her two groups. One group she has read numerous books about the struggles of war and immigration as central topics. The other group she had not been able to work with as much so they did not have the same experiences. In both readings of *Tomorrow*, at least one student used the illustrations to predict, and others agreed, of the possibility that what was “changing” was possibly the Twin Towers disaster. The multilingual learners in the group that had read numerous books on topics of war and immigration quickly predicted that war was what caused the “changing.” The other group of readers made unusual predictions about what had changed.

Denise thought that because of their experiences with COVID, students might connect to the characters’ experience of not being able to go to school or to go out and see friends. She thought they surely would make that prediction early in the reading, but neither group did.

Melissa had the opportunity to read *Sulwe* with four different third-grade classes and two second-grade classes. Each time, they began by discussing the cover of the book and what it might indicate the story was about. In every discussion, students focused on it as a story about space. Seeing the cover background is a starscape, this is not terribly surprising. What Melissa found interesting was their unwillingness to release the idea of space travel. When she asked about what they thought *Sulwe* was doing, they said she was a scary or angry space baby, and there was guessing about what horrible things were happening to her in space. Her hand reaching out was explained as a grabbing action, instead of innocent, even though the roundness of her face and eyes convinced them she was much younger than the character is in the story.

Looking back, Melissa wishes she had talked about night and how it can make us feel before reading the book to see how that framing may have changed their perspective. Discussions after the book focused on the importance of liking yourself and the lessons *Sulwe* learns from the mythology story about day and night. The next time Melissa uses this book, rather than have them discuss the cover as an introduction, she will have them describe day and night and see how their interpretations of those words and ideas influence how they see the book.

### **Alex Hammond: Discussing Students’ Thinking about *Story Boat***

*Story Boat* (Maclear, 2020) stuck out to me from the beginning because of the bright colors used in the illustrations. The cover has many interesting details that make you wonder and start thinking before even opening the book. I enjoy stories with bright colors that provide many chances for your imagination to wander. I love that the book has so many details to notice. I read it multiple times and each time I read it, I noticed something else. I especially enjoy sharing stories like this one with students because they always notice things that I did not see initially.

I chose to read this book with two different classes. My goal was to read the book without context for students. I wanted to truly see where their minds took them and allow them to explore all options. I did not want to give them any stepping stones as I was curious how they would approach this book, especially after a year of quarantine and difficult events. I started by telling them we were going to read a book for fun. They were excited immediately. I had a couple of open-ended questions planned throughout the book, mostly questions about the book’s events.

Both classes of fourth-grade students were multilingual learners, but they approached the book in different ways. Each class responded with completely different ideas. One class was very literal and said that the boy was writing a story and everything he wrote then came to life. They did not see that the boy was using his imagination. What they saw on the page is what they believed was happening. Most students thought that he was dreaming and that explained how he was flying and using the cup as a boat. Some said that the cup was his new home and the family found it and live there now. They did not think about the details or wonder how things were possible.

The other class realized the boy was using his imagination as he traveled somewhere. They thought more about what might be happening. This class realized the family was carrying things with them as they traveled so they concluded that the family was immigrating somewhere. They realized the book was a combination of literal (they were traveling somewhere) and imagination (he was imagining himself flying/living in a cup). One student realized they were immigrants going somewhere and the rest of the class agreed and fed off of that. They listened to each other's ideas and explored that student's idea. Some students threw out other ideas but they usually circled back to the first student's idea and this contributed to how each class responded to the story. Their interpretations show how the students can build off each other's viewpoints. Giving them the opportunity to just explore a book can lead to so many new and different ideas. I'm always impressed by the details that students think about on when I provide space for open discussion.

<b>Literal Interpretations</b>	<b>Imaginative Interpretations</b>
Living in tents now	Everything the character draws becomes real
Traveling to visit someone new	Constellation is telling the story
Going on a nature walk	Character is using the pencil as an oar to steer the cup boat
Character is dreaming about everything	Character is imagining things as they travel
Character is actually living in a cup now	Character is drawing the story as it unfolds
Going on a vacation	Using everything the find to make a boat

Table 3. Literal and Imaginative Interpretations.

Students come to school with so many different backgrounds and experiences. Their home cultures and the things they have experienced changed the way they approach the same book. Very rarely do we allow students opportunities to just read and explore new ideas without guidance from us. I enjoy reading global literature with students and hearing more about their lives. These books gave them so many opportunities to connect the story to their own lives. I noticed students get so excited to read about different cultures and families. They truly enjoy learning when they have engaging literature from a global perspective.

### **Elizabeth Weisenfelder: Grappling with Read-Alouds of Global Books in a Pandemic**

One of the most beloved traditions altered by the pandemic is the read aloud. Virtually, the read aloud was nearly impossible. Laptop camera quality made it difficult for students to engage with illustrations in meaningful ways. Additionally, the virtual setting did not lend itself to rich analysis of text and illustrations, nor did it allow for students to engage in the types of discussions we typically had when exploring a book.

Though returning to in-person learning certainly helped solve many of these problems, there were still a few barriers. Typically, students gather on the carpet when it's time to read a story. However, because of social distancing measures, this practice was not possible. This may not seem like much of an obstacle, but it is very difficult for third graders to focus for an extended amount of time while sitting at a desk, separated from their peers. The carpet is a space where engagement is high, since I am sitting near students, which makes seeing the illustrations and engaging in conversations much easier. If I have learned anything this year, though, it is that children are adaptable. Even at their desks, spread apart from one another, students were able to have deep, analytical discussions regarding text and illustrations.

My class explored various global books this year: *Bilal Cooks Daal* by Aisha Saeed, *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour, and *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o to name a few. However, of all the read alouds the class explored this year, *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham was the book that students connected with the most. Though this book doesn't fit the traditional definition of global literature, I believe that it is a global because it illustrates how everyone throughout the world has been impacted by COVID-19. Everyone, in every corner of the world, has been touched by the pandemic in one way or another, so in my opinion, it is very much a global book.

In the planning stages of a read aloud, I typically go through and develop questions based off the illustrations and text. I consider what I want students to take away from the book and how I can help guide them to those understandings. However, for this book, I didn't do any of these things. *Outside, Inside* is an account of how the world changes because of the COVID-19, without mentioning the words "virus" or "pandemic." I wanted to see how long it took students to pick up on the topic of the book, so I didn't want to do much prompting. Students were already well-aware of the pandemic—they'd been living through it for more than a year.

I wanted to use this book to encourage students to reflect on the changes they'd experienced in the past year. I wanted to create a space where students felt safe to share the challenges they have faced. Though our classroom reflects the changes created by the pandemic, we rarely discuss it. Ultimately, I wanted to use this read aloud to help students share their experiences, so I didn't want them to be hemmed in by pre-planned questions and goals. I started the read aloud by asking students what they noticed about the cover and what they thought the book might be about, taking into consideration the title. Many noticed the hearts hanging from the window and predicted the story might be about Valentine's Day. They also noticed a little girl and cat looking out the window and predicted that maybe they had to stay inside for some reason. I asked them to think about a time they had to stay inside and many spoke about weather that prevented them from going outside. The cover and title alone were not enough for students to predict that this book was about the pandemic.

On the first page of the story, students noticed a busy street, full of people doing daily tasks like walking dogs, driving, and playing. Students also noticed the cat that was featured on the cover of the book as well as the little girl who was inside the cover. The next page shows the same street, but as students noticed, it is now completely empty, except for the cat. The cat became a landmark as we continued the story. Students felt that because the cat continued to show up, it would be of some

significance. At this point, I asked students why they thought everyone went inside. Students predicted that it might be cold outside or that bad weather was coming. Still, there was no mention of coronavirus.

The next page shows that everyone, everywhere, all over the world went inside. On this page, students made the connection that something had to be happening everywhere in the world, so it probably wasn't a weather event. On this page, students still noticed the cat, and one student wondered if the cat was the narrator of the story since it had appeared on all of the pages. The next page shows people all over the world behind windows, much like the little girl on the cover, except this time, we can see their faces. At this point, some students began to make the connection that this story might be about the pandemic. "We had to stay inside because of coronavirus," one student said. Some students weren't sold on this idea, though. They couldn't believe that there was already a book about something that was still happening. It wasn't until the next page that students were in agreement that this book was about the pandemic, because the illustration shows people who couldn't stay inside—firefighters, paramedics, store owners, garbage truck drivers, police officers, and mailmen. Students noticed that everyone on this page was wearing a mask, which is how they knew that this story had to be about the pandemic.

Students connected with the page that showed what life was like inside, especially the illustration of online school. "Hey, that's how we learned at the beginning of the year," remarked one student. Students really connected with this page because it shows various activities that they took part in during the pandemic. This encouraged them to share their experiences, which was one of my goals for this read aloud. Students talked about spending time with their families, reading books, watching TV, and playing video games.

## STUDENT EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

After reading "Outside, Inside" by LeUyen Pham, I asked my students to consider how their lives were changed by the pandemic. Students drew pictures of things they did during quarantine and wrote about how their worlds changed. These are some of their responses.



### BORED, BORED, BORED

Many students mentioned the excessive amount of TV they watched during quarantine. One student wrote, "I was bored of watching TV."



### Family Time

A common thread throughout student work was the increased family time students experienced due to quarantine. One student drew a map of their house and showed each family member doing different things—sleeping, eating, cooking, watching TV, and playing video games.

### COMMON OBJECTS

Lots of students illustrated objects that represented their time in quarantine. These objects included masks, computers, TVs, books, drawing supplies, and video games.



### SCHOOL GOES VIRTUAL

Many students also illustrated and wrote about the ups and downs of virtual school. One student drew a picture of herself at her work station, in front of her laptop. On the other side of the paper, she drew herself asleep and wrote, "After class, I take a nap."





### CHANGING CELEBRATIONS

One student wrote about her older sister's birthday during quarantine. She used dialogue to illustrate the conversation her parents had with her sister. She wrote, "We are sorry that we couldn't invite anyone to your party, since Covid-19 isn't safe and we don't want anyone to get sick, but at least you have us. We are so happy we're not sick and are healthy and can be with you for your birthday"

### DOCUMENTING THE PANDEMIC



One student made a timeline of events, as he remembered them. The events included on his timeline were, "warning of Covid-19, first stimulus checks, importance of wearing mask, and social distancing guidelines". He also illustrated the logo for the local news station, where he got this information.

Figure 3. Student Experiences During COVID-19.

Toward the end of the book, there is a page that talks about how staying inside during the pandemic was the right thing to do. The illustrations on this page show some people in full-color, but also people who have a grayish blue tinge. Students predicted that the grayish blue people had died from the coronavirus, since this color represents sadness and depression. This page invited students to share about losses that they'd suffered during the pandemic, which is something we haven't talked much about as a class. Though these conversations were not easy, I could tell students were relieved to have a space to discuss these heavy topics and connect with one another. The pandemic has changed so much about their lives and it's something that we, unfortunately, do not acknowledge in school very often. In returning to in-person learning, there is a temptation to pretend things are back to normal, even though COVID procedures reject that notion. This read aloud allowed us to step back and recognize that things are not normal and discuss that we are all living through a historic time—a time that none of us have ever lived through. We discussed that one day we will recount the time of the pandemic to those who did not live through it, so we are the ones responsible for writing down what happened.

In my mind, what made this read aloud so successful is that students were able to make very personal connections to the story. The multilingual students felt empowered and confident to share their experiences because they brought with them a wealth of knowledge and personal experiences. Sometimes multilingual learners can be hesitant to share during whole group, not because they don't have anything to share, but because they feel nervous to use English in front of their peers, especially if the content is new or unfamiliar. I feel like *Outside, Inside* helped to lower the affective filter of multilingual learners because they were able to use their personal experiences to connect with the book. This was not information they just learned about, it was not new or unfamiliar topics, we were discussing topics that represented their lived experience, which made the book powerful and relevant to all students, something that transcended language barriers. Students were able to use their knowledge and experiences to make connections to the book, but most importantly, they were able to make connections to each other.

### **Kathryn Hall: Finding Commonality through Food and Global Literature**

Food is at the very heart of cultures. It connects and it exposes us. It has the power to unite us with one another in our differences. This year, several powerful pieces of global literature brought joy and connection to a classroom of twenty second-grade English learners from seven different countries and four different continents. For two students, who had entered a U.S. classroom for the first time, there were many uncertainties and unknowns. They were hearing a new language, being exposed to new academics, and experiencing new foods. In a pandemic year filled with fear and uncertainty around every corner, we longed for connection with each other. Personal experiences and family connect us with one another and open up conversation when we are able to talk about our experiences. For students, food is a symbol of celebration with personal ties to their cultures and families.

With two of our global literature books, I created a unit specifically looking at different cultures and the foods that are important to them. *Bilal Cooks Daal* by Aisha Saeed focuses on a slow-cooked dish,

daal, that is commonly cooked in South Asia. Bilal is excited to make this dish with and for his friends, but he is also nervous. Will they like it? We were able to talk about how often the foods that are important to our family and culture can feel like a part of us. Several students who are of Asian heritage were able to connect with some of the cultural elements of Bilal's family. Students expressed how they have shared those same nerves that Bilal experienced when sharing an important meal or dish with friends who had never tried it before. This led into important conversations about different foods that are important to our families and how they connect with our culture. After reading the book, I asked students "What is a special food or recipe that your family makes?" Students used the "Read, Sketch, and Stretch" strategy to draw a picture of a special recipe. They then proceeded to label the image and write several sentences. When we shared, it was incredibly special to hear the variety of different dishes and cultures represented within our classroom. We were then also able to look up and learn more about the names of the dishes as many were in a different language. The historical element of food is what makes it culturally significant. With this in mind, we spent time researching the history behind several dishes to discover the reason why they exist.

*Freedom Soup* (Charles, 2019) is a celebratory book that follows a Haitian family making a traditional New Year's Soup. Students learned about Haitian Independence as they read and learned how food can be reflective of important moments in a culture's history. After reading the book, I asked students, "How is food important to your family?" Students responded in writing in the form of a letter to their teacher.

During our share, students were able to share specific holidays or celebrations for which their family prepares special meals. Some shared religious holidays while others shared important independence days. Many students also brought up how important food has been to their family during the pandemic. Some students had spent time at home learning from a mother or grandmother how to make some of their favorite cultural dishes. Because of COVID, we were not able to bring different foods into the classroom to share with one another. However, using these books in the future, I would love to invite families to make a dish or recipe together that can then be sent in to share with the classroom. These global books were unifying for our class as we were able to connect over foods that were important and unique to our families.

### **Concluding Thoughts from J.E. Moss Global Community**

We also plan to further explore the role that life experiences play with making connections to a book. We want to effectively introduce concepts while expanding student thinking. In order to experiment with this idea next year, we intend to read the titles in differing orders, and vary reading styles (reading the book all the way through without talking or questioning and talking during the read aloud) observe how that introduction of knowledge impacts responses. We want to explore how to encourage our focus on using global literature strategically with students.

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Jeanne Gilliam Fain is a Professor of Education at Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tennessee.

Kathryn Hall is a second-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Alexandra Hammond is a fourth-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Denise Lancaster is a K-4 ELL Coach at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Molly Miller is a second-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Kahla Smith is a fourth-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Elizabeth Weisenfelder is a third-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

Melissa Williams is the librarian at J.E. Moss Elementary School.

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## **Developing the Multimodal Language and Literacy Skills of Emerging Bilingual Students through Children's Literature**

Chang Pu, Yuan Chen, Rebekah Gooding, and Sarah Williams

Our global literacy community consisted of two classroom teachers (Yuan and Rebekah), one school administrator (Sarah), and a teacher educator (Chang) who is interested in literacy development and virtual exchange. Yuan teaches in a Mandarin Chinese dual language program at the International Charter School of Atlanta in the U.S., and Rebekah teaches at ChengDu ISC Experimental School in China. Two classrooms of third-grade students also participated in our literacy practices. Chang and Sarah served as a facilitator or a discussant during group meetings and provided resources and support to the group.

Our literacy community group was teacher-led and adopted a collaborative approach to work as a team. Teachers at both ICSAtlanta and CDES schools used some global literature in their classrooms to enrich reading in the past, but not in a systematic fashion. All members of our community have had cross-cultural learning and teaching experiences (5-10 years), and strongly support bilingual education.

The International Charter School of Atlanta (ICSAtlanta), a state charter school, provides dual language immersion education in French, German, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish and offers International Baccalaureate World School for the Primary Years program. It serves students in the state of Georgia from Kindergarten to 8th grade. ICSAtlanta strives to provide students with educational opportunities to foster international perspectives while meeting Georgia's education standards. The school mission is to prepare students for a successful future by promoting academic excellence through rigorous instruction that includes multilingualism, cultural awareness, respect, and tolerance for others (ICSAtlanta, 2021).

The student body of the third grade Mandarin class at ICSAtlanta is composed of Asian, African American, Latinx, and White students. Fifty percent of them have Asian backgrounds. Aligned with the school's name, the class is very diverse. Almost ninety percent of the students are either first generation or second generation immigrants. The school's culture embraces the international learning community and respect for diversity. Eighty percent of the students started learning Mandarin Chinese in Kindergarten (5 years old). Most of them are able to exchange basic conversations in Mandarin, while some of them are at intermediate levels of Mandarin in listening and speaking according to the American Council on the Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards. The main goal for third grade students during our collaboration was to improve their reading and writing skills via the bilingual reading and writing exchange with peers in China.

Cheng Du ISC Experimental School (CDES) is located in Chengdu, China. It is an independent school that is part of the international schools consortium (ISC). CDES's goal is to prepare students to realize their full potential academically, physically, socially, and spiritually to meet the challenges of an ever-increasingly complex multicultural world (CDES China, 2021). It serves students from preschool to secondary grades, offering students an English immersion education across the curriculum and Chinese language arts (in Chinese).

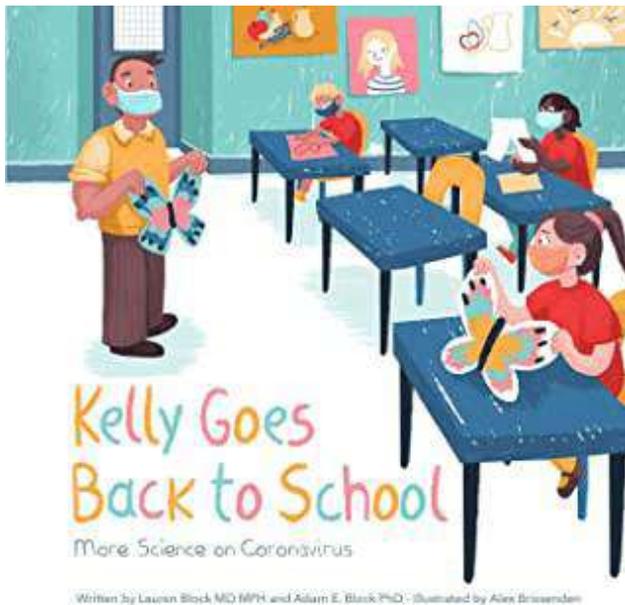
The majority of students from CDES are Chinese, but some students are from South Korea, the Philippines, and the U.S. Students at ICSSAtlanta are culturally diverse, including children of immigrants as well as African American students. Students in both schools are emerging bilingual learners and their second language proficiency levels (i.e., English or Chinese) vary, ranging from beginner to intermediate. Both teachers strove to motivate students to use the target language in meaningful ways and develop literacy skills.

The focus of our global literacy community was two-fold: 1) to explore effective pedagogies to help students develop language, critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and global competence through authentic global children's literature; 2) to integrate global children's literature and UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>) into the existing curriculum. Our group meeting activities followed a collaborative inquiry model (Kasl & Yorks, 2002), commonly used in teacher professional development that involves a cyclical process of inquiry, reflection, and action. Meeting activities focused on exploring how to use global children's literature to introduce UNSDGs and connect with students' experiences to help develop global competence and biliteracy skills. We discussed unit designs, unit lesson timelines/class schedules/school calendars, children's literature books, multimodal literacy practices, technology tools we could use to promote learning and interactions, and teaching strategies to implement the unit plans, as well as challenges we met when implementing previous units.

We also summarized and reflected on lessons learned through implementing unit plans in classrooms and proposed new changes. Accordingly, we used our unit plans as a guide to implement activities in respective classrooms. We usually started a unit lesson with the selected children's literature book to lead students to the topic and then used a variety of literacy practices to guide students to explore the topic, tie to learning standards, and develop literacy skills. Most unit lessons integrated English/Chinese language and literacy skills with social studies standards. We selected authentic children's books written by U.S., Chinese, and Chinese American authors when developing four unit-lessons (i.e., The Impact of COVID-19, Markets, Chinese New Year in China and the U.S., and My City). In this report, we focus on the following two inquiries to illustrate our learning.

### **Inquiry on the Impact of COVID-19 on Our Community**

We chose to focus on the impact of COVID-19 on our community amid the pandemic. Students were still trying to understand what the virus was, how it affected their community, and how they would prepare for going back to school. This focus also relates to UNSDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being. We felt the topic was familiar to students and they would be able to make connections. We chose *Kelly Goes Back to School* written by Lauren Block and Adam Block (2020) for CDES students so they would understand how the pandemic affected students in the U.S. Students at ICSSAtlanta read *A Different Spring Festival* (不一样的春节) written by Gao Jing (2020) so they read about how the pandemic affected children and their families in China.



Students at both schools engaged in discussions prompted by the global thinking routine “The 3 Ys”: 1) Why might this topic matter to me? 2) Why might it matter to people around me? and 3) Why might it matter to the world? (Boix Mansilla, et. al, 2017). Reading about the pandemic and being engaged in discussions regarding its impact on communities in the country where they and their peers live helped students understand how we were closely connected and how we shared similar feelings such as anxiety, fear, and uncertainty during this challenging time. Additionally, students brainstormed ways to address the crisis locally and globally, preventing the spread of the virus, and identified people who were critical community helpers as shown in Padlet posts or posters (presented via Flipgrid). Students used their linguistic repertoire as well as drawings and clip art/pictures to make meaning and illustrate their ideas and interacted with their peers on their posts (Figure 1). Most students wrote a statement in the target language and then used a variety of illustrations to provide details and elaborations of the statement. The multiple modes in meaning making were made easier by using web-based technologies such as Padlet and Flipgrid. In addition, for students who chose to take lessons remotely at home due to the pandemic, it was a meaningful journey for them to express their feelings and connect to the rest of the world via technology.

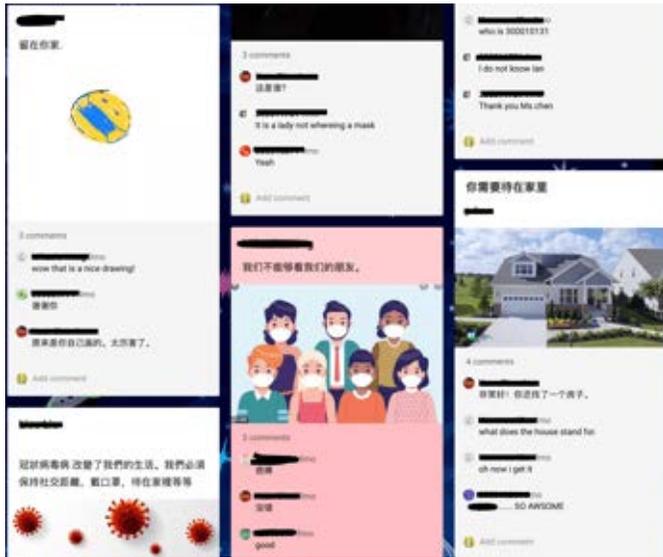


Figure 1a. Student Work Samples (Padlet Posts and Posters).

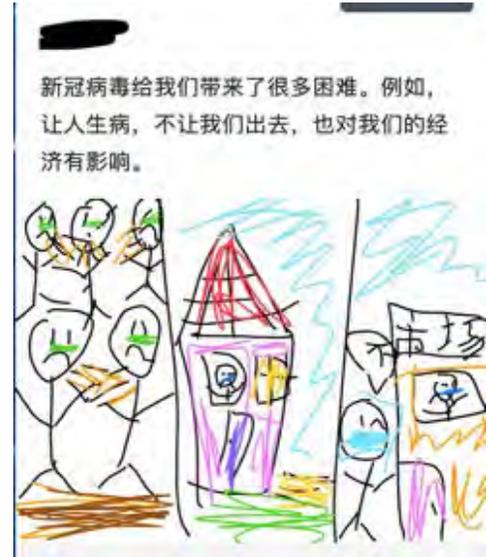


Figure 1b. Student Work Samples (Padlet Posts and Posters).

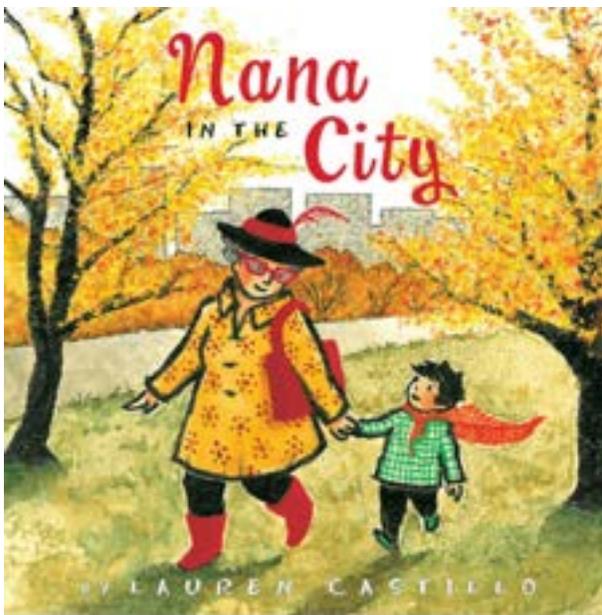


Figure 1c. Student Work Samples (Padlet Posts and Posters).

Teachers faced great challenges to complete the unit lesson due to irregular student attendance affected by the pandemic and the need to move back and forth between remote teaching and face-to-face instruction. However, both teachers felt students were captivated by learning about their peers' experiences and sharing their prior knowledge, as well as learning about the topic through four language skills. Rebekah reflected at our meeting that although the children had different experiences and perspectives such as the normalcy vs. abnormality of mask wearing in China and the U.S., the unit lesson provided teachers with the opportunity to unite children with others globally and see how we all were connected.

### Inquiry on My City

In this unit, students at both schools read *Nana in the City* written by Lauren Castillo (2014). Students at CDES read the original English version, and students at ICSAtlanta read the translated Chinese version. We chose this topic because students at both schools live in cities and are familiar with the urban scenes shown in the book. We also wanted to connect the topic to UNSDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.



In addition to discussing plots and characters in the book (e.g., Why did the boy not like living in the city at the beginning of the story?), students described their cities and created their city book to share with peers via Book Creator (<https://bookcreator.com/>). Some students were able to record and include their book read-aloud along with creating their books. The students at ICSAtlanta made connections to their own grandparents/families in the cities. They also discussed the cities that they would like to visit as part of language and social studies lessons. Additionally, students at ICSAtlanta used Flipgrid to share about visits of their grandparents or family members, enabling us to learn about their family histories and even some immigration stories.



Figure 2a. Student Work Samples: My City



Figure 2b. Student Work Samples: My City.



Figure 2c. Student Work Samples: My City.

In our planning meeting, we discussed how we could connect the topic of my city to UNSDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities by exploring challenges people might face when living in cities. We discussed how we could use the issues that appeared in *Nana in the City* and photos of crowded cities, traffic jams, waste management, and an unequal access to housing to discuss problems of urbanization and brainstorm possible solutions that students could act on in their communities. We also selected the thinking routine's See-Feel-Think-Wonder (Re-imagining Migration, 2019) to guide students to observe the photos and develop awareness and critical thinking skills around the topic of urbanization. The students at ICSAtlanta also recalled their learning from a previous social studies lesson on Georgia habitat and environmental protections to come up with solutions to improve their community. Unfortunately, due to constant quarantines as well as lesson delivery format and schedule changes affected by the pandemic, we were unable to complete the urbanization inquiry part of the lesson.

## Lessons We Have Learned

We learned that students in both countries were able to engage with global children’s literature if they could find easy connections with the books. In particular, students showed strong interest in learning about their peers from another country and their connections to the books, and interacting with them. Rebekah stated at the meeting that topics such as the COVID made it very easy to become personal. Yuan reflected, “Reading books with different topics has brought to students a brighter world that is connected to the current situations such as the COVID pandemic, environmental protection, city life, cultural perspectives and holidays in two cultures.” Sarah also commented that the collaborations included concrete plans to learn about global issues through children’s literature and to expose students to different perspectives than those commonly found in their community. Because we value multiple modes of communication and literacy practices and gave students freedom to make choices in how they wanted to share their ideas, students became less anxious when using the target language.

Both Rebekah and Yuan reflected on how students responded to using children’s literature in social studies or science, and how the cross-curricular approach also benefited students’ literacy development. Rebekah described that the My City unit made it easy to introduce key words and concepts from the social studies standards for communities by connecting them to the book *Nana in the City*, and to introduce some higher-level vocabulary such as industrialization. In their COVID unit, Rebekah was able to connect to the scientific method. The class discussed vaccination and vaccines in the book and why we could not have them available sooner. Students in both classrooms were encouraged to go beyond the surface meaning or the scope of the selected books. Students at ICSAtlanta applied the knowledge that they learned from the COVID-19 books series to daily hygiene to preventing spreading the virus.

Technology implementation was another asset or skill that teachers felt that they and their students gained through this journey. Technology enabled collaborations between and among students and teachers in both schools. Sarah commented that the COVID might accelerate technological development in teaching and collaboration as many schools in the world moved to online teaching, which might make such collaborations easier. It also supported students in using digital multimodal semiotic resources in both languages to convey meanings easily. Yuan shared how exciting it was for students to be able to communicate with their Chinese peers in either Chinese or English even though communication was asynchronous due to time zone differences.

We also learned that learning different technology applications and preparing students to use such technologies was time consuming. Yuan reflected that she learned to introduce technology tools one at a time and guide students to apply it at their own pace. Trouble-shooting technological issues (e.g., how to let students access each other’s digital production) was the most challenging activity with which our literacy community members were involved during the collaboration. We realized that responding to technical issues in a timely manner and using technologies (e.g., Zoom calls) to view the problems from the user-end view and then creating digital tutorials accordingly was beneficial in overcoming this challenge. Although it usually takes substantial efforts in planning, preparing,

and coordinating projects, and in troubleshooting technical issues, virtual exchange projects are sustainable and low-cost and encourage collaborations across physical borders and spaces.

While students were engaged in unit lessons, we also recognized the importance of differentiated instruction. Students in both classrooms have a wide range of proficiency levels in either English or Chinese or both. Differentiated instruction was constantly integrated either in the process of learning about the topic through the selected books or in the final products they produced. Both Rebekah and Yuan reflected that authentic children’s literature, such as *Nana in the City* or 奶奶的红披风, were not tailored in language use to accommodate second language learners’ proficiency levels so they needed to provide additional language supports to help students understand the books, especially in the areas of vocabulary and sentence structures. Although students were encouraged to use different meaning-making modes when participating in the literacy practices, some were not able to provide their response to the lessons in the target language. Additional scaffolding and modeling (e.g., providing word banks of key words) were needed to ensure that all students met the learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

Throughout this professional development journey, we learned important lessons regarding integrating authentic global children’s literature in language immersion programs and establishing virtual exchange programs, even though our initial plan was challenged by the pandemic. Evidence from our collaboration indicated that virtual exchange projects can facilitate students’ explorations of global issues from children’s literature and mirrored in their local communities through diverse perspectives. In addition, we were able to explore ways to motivate students to use their second language in meaningful ways and develop their biliteracy skills by connecting lessons back to the community and their experiences, even though the second language was not prevalently used in their local community. We were encouraged to hear that our school administrators also valued our collaborations across national borders and spaces, welcoming similar opportunities and partnerships in the future. As Sarah put it, “We want to continue to enrich students’ lives and help them to continue to grow more and become global citizens.”

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Chang Pu is an Associate Professor of Teacher Education (ESOL) at Berry College, whose teaching and research interests center on TESOL, bilingual education, and teacher education.

Yuan Chen is the language and Mandarin lead teacher at the International Charter School of Atlanta and has taught Mandarin in an immersion setting for 6 years. Before she entered the immersion teaching, she had taught elementary school, Chinese language as second language, and English as a second language in the U.S. and China from elementary to high school.

Sarah Williams is the Academic Principal for Chengdu ISC Experimental School, China. Sarah is from Atlanta, Georgia, US and taught in Atlanta before moving to Grahamstown, South Africa. She earned Masters of Education from Rhodes University and coordinated an afterschool enrichment program at a local non-government organization before working in China.

Rebekah Gooding is a third-grade teacher at Chengdu ISC Experimental School.



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### **Belizean Voices: Reflection, Consideration, and Response**

Sue Christian Parsons with Erica Aguilar, Melissa Bradley, Yvonne Howell, Ray Lawrence, Rashid Murillo, Guadencio Muxul, Denise Neal, Ruth Reneau, Tanesha Ross, and Gwendolyn Usher

The Belize Global Literacy Community is indeed a global community. All participants are associated with Oklahoma State University (OSU), but only one participant, the convener (Sue), actually joined from Oklahoma as a literacy education professor. The rest are educators in varied settings in Belize, some working in Belizean Ministry of Education positions supporting teachers in school and others teaching learners from early childhood to college. These Belizean educators are part of a doctoral cohort in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Ph.D. program at OSU. We met every other week through Zoom and continued our explorations and conversations digitally during other weeks.

As we explored the Worlds of Words Padlet and discussed our participation in the project, we noted that our stance seemed a bit different from other participating groups. We, too, were exploring global literature but with a view from a different part of the globe than many other participants. The Belizean participants, most working in contexts with limited access to real books for teaching, wanted to learn more about what books were available and how to use literature effectively in their classrooms. The U.S.-based participant, with broad knowledge of and access to trade books but limited understanding of Belizean teaching contexts, culture, and literature, wanted to expand her understanding of global contexts and perspectives. Though interested in exploring a broad range of global perspectives, we entered the work with a consideration of how books would resound with Belizean readers in Belizean classrooms.

We read scholarly work to ground and guide our exploration. In response to Sims Bishop's (1990) timeless essay, *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors*, we discussed the challenge of finding texts in which Belizean children could see themselves. As we talked, our conversations focused on limited access to books and the lack of representation of Belizean voices in their curated curriculum and textbooks.

- In the school system in Belize, students rarely experience content that mirrors them. They are often exposed to windows and sliding doors that allow them to peer into the lives of foreign principles and belief systems. Thus, there is some disadvantage to individuals being bombarded with foreign doctrine. In some cases, this sets the stage for ideologies of superior culture to be implanted in the minds of minority groups. Readers are often poisoned with this view that they are inferior to the dominant principles highlighted in texts. While it is important for readers to learn about other people and places, it is even more vital that they learn about themselves. There needs to be more books that mirror the lives of minority and Indigenous groups. (Melissa)

- It is difficult to talk about global literature without first setting the stage to understanding what drives educational reforms in Belize. Belizean leaders and educators have a strong tie to the Caribbean; we use a lot of Caribbean written textbooks, novels, and children literature—along with American texts. This means that our rainbow of cultures is not depicted in the excerpts, short stories, or essays in these educational books. We need to move from politics and “strong emotional ties” to what is the reality in Belize and let’s help our own students see themselves in books. In chapter two, “Making sense of pedagogy” in the book *Understanding Pedagogy Developing a Critical Approach to Teaching and Learning*, Waring and Evans (2015) explore and explain the complex concept of pedagogy for axiological emancipatory interests. They echo educators must understand how pedagogy, at an organic level, informs instructors on how to view their positions as professionals of today and tomorrow. Educators should be consciously and actively engaged in “what and how are future learners’ interests being acknowledged and addressed in the curricula and schooling” (p. 26).
- Pedagogy is a critical act of inquiry by the teacher to promote student learning. They rightly observe that pedagogy “is certainly not a neutral landscape—it is very much about a socially critical agenda, one in which notions of learner empowerment are framed by those power relationships that revolve around how knowledge is conceptualized and therefore what knowledge is valued, and how learners are positioned in relation to how that knowledge is created as part of the pedagogical process” (p. 28). I love this quote, it has me cathartic, it reminds me of the novels I read during my secondary education—none reflected my culture. I suspected it, felt ignored, voiceless, and on the brink of voice erasure if I had quit school. Many days, I felt as if I did not belong in school. I wanted to learn, but I also wanted to belong. (Erica)

In response to Short’s (2009) framework for engaging with international literature, we began with exploring and sharing our own cultural identities through journey maps and cultural x-rays (Figure 1), a process that launched storytelling, poetry, and art (Figure 2), and helped develop a stronger sense of community, especially across the Belize/U.S. divide. We paired Short’s curricular framework with Leland, Lewison, and Harste’s (2018) similar framework for engaging learners in critical literacy through literature. As our work centered on Belizean voices and agency, we reached back to previous readings in Freire (1970) and explored pedagogical implication of critical literacy with Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002). Wolf (2009), Peterson and Eeds (2007), and Parsons et al. (2011) were also instrumental in exploring ways to center literature in the curriculum and engage readers in critical, authentic, and agentic literacy.

Rashid's Cultural X-Ray



Figure 1. Rashid's Cultural X-Ray.

Ruth's Cultural Exploration Poem

*Blood Lines* by Ruth Reneau

Claims and names running through my veins:  
Who am I?  
They tell me I'm Creole.  
Of course, my Grandfathers are  
Or so they say,  
But my grandmothers are East Indian.  
My paternal Great Grandfather was born in Guatemala.  
Two brothers came from over the border  
And started a whole new generation.  
Charles and Joseph sure did their part in creation,  
The Reneaus are everywhere,  
You do the multiplication.  
I must take time to mention  
My great, great granny Hendricks was Manduran  
Hail, Longworth, Kellyman, Staine, Smith, Stuart.  
They say we are one.  
Claims and names running through my veins.  
Was my Granny Stella's Father really a wika?  
They say Percy was white and had blue eyes.  
Dyer, Steward, Giddins, Haylock,  
Claims and names running through my veins.  
My Great Grandmother on my mother's side held the title "Brown."  
Her Mother though was a maiden named, "Meighan."  
From the black on white picture on the wall, they sure look African.  
It was slavery that brought them to this great land.  
They call us people of the Diaspora.  
They say we are Displaced.  
Moody, Lewis, Dougal,  
Claims and names running through my veins,  
Running, running...  
Who am I?  
There is no room for confusion.  
I am Belizean.

Figure 2. Cultural Exploration Poem.

We searched for trade books, exploring resources that promised global perspectives and authorship such as the Outstanding International Books list published each year by the United States Board on Books for Young People. Because of the lack of representation of Belizean voices in the books we found, our selections offered cross-cultural inquiry. Our goal was to read books together, respond as readers in dialogue, consider books that would work well in Belizean classrooms, and explore pedagogical possibilities for engaging with those texts. As a children's literature professor with resources available, Sue, the U.S. participant, worked on access, purchasing books for the group with Global Literacy Community award funding and additional funding sources. We began with novels, a list of books representing various global perspectives. Participants explored the books to find those that seemed most interesting to them and, potentially, to their students. From a broad initial list, we chose four with the intent of having small group literature study sessions: *Children of Blood and Bone* (Adeyemi, 2018), *The Other Half of Happy* (Balcácel, 2019), *Hurricane Child* (Callender, 2018), and *A Time to Dance* (Venkatraman, 2014). For quick access, we planned to purchase digital copies of the books only to find

that accessing the purchased books on the Belizean end was difficult. Computer after computer flashed with the message that this book was not available to users in Belize. We contacted Amazon in hopes of using their global distributors, but Belize was not one of the options for shipping. Though we eventually found workarounds for digital book access, the struggle highlighted barriers to sharing global literature.

While we waited for novel access, we explored a wide range of picturebooks. We worked around access issues by sharing read alouds in our Zoom sessions and selecting quality books from the Epic Digital Library (<https://www.getepic.com/>). We approached books as readers before we considered them as teachers. Though the books directly addressed cultural experiences beyond Belize, these conversations did much to illuminate content and themes that connected in meaningful ways to Belizean experiences. The group gravitated to books that explored diverse heritages in a diverse society and the importance of being seen and valued, as well as celebrated heritage and community. Books that acknowledged colonialism, a strong thread in the tapestry of Belizean cultural history and current realities resounded as did books that celebrated the love of family. A strong sense of story was also a big point of appeal.

Throughout our time together, participants contributed their own creative as well as scholarly writing to the Padlet. As the work went on, we added a column expressly for Belizean voices to which participants added their own writing and writing from Belizean authors. Some books that were particularly meaningful to the group included: *Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings* (Latour, 2018), *I Am Every Good Thing* (Barnes, 2020), *Saturday* (Mora, 2019), *Digging for Words: José Alberto Guitérrez and the Library He Built* (Kunkel, 2020), and *Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book* (Morales, 2016).

*Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings* was a strong draw, not only for the Caribbean setting but because of the explicit attention to the enduring effects of colonialism. In response, the rich history of Belize came into conversation, a history marked heavily by colonial forces and a current culture shaped in many ways by those influences. This theme emerged again and again in responses to literature and exploration of literacy practices, especially in conversations about the novels that, in portraying diverse global experiences, invited conversations about participant's own cultural heritages and histories.

Barnes's and Mora's books elicited an enthusiastic response as readers reveled in representation of individuals with African heritage, strong mirrors to many of them, their families, and their students. Discussion delved into comparisons of experiences of Black people in the U.S. and in Belize, noting similarities in history but also differences in social treatment. Also noted was gender representations of Black girls and the portrayals of their lived experiences. The mother/daughter adventures in *Saturday* rang true to many readers who noted the easy pace, the warm relationship, and the focus on positive resilience as feeling very much like the culture they live. Ruth noted with particular appreciation the focus on lives of women of African heritage, including a rare depiction of hair care.

*Digging for Words* elicited similar response and enthusiastic recognition of the lives of many Belizean students. Guadencio, in particular, recognized his Belizean community in this book set in Columbia and noted the power of such a book to speak across cultures.

- Students at the elementary level, in Orange Walk District, Belize, speak three languages which are Spanish, Creole and the English Language. Most students in a class would be from the mestizo culture just like in the story. The majority of students are also from the rural areas of Belize where they enjoy the maximum beauty of nature...similar to the neighborhood that is portrayed in the story. Something, very important that would relate the students to the story is the fact that most people in these villages work in hard labor or in the farms. Waking up early is nothing strange for these learners and going around in a truck like Don Jose is very familiar to [them]. With all the previously mentioned points, it is clear that the reader can easily bring this text to life and immerse [in the] lived experience of the main characters. This is a way of opening the world for learners through literature (Short, 2009). The familiarity of cultural aspects in the life of the characters in the writing allows readers to experience a new culture that they can easily embrace. When students recognize the cultures that influence their thinking, they become more aware of how and why culture is important to others. They no longer see culture as about the “other” and as exotic but recognize that it is at the heart of defining who they are as human beings (Short, 2009). It allows them to appreciate and respect other people and to acknowledge that we are one people sharing this world that we call home. (Guadencio)

Yvonne highlighted *Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book* as a book that is expressly and joyfully culturally specific. She sees a need for a wide collection of such books, representing varied cultural traditions within Belize, as a way to maintain the “uniqueness of many cultures” that may otherwise be lost in the common rhetoric of Belize as a “melting pot.”

The novels we chose represented a variety of cultural locations—West Africa, India, United States/Guatemala, and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. Just as with the picturebooks, we came to the reading and dialogue first as readers and then reflected on the experiences as teachers considering possibilities for the classroom. We used the two-session literature study group structure suggested in Parsons et al. (2011). Short (2009) asserts that cross-cultural studies operate both as mirrors and windows (Sims-Bishop, 1990). As we engaged in dialogue about each text, reader’s own cultural identities informed our transactions. As a result, the rich multicultural tapestry of Belize emerged. *Children of Blood and Bone* elicited histories of minoritized communities who, having moved into Belize, also experienced cultural suppression. In response to *A Time to Dance*, one participant detailed her Indian heritage and the existence of an Indian community in Belize. The exploration of bicultural identity in *The Other Half of Happy* brought conversation focused on the value of multicultural perspectives in Belize and the importance of nurturing that multiplicity as national identity, while *Hurricane Child* raised discussion of gender positions and expectations, including a cultural struggle to understand and embrace members of the LGBTQ+ community.

- After reading *Children of Blood and Bone*, I certainly endorse Short’s (2009) statement that literature is a portal to gaining perspectives about other cultures and even finding commonality in our human existence. Though magical and mystical in foundation, it clearly depicts the desire to preserve cultural traditions and practices and highlights the power in cultural identity. Additionally, it illuminated the need to appreciate other cultural orientations and perspectives and “reading the world” from a critical perspective. (Ray)

In April, we had the opportunity to host author Daniel Nayeri who talked with us and others in the OSU community about his Printz Award winning book, *Everything Sad is Untrue: A True Story*. This immigrant narrative spoke to the Belizean educators as they continued to consider deeply what it means to teach in a strongly multicultural community. They noted the powerful immigrant stories that run through their communities and considered ways to make space for everyone's stories to be heard through the books students read.

The initial instructional plan was to use the books and teaching practices (e.g., dialogue as pedagogy, transmediation of text, interpretive stances, readers as writers) in the teachers' classrooms around Belize, conducting action research. Teachers would select the books they wanted for their classrooms. These books would be purchased with project funds and shipped to Belize. Several factors squelched those plans. First, for most of our time together, Belize was "shut down" due to the pandemic. Teachers were trying to work with distance learning but limited infrastructure and the lack of resources available to learners at home made conducting our research unfeasible. Additionally, the difficulty with access slowed our progress. We figured out workarounds for digital access, but those processes were still cumbersome and digital books were not the best option for classroom use. Shipping books directly to Belize from distributors proved problematic as well as the easier route of working with one publisher or distribution house, an avenue that wouldn't lead to the wide range of representations we were seeking. Additionally, shipments into Belize from the U.S. involved a fee to be paid by the recipient at pick-up, a cost not easily absorbed by the participants. Eventually, we were granted dispensation of customs fees and taxes for one shipment of books. Sue purchased all books through award funds, added books donated by Daniel Nayeri, and sent one huge shipment to Belize for teachers to use in the fall.

As a learning community, we considered what new action work would best serve our purposes for this project and decided on two areas of focus. First, we would reflect upon our changing stances as teachers as a result of engagement with multicultural literature. Second, teachers felt the need to amplify Belizean voices we had found to be so marginalized in the literature accessible to us. Some examples of this culminating work are included below.

Our takeaways? Of central importance to Belizean educators was teaching for justice by prioritizing the experiences and voices of the members of their communities, including representation of and through languages and heritage.

- In terms of pedagogy, teaching the way we were taught did not make me feel alive, so why would I teach my students that way? It is time for an educational reform in Belize where the foundation is linguistic justice to promote social justice. After all, hasn't it been said that literacy is about power and change—the power to change? Literacy in Belize has long been used as power to suppress change and cultural wealth. We must not stop at the teaching of reading and writing at the surface level, but continue to illustrate how these readings of novels, short stories, textbooks humanize certain people and how it does not to others—especially to our own Belizean people. (Erica)

Such work involves promoting Belizean voices and perspectives in classroom teaching, including learners and teachers as writers, examining cross-cultural texts critically with an eye toward relevance for Belizean readers, and intentionally adopting practices that encourage readers to read with awareness of how books position them as culturally-situated readers in a global community.

- Teachers can access books written by authors from across borders they know have some similarities to that of students and allow students to read, critically exploring and making connections through these similarities, prompting curiosity in finding about the differences. An example is Belizean classrooms have a large number of students whose parents are Central American immigrants. These students would be able to relate and make connections to the story, *The Other Half of Happy* written by Rebecca Belcarcel (2019). There are other books which reflect life after colonialism. Since Belize was a colony of Britain, these books would help the students understand who they are as a member of the Belizean society, through the reading of literature based in countries with similar historical backgrounds. (Gwendolyn)
- As I reflect on my elementary school literacy experience, I can recall how much I disliked reading. The books I interacted with were not fun to read. However, I can remember my mother making a conscious effort to provide books to help develop literacy and numeracy concepts. The books that I read for pleasure were foreign books like *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *Rumpelstiltskin*. None of those stories were a reflection of who I was and did not fit into my reality. As I entered into my secondary education journey, literature became more difficult. I read books that I was not interested in and studied text with designed questions. As a student, I could not relate to these stories, which made reading painful. As a primary school educator, I wanted to ensure that students did not have the same negative experience. So I ventured on a quest to investigate how to use literature to empower students. Providing students with choices about the books they read is a great motivation. Creating the learning space where they get to select books that informs them about other culture and seeing a reflection of themselves is vital. Students need books that serve as both mirrors and windows. According to Short (2009), exposing students to diverse books as they look at the world and reflect on themselves is the beginning of a deeper understanding of the world. Therefore, creating classroom libraries filled with diverse books that the teacher carefully selects will impact students' reading experience. (Denise)

Educators viewed practices that give students voice and agency as paramount. Many noted the importance of providing choice in readings. Others noted the important shift from students answering questions about a text to teaching them from an early age to analyze and question the text. Dialogue proved instrumental in illuminating both text and reader in our work together, and teachers noted intent work toward teaching readers to engage in productive talk about texts to illuminate varied perspectives. They also saw great power in the arts as a tool to develop personal and culturally responsive understandings as well as to engage with texts well beyond the surface.

- I have come to learn that the issues my students were having with proper engagement with their texts emerged because of our use of culturally irrelevant texts. Students were not able to relate to or identify with these texts as they were culturally removed and alienated from the experiences within these texts...My hope is to inspire young Belizean writers to explore their cultural wealth through the creation of young adult literature from their cultural perspectives. Young adult literature and particularly picture books by Belizean authors or depicting Belizean cultural diversity is almost non-existent. This teaching transition provides the context and framework towards young Belizean literature production. (Ray)
- As a literacy scholar I no longer see labels, I see books as a journey to self-affirmation, respect, and appreciation for others. I see books as a powerful tool to foster critical thinking and promote social justice. I am now passionate about creating a forum for children to become readers...who understand and value what they read as they transact with text. The readings on critical literacy suggest that this concept is only fully achieved if it evokes change. This change will come if teachers factor in students' cultural background and make the pedagogies contextually relevant. We should be creating lessons that are relevant to their reality and the world they live in...A goal of mine is to encourage teachers to create activities where students interact with each other, use music, art and drama to cater to a variety of learner needs. This is important for all subjects because it is through language and how students interact with each other that students truly learn. As I assume my role as a literacy scholar and administrator, I plan to create a digital space where students can connect to their identities, language practices and culture. I want my young adult learners to voice their opinions whilst respecting the opinion of others. (Tanesha)

Of utmost importance to the Belizean participants is sharing Belizean voices with the broader cultural community. Several already write texts for their learners to read and are actively considering seeking publication. They also posted about works by Belizean authors that they feel members of this broader community of seekers should know. One frequently mentioned is Beka Lamb (Edgell, 1982), the work of a Belizean-born author and set in Belize with authentic characters and contest. Others answered the call for Belizean writing by sharing their own work—the beginning drafts of a picturebook, a short story, books and other works by local authors available through the Belize National Library service (<https://www.facebook.com/BelizeLibraries/posts/4564027853611839>). Participants shared the writing of their students as well, fresh voices from Belize, exploring what it means to be Belizean.

From the convener's (Sue's) standpoint, exploring multicultural literature with a community of educators shed light on the privilege of access and deepened her own understanding of a culture previously only viewed from the outside. The experience was humbling in the best way, a chance to sit back, listen and learn and, thus, reconsider and vet her own understandings and practices in selecting and engaging with global literature. Exploring culturally responsive literature practice in an international partnership was particularly rewarding. These explorations evoked not only experimentation with and adjustments to practice in all instructional contexts represented (early childhood to higher education), but also prompted deep and generative consideration of how instructional practices aimed at increasing literacy may instead actually silence voices and constrain learning—and of the power of international children's literature to influence critical and joyful change.

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Sue Christian Parsons is an Associate Professor and the Jacques Munroe Professor of Reading and Literacy at Oklahoma State University.

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## **Exploring Children's Rights through a Global Literacy Community in the Land of Enchantment**

Yoo Kyung Sung, Diana Botello, Amber Gordon, Melody Magor-Begay

### **Our Process as a Global Literacy Community by Yoo Kyung Sung**

I have many wishes in teaching graduate literacy courses. My first wish is to continue reading global and international literature together as a group after a semester ends. My other wish is to continue to meet even though we live on different sides of New Mexico. This literacy community group was born as a way for these wishes to come true.

Albuquerque is the only large city in the state of New Mexico. The Land of Enchantment is the state nickname. Albuquerque metropolitan areas are formed around the city of Albuquerque, which means there are many remote towns and schools where teachers are locally connected. For example, the world-famous tourist city, Santa Fe, is the capital of our state and yet is still considered a small town from which people commute to Albuquerque by train or car. The teachers who formed the global literacy community of the Land of Enchantment live in different regions in New Mexico, yet we all met through graduate courses where they read a range of children's literature.

Five classroom teachers living in different locations had a common interest in having a rich dialogue with other teachers as members of a learning community. If the pandemic had not happened, I might have recruited teachers in the Albuquerque Metro areas so that I could continue what I normally do at in-person meetings—eye-contact, laughter, snacks, book browsing, and activities. It was hard to imagine forming a group without these regular agendas. Surprisingly, the COVID-19 situation that was repeatedly described as “unprecedented” became one of the good things that happened to us. Being in different locations couldn't stop us because we located our meeting space by utilizing virtual discussion tools (i.e. Zoom and Padlet) and continued our celebration of spatiality.

This format and group took a lot of courage for all of us. When COVID-19 began, it was hard to know the best solution for teaching. To be honest, nobody could anticipate what would happen to students and schools. However, six members joined the literacy community and five members stayed till the end. Soon virtual spaces and virtual dialogue grew to be a new normal practice for teachers, and kept nurturing our growth, leading to an appreciation of the literacy community. When teachers felt disconnected from their usual school community and from colleagues and students due to social distances, the pandemic turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to stay connected with teachers in different schools through having collective dialogue where we read, taught, shared, reflected, and grew together beyond our physical locations.

This literacy community includes teachers in various locations. Three teachers live in Northern New Mexico in cities like Farmington and Taos that are a 4-to-6 hour drive away from Albuquerque. We also include a teacher in South Valley near Albuquerque metro areas, yet South Valley has its own unique spatial identity and regional history from Albuquerque. One teacher is in Albuquerque. Different community locations offered diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds along with school cultures that supported our book discussion. A wide range of areas of specialties and grade levels from a junior college writing teacher, middle-grade literacy teachers, an early literacy bilingual language teacher, and a community parent educator/leader enriched our learning.

In this vignette, I reflect on the literacy community members' different needs, the role of a monthly study group, and the creation of text sets. The purpose of this reflection is to think about how a literacy community leader can support members. The journey of a literacy community is somewhat ambiguous until we hit the (adventurous) road and move forward as if our journey is like a living thing that is spontaneous, responsive, reflective, unexpected, entertaining, emotive, and challenging.

### **Articulating My Interests with the Anchor Text**

Some of our meetings were both fun and hard because of the feeling of indecisiveness. It was fun to decide what we would do, yet it was not easy because we were shaping what we were to do without being sure of our plans. The beauty of the literacy community was that we planned as we experienced. As a leader, I proposed children's rights as the leading theme for our group, thinking that children's rights as a theme would allow us to rethink the sociopolitical landscape of New Mexico. We could unfold a wide range of social issues through the theme of children's rights, including immigration issues, bilingual and biliteracy learning, inequality of community resources, poverty, and many more. Specifically, the pandemic situations that brought unprecedented problems in shortages of resources, materials, and life essentials could have great potential for us to consider teaching implications with children's literature because of the strong relevance of books with children's rights. The ambiguous nature of the group inquiry theme, children's rights, allowed us to connect sociocultural issues to our teaching of literacy and literature, which mirrors layers of our world.

The first step was reading the first anchor book, *I Have the Right to Be a Child* (Serres, 2012). An anchor text is a cornerstone book (Sung et al., 2017) that the literacy community members expanded to the concept of children's rights like tree branches from the tree trunk. This poetry picturebook unpacks the concept of children's rights through a young child's narratives and language. We chose *I Have the Right to Be a Child* as the first anchor text because of its accessibility to the concept of children's rights and because it helped us to learn about children's rights. *I Have the Right to Be a Child* allowed each member to choose a specific type of children's rights for their teaching. Selecting different types of children's rights for their teaching helped members reflect on their teaching and units. The early meetings in this journey created the central space where teachers shared their choice of topics related to the children's rights theme. While they explained what and how they chose in relation to the anchor text, *I Have the Right to Be a Child*, each member made sense of their teaching practice to work around a children's rights inquiry and inspired each other. Table 1 indicates each member's choice of children's rights that they used to plan their school year 2020-2021.

Teacher	Inquiry Theme	Children's Rights Themes
Amber (Adult Writing Instructor at College)	Intergenerational, Language Barriers, & Indigenous culture	Rights to have resources in food & technology Right to have medical necessities
Gloria (Middle Grade Teacher)	Personal Identity-Moving and Immigration	Right to have a complete family Right to dream Right not be a victim
Diana (Kindergarten/Bilingual Teacher)	Personal Identity-Moving and Immigration	Right to be respected (isolation) Right to be protected by adults Right to express freely (personal identity)
Melody (Community Leader/Educator)	Empathy & Inclusion (Autism)	Right to be respected Right to have family and community Right to be protected by adults
Vicki (Middle Grade/ELD Teacher)	Hope and WWII	Right to be respected Right to express completely & freely

Table 1. Teachers' Inquiry Themes and Children's Rights.

Choosing an anchor text so that everybody has the same book was helpful for a smooth start to our literacy community. I added several more anchor texts as we proceeded in our literacy community. Along with the anchor texts, assigning a small task, such as selecting sub-themes, helped teachers reflect and think of their themes as inspired by the anchor text, *I Have the Right to Be a Child*. Sharing what they thought of the anchor text and how they were going to adopt the ideas from the book helped us understand each other's teaching purposes. I invited teachers to use Epic Books, which is a digital book collection that allows teachers free access so that they could utilize Epic Books for their virtual teaching. At the beginning of the literacy community gathering, half the members had used Epic Books and the rest didn't know about this tool. The Epic collection was also a great resource for us to prepare for our upcoming meetings. Assigning a book to read for each meeting helped teachers browse a range of children's books in various genres and formats (i.e. videos and audiobooks). The book choices that we read and shared by utilizing EPIC Books for our meetings helped us think about children's rights in diverse contexts. Teachers had numerous opportunities to think about their text sets and supported their text set choices for students later in our journey. The assigned readings supported our monthly meetings based on our discussion focus.

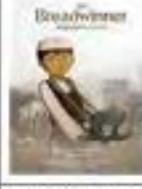
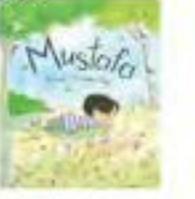
Continuum of Literary Invitation to Children's Rights	Children's Rights Themes	Teachers' Responses			
<p><i>Somos Como Los Nubes: We Are Like Clouds</i> by Jorge Arrieta (2016)</p> 	<p>Right to have a complete Family</p> <p>Right to Dream</p> <p>Right Not to be a Victim</p> <p>Right to be protected by adults</p>	<p>Contemporary issues</p> <p>Latin American immigrants</p> <p>Presentations of bilingual texts</p> <p>Sugarcoating ending? Happy ending at the park?</p> <p>What's the depiction of a detention center/space?</p>	<p><i>Look Up</i> by Jung In Ho (2016)</p> 	<p>Right to be seen</p> <p>Right to have a community</p> <p>Right to be respected</p> <p>Right to express</p>	<p>New perspectives from different directions we don't usually face.</p> <p>Empathy development through a wordless book</p>
<p><i>La Frontera</i> by Debra Mills and Alfredo Alva (2018)</p> 	<p>Right to have a complete family</p> <p>Right to dream</p> <p>Right not to be a victim</p> <p>Right to be protected by adults</p>	<p>Family separations</p> <p>Arriving in Texas</p> <p>Intertextual connection to <i>Somos Como Los Nubes</i></p>	<p><i>Breadwinner: Graphic Novel</i> by Nora Toramey (2018)</p> 	<p>Right to be respected</p> <p>Right to have family and community</p> <p>Right to be protected by adults</p> <p>Right not to work</p> <p>Right to go to school</p>	<p>Gender and politics</p> <p>Literacy and politics</p> <p>Literacy as power</p> <p>Curiosity about the original novel of <i>Breadwinner</i>.</p>
<p><i>Mustafa</i> by Mary-Louise Gay (2018)</p> 	<p>Right to be respected</p> <p>Right to have a family and a community</p> <p>Right to be protected by adults</p>	<p>Syrian refugee child's adjustments in new land</p> <p>New peer relationship to provide new hope and adjustment</p> <p>Finding a new home</p>	<p><i>Off to Class</i> by Susan Hughes (2011)</p> 	<p>Right not to work</p> <p>Right to go to school</p>	<p>Protecting children's rights to be educated</p> <p>School cultures around the world reflect ecological conditions and lifestyles that support children's education.</p>
			<p><i>Along the Tapajos</i> by Fernando Viela (2019)</p> 	<p>Right not to work</p> <p>Right to go to school</p> <p>Right to have family</p> <p>Right to have a community</p>	<p>School cultures around the world reflect ecological conditions and lifestyles that support children's education.</p> <p>The idea grew to be somewhat negative in the U.S. Tapajo people's seasonal migration story expanded such negative concepts of migration in the U.S. to positive and broad concepts.</p>

Table 2. Shared Books for Monthly Meetings.

### Supporting Teachers' Text Sets

The literacy community members needed a range of supports as they planned their text sets. After they chose their sub-themes related to children's rights, we read different supporting texts that helped us continue discussing children's rights. Some members made changes in their teaching focus as we read more literature on children's rights. I also noticed teachers' early choices of children's rights evolved through theme-driven thinking like a circle—empathy, hope, community, protection, etc (Table 1). Before they finalized their text sets, I introduced international children's literature. Because of the common rhetoric around multicultural children's literature as diverse books or culturally responsive children's texts at their schools, teachers interchangeably used the term multicultural literature with global literature. Introducing specific book awards helped them to recognize different types of children's books beyond culturally responsive and diverse books. One major list was the Outstanding International Books (OIB) by USBBY and the Schneider Family Award by American Library Association (ALA). These two awards helped them to understand the difference between international books and multicultural children's books that are often labeled as diverse books. In addition, the Tucson Festival of Books (TFOB) virtual book festival provided resources to several teachers. They broadened their book repertoires by adding graphic novels, poetry books, and more from TFOB.

Although teachers, in general, are encouraged to use diverse children's books by their schools and school districts, teachers' resources and access to multicultural and global books are not as developed as I thought. OIB recognizes international children's books that were first published outside of the U.S. and then republished in the U.S., and award books by ALA that recognize different kinds of literary excellence and criteria became resources for choosing their text sets of children's rights. For example, Melody found a great book list from the Schneider Family Award that recognizes strong books with representations of children with disabilities and special needs. Her theme was empathy around children with special needs (e.g. autism). Starting with anchor texts and deciding together on monthly picturebooks and *The Breadwinner* graphic novel for our regular meetings seemed to support teachers in reflecting on and planning their teaching. Two other anchor books, *Along the Tapajós* and *Off to Class*, were helpful as we choose more international children's literature while exploring the theme of children's rights.

### **Facing Challenges and Identifying Changes**

Through their vignettes, the members of the Global Literacy Community of the Land of Enchantment share stories of their journeys. This vignette is my story and includes the realization that things didn't go as I expected. First, the text sets were more variable than we thought they would be. Teachers carefully chose their text sets based on our discussions, book readings, and idea exchanges among the members; however, not all books in the set were usable. Chapter books take a long time to be used widely with students and some teachers used several books more than the rest of the text set. Mixing picturebooks with chapter books for all age groups might help teachers use their text sets widely and fully. Mixed formats of picturebooks, chapter books, and graphic novels would be useful for hybrid classes as well as online and in-person teaching. Diana shared parents appreciated the picturebooks on migration and the themes of children's rights, especially because picturebooks are visually powerful.

Second, teachers had different paces with their text set adoptions. School districts and school leadership have certain expectations of teachers' goals. Supporting teachers to be creative by pairing school materials with their text sets was essential. Checking in with teachers who teach different grade levels would help in seeing how they use their text sets. Teachers in different grade levels have different needs and challenges that they deal with. Unless I checked with them, they felt somewhat awkward about not using the entire text set. Allowing for different spaces would be helpful in providing efficient support.

### **Looking Back and Moving Forward**

Teachers may have had doubts when we began our journey about whether it was a good idea to start a literacy community and to make a commitment for an academic year when things were already crazy. It felt hard and uncertain enough with virtual classrooms and online teaching. It was like wearing a mask when it is already hot in summer. These feelings of doubt and uncertainty didn't last long. We enjoyed reading wonderful global and international children's literature with each other. Having our family members, including pets, at home while we were attending a zoom meeting grew normal. Sometimes we had unexpected guests join our meeting on the screen— a cat acting like a kitten, a hugging child, and a barking dog. It isn't always the best situation, but it worked. Sometimes teachers were not feeling well,

yet they were still there over the computer screen. Yes, the pandemic has been hard and challenging; however, strong commitment around an appreciation of books and empowerment by rethinking children's rights through children's literature took us to a land of enchantment in our hearts.

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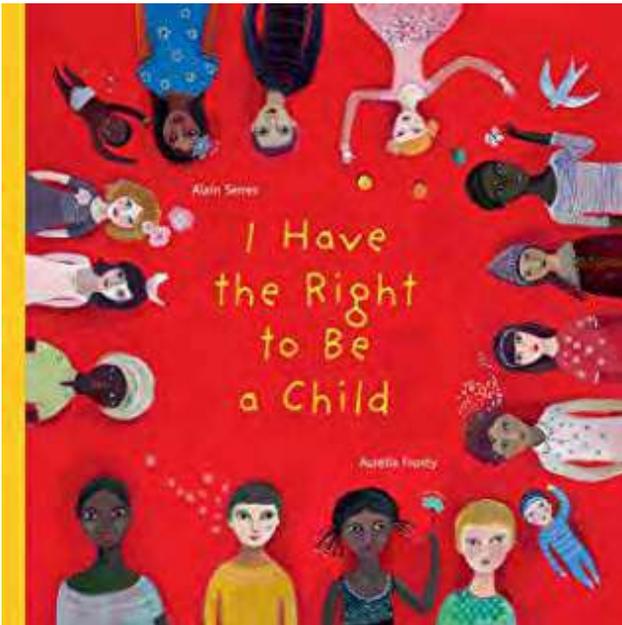
### A Kindergarten Journey: Gaining a Deeper Understanding of Ourselves and Others through Exploring Migration by Diana Botello

In the midst of a pandemic, somehow the devotion to teach still prevailed. The times of handshakes, hugging, and getting together seemed so far away. Rather, it was a time when technology took over our classrooms, playgrounds, and meetings. For a bilingual kindergarten teacher like myself, it seemed close to impossible to imagine learning happening under such conditions. Not only was age a factor for students, but my job to teach two languages got much harder. Teaching students how to read, write, and speak in both English and Spanish is a job I take very seriously. Working as a bilingual teacher at a Title I school I see parents who reflect my own family. Parents who work countless hours at minimum wage jobs, who experience discrimination and racism from not speaking English "the right way." But I also see students whose lack of English has made them insecure and silent. Nonetheless, these parents are the most respectful, caring, and devoted to their children's education than any other parents at the school. That is because they know what a good education can mean for their children. Being an immigrant to the United States has taught me just how valuable education is. Just how valuable being bilingual can be. And like these parents, I am devoted to giving each student the education they deserve. Despite the hard times the world was living.

Even with all the pressure, stress, and anxiety I saw a light at the end of the tunnel. This light came from the smiles of students, smiles which were made possible from the help and support of their parents and grandparents. These family members were the same ones who sat next to them each day as they logged into my class and made sure they ate breakfast, had everything they needed to learn, and were focused in class. With them in mind, I wondered how to incorporate students and their families into my lessons.

Through the help of my literacy group and our discussions regarding the topic of “Children’s Rights,” we were able to pinpoint specific rights which were relevant to students. These rights came from the book *I Have the Right to Be a Child* by Alain Serres (2009). Being in a bilingual classroom, I often have students or guardians who are from different countries. I began to think about a theme that I would carry out through lessons with my class. This sub-theme of children’s rights relates to the Migration theme. The rights I focused on were:

1. Be respected
2. Be protected by adults
3. Express myself completely freely



I took a particular interest in this topic because I am an immigrant to this country. It was important for me that students and their families knew where I came from. The topic of Migration could lead to class discussions about culture, language and most importantly, social justice. In an article, Kathy Short (2009) uses a curriculum framework to support students in their intercultural understanding. “This framework highlights multiple ways of engaging with international literature to support children’s critical explorations of their own cultural identities, ways of living within specific global cultures, the range of cultural perspectives within any unit of study, and complex global issues” (p. 3). Following this same framework and discussing the topic of Migration from multiple books for the rest of the semester helped create a safe environment in my classroom; a safe environment that

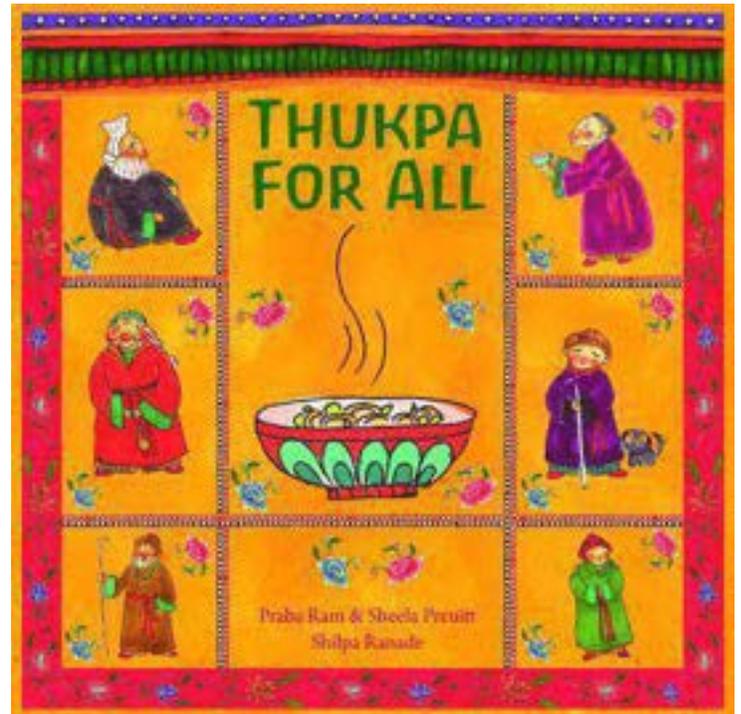
would inspire myself and students’ guardians to tell our own migration stories. Within a few weeks, we were able to have conversations about topics that were crucial to understanding global issues.

### Identity: What makes us happy?

Before starting with the topic of migration, it was important that students learn more about themselves and their classmates. We first read *Thukpa for All* by Praba Ram and Sheela Preuit (2018). After reading, as a class we created a cultural x-ray (Short, 2009) that was an outline of a body to represent the main character. Inside, we drew identity aspects such as: what made him different, what he valued, and what made him happy. Once this was completed, each student made their own cultural x-ray. I simply asked, “What makes you happy?” Kindergarteners said things like:

1. "My mom"
2. "My family"
3. "My sister"
4. "My dog"
5. "My grandma"
6. And on and on

The cultural x-ray was an outline of their bodies to which they added “the values and beliefs that they hold in their hearts” (Short, 2009, p. 4). With their drawings inside their cultural x-rays, I saw the value each drawing had for them. What they drew is what made each of them different and what made them happy. Students then shared their cultural x-rays with the class and spoke with smiles on their faces about what made them who they are. I am a strong believer that when students’ self-identities are valued



and respected by everyone in the classroom, they reciprocate by respecting other people and cultures. “All learners, adults and children, must explore their own cultures before they can understand why culture matters in the lives of others around them” (Short, 2009, p. 3).



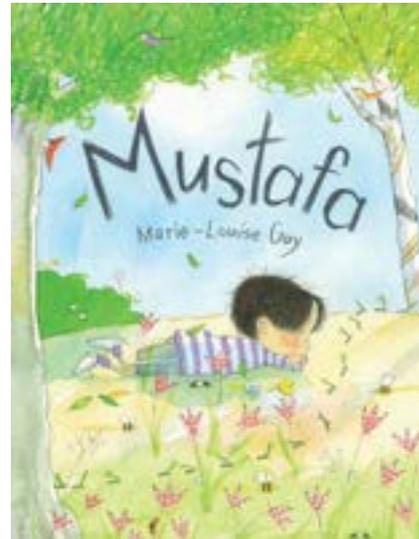
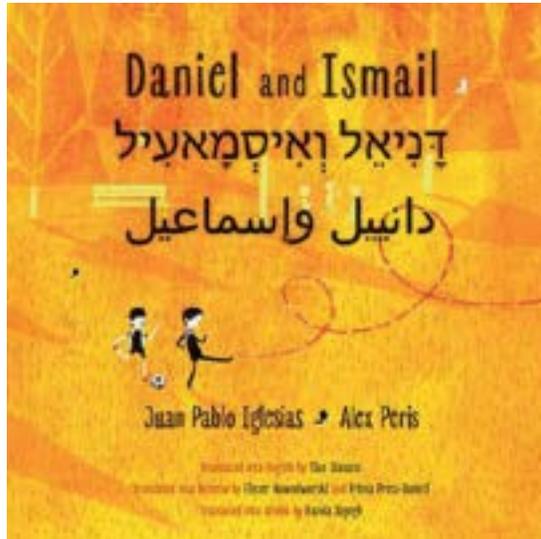
Figure 1. Student’s cultural X-Ray.

Student: Miguel Otero

"What makes me happy is hanging out with my mom. I like when my uncle takes me to the park and when my grandma buys me ice cream."

### Learning about Others: Friendship

In order for students to learn about migration, it was important that they learned that not all kids are exactly like them. “Students come to deeper understandings about their own cultures and perspectives when they encounter alternative possibilities for thinking about the world” (Short, 2009, p. 6). I decided to read aloud picturebooks about children of different cultures and parts of the world. These were *Mustafa* by Marie-Louise Gay (2018) and *Daniel and Ismail* by Juan Pablo Iglesias (2016). By first reading *Mustafa*, students learned that there are kids in the United States that come from different countries. Mustafa’s story also showed them that sometimes people don’t move from one country to another by choice, rather, because of danger. In this story students noticed the different traditions others have as well as how important it is to be friendly.



Friendship played a huge part in our conversation. With this concept fresh in their mind, I read *Daniel and Ismail* and discussed how their friendship happened even with so many differences and people against them. I explained that in friendships there are often differences in religion, ways of dressing, and even ways of thinking. Regardless, when people have shared interests and they are honest and caring towards one another, then friendships can surpass anything.

For this lesson, I asked students to think of a friend that was different from them. The difference could be because they come from another country, they have different beliefs, traditions, ways of dressing, etc. I asked them to draw their friend, explain what they would do if they were together at that moment and what made them different.

Student: Aurora Hernández

"Es mi amiga de México. Ella no vive aquí, pero a veces voy a visitarla. Ella es diferente porque solo habla español."

(This is my friend from Mexico. She doesn't live here but I go visit her sometimes. She is different because she only speaks Spanish.)

With this lesson, students learned that although there are people who come from different parts of the world, they bring something special with them. That can be their language, food

or traditions. In order for students to learn to appreciate this more, I decided to invite a friend of mine to join our virtual meeting. This friend was Nader Magdy from Egypt. He walked the streets of Egypt and showed students the roads along with the stores and different forms of transportation. He even showed us a wedding where we were able to listen to the music, hear his conversations with others and see how they danced and dressed. Students and their families were delighted to have had this experience. "We worked to integrate the stories, languages, lifestyles, and ways of learning from many cultures" (Short, 2009, p. 6)



Figure 2. Student drawing of a friend.

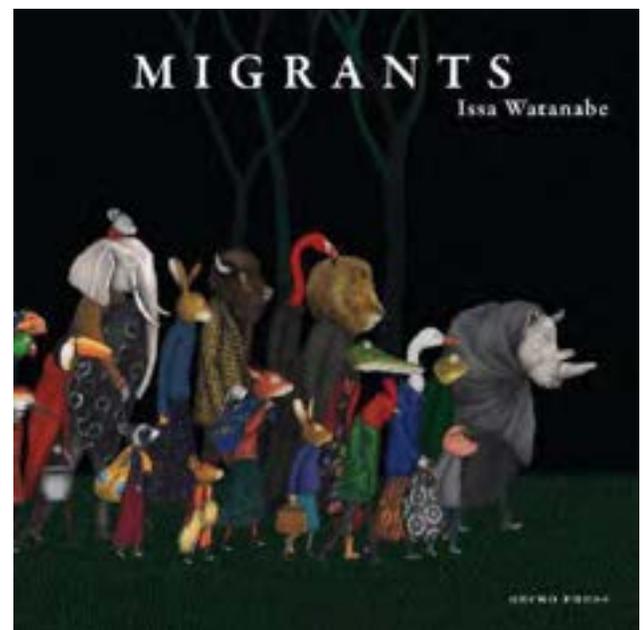


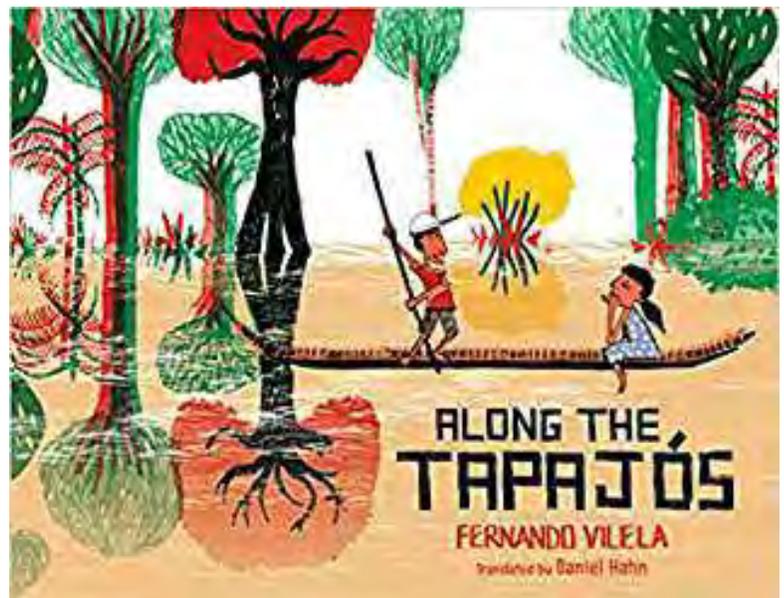
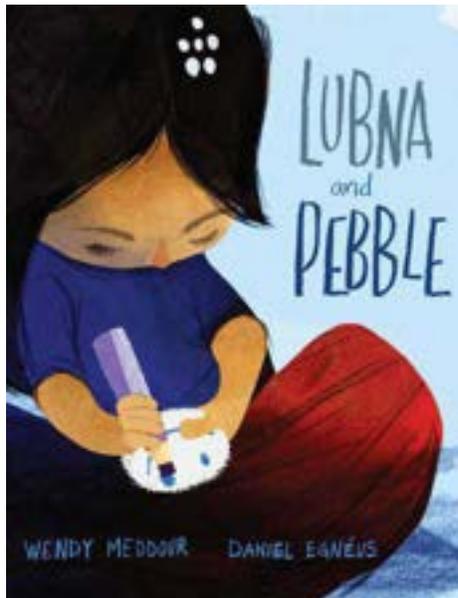
Figure 3. Pictures from Egypt.

To go with the theme of migration, I chose these three books from the Outstanding International Books from USBBY. An international book is “used to describe a book published or distributed in the United States that originated or was first published in a country other than the U.S.” (USBBY). I wanted to give students an understanding of different lifestyles and situations that led people to move and so chose *Along the Tapajós* by Fernando Vilela (2015). I also chose *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour (2019) to incorporate an understanding that moving can involve seeking refuge from danger and how it is important to be in a safe place. In these two books, students saw yet again the importance of being protected by adults. After reading and discussing these books, I decided to tell them my own migration story. Sharing that I came to the United States at only 8 years old and walked through a desert impressed them. They had so many questions such as:

- "Why did you have to walk through a desert?"
- "Were you scared?"
- "Why did you have to hide"

All of their questions had answers and as an educator, I was happy that they showed so much interest. Most importantly, I wanted the families to feel that our class meetings were safe environments. Creating this atmosphere allowed some mothers and one grandmother to share where they were from and how they came to the United States. When they shared, I saw the amazement in their child’s eyes because they had not heard that story. Their stories of migration from Mexico and Algeria to the United States were fascinating.





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After this discussion, I read *Migrants* by Issa Watanabe (2020). I chose this book because it connected with not only my own migration story but also that of some parents. This wordless picturebook shows the reality that migrants go through. From the things they take with them to the dangers in their journey. We analyzed the different characters in the book and students noticed how a skeleton always follows the travelers in this book. One student said "that means that someone is going to die." Although many noticed the skeleton, only one student was able to see the inference. This comment led us to discuss why these forms of migration are dangerous. Also, why people risk their lives to get to a better or safer place. They also saw what the travelers took with them in their journey, such as clothes, blankets and food. We talked about the needs and wants of migrants, such as only taking what was necessary with them.

For this activity, I asked students to think of reasons why migrants are good to this country. They were to draw and write "Migrants are \_\_"

Aislynn Anaya wrote "Migrants are frendi."

When I asked her to explain her drawing, she said "Migrants need a backpack where they can put all their things. They also need money. They are friendly."



### Right to Be Protected by Adults

Seeing that every student talked about an important adult who made them happy, I saw it as an opportunity to talk about their right to be protected by adults. As a class we discussed how adults can protect them and why they should not be left alone to protect themselves. This was the day we started to talk about their rights. First by reading *I Have the Right to Be a Child* by Alain Serres (2009) and then focusing on certain ones.

### Right to Freely Express Myself

We had a class discussion about another of their rights, which is to freely express themselves. It was

Figure 4. A Student's drawing and sentence about migrants.

important to talk about this right because we discussed topics that they may want to talk more about. I started the conversation by saying:

- "Do you know you have the right to express yourself freely?"
- "What do you think that means to express yourself freely?"
- "Does that mean we break the rules?"
- "In what ways can you express yourself?"

Students were excited to learn that they had the right to express their emotions and feelings. We discussed the various ways they could express themselves like talking, drawing, writing, singing and dancing. I emphasized how important it is to express themselves. I said "When you feel happy, dance and sing! You have the right to express yourself and when you are sad you have to right to be quiet and cry if you need to. No one should take that right away from you."

### Right to be Respected

To finalize our exploration of migration, we discussed a very important right—the right to be respected. I summarized for students everything we had learned about ourselves and different cultures and languages and how there are people from different parts of the world in the United States. I read to them yet again *I Have the Right to be a Child* by Alain Serres (2009) and emphasized this quote: "I have exactly the same right to be respected, whether I am black, white, small or big, rich or poor, born here or somewhere else" (p. 15). Students and their families learned that it is important to be friendly with people who are different from them. They saw the beauty in every culture and language, and they valued their own. Having finished the lessons, the mothers who were present in each virtual meeting thanked me for teaching their children about migration. The international books we read as well as our discussion about children's rights helped engage not only kindergarteners but also their parents. As they explained their favorite part and how their child showed interest in learning more about people

from different parts of the world. “Children’s engagements with literature have the potential to transform their worldviews through understanding their current lives and imagining beyond themselves” (Short, 2009, p. 10).

In a time of social distancing, somehow countries and people came together. Virtually, students and their families joined and learned about the different circumstances that lead to migration. We shared stories, read international books, listened to music in different languages, and explored the streets of Egypt. My fear of not being able to effectively teach in a pandemic became just a memory because the reality was much better. The light at the end of the tunnel were the smiles from my students and their family members who joined each day. Smiles which grew wider as we explored our identities and shared our personal stories. Smiles welcomed everyone regardless of their language, culture, or background. As a class, we created a safe place right from our computer screens, whether that was in our living rooms, kitchen table or day care.

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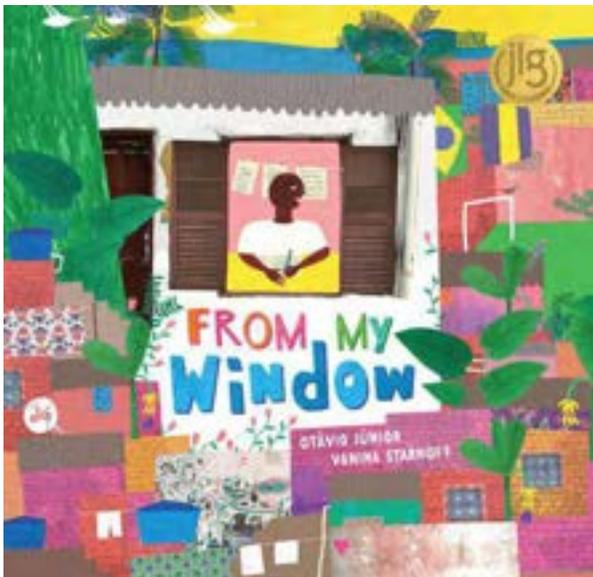
### Reading and Writing about Children’s Rights in a College Writing Class by Amber Gordon

I teach a two-semester writing course at a Hispanic-Serving Institution community college located in Northern New Mexico. My students are adult learners who come to the institution with a wealth of knowledge and life experience but who are considered to be writers who are not quite ready for college level writing. Thus, students need an extra semester to hone their skills prior to entering into what is considered college level writing. I am fortunate to have an entire academic year with them as we practice writing skills the first semester and then, in the second semester, complete the first college level writing course.

During the spring of 2021, while teaching in an asynchronous online classroom environment, I decided to support students with writing prompts related to children’s rights and designed reading discussions around specific texts to help them grow their ideas and spark their curiosity to research this important topic. We read *I Have the Right to Be a Child* (Serres, 2012), *Along the Tapajós* (Vilela, 2019), *From My Window* (Junior, 2020), *Mexique: A Refugee Story from the Spanish Civil War* (Ferrada, 2020), and *The Lady with the Books: A Story Inspired by the Remarkable Work of Jella Lepman* (Stinson, 2020). After reading each of these texts we had discussions where students could together explore the meanings of these books. I supported our reading discussions with resources related to the real-world context of the texts. For example, while reading *Along the Tapajós* (Vilela, 2019) and *From My Window* (Junior, 2020) we studied the contrast between living along the Amazon and living in a favela in Brazil. In addition to discussing the texts, students also explored what land development, lack of infrastructure, and children’s rights mean in these locations.

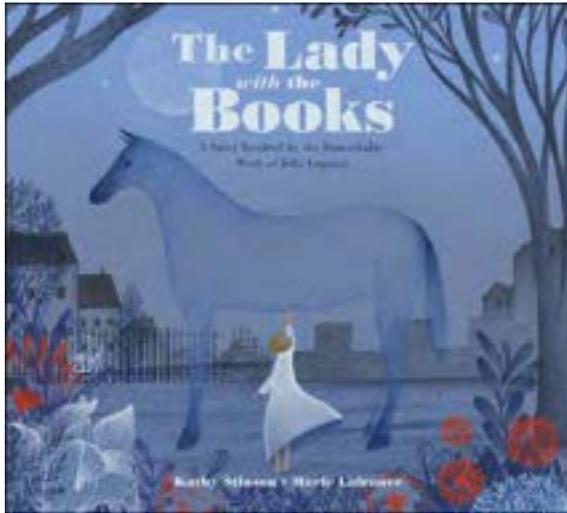
We began the semester with *I Have the Right to Be a Child* (Serres, 2012) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (n.d.). These paired texts allowed students to understand that children’s rights are important and need to be intentionally included in our lives as caring human beings. One student said that they enjoyed both texts and “believe strongly that children need to have their rights protected.” Most students reported that they did not know such a convention existed and they were happy to discover it. They discussed the need to empower the children in their lives and to help all children have their basic needs met, viewing this issue as a global priority where they could take action by respecting the views of children around them and making sure that children have space to play and explore their imaginations. Students also challenged these texts, bringing forward their personal stories of inequity in school settings, abuse they have seen in foster care homes, and poverty levels that impact a child’s access to food and clothing.

I found their discussions to be deep and emotionally reflective. I had been worried that students would be exhausted by the stresses of living through the worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19. Instead, students found vigor in this topic and were eager to learn more and to discover the stories contained in our selected texts.



As we moved forward in the semester, I discovered that students were particularly interested in the places that children live in the world. For a week we explored *Along the Tapajós* (Vilela, 2019) and *From My Window* (Junior, 2020). We watched videos on Amazonian basin land rights and life in a favela during COVID-19. We examined maps of these locations and tried to compare them to our river basins and cityscapes. Students enjoyed the artwork of each book. They commented frequently on the use of water and migration as not only a beautiful illustration but also as a way of life that they took as unfamiliar. They felt that Junior’s (2020) book made them feel happy, but they also felt the conflict of a story where a child looked out from a window thinking about and wanting to play.

One student appreciated seeing a book (Vilela, 2019), where a “culture with natural nomadic practices in direct relativity to their environment was represented.” The student was “surprised because they have not observed any modern-day nomadic lifestyles” and admired how the people represented were so “consciously connected to the cyclical climate changes” while understanding that these customs had been “developed over many years and are at risk of being destroyed.” Students also discussed the level of responsibility the characters had in *Along the Tapajós* (Vilela, 2019) that resulted in risking their lives to save what they loved. This text brought several of them to tears as they considered the perceived realities that some children live. One of my favorite student responses was how “along this riverbed they live a simply yet happy life but it’s because they have a different way of thinking.”



Students were also interested in exploring historic moments where children’s rights were impacted. They wanted to connect these events to current events in order to see how, or if, things had changed over time. We spent a week reading and writing about *Mexique: A Refugee Story from the Spanish Civil War* (Ferrada, 2020) and *The Lady with the Books: A Story Inspired by the Remarkable Work of Jella Lepman* (Stinson, 2020). Students described these texts as advocating for the recognition of how children are impacted by living in war zones. One student said “*Mexique* touches me. Just reading this text reminded me so much of what is going on for our border families.” Another added “it’s like the story keeps rewriting itself.” They were saddened by the way children continue to experience war and separation from their families and felt that both books represented a way for readers to understand how communities can be impacted by war.

While reading *The Lady with the Books: A Story Inspired by the Remarkable Work of Jella Lepman* (Stinson, 2020), students felt comfort, joy, and love. They remarked that the historical representation of Jella Lepman, founder of the International Board on Books for Young People, was culturally inclusive and nonjudgmental. They felt that this impacted them positively as readers because they could see the critical importance of reading books by authors from other cultures and countries. One said, “I think educational rights were being advocated for in this book and I would recommend this book to readers because it is a book that brought me hope and a little light around the topic of World War II.” Another commented that they really liked this story because it was about “two siblings surviving in a world where they had badly broken their rights and one person made a great impact on them.”

During the semester I found that students connected to themes of environmental protection, as well as the right to play and be educated in a culturally relevant way. Some students expressed that they related to certain texts because they had similar life experiences and were compassionate as they learned about the violations of children’s rights that occur globally in both historical and current contexts. Their essay writing for the course reflected the ways that their independent investigations into children’s rights inspired them to advocate, change, and educate others about this important topic. Students made space in their essay responses to bring in their personal experiences and the experiences of their family members. Additionally, I requested that their family members become part of their peer review group

so that they could share these texts and thoughts with whomever they had around them while they were writing. This sharing made their exploration richer and more important to their learning. Based on their reading discussions and essay writing, I know these students have discovered a love and critical need for children’s literature which matters because a book can share so much.

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### “It Doesn’t Fit in the Box’: Bridging Acceptance and Children’s Rights with the Community through Global and International Children’s Literature by Melody Magor-Begay

My situation was unique in that I was not limited to one classroom or school setting. The make-up of my population consisted of the Four Corners region in the southwestern corner of Colorado, southeastern corner of Utah, northeastern corner of Arizona, and northwestern corner of New Mexico, which belongs to several Indigenous tribal nations, the largest of which is the Navajo Nation. As an advocate of those families and having two children myself with autism spectrum disorder, my goal and focus was and continues to be a promotor of awareness and acceptance of those with special needs in our surrounding community.

### Incorporating Children’s Rights

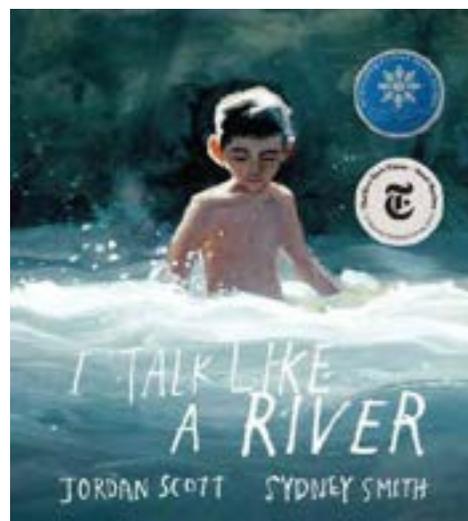
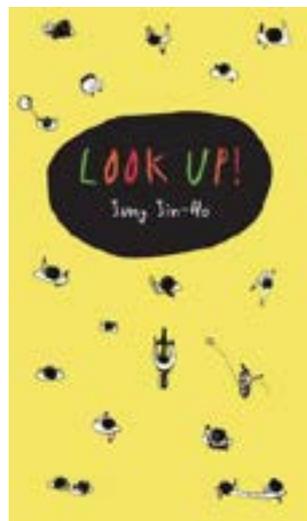
Since the focus of our Land of Enchantment Global Literacy group’s vision of literature was based on children’s rights; we began our global literature journey with *I Have the Right to Be a Child* (Serres, 2012) in which the rights presented by the United Nations Convention of Rights of Every Child are presented beautifully. This book was our guide and our foundation, from which each member of our Global Literacy group was then able to connect with their own lesson plans and chosen text sets. We each selected two to three children’s rights to give focus to our selected text sets. The rights I selected consisted of: rights to be respected, rights to have family and community, and rights to be protected by adults; with the underlying theme of empathy and inclusion (especially in the area of autism). Each month our group met via Zoom and allowed our own branches of discovery to connect and grow even further as we found many of our experiences and resources overlapped, binding our work together.

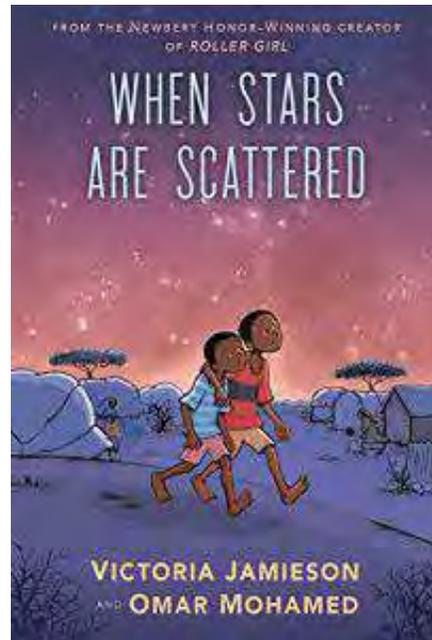
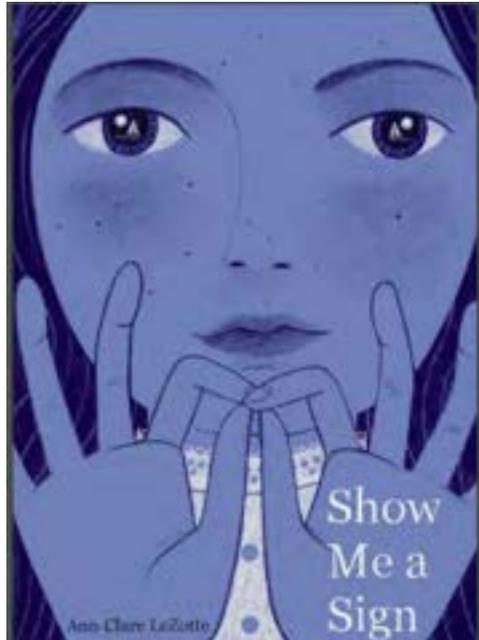
With these goals and children’s rights in mind, I considered how I could implement my selected text sets. The population I was dedicated to work with did not consist of one school and one group, but many community areas. These included the administrators of the Four Corners’ Families with Autism Support Group, a member of the Farmington Municipal School Equity Council, a board member of our local chapter of Equine Therapeutic Riding Remedy Reigns, and an active member of our community through connection to resources in our area from the school districts and City Management of Special Needs programs, such as the All-Abilities Park and Special Olympics.

My goal was not only to create a text set to use in isolated lessons or with one group of students, but one that could be utilized by the community and its members. This is how the underlying theme of empathy across all cultures emerged. Having an intercultural vision of the world around us starts with ourselves. Short (2009) points out we need to “explore our own culture before we can understand that culture matters in the lives of others” (p. 3). Empathy plays a key role in understanding not only our students but ourselves through books as “bridges of understanding to unite children of all countries” (p. 1). Educators are leery of reaching beyond the boundaries of their comfort zones to the unfamiliar, and this is where many students are lost between the cracks—due to a lack of initiative or fear to make connections that are vital. Short states that “when student recognize the cultures that influence their thinking...they no longer see culture as about the ‘other’ but recognize that it is at the heart of defining who they are as human beings” (p. 4). Students need to experience their value authentically, not in an “exotic” manner, but in its true, raw and purest form. Intercultural literature needs to become a living and breathing natural component of our teaching and not a foreign concept presented as another data collection point. What we value becomes a part of us and is a human right that belongs to our students.

### Creating My Text Sets

My selected text set grew out of searching through many international book lists, including the Outstanding International Book List from the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) to find books, including *Look Up!* by Jung Jin-Ho (several copies so I could do book groups as well), *I Talk Like A River* (Scott, 2020), *Show Me a Sign* (LeZotte, 2020), and *When Stars Are Scattered* (Jamieson, 2020).





When beginning my journey with my two children who have autism, I looked high and low for resources that would bring support to a new world I knew very little about. I spent countless hours searching on the Internet, trying to reach out to different agencies, and had many moments that I felt I had truly failed my children. The greatest resource I found was that of people and the discovery of resources through their knowledge. The greatest piece of knowledge and resource I ever received and was reminded of through the process of the Global Literacy Community was a quote my children's teacher shared with me. Her son was also on the Autism Spectrum and as he became older, he decided that in order to make sense of the world around him, he would look at it as a box that sometimes was not able to hold everything. As he stated to her, and she gave me permission to share his words: "It doesn't fit in the box, and that's ok." I feel as if this perspective is what has not only guided much of my life but could be shared through more than just pamphlets and websites. This connection comes from literature, and especially from Global Literature, which allows us to connect and empathize with those on a similar journey through connecting and binding emotions and prejudices that are not isolated but globally experienced.

### **A Driving Force and Making Connections**

*Look Up!* became a driving force and the binding for my text set and planning. This powerful text consists of a few words and simple black and white illustrations. The book begins with a child in a wheelchair looking down on a busy city from a high building. All this child can see is an aerial perspective of life below, such as the tops of trees and people's heads as they attend to their busy lives below. In an attempt to connect with a world this child longs to be a part of, the child shouts down with a request of "Look Up!"—a request unheard and unacknowledged by the narrow vision and perspective of those below. Finally, one person stops and takes the time to look up. Because one person acknowledges this child who so badly wants to connect to the world, others take notice and look up. As each person looks up, a chain reaction occurs and soon there is an entire community of individuals laying on the sidewalk looking up to find a way to connect their lives with this child from an "out of the box" perspective.

This book spoke to me in so many ways; both coming from similar experiences with my own children and as an educator who, after living an autism life and entering the community of special needs because of this life, had seen firsthand how ostracized and forgotten those with disabilities become. Jung Jin-Ho found a way to create an allegory or metaphor through *Look Up!* that encompassed the heart and soul of every human's right to matter—rights of awareness and acceptance that many times are not considered or valued, creating a forgotten or invisible people.

With this immense beginning, I branched out looking for similar books with underlying themes of empathy awareness in global literature.

Titles such as *I Talk Like a River* and *When Stars Are Scattered* were added because they too showed the power of empathy across all abilities and cultures. *I Talk Like a River*, a beautifully illustrated text by Sydney Smith and written by Jordan Scott, is from the perspective of a young boy who stutters. He feels very isolated from the world around him and that he is constantly judged about how he sounds when he speaks; so, he feels it is better to stay silent and not even try to connect with the outside world. His only comfort is the river, where he feels he can be himself and can speak freely. This book spoke to my heart, coming from seeing both my own non-verbal children try to communicate with those around them only to be shut down as a result of misunderstanding and fear; empathized so eloquently in Scott's words, "All they hear is how I don't talk like them. All they see is how strange my face looks and that I can't hide how scared I am." All three of my chosen rights were encompassed and woven throughout this text, especially the rights to be respected and protected by adults.

The young boy's father tells him that he speaks like the river, proud as it bubbles, whirls, churns and crashes, glistening into smooth and beautiful water. I thought of my son who is not able to greet people in what is considered a normal way or tell me he loves me using traditional words; but uses alphabet letters and chalk to write his feelings and emotions. We are so wrapped up as a community and society in what we think the perspective of normal should look and sound like. When we are faced with unique and "it doesn't fit in the box" situations, we have a difficult time wrapping our minds around the unique and react defensively by ignoring or shunning the situation or person. I have found this concept to be global, in some cultures more pronounced than others, but still omnipresent.

### **Developing Global Empathy**

A book that was shared in one of our meetings became another foundational book for my work. *When Stars Are Scattered* illustrated by Victoria Jamieson and written by Omar Mohamed (2020) is a graphic novel that allows a unique opportunity for the reader to enter the true story and life events of Omar and his younger brother Hassan living an uncertain life in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Omar's brother Hassan is nonverbal and considered odd and unintelligent by other community members; a story that is familiar to many living a nonverbal life. Omar finds himself in an internal battle with himself when he has to make the difficult decision to leave his brother behind in order to attend school. Omar's character encompassed the plea and inner struggle of so many caregivers and siblings of those with special needs—"I'm so tired I can't do this!" He not only is expected to complete

expectations for daily life and survival, but also must protect and care for his only remaining family member, his brother who is lost without him. This feeling of being stretched so thin and also having to contend with the stigma and prejudices of others is felt unanimously globally.

The guilt that accompanies trying to protect and bring about acceptance is a feeling that has no borders or boundaries. The rejection of Hassan as unworthy is a human reaction and infringes on the right to be respected, a right all should be given. Throughout the book I empathized greatly with Omar's constant struggle of trying to open the world's eyes to Hassan's abilities and misunderstood uniqueness; a daily battle that myself and so many others face who care for loved ones with special needs. This story also opened my eyes to "acceptance" itself as a global perspective that needs to be enlightened. Coming to this realization became the catalyst of how vital global literature is in bringing about awareness, acceptance, and change.

I had been asked by several schools to share an interactive lesson that would allow students, teachers, parents and community members to participate in an empathetic lesson on experiencing the world or seeing for a moment through the eyes of someone with autism. I had designed a lesson based on the knowledge of my own life with both my children having autism and from interacting and connecting with many other families and caregivers of those with special needs; a community I had not fully realized existed before. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, I was not able to share my lesson with an extended group; however, I was able to share and work with my daughter's fourth grade class, which consisted of twenty-two students, her teacher and the principal of her school. Previously to my daughter's attendance, her school had never had someone with autism enroll, therefore many biases and stigmas had to be broken, which allowed the door to open to other students with special needs. With this realization, my lesson was centered around *Look Up!*, hoping for a similar chain reaction.

### **Walking In My Shoes and Seeing Through My Eyes**

My intention was that my lesson could be adapted or modified to meet the needs of others and could also pertain to other special need's groups, not solely those with autism. I began my lesson with a reading of *Look Up!*. The students also had copies of the book in hand so they would be able to see the powerful pictures close up. Even though this book is a nearly wordless, it does possess and elicit in readers a great longing to connect to this child calling out and trying to communicate. The child in the wheelchair, unable to get down from the building, earnestly requesting that somebody please take the time to "look up" so the child can see their faces and not just the tops of their heads. This birds-eye perspective was familiar to students and they seemed to empathize with this child's need to connect. I had to pause on almost every page because I could see students scanning each picture and then immediately sharing what they had discovered—"I see the tops of umbrellas...I see trees... there is like a sea of heads." One student blurted out, with evident frustration for the child in the book, "Why don't they look up?" All the students seemed quite relieved when one person finally took the time to look up.

As a chain reaction occurred in the book and more and more people noticed and joined to look up at the child looking down, I asked students what was happening. They noticed the chain reaction that occurred and at the end of the book commented on the large smile that was illustrated on the girl's face because so many took the time to acknowledge her. They also commented that the only color in the illustrations was at the end after everyone looked up. We continued with an extended conversation and sharing time about the importance of awareness and acceptance and what those two words mean in our lives. We talked about what "the right to be respected" means. Ethan firmly shared that the child looking down had not been respected until "one person stopped and showed the others they needed to stop." It was "a magical moment."

The next part of the lesson took this feeling of empathy a step further, as students were given a chance to participate in an empathetic hands-on experience. Each student was given a bag of mixed-up objects including a disassembled puzzle. Their task was to dump the bag out and sort the items into like groups and to assemble the puzzle. The stipulation was that they only had one minute to complete their task. I set a visual timer so they could keep track of their time. As I started the time you could hear the buzz of each group trying to instruct each other on how to complete the task; some groups assigned unofficial jobs of who should sort what and who should put the puzzle together. Some of the students sat silently, letting others take the lead while others had already given up. The teacher circled the classroom as I did and the principal joined in for observation. The timer went off quickly and there was an overall sigh of frustration and disappointment that time had run out, "We didn't have enough time! Can we have more time?"

I explained that in many cases this is how those with autism feel, they are set a task and because they need to sort and categorize first in their mind, the actual focus of the task becomes impossible. I used the example of their math lessons, that before a person with autism may be able to complete the problems, they have to separate first the subject, then how many problems, the types of problems, where their pencil is, their paper, etc. before they can even consider beginning the actual task. This takes time and before they have even begun, they are expected to be finished. This was eye-opening not only for the students but also for the teacher and principal.

The final part of my lesson involved giving each of the five groups a blank white poster with a selection from Look Up! placed in the middle and a box of markers. Each student was also given five post-it notes. They were to look at the picture or part of the book they had in the middle of their poster and to write either a thought, a quote they liked from the book, words inspired from our reading or previous activity, or illustrate their feelings. After they completed their post-it, they were to attach it to the poster in front of them. When all the groups were completed, the students were then instructed to move to the next group's poster and comment on one of their classmate's post-its either with a quote, comment, extension, or illustration. I had started the activity with a reminder that they were not to be hurtful or negative, only supportive to their classmates in their comments and illustrations. This process continued until every group had visited their classmates' posters and each student had a chance to comment on five other's post-its. (See "Sticky Thought" Activity Poster).

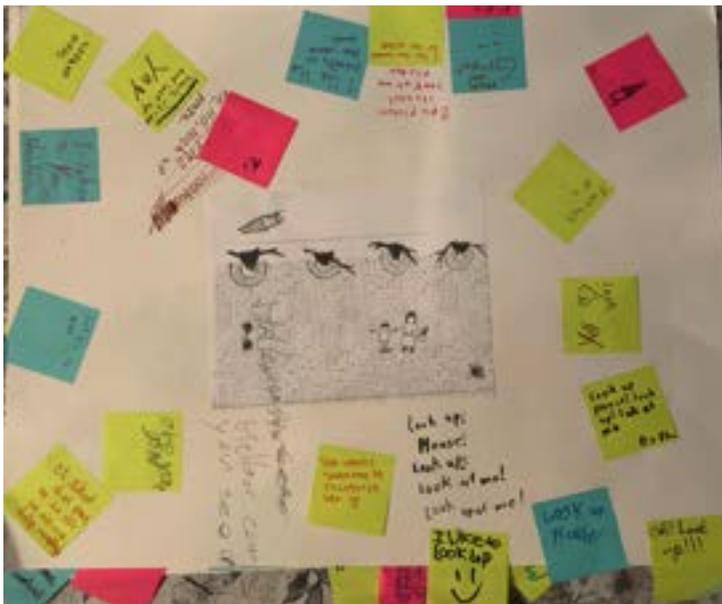


Figure 1. Sticky Thought Posters.



In the conclusion of the lesson, we had a brief discussion about what students had read and commented on and a time for questions. Alexa asked me if they were autistic because they were deaf in their left ear and we were able to share with one another the difficulties this student had throughout the day as well in completing tasks. Two boys shared that they had Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and they too felt they had to take the time to sort and “group in their minds” before they could finish a task. As a parting gift to the teacher and the class I left a text set, including several books I thought would be beneficial to their library, such as *I Have the Right to Be a Child*, *I Talk Like a River*, and several copies of *Look Up!*.

### **My Eyes Have Been Truly Opened**

Throughout the process of our Global Literacy Community, my eyes have truly been opened to the rich resources that are available if only one digs a bit deeper. In nature we tend to grasp at what is at surface level, right in front of us, “at face value” and forget that beneath the surface are the greatest treasures. I feel our Global Community resembles this process in many ways. I have found I am a surface grabber and need to dig deeper to see all the treasure. As we met each month and shared with one another, I felt I was gathering treasure for a resource treasure box. Each person shared their beautiful books and I found myself adding to my collection of global literature weekly.

One particular book that was shared by one of my cohort colleagues was *When Stars Are Scattered*. I was fortunate to participate in the Tucson Festival of Books in which the author Omar Mohamed and illustrator Victoria Jamieson shared the essence of their book and Omar’s project of Refugee Strong for which he organizes volunteer trips to Dadaab almost every year. He takes books, pencils and lamps for students purchased with funds raised throughout the year. I want to reach out to Omar through his website [www.refugeestrong.org](http://www.refugeestrong.org) to see if our local autism support group and the San Juan Autism Society could also be a support for those with special needs through his program. I am hoping we can explore a way to take action in supporting refugee education in Kenya through our community members.

As part of my selected text set, I also requested several copies of the book *Look Up!* so I could share this book physically with others, although it is available on EPIC digital library, I wanted it accessible without a subscription to community members involved in the Four Corners Families with Autism support group and those on the Equity council for our local school districts. Galadriel, a mother from Four Corners Families, shared a beautiful experience after reading *Look Up!*. Her son, who has autism, had joined a local baseball team and when it was his turn to be up to bat, he would not swing until he had completed writing the alphabet in the dirt with his bat. Instead of the other players and families becoming impatient or upset with her son’s batting process, they said the letters with him and cheered him on with each swing.

I placed several copies of *Look Up!* in the Farmington, New Mexico resource room provided by Farmington Municipal Schools in their main building, as well as copies of other books shared in our Global Literacy Community. This also included the shared books *Off to Class: Incredible and Unusual Schools Around the World* (Hughes, 2011) and *Along the Tapajós* (Vilela, 2019); books both depicting

the essence of the right to be respected and the right to family and community—to me they are interconnected. Having two autistic children, my life is very unconventional as are many of the families mentioned in both books. The outside world does not always understand or have empathy for my family, and I find myself working harder and harder to bring insight. My children have the right to live life to its fullest just as the families throughout the stories in these books. Through my experiences, my heart and eyes have had to open and I wish they had been illuminated before. Through beautiful works such as these and more and more exposure and sharing of such beauty, I feel the world is well on its way to opening up and allowing these rights to infiltrate and burn brightly. “One size does not fit all.” Being who we are as unique human beings who come from unique situations, having the right to be respected may have to come in different forms.

My journey does not end here as there are still so many avenues and connections I intend to make stemming from our Global Literacy Community. Being able to collaborate with colleagues and build a text set that is beneficial in connecting to empathy and in promoting empathy awareness has ignited so much more. From sharing on our Padlet after each meeting, reflecting on each other’s posts and coming together each month to collaborate further through the sharing of our discovered books and corresponding lessons, I see an entirely new chapter of bringing about awareness and acceptance in our educational and extending communities. My future aspirations include the creation of a book group to share the global titles mentioned in this vignette and newly discovered books as well. I would also like to continue to share and put global literature in the hands of our community, such as the Four Corners Families with Autism. I was able to share *Look Up!* through EPIC in one of our monthly support meetings via Zoom during COVID-19 and it sparked many rich conversations about how awareness and acceptance need to grow in our communities. It was exciting to have a colleague from our Global Literacy Community join us and share that they would also share about our support group with their own community.

Progress has to be accomplished with small steps and empathy makes for a stronger community. In all the books we shared and discovered, these seem to be common themes. Fathoming the unconventional or unknown is imperative for empathy and knowledge to grow, and both are the catalyst and are essential for a stronger community. By reaching out as a member of the Equity Council, participating on boards of All-Abilities initiatives such as our community’s All-Abilities Park and the local chapter of the Remedy Reigns Therapeutic Horsemanship Program and contributing resources such as these rich text sets of global literature, I feel progress can be made. The next steps will be to attempt to connect with Omar Mohamed through his book, reaching out hopefully to other special needs communities, co-host a webinar and family program with The University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability, and share many of these resources at a Light-it-up Blue event with our community. My goal is to build awareness and acceptance for our special needs community to show that “It doesn’t have to fit in a box...and that is ok.”

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Diana Botello is a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Susie Rayos Marmon Elementary. She completed her Masters in Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies with a concentration in Bilingual Education in December 2021.

Amber Gordon is an Adjunct Writing Instructor and the Training & Development Specialist in the Center for Academic Success and Achievement at the University of New Mexico – Taos.

Melody Magor-Begay was a third and fourth Grade teacher at Kirtland Elementary and is the Administrator of the Four Corners' Families with Autism Support Group and member of the Equity Council of Farmington Municipal Schools. She completed her Masters of Arts in Elementary Education focusing her final Capstone Project on Living the Questions of Autism: Equine-Assisted Therapy and Empathy.

Yoo Kyung Sung is Associate Professor in The College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



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## Increasing Global Literature in the Library

Elizabeth Farris and the Startown Global Literacy Community

The community of Startown is a suburb of Newton, North Carolina. Startown Elementary serves a student population of approximately 550 students preschool through sixth grade. Seventy percent of students are white, 10% are Asian American, 8% are Latinx, 7% are African American, and 5% are two or more races (Great Schools.org). Based on the number of eligible families for free or reduced lunch, 49% of Startown families are low-income (Startown Elementary, 2018). Despite this level of low-income households, the school has a 1:1 ratio of Chromebooks for students.

For this grant, the group's initial goals were to purchase and promote global books for the library and to create a schoolwide celebration of cultures. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we changed the latter goal to instead commission a global mural in our school. Our goal to commission this mural has also been put on hold due to COVID restrictions with outside visitors in the building, as well as difficulty in getting a muralist to complete the work. Because of these setbacks, our goal of promoting global literature became the primary focus of the group.

Our study group was already a committee, the Global Committee, designed to lead our school through global modules in conjunction with Participate Learning. Participate Learning partners with K-12 schools to implement global education, as well as to help hire ambassador teachers from other countries to teach through dual language immersion. The additional focus of global literacy worked seamlessly into our meetings, which were scheduled for each month. We did not always meet monthly due to the unique circumstances of our hybrid school year, but our group worked together through emails and quick chats in the halls as time allowed when physical meetings were not possible.

When we met, we brainstormed suggestions for books to purchase for the library. Members collected suggestions from colleagues and book lists. We created a shared document to curate a list of books to be purchased. Once the books were purchased and processed by the media coordinator and Global Committee Chair, Mrs. Farris, we worked on ways to encourage our colleagues to incorporate global competencies and global literature within their lessons.

One of the best study group meetings was our last one of the year, when we reflected on what we had gone through as a staff, whether we had reached our goals, and what we wanted to do moving forward.

### Global Literature

Mrs. Farris created "Global Book Unboxing" videos to generate excitement for the grant purchases. Books were discussed in three segments—books written in Spanish, paperback books intended for teacher use, and global books for everyone. We shared these videos with teachers and students through our Learning Management System. This allowed students to preview the new books and place the books on hold for checkout since they were unable to physically visit the library at the time. [Link to Global Unboxing Samples.](#)

Once students were able to visit the library again, the books were highlighted once more through book displays.



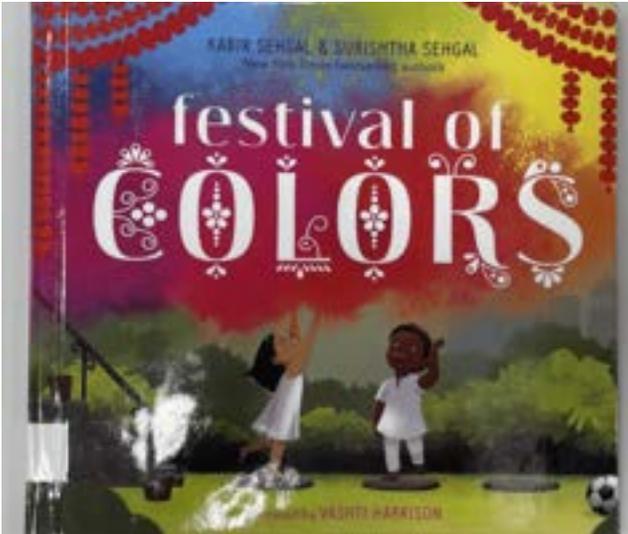
Figure 1. New Global Picture Books.

Paperback books were purchased for teacher use and shared through the Unboxing videos as well.



Figure 2. Paperbacks for teacher use.

Mrs. Setliff, a kindergarten teacher and Global Committee member, as well as Ms. Whitehouse, a sixth-grade teacher and Global Committee member, read the picturebook *Festival of Colors* by Surishtha and Kabir Seghal (2018) about Holi, the Indian Festival of Colors, with their students. Mrs. Butterfield, the school's music teacher and Global Committee member, incorporated a discussion of Holi into her lessons for kindergarten through sixth grade when teaching about musical instruments of the world. She stated that she realized her lessons were mostly centered around Europe and through our study group discussions became mindful to include the whole globe when teaching students about music.



Mrs. Butterfield also noted that through teaching about Holi, the kindergarteners enjoyed the vibrant colors, and a first-grade student whose family is from India was very excited to learn about Holi in music class. Seeing himself represented in this way was noticeably affirming. Students made connections between the original story of Holi and the Christian story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Sharing a short picturebook with older students helped bring their class discussions of ancient civilizations to modern day.

Figure 3. Festival of Colors.

Mrs. Setliff shared with the committee the importance of “teaching the teachers first” in order for global understanding to truly take root with students. She did not know about the Holi festival prior to selecting *Festival of Colors* to read with students, and she found the author notes in the book to be informative for her prior to sharing the story. Setliff also noted how she continues to read books to students about Chinese/Lunar New Year because she had a student from China the previous year. Getting to know a child from another country strengthened her appreciation for other cultures and the importance of teaching her students to do the same.

Several teachers met virtually after school one afternoon with author Nancy Johnson James and illustrator Constance Moore to discuss their picturebook, *Brown: The Many Shades of Love* (2020). This opportunity led to great discussions about the portrayal of the color brown in children’s literature and all human skin as a shade of brown. Teachers brainstormed different ways in which to use the book with students, noting the versatility of the book for all ages. Constance Moore led the group through a sample lesson that involved tracing and coloring our hands and writing a poem using the sentence starters “My brown is” and “My beautiful shade of love is.” The participating teachers discussed how they had never truly taken the time to notice their own skin prior to the activity.

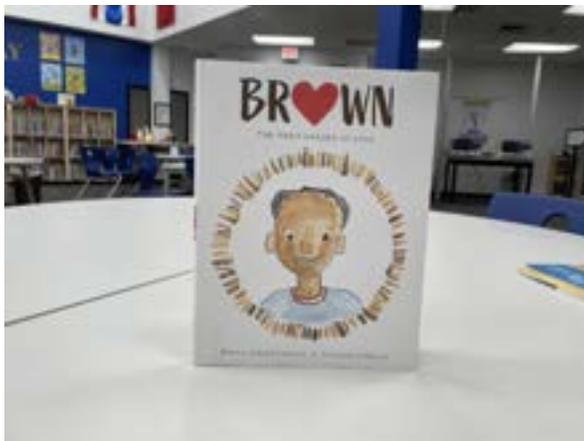


Figure 4. *Brown: The Many Shades of Love*.

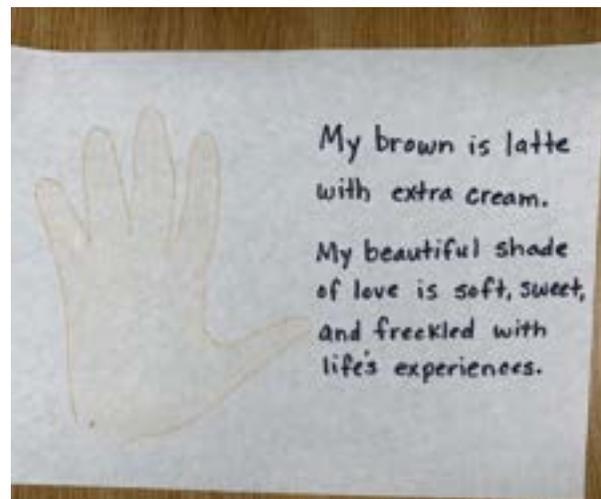


Figure 5. Poem written by teacher during author/illustrator virtual meet for *Brown: The Many Shades of Love*.

## Global Experiences

Mrs. Finney, a Global Committee member who was teaching a virtual first grade class, had three students from other countries. This has helped shape her lessons to be more mindful of approaching lessons with a global lens. The school had a “Dress from Your Culture” day, and her three students dressed up for their online meet. One student even made a video of herself wearing traditional Hmong clothing and spoke in Hmong to her classmates.

Even though our original goals had to change, the group still wanted to plan a schoolwide celebration of different cultures. We planned and implemented a schoolwide “Christmas Around the World” contest in which grade levels studied Christmas traditions from other countries. The rules were kept to a minimum to allow teachers the flexibility to cater the contest to their students’ needs. Teachers could also choose to work independently or as a grade level, and they were given the freedom to choose the area of focus for their students. Everyone chose to work together as a grade level, with second and third grade working together to focus on Central and South America. Second grade painted a permanent “mini mural” of Central America, which has inspired our study group to encourage each grade level to create mini murals of geographical areas in the future.



Figure 6. Mural of Central America.

Fourth grade took the opportunity to learn more about a new student whose family is from Egypt. His family used video to present their Christmas traditions, shared family artifacts, and taught the whole grade level how to sing a song in Arabic.

The winning grade level's reward was to get to watch *Landfill Harmonic: A Symphony of the Human Spirit*, a documentary about a Paraguayan children's musical group. This was the first time the majority of the third-grade students had watched a documentary, let alone the first time they had watched something primarily in another language.

Classes were able to "visit" other countries around the school by viewing the artwork from the contest that decorated the hallways.

Señorita Quiñones, our kindergarten dual immersion teacher, shared information about her home country of Colombia with students. Already immersed in the Spanish language, students were eager to learn about her country and share what they learned with the rest of the school. They created and shared a video with the school completely in Spanish. Mrs. Farris, the media coordinator, was with sixth graders when the video was shown to the school. They were amazed that the kindergarteners could speak so fluently, and one student who speaks Spanish at home was especially impressed with their ability to correctly pronounce words. This student had heard about the program but hadn't yet seen it in action, and it made her proud to see a whole class of students speaking her family's native tongue. Link to Colombia Project Student Samples (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cpFEXS38U8RebuycBNZn4cHqnkhXUw6v/view?usp=sharing>).

In addition to this project, Señorita Quiñones' students were open to checking out books from our library's World Language section, as well as nonfiction books about various countries. Their interest was not limited to just Spanish-speaking countries. The grant allowed us to really beef up the World Language section by 55%, which proved to be crucial for the dual immersion program.



Figure 7. World Language section of library (as indicated by yellow arrows).

### Final Reflections

Not having intervention time put a damper on being able to incorporate global studies for some classes. Some teachers felt pressured to fit a year's worth of curriculum into the days students were physically present because many students and their families struggled to attend during their virtual days. Some teachers relied on their traditional ways and were hesitant to explore newer stories in a similar context. The committee feels confident that without a pandemic-laden year, all of these pieces will be better put together in the future.

Having the time to reflect at the end of the school year on what the school did accomplish towards a global understanding helped the committee to realize that we actually did more than we thought. We are growing in our own understanding and intentional planning.

Media coordinator and Global Committee chair Elizabeth Farris reflects, “One thing I have noticed this year is that in addition to using the books we purchased through this grant, teachers are also eager to share global literature they have come across with me. They want these books in our library, and they want to share them with students. They recognize the importance of students seeing themselves and others reflected in literature, and they are excited to share their newfound knowledge with me. Prior to this grant, I don’t recall this same enthusiasm.”

The group is looking forward to continuing this work next year. We still very much want to create the mural and are now leaning towards having Startown alumni create it. We also want to continue school-wide celebrations of cultures similar to our Christmas Around the World.

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Elizabeth Farris is the Media Coordinator for Startown Elementary School and loves to share the excitement of reading and learning new things with teachers, students, and their families.

Karen Brown is a second-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

Delaina Bryan is a fourth-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

Margy Butterfield is the music teacher at Startown Elementary.

Jessica Finney is a first-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

Jonna Hughes is a third-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

Jodi Hutto is the guidance counselor at Startown Elementary.

Kim Jordan is the principal at Startown Elementary.

Bobbie Setliff is a kindergarten teacher at Startown Elementary.

Grace Ann Sevier is the assistant principal at Startown Elementary.

Laura Warren is a fifth-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

Stephanie Whitehouse is a sixth-grade teacher at Startown Elementary.

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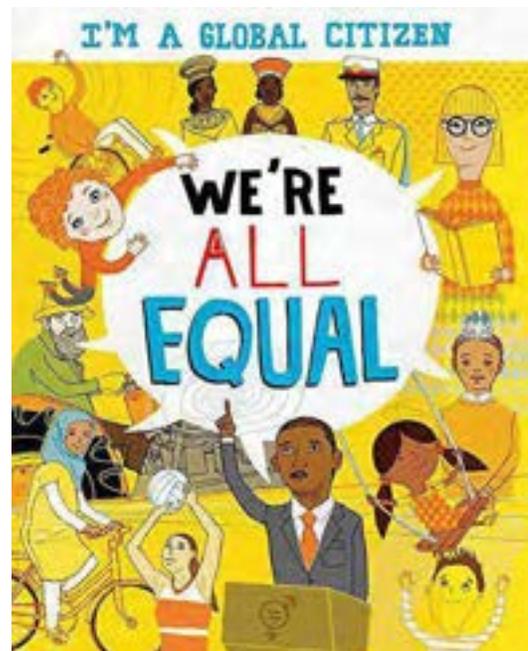
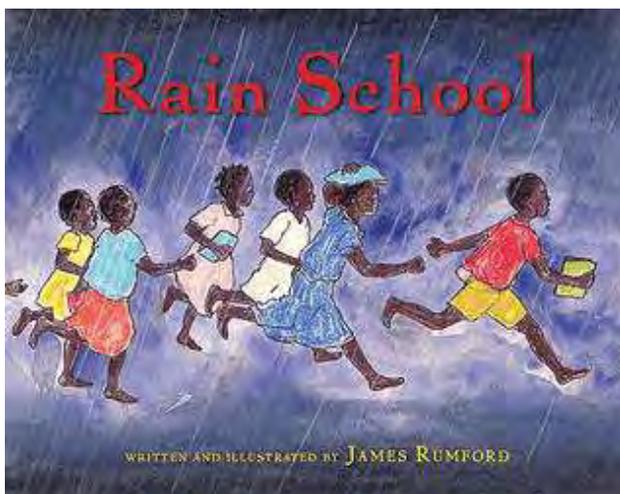
## Going Global with Literature

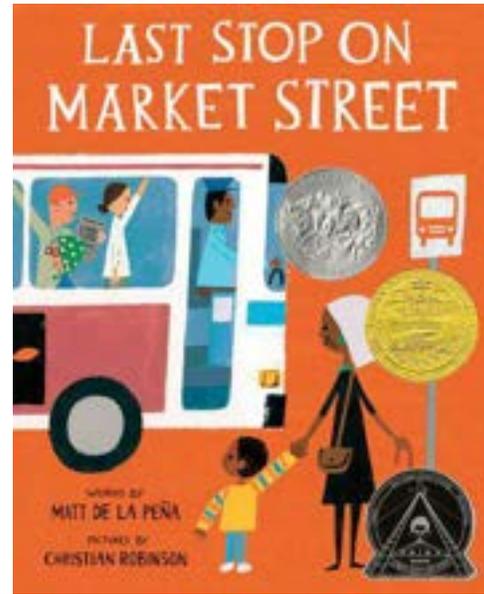
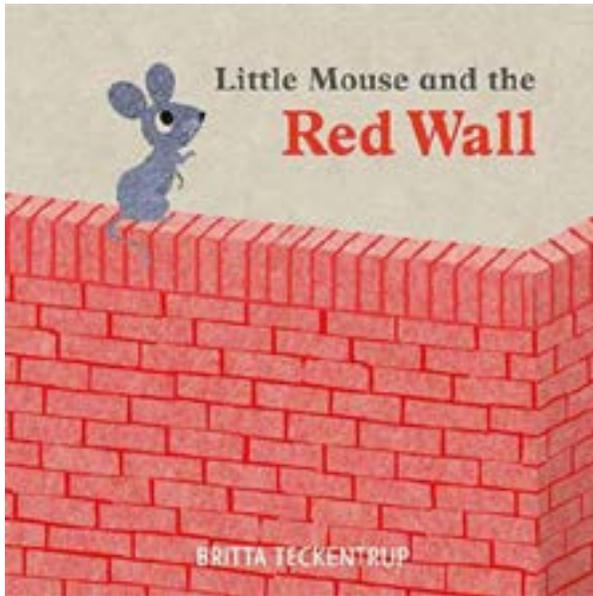
Andi Webb

Wilmington, North Carolina is a port city in the southeastern region of the state. Known for its beautiful beaches, it attracts many tourists throughout the year. The River Festival and Azalea Festival are popular times of the year for people to flock to the area. Within the city, there are diverse dynamics in the school system. At Forest Hills Global Elementary, we serve students from supportive families, students from traumatic backgrounds, English Language Learners, Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, and students with academic and behavioral challenges. The support of Worlds of Words and CERCLL was powerful for students and teachers because books were literally put in the hands of children who need them and may not have access to literature at home.

With the Global Literacies Community grant, I formed a team of educators who were representative of the K-2 grade span and the 3-5 grade span, as well as leadership team members, our global studies coordinator, and our media specialist. Most of our team members additionally serve on the school's global professional learning team. Through this grant, specific books were requested that met a need at the school. As a global school, we do our best to teach students about the world around them and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Globally focused books were requested and our team recorded the books being read aloud and wrote lesson plans/resource guides for each book to make utilizing them easier for teachers.

The recordings of the books being read aloud, as well as the lesson plans, were uploaded to our Google Drive and shared with all teachers to utilize in their classrooms. The specific books chosen are suggested by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Book Club. Recommended literature is included and updated for the Sustainable Development Goals on a regular basis on the website.





In addition, traveling books in English and Spanish were purchased in an effort to help bridge the connection between school and home with our English Language Learners and their families while simultaneously helping young students learn to read. These books were extremely helpful in providing books for English Language Learners whose families do not speak English and may not have access to many books at home. Teachers utilized the books in their classrooms to help students read in their native language and books were sent home for families to be able to read to their children in their native language as well. We are hopeful that our families who do not speak English as a native language will be able to see that we value their cultures and languages, and are working to meet the needs of their children.

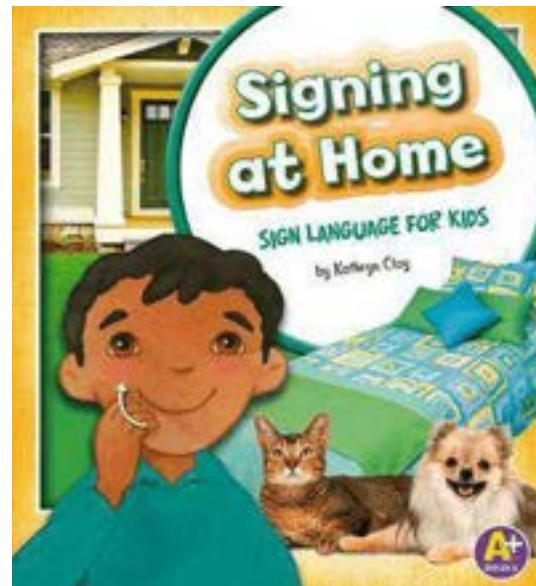


Figure 1. Spanish for Kids.

Our Deaf and Hard of Hearing population acquired books to utilize as they learn American Sign Language (ASL). The books have helped support staff who do not know ASL to communicate better with students who do use sign language. Because some of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are just learning ASL, these books are helpful to provide them with visuals and progress toward improved communication so their thoughts can be understood and their needs met.

It is imperative, when students are young, to build a strong foundation in literacy and help develop a love for learning. Easy readers in Spanish and books on American Sign Language provide access for students and staff to use when needed. The global books based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals help students understand people and places that differ from their own cultures, while helping educators foster empathy, understanding, and peace.



Figure 2. Global books at Forest Hills Global Elementary.

Andi Webb is a teacher and instructional coach in North Carolina. She loves to read and wants to help children love to read as well.

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