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Global Literacy Communities:
Selecting and Discussing Global Literature

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College of Education

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WOW Stories: Volume X, Issue 2
Global Literacy Communities: Selecting and Discussing Global Literature
Fall 2023

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Introduction and Editor's Note

This issue of WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom includes vignettes from three global literacy communities in Arizona and Tennessee, including a private school in a rural community and public schools in urban areas of the South and Southwest. Educators in these communities are committed to the use of global literature with children to explore language and culture across global contexts. The communities are connected by their focus on carefully selecting global books for their classrooms and on spending time as teachers exploring and discussing these books together as a study group before bringing them into classrooms.

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who engage in professional inquiry around innovative practices with 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 2021-2022, three Global Literacy Communities received grants from the Worlds of Words Center of Global Literacies and Literatures 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. Each community has written a vignette for this issue of WOW Stories.

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 vignette focuses on the Drachman Global Literacy Community in Tucson, Arizona. In this public K-8 school, teachers working with middle-grade students wanted to expand the variety and quality of the novels that students were reading within each of their theme cycles. They also documented the types of novels that were the most engaging for students.

The second vignette focuses on the J.E. Moss Global Literacy Community in Tennessee and their challenges due to a scripted literacy program and community attempts to ban books. Their focus was on developing teacher knowledge around text selection by critically examining books through the lenses of reader connections, evaluation criteria, and instructional possibilities. They documented how and why they evaluated specific global picturebooks through these lenses and the ways they engaged students with these global books.

The final set of vignettes focuses on the Vail Global Literacy Community, a community of educators in a faith-based school for young children, ages 2-9, in Vail, Arizona. Their goal was to continue their work with creating a global literature curriculum that invites young children to take on intercultural perspectives (see Volume 8, Issue 1 [https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/volume-viii-issue-1/] and Volume 9, Issue 2 [https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-2/] for their

previous vignettes). They also wanted to continue developing writing and art experiences to deepen children's cultural understandings in Storying Studio.

The vignette by Prisca Martens and Ray Martens, the facilitators of this group, provides an overview of their work as a study group and in classrooms to carefully select books and to plan curricular engagements for engaging children across the curriculum. The vignette by Jennifer Hook focuses on engaging preschool children in explorations of identity through story and music. The vignette by Lacey Elisea and Jane Metzger describes their inquiry with first graders using read-alouds to explore family origins, favorite childhood stories, and a cross-cultural study of China. The final vignette by Cassandra Sutherland and Lacey Elisea shares a collaborative inquiry across classrooms and disciplines connected to the Olympics through art, physical education, and books.

We invite you to read these vignettes and learn about the innovative work occurring in school-based study groups that support teachers in their intentional selection of global books for their classrooms and in their instructional planning. These vignettes provide examples of picturebooks, novels, and curricular engagements that encourage children to reflect on their place in a world of rich diversity.

Kathy G. Short, Guest Editor

Selecting Novels to Encourage Reader Engagement

Dara Carlson

At Drachman Montessori K-8 Magnet School in Tucson, we wanted to expand the variety and quality of novels read by middle school students. Our population of students is majority Latinx, but overall, very diverse. A significant percentage of students identify as immigrants and refugees. Many are emerging bilinguals and trilinguals. The culture of our Montessori community is one that embraces and celebrates the diversity of students and families. We seek to learn from one another and our differing experiences. As teachers, we feel that students are best served when we reflect their diversity in the literature that we offer.

We try to give our 6th-8th grade students a choice of the novel they read each quarter, so we hope to have 3-4 different titles available for them to choose from in selecting one to read. Within this selection, we strive to provide a representation of different perspectives, cultures, and life experiences in the books. The books must also fit into the theme we are studying with some connection to the content being explored in either social studies, science, or language arts. And, given the variety of learners in our mixed-grade classrooms, we need books with different levels of complexity within the same selection. The task of finding the perfect grouping of age/school-appropriate, on-theme, diverse, engaging novels for readers of different strengths is time consuming. And while many titles are available to us through our district, our goal was to invest in titles that were not readily available so that we could have them as a part of our middle school collection. In our teacher study group, we spent time talking about and researching potential titles and deciding which ones to make available to students. Then we reached out to departments in our district and libraries at other schools to see what was available to borrow and what needed to be purchased.

Our themes and novel selections for each quarter are outlined below:

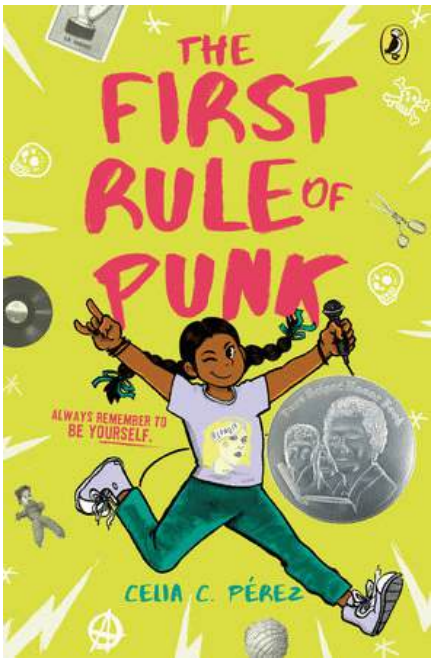
- Cycle 1 (Forces): *Sophia's War, Refugee, Chains*
- Cycle 2 (Structures): *Fahrenheit 451, The First Rule of Punk, The Last Book in the Universe*
- Cycle 3 (Power): *The Afterlife, March* (The Trilogy)
- Cycle 4 (Change): *Ender's Game, Monster, The Giver, Gathering Blue*

In our language arts curriculum, students spend half of each cycle reading short stories or poems and half reading a novel selected from the options. No matter what they are reading, they do a reading response each day on Monday through Thursday. There are eight different responses for them to choose from, and we teach students how to do each response at the beginning of the year. They can choose which response to do for their daily reading, but they must cycle through all eight before they can repeat a response. Their eight responses are:

- Retell (a summary)
- Freewrite (any thoughts, reflections, or connections to the reading)
- Poem (create an original poem)
- Letter to a Character (write a letter to one of the characters)

- Transcribe a Quote (and reflect on the importance/meaning of the quote)
- Character Timeline (writing both the events of the book and how the protagonist was feeling during each event)
- Sketch a Significant Image (an image in your mind from the story)
- Describe a Significant Image (an image in your mind from the story)

Many teachers also do daily novel discussions, read alouds to help students stay caught up with the reading, and reading response workshops. These workshops provide more structure and guidance as a small group of students work on their reading response together. These different engagements help students enjoy the book.



In our work with students, we found that engagement was highest with non-traditional books. These books differed from the "typical" novel read in school in that some were graphic novels like March and others were novels taking place in the contemporary world like *The First Rule of Punk. The First Rule of Punk* was probably the most popular title, indicating student preference for contemporary fiction over historical fiction. There are pop culture references in this book that students enjoyed incorporating into the classroom community. One class even created a class playlist of the Latinx punk songs characters talked about in the book. Of all the reading responses, Sketch an Image is always a student favorite, and for this novel they drew imaginary flyers for the unauthorized punk show discussed in the novel.

The biggest struggle was engaging students in the historical background of the books. *March* is a nonfiction trilogy of graphic novels about the Civil Rights movement based on the experiences of U.S. Congressman John Lewis. While reading the trilogy, teachers showed videos of many of the historical moments described in the novels, such as the March on Washington. Students also listened to famous songs that came out of the Civil Rights era. These strategies, along with frequent novel discussions to clear up confusions, helped boost engagement with the novels.

Teachers also found that it was helpful to leave Friday as a "catch-up" day for reading instead of assigning new pages. Friday gave students who were behind a reason to keep reading and reasonably expect to be able to get caught up, instead of giving up because they were too far behind. Students who were not behind on their reading worked on other assignments. Being a Montessori school, students have large work blocks where they can independently choose the assignments they want to work on from any subject.

Our goal was to incorporate more guest speakers for students this year, but for a variety of reasons, we managed only one meaningful guest speaker experience, listening to a Holocaust survivor. We walked to the Jewish History Museum and Holocaust Center in downtown Tucson. After exploring the museum, students heard from a survivor who visited us at the museum. They shared their life experiences, including before, during, and after the Holocaust, and then students asked questions. Middle school students can be a tough audience, but while interacting with the speaker, they were extremely attentive, respectful, and curious. It was by far one of the best educational experiences we had all year. This visit was incorporated under the Cycle 3 theme of power.

Based on our experiences, our study group has two main takeaways. First, we want to incorporate more contemporary realistic fiction into our literature selections. These books are what students engaged with the most, and engagement is always our number one goal. Second, we want to schedule more guest speakers. Having people share their lived experiences is an authentic way of learning and students are more likely to remember what they learned than from receiving the information in a traditional format. Overall, it was a successful school year, and we are so grateful that we could invest in text sets that will be used for years to come.

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Using Three Lenses to Critically Engage with Global Texts

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

Elementary students come to classrooms with diverse needs, experiences, cultures, and interests that are often a poor match for one-size-fits-all book titles and programs. Children's literature can either perpetuate the status quo or challenge it. When teachers make a deliberate effort to bring children's literature that features global communities into the classroom to be used in powerful ways, both teachers and children can be inspired and motivated. As scripted programs and curricula expand in schools, teachers need to be able to critically evaluate and select texts that work for the specific students in front of them. The purpose of our global community is to develop teacher knowledge around text selection and evaluation by critically looking at elements of diversity, quality, and kid appeal to select titles for classrooms.

Although students coming to classrooms are diverse, scripted programs assume one book fits all needs and remove teachers from the book selection process. State Education Prep Providers are asked to prepare candidates to use "High Quality Instructional Materials" instead of teachers developing their own lessons. Our university-school collaboration works to create a space where we can grapple with the challenges of using global literature in thoughtful ways in the midst of these mandates and attempts to ban books by groups such as Moms of Liberty in Middle Tennessee. We also grapple with teaching to the test and using a scripted Language Arts Curriculum, *Wit & Wisdom*. Our community is finding ways to insert global texts that are not currently on the list of books within the Language Arts Block amidst the challenge of the overemphasis on teaching text evidence.

Our global literacy community consists of five K-4 teachers, an EL coach, a librarian, and two teacher educators, each of us with more than 4 years of teaching experiences. The EL coach and librarian have expertise with a range of texts and have experienced a book challenge. Four teachers have worked with the teacher educators on additional global literature projects. The project is situated in a Title 1 school in Middle Tennessee where many students come to school knowing multiple languages. The teacher educators have worked at this school for eight years.

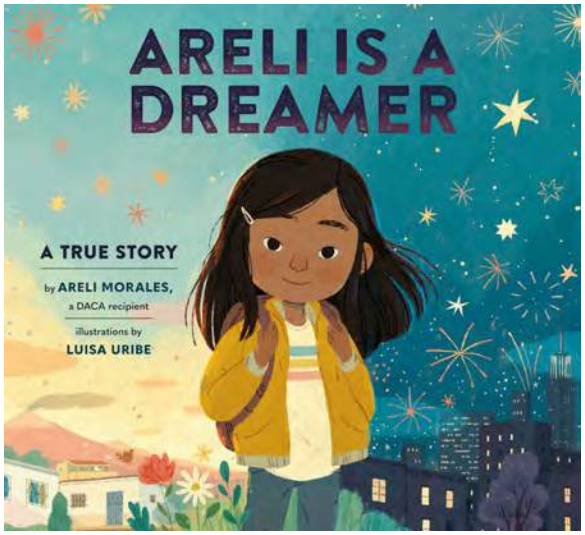
For several years, we have focused on making connections with global texts. We maintained that focus, but this year we analyzed global texts through the lenses of readers, evaluative criteria, and instruction. In this vignette, we each selected a different text that we felt strongly about using with children in the classroom. We liked the idea that we could use our differing opinions to deepen conversations and help students understand the importance of making deep personal connections with a global text. These connections provided deeper understanding of multiple texts and situations that many students powerfully resonated with in our classroom discussions.

Past community projects taught us the importance of starting our work with valuing the reader. We used to jump right into thinking about how we wanted to use a global text with children and discovered that we needed to place ourselves into the books as readers first. Then we started to evaluate the global texts. We used criteria from the Notable Books in a Global Society award as a jumping off point as we carefully analyzed texts. This reader lens and evaluative lens then propelled us to think about how we would use books in elementary classrooms.

Figure 1: Using a 3 Lens Approach to Analyzing Global Books in the Classroom

Reader Lens	Evaluative Lens	Instructional Lens
What do you notice as a reader?	How does this book relate to evaluative criteria?	How would you teach this book?
Story, Structure, Language,	Quality of Writing, Genre,	
Illustrations	Kid Appeal	
	Authenticity of Culture and Representation	
	Diversity of Themes, Language, Stories	

We used this frame to think about the global books that we read and discussed. We recorded our thinking about these books in journals around this framework. This vignette is organized around pairs of teachers and how they used these three lenses in selecting and using a global book with their students.

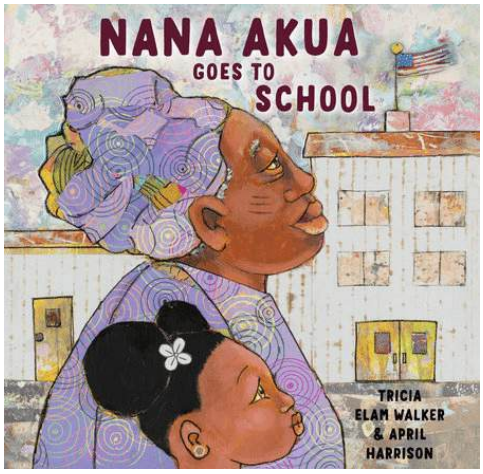


Denise Lancaster and Kahla Smith

Areli is a Dreamer, written by Areli Morales and illustrated by Luisa Uribe (2021), is an autobiographical picturebook about Areli's journey as a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) Dreamer. This book powerfully shows the challenges of an immigrant living between two worlds. Eventually, Areli's application for DACA is approved and as a result she now has the freedom to live "her dream" in the United States. In addition, Denise and Kahla read *Nana Akua Goes to School,* written by Tricia Elam Walker and illustrated by April Harrison (2020). Zura wants to bring her most favorite family member to school for Grandparents Day. But she is worried about what her classmates might say about her because Nana Akua has Adinkra symbols in tattoos on her face as part of the tribal marking tradition from Ghana.

Denise related to *Areli is a Dreamer* due to the many stories she has heard from her multilingual learners over the years. Kahla connected with *Nana Akua Goes to School* due to feelings of being treated differently as a child because of physical uniqueness. Denise, an ELL coach, and Kahla, a fourth-grade teacher used both books together in Kahla's fourth grade classroom. They worked collaboratively to support the fourth

graders as they critically read these books. They chose these books because the texts were deep and thoughtfully connected diversity through the topics of immigration and cultural diversity in the family inside and outside of schooling.



Using a reader's lens

While using a reader's lens to view *Areli is a Dreamer*, we (Denise and Kahla) valued the authenticity of the story as an accurate depiction of what happens to many immigrant families. The illustrations have depth and they truly represent the emotions expressed in the texts. There is a beautiful illustration that symbolizes the moment Areli feels a sense of belonging in both cultures and shows her thoughts of immigrants from the past.

When viewing *Nana Akua Goes to School* through a reader lens, we noticed that the book was extremely attractive. The bright colors and visual images strongly depicted the feelings characters were experiencing. The illustrations showed a lot of diversity in students and their families at the school, which is important for readers. In addition, the author included a pronunciation guide of the Adinkra symbols, which aided in the authenticity of the story. There is quite a bit of figurative language, adding to the overall appeal of the story. Finally, the author focused on having self-pride in your culture which we viewed as valuable for our readers.

Using an evaluative lens

Through an evaluative lens, we were enchanted by the bright colors. We appreciated the incorporation of Spanish language into the text because it provides a means for students to see their language in print and honors their linguistic backgrounds. We also valued the authentic experiences, such as showing how Areli's brother can travel back and forth as a U.S. citizen, but Areli may not be able to return to the U.S. if she leaves because she is not a citizen. Students shared similar stories with us. At our school, we interact with many students who are new to the country. Children often come to school just beginning to speak English and we work to build community and honor all of the languages represented in the school. Areli did not have the same warm welcome in her school. We appreciated that this book allowed students to see an unfamiliar perspective.

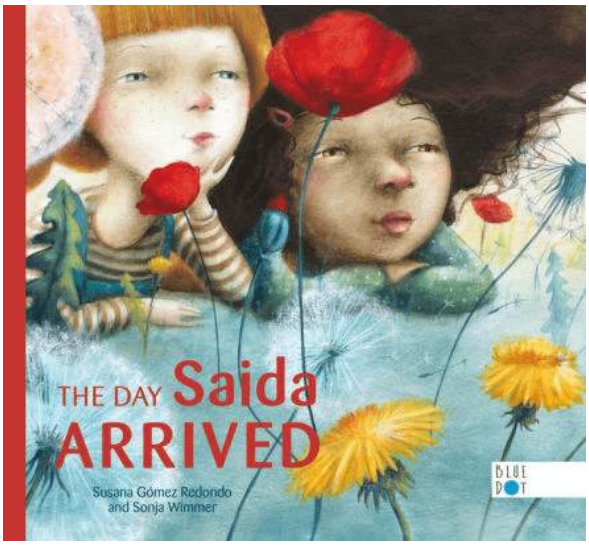
In reading *Nana Akua Goes to School* through an evaluative lens, we noted that the book would appeal to fourth-grade students in terms of comprehension and connections throughout the story. The book also included diversity in multiple ways. Diversity was shown through the illustrations as well as in the ideas shared by the grandparents about what makes each child special. We also felt the story was high quality. The author conducted research about the culture represented to assist in the depiction of authenticity of representation. The story had many elements that made it appealing to our multilingual learners. The author included pictures of the Adinkra symbols as well as words from the language, which students enjoyed. The author portrayed an elevated level of curiosity from students and their grandparents when it came time to hear Nana Akua's story, showing students the value of learning unique symbols.

Using an instructional lens

As we thought about *Areli is a Dreamer* using an instructional lens, we noted the book promoted deep conversations about immigration and the struggles associated with it. One reason we work so well together as colleagues is that we both ask thought-provoking, open-ended questions to spark conversation. We used the strong connections that many students had toward the book to build connections for others to see what their peers' families experienced. We intentionally withheld the author's note in the beginning to discuss her story further and then shared it with children.

The instructional lens for *Nana Akua Goes to School* allowed us to see that the book provides many opportunities to build connections and increase engagement. We wanted students to understand that some aspects of culture should be considered gifts, and not just something that make us different. We began this process by bringing in the figurative language used by the author to help deepen comprehension of the story. To help strengthen the idea of building connections, we invited students to choose one of the Adinkra symbols they felt best represented themselves or their family. We had students design their own symbol to represent their family and explained the significance.

We asked students which of our two books, *Areli is a Dreamer* or *Nana Akua Goes to School*, they liked best and why. There were a variety of responses to this question. Students selected their favorite text based upon the connections from their lives that they shared with the text and illustrations. Using the three-lens framework, we discovered a method to analyze and select texts that are appealing to readers, thought provoking for students, and prepared us instructionally.



Kathryn Hall, Molly Miller, and Alexandra Zuehlke

The Day Saida Arrived, written by Susana Gómez Redondo and illustrated by Sonja Wimmer (2020) is a story about friendship and a celebration of language. A friend works to find the right words in the language she knows and grapples with helping her new friend navigate the challenges of school in a new country. Arabic and Spanish are used thoughtfully across the book as both girls teach each other their languages. Kathryn (second grade teacher), Molly (second grade teacher), and Alexandra (fourth grade teacher) selected this book to use in the classroom because they noticed the theme of friendship and language and wanted to support the linguistic friendships they frequently observed in their classrooms.

Using a reader lens

As the three of us (Kathryn, Molly, and Alexandra) opened the book, we noticed vivid illustrations that immediately invoked deep emotions. Right away the reader starts to wonder what is happening. Why is the girl crying? Why has the author used the whole page to show the character's face? Creative inventions, larger than life people, and clear emotions are depicted, drawing us immediately into the book and into the world of the character. We found out through the story that the character speaks Arabic and see Arabic words on every sign and as labels on each picture. As readers, we enjoyed getting to see the world through

the character's eyes and were inspired to learn another language as the two girls teach each other words in their own languages. The book ends with the English alphabet and the Arabic alphabet side by side. We enjoyed being able to compare the two alphabets and see how they are similar and different.

Using an evaluative lens

The broad messages shared within the book about friendship, language, immigration, empathy, and respect connect with a broad audience. Students will immediately be drawn to the vivid colors on the pages. The empathy and concern for Saida's emotions throughout the text will keep students connected and invested in the story line. The book centers around the stories and experiences of students in our classrooms so they can see themselves in the story. Many immigrant stories are told from a first-person perspective. However, this book explores a different approach where Saida's English-speaking friend tells the story of her arrival. Many students will connect with having met or interacted with someone who comes from a different place or speaks a different language. The author also strategically incorporates Arabic words on the page alongside the English words with similar meanings. The pronunciation guides throughout the book and the list of Arabic words in the back provide students with visuals to process new words from different languages. Overall, *The Day Saida Arrived* is a high quality and powerful text with themes that connect with a broad audience and expose students to the diverse experiences of immigrant peers.

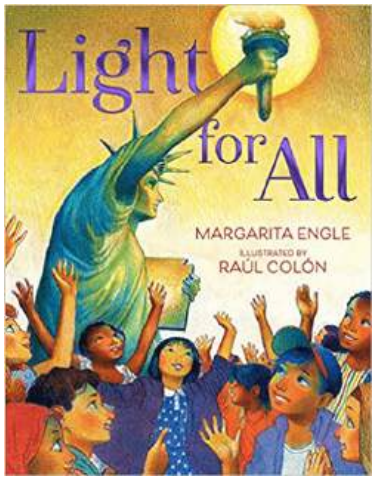
Using an instructional lens

This book thoughtfully shows the power of learning new languages. Multilingual learners have critical experience with learning a new language in school, and many may recall a time when they arrived in a new classroom and added to their language learning journey. This book is also a valuable lesson in empathy and discussions about being in a new school with a new language. How does it feel to be the new kid? What if you speak a different language than the teacher or other students? How can you help students who are new and learning a new language? How can you learn the language of someone new?

After reading this book with students, we discussed the importance of words and why words are important. Why does everyone deserve to have and use their own language? Responses included needing words to learn and communicate with others, and using words to help us be strong and confident. Students learned that everyone learns words differently and that helping others includes getting to know their story and a desire to learn their words. Words are a powerful tool for communication—and everyone deserves to communicate!

Elizabeth Weisenfelder and Melissa Williams

Light for All, by Margarita Engle (2021), celebrates the U.S. story of immigration. Illustrated by Raúl Colón, the vibrant illustrations portray diversity in the U.S. in a variety of ways. The poetic prose and colorful illustrations provide opportunities for children to see themselves and each other in this story. Elizabeth Weisenfelder, a third-grade teacher at J.E. Moss Elementary used this text in her classroom. Melissa Williams, librarian at J.E. Moss Elementary, used this text with several third and fourth grade classes. Both examined the text through a reader lens, evaluative lens, and instructional lens.



Using a reader lens

As a reader, Elizabeth finds this book engaging on many levels. The prose is sparse on most pages, but every word has a purpose and brings deep meaning to the text. The illustrations are rich and detailed, and the recurrence of the Statue of Liberty on many of the pages make it clear that her light truly shines for all. Throughout, readers see the Statue of Liberty situated from different angles and settings, cementing the statue as a symbol of hope, freedom, and opportunity. The illustrations are engaging images of ships arriving to Ellis Island under the lamp of Lady Liberty and joyful immigrants as they arrive to their new home with the Statue of Liberty now shining behind them, as well as images that depict reasons why people might need to leave their homelands. Coupled with powerful prose, these illustrations make a reader feel pride in living in a nation of immigrants.

The first thing Melissa noticed on opening the book is how warm the pictures feel. Raúl Colón does a wonderful job of making the book feel welcoming. The images are light and bright and the texture has readers wanting to run their fingers over them. But more than just the colors, so many people from different backgrounds can see themselves in these images. The story seems simple, and the language is approachable, almost sweet. However, the message is poignant. There are many reasons why people come to the U.S. but the light of liberty continues to shine for all that come here. As wonderful as that thought is, one powerful moment is when Margarita Engle reminds readers that, while newcomers may love this new homeland, the U.S. has bitter moments in history. We may not be perfect, but we can work together to create a "shared hope for all."

Using an evaluative lens

From an evaluative lens, this book is diverse in multiple ways. Elizabeth immediately noticed the broad diversity that went beyond the cultures so that Light for All is a great example of how a text can encompass various types of diversity. *Light for All* examines different reasons why people might immigrate to the U.S., their differing hopes and dreams, and the different occupations they seek once they arrive. In this sense, this book broadens the scope of diversity, which makes it possible for more students to make connections to themselves, others, and the world around them. The topic of immigration can be heavy and sometimes difficult for children to understand, especially if they have not lived this experience, but this book does a good job of using words and illustrations to show that immigration is something many people, especially children, experience.

One strength of the book is that so many readers can find themselves in it. It is incredibly important for readers to see that validation in what they read and the message that their stories matter. Elizabeth tries to be as inclusive as possible in purchasing books for the library to make sure that the space is welcoming, and the books are available to everyone. This book seems to be designed to be welcoming, telling the story of many immigrants who came to the U.S. for differing reasons while not glossing over the fact that it is important to support homes with multiple languages and traditions brought to a new homeland. It is important to value the heritages of all people who move to the U.S.

Using an instructional lens

Elizabeth found a perfect opportunity to use *Light for All* with her third-grade class since the third module of the mandated reading curriculum is about immigration, using the book as a hook to engage students around immigration. Most students in her class are multilingual learners and either are immigrants themselves or have family that immigrated to the U.S. Knowing this, Elizabeth thought the text might spark some conversation about their own experiences. Immediately, students noticed the variety of children on the cover and that these children looked different from each other. As the class read, students were particularly interested in the different reasons why people come to the U.S., such as war, natural disasters, and famine. This led to a conversation about what is currently going on in Ukraine and why Ukrainians might need to escape war. Elizabeth found this real-world connection to be the most powerful part of using this text with students, providing a safe space to voice their questions and concerns about the world. The conversations while reading this text supported student learning by allowing them to form deeper connections to the content and to the world around them.

Melissa used this book for a project about landmarks with several classes of third and fourth graders. Students researched a favorite landmark and then built that landmark in Minecraft. After completing their Minecraft buildings and presenting why they researched that specific landmark, Melissa read this book to encourage discussion about the purposes behind their landmarks and why they felt other landmarks were built. They had a wonderful discussion on the purpose behind the Statue of Liberty and the meaning of the word liberty. They remarked that the statue stands for freedom and hope. They discussed why there might be a statue in New York standing for freedom and hope, leading to comments on why people come to the U.S. and what was in the book about those reasons. Melissa mentioned that when immigrants came into New York on ships for the first time, the Statue of Liberty was the first thing they saw. Some students commented that people may have been looking for a second chance for liberty. A few students noted that just because they were coming to a place that had a statue about freedom didn't mean that the new country was perfect, and the importance of remembering the not-perfect history to work towards a better future.

The experiences of Melissa and Elizabeth in reading, evaluating, and teaching with this book led both to believe this is a valuable book to include in teacher libraries. It has facets that can add to a lesson or be used as a book study. This text can also be used to supplement a scripted curriculum.

Concluding Thoughts

Using the three-lens framework, we discovered a method to analyze and select texts that are appealing to readers, thought provoking for students, and inspirational for teachers. In terms of the reader lens, we learned to analyze the story and think about the strong narrative in the book, including the dialogue and relationships between characters. We analyzed the visual appeal of the book in terms of vibrant colors in illustrations. We examined the simplicity of the text as connected to the illustrations. We noted the level of readers who could join in reading the books. We read heartwarming and inspirational stories that were told through multiple perspectives. Diversity in multiple language within a country and a sense of pride within a culture were key factors we noticed.

Using the evaluative lens, we based our analysis on analyzing the content of the text and illustrations. We did an initial look at representation to note language, image, space, and objects across global books. Our community made connections with illustrations and authors' perspectives. In terms of an instructional lens, we tried to move outside of a rigid curriculum as we thought about integrating these books into our classrooms. We made connections to powerful books from other projects and thought about how to intentionally use global books for instruction in the classroom.

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Developing Curriculum with Global Literature

Prisca Martens, Ray Martens, and Nicole McMillan

Creation School is located southeast of Tucson near the Rincon Mountains in the heart of the Sonoran Desert. The school served about 100 students in 2021-2022 in preschool (beginning at age two) through fifth grade. As a Lutheran school, it provides a Christ-centered environment that nurtures children's faith, strengthens families, and invites children to explore and discover their world through rich indoor and outdoor learning experiences. The school is about 50% Latinx and 50% European American and Asian/other cultural groups. A few teachers and students speak Spanish, but English is the primary language used.

Creation just completed its ninth year. For the third consecutive year, Creation has had a Worlds of Words Global Literacy Communities Grant to develop a curriculum using global literature. Through story, global literature focuses on building intercultural understandings of cultures, regions, and people around the world (Freeman, Lehman, & Scharer, 2007; Short, 2016), which supports and is integral to the school's Christian/Lutheran beliefs.

Our Vail Global Literacy Community Study Group

Our Vail Global Literacy Community in 2021-2022 included six teachers: Lacey Elisea (first grade teacher), Jane Metzger (inclusion specialist and first grade teaching assistant), Cassandra Sutherland (K-5 physical education/art teacher), Nicole McMillan (kindergarten teacher), Josh Landi (fourth/fifth grade teachers), and Jennifer Hook (school administrator/preschool teacher). Prisca and Ray Martens were facilitators in the literacy community. Our goals for the year were (1) to continue to develop a curriculum for preschool through fifth grades using global literature and organized around a "Curriculum that is Intercultural," (Short, 2016); and (2) to continue developing writing and art curricula that include experiences inviting children to explore global literature and deepen their intercultural understandings, as well as create and share their own stories.

Our study group met regularly throughout the year and followed a consistent agenda. We began our meetings with teachers discussing events and issues in their classrooms and questions/concerns of teachers. Examples of these included teachers sharing student writing samples or other work, talking about student responses to read-alouds, and creating student book clubs in classrooms. We then discussed a piece of literature we had all read. This literature included Voices in the Park (Browne, 2001), Each Kindness (Woodson & Lewis, 2012), and A Good Night for Freedom (Morrow & Jenkins, 2003). Our discussions focused on our responses to the stories and comments on what we noticed in the art. Some teachers then read these books to students in their classrooms.

We then discussed professional literature we'd read. These readings included journal articles such as "Building Intercultural Understandings Through Global Literature" (Martens et al., 2015) and the book *Leading Literate Lives* (Affinito, 2021). In *Leading Literate Lives*, Affinito discusses the importance of teachers being readers and writers themselves. She provides numerous strategies to support teachers personally in this goal as well as strategies for how to encourage students as readers and writers in the classroom. We ended our meetings by sharing plans for the upcoming weeks and for our next meeting.

In their classrooms teachers read and discussed global and multicultural literature with students, provided time for students to respond to the literature orally and/or in response journals, and integrated text sets to support the focus of classroom topics. These text sets were on identity, the 2021 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics; and cross-cultural studies of China and Mexico.

Learning Through Read-Alouds

Teachers at Creation use a variety of strategies to engage students in learning and read-alouds are an essential one. The numerous benefits of read-alouds include supporting language and vocabulary development, building content knowledge, strengthening listening comprehension, expanding literary knowledge, inviting personal connections and reflection, and building community in the classroom through story (Laminack, 2016). Through story in read-alouds, students have a shared experience they can discuss and revisit as they build and make sense of themselves, the story they heard, and the world (Short, 2012). Stories invite students to respond and make connections to their own lives.

Read-Alouds in Kindergarten

Nicole Macmillan shared an example of a read-aloud in one of our study group meetings. In her kindergarten class, Nicole was helping her ten students develop a strong understanding of who they are as cultural beings and appreciate their own uniqueness. She knew that only then could her students appreciate the culture and uniqueness of others. In addition, she understood that when literature mirrors students' lives and identities, students are encouraged to value literacy as critical to their identities (Short, 2016).

One of Nicole's read-alouds was *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Martinez-Neal, 2018). In the story, young Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela decides that her name is just too long. Once her father explains the significance of each part of her name, however, Alma decides that her name fits her "just right."

As Nicole read, she could see students connecting the story to their own names, lives, and identities and wondering what their names meant and how they got them. When she finished reading, Nicole asked if anyone knew the story behind their names. Oriana eagerly shared, "My parents picked my name while I was still in mommy's tummy. But after I was born, my parents called me 'Spike' because my hair stood straight up!" Since students were curious about their names, Nicole created a form for them to take to their parents. The form explained the book and discussion in class and invited parents to share how they decided on their child's name.

Students were excited to share what they discovered about their names with their classmates. William, for example, received his name because his mother liked Will Turner's character in the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Bruckheimer, 2003) and Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1995). In addition, "William" means determined/valiant protector and has been used for royalty throughout history. Zachariah received his name because his parents wanted a Biblical name that reminded people God remembers the fallen and those who are lonely and hurt.

The students' interest in names prompted Nicole to locate other books to read-aloud, such as *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2001), *My Name is Yoon* (Recorvits & Swiatkowska, 2003), and *My Name is Sangoel (*Williams, Mohammed, & Stock, 2009). *My Name is Sangoel* is the story of Sangoel, a young boy from Sudan who travels to the United States as a refugee. His classmates and teachers struggle to pronounce his name so Sangoel creates a way to show his name with pictures (i.e., a sun and a goal). Nicole's students started thinking about how they would "draw" their names and discussed how their names are their own and belong to them.

Nicole also read the Author's Note in the book which explained that at one time officials took away refugees' given names and replaced them with Americanized names. Students talked about how devastated they would feel if the names their parents gave them were taken away. Nicole shared that sometimes refugees cannot bring money, food, clothing, or even other members of their families when they leave their homes and their names are all they have. The discussion gave Nicole's kindergarten students a new perspective on their identities, their families and homes, and the importance of their names.

Through these and other read-alouds, Nicole supported her students' language and literacy development, content knowledge, and listening comprehension. Just as importantly, with "Alma" as a member of the classroom community through the read-aloud, Nicole helped students strengthen their understandings and appreciation of themselves and each other as unique cultural beings with unique cultural identities.

Closing Thoughts

In the vignettes that follow, we invite you into the classrooms as teachers share details of their work and experiences with students. The vignettes demonstrate how the teachers are working to integrate global literature across their curriculum as much as they can. In "Exploring Identity Through Stories and Song," Jennifer Hook explores music. In "Global Literacy Journeys in First Grade—Far Away Places…Yet Close to Home!" Lacey Elisea and Jane Metzger discuss cross-cultural studies, reading/writing, and students' families. And, in "Learning About the Olympics: An Integrated Curriculum/Multi-Class Celebration," Cassandra Sutherland and Lacey Elisea share global literature/perspectives in physical education and art.

It was an exciting year of learning and growing for all of us. We hope that the vignettes provide a taste of our excitement and offer insights into how global literature enriches curriculum and students' understandings of themselves, others, and the world.

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Exploring Identity through Stories and Song

Jennifer Hook

> *"Storytelling, along with song and dance, is the first Art of the Human Family. Every Human Child is wired for it" (Brownlee, 2022a).*

I have never seen a group of students "wired" for song and story like our preschool class at Creation School in 2021-2022. This class of 11 children, ages 3 and 4, would be considered typically developing, with their families representative of our neighborhood demographic. Seventy percent of the students were European American, 18% Latinx, and the rest reported a mixed heritage. The families who choose Creation School appreciate our philosophy of wonder and curiosity about our natural world, and they extend their children's learning through weekend camping, hiking, or nature walks in the scenic Sonoran mountains that rim our town. Creation School is tuition based and most families can provide the cost of care in addition to their family needs.

Figure 1. Informal story reading in class

Figure 2. Singing in Chapel

My co-teacher and I also represent our community. We are both of European American descent, Christian, and love nature and the outdoors. We are lifelong educators with many years of experience, driven by our passion for children and their development. Part-time teaching now suits our semi-retired lifestyle.

I noticed the students' wiring for story and song during the first few weeks of class. The students would quickly gather for informal story reading (see Figure 1). Students also looked forward to the singing during our weekly chapels (see Figure 2).

Throughout our time together, students interacted with each other in a lyrical sense, sometimes recounting songs they knew, such as "Paw Patrol, Paw Patrol," in a singsong way that communicated a feeling or sense instead of an idea. I was reminded that music, like art, gesture, sound, drama, movement, and oral/written language, is a mode through which humans communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Eisner, 2002; Kress, 2003). I realized that the attraction to music was another avenue to storytelling, meaning-making, and sharing information about oneself.

I also noticed that students' recounting of songs and stories they knew typically did not extend beyond current popular children's shows. They were the consumers of music more so than the creators. I felt this class would

respond well to a curriculum rich in global song and story as a means of creating meaning, developing their identities, and exploring different cultures. This would broaden students' perspectives of the world and help them value the variety of ways people live, act, and believe.

I was hopeful that through our learning together, students would see themselves not as consumers, but as creators, story writers, and music makers. We have a flexible framework for our curriculum based on Bible stories. Child-led projects, with play and exploration are key in our lesson planning. By introducing appropriate books connected to songs, I felt we could expand how the students interacted with music and stories.

Figure 3. Rainbow dancing with scarves

Exploring Identity Through Books and Songs

One of our first offerings occurred during the lesson sharing the narrative of Noah and the Ark, in which Noah sees a rainbow after the ark comes to rest on dry land (Berghof & Kramer, 2012). To extend our discussion of rainbows, we listened to the Zuni Pueblo Rainbow Dance (2017), using colorful scarves for our music and movement that week. Hearing the music drew in all the students, and together they responded to the rhythms and beats with the colorful scarves (see Figure 3).

Over the next few days, we also added instruments: bells, shakers, drums, and cymbals. Students explored the instruments enthusiastically! We took the instruments and Rainbow Dance soundtrack outside to give us more space for dancing. Figure 4 shows a boy working with a percussion instrument.

n retrospect, I wish I had connected this experience with *When Clay Sings* by Byrd Baylor and Tom Bahti (1987). The story describes the voice of broken pottery, a remnant of a different time in the Southwest. The students could have been given clay of their own to explore and mold, creating not only a pot, but a story. At the time I felt the concept was too abstract for our 3-year-olds, but I think the experience of the music, the story, and the clay together would have given students a sense of the culture and a way that people can give voice to their experiences.

Figure 4. Percussion on the grass

I Got the Rhythm

Our next book was *I Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison (2014). The story recounts the journey of a young girl through her urban neighborhood. She begins by thinking of a rhythm in her mind, and then finds ways her body can replicate that rhythm. Throughout the book, she encounters different people with whom to share her rhythm. We introduced the book by first creating a beat with our hands and knees. Then I read the book in rhythm with the beats students were making. The story ends with the invitation "I got the rhythm and you can too." After several readings, a smaller group of students acted out the rhythms established by the narrator and then thought about which rhythm was their favorite. Several felt the

rhythm with their knees (knock knock), some felt the rhythm with their feet (stomp stomp), but the biggest favorite was the rhythm in their hips (shake shake), which quickly turned into the rhythm in their bottoms! The way students acted out the rhythms showed that they "can, too" see their identity as creators and music makers, just like the child in the story.

The value of this experience was the physical connection between the young girl in the story and the students in the class. Although the child in the story is an African American child in a multi-ethnic neighborhood, our students felt the same things she felt, moved the way she moved, and enjoyed the things she enjoyed, helping them realize the common human experiences they share with others in the world (Short & Thomas, 2011).

Figure 5. Practicing for Las Posadas

Figure 6. Learning about the power of candlelight

The Night of Las Posadas

Christmas was right around the corner, and every year the school participates in the Las Posadas. Las Posadas is a tradition from Mexico and several Latin American countries depicting the arrival of Mary and Joseph into Bethlehem. The students in our class were new to our school tradition, so we worked on the Bible story as well as the Las Posadas narrative and the traditional song sung during the event (Barrara, 2019). Tomie dePaolo's (2001) *The Night of the Las Posadas* was helpful in explaining how the tradition is celebrated in Mexico. We practiced what would happen before our actual Las Posadas celebration (see Figure 5).

As we explored the traditions in the story, we shared what we saw in our own Christmas celebrations. Families shared their home traditions through a survey and we talked about the similarities and differences during class time. Candles and candy canes were class favorites and a common thread among the families experiences (see Figure 6).

In learning the song and the story, the students could "try on" an identity from another culture similar to their own. Participating in the Las Posadas helped expand their understanding of cultures that live next door or in another part of the world. Just before Christmas break, students traveled from station to station around the school campus, re-enacting the story of Mary and Joseph finding no room in the inn.

When I reflected on this time with our students, I realized that I missed a great opportunity to explore the story as writers. Christmas is very busy, but I wish I would have set aside time for students to write/dictate their own stories or songs. In my effort to "teach" them the story of Christmas, I neglected to acknowledge their identities as writers and storytellers of their own experiences and simply enforced their identity as consumers.

Spring Celebrations

Spring marks the celebration of the Jewish festival of the Passover. Music is integral in Hebrew culture, and as we studied the Biblical accounts of Passover, I shared the distinct sounds of Israeli and Greek folk dancing, such as "Zorba Greek Line Dance" (2015), and the Shemah (see Figure 7).

To reinforce the idea that stories and songs belong together, we read The Little Overcoat, adapted by Yetta Trachtman Goodman from a traditional folksong (Goodman & Arenson, 1998). Students enjoyed the dancing but were very anxious to be outside. It was during the transition from indoor learning to outdoor learning that the students took ownership of their identities as singers and storytellers.

I was inspired by a quote from *Leading Literate Lives* by Stephanie Affinito (2021) in which she states that, "organizing the space around you facilitates the kind of life you want to live" (p.23). Affinito encourages readers to have books easily accessible. As I prepared the outdoor space for the students, I made sure music and books were available for their exploration.

Figure 7. Zorba Greek Line Dance

Figure 8. Outdoor music center

Our outdoor music center was nothing more than old kitchenware bolted to a frame but students spent lots of time drumming, pounding, or jangling (see Figure 8). One group of boys created a band, shouting "Yayaya" and fervently drumming, before running a loop around the playground, only to return as some kind of chorus – "Yayaya" – then off running again. I wondered if their unconscious pattern was a deeper human experience bubbling up through the generations of hunters going out and then returning to celebrate.

Some students spent more time in the quiet area, looking at books together in the shade (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Outdoor reading center

I was able to capture one student embracing the idea that she was a song writer and storyteller. She was singing an original song with the words, "Everyone Like Me." I said, "Hey, Cassidy! Can we turn your song into a book?" She nodded. Together we created a small pamphlet with the words, "Everyone like me, everyone like me. You are…." She was not interested in illustrating the book, just pleased that her words were recorded.

The Little Band

Our final activity of the school year was around *The Little Band* by James Sage and Keiko Narahashi (1991). To set up the framework of students as musicians and participating in the story, we sang the American Spiritual, "Little David, Play on Your Harp" while I showed them the picture from the Bible story (Berghof & Kramer, 2012). Then we substituted the words of the chorus to include their names, and the instrument they were playing.

Little Blaise, play on your jingle bells...
Little Mackenzie, play on your maracas...
Little Landry, play on your guitar...
Little Blakelee, play on your eggs...
Little James, play on your jingle bells...
Little Luke, play on your maracas....
Little Asher, play on your drum...
Hallelu!

We also practiced rhythms with our homemade rhythm sticks made from mesquite trees (see Figure 10). The students enjoyed tapping along with the same beat as an in-sync band. They showed growth in self-control from the beginning of the school year where they explored their individual rhythms.

Figure 10. Rhythm sticks from mesquite trees

Closing Thoughts

The Little Band is a beautiful story of how music can change you. Even after the players are gone, nothing is ever the same again. The story could be a metaphor for the time we spent together at Creation School. The work of creating identity as songwriters and storytellers will not end when the school year is over. Even though the students may not remember much from their first year at preschool, they demonstrated their understanding and potential to be creators, not just consumers.

Through this year, I have learned that students have the capacity to embrace different cultures through the music and stories of a culture. Students went from only singing songs and stories they knew to experiencing multiple ways of knowing and viewing the world through music and stories (Short & Thomas, 2011). They responded to music and stories in authentic ways and created music and stories unique to them. I have also learned that I need to take the time to write down children's stories. The additional exercise would not be used as a form of assessment (although it could be used to inform lessons), but as a gift to the child as a future person who may forget the songs and stories of their preschool years.

"We are what we imagine ourselves to be from the 'Who Am I?' story we create about ourselves, (and this is the important bit), whether it is true or not. None of us starts off with a story about who we are, we have to construct it: word-by-word, image-by-image, sentence-by-sentence, experience-by-experience" (Brownlee, 2022b). It is my hope that the "Who Am I" story that children created for themselves this school year includes a description of stories and songs as indicators of their identity.

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Global Literacy Journeys in First Grade—Far Away Places...Yet Close to Home!

Lacey Elisea and Jane Metzger

We are educators at Creation School, a Lutheran school located in Vail, Arizona, approximately 20 miles southeast of Tucson. Lacey Elisea has a degree in early childhood and is Creation's first grade teacher. Jane Metzger has early childhood, elementary, and special education certifications and experiences. She co-teaches with Lacey in first grade.

We had the opportunity to loop up with our kindergarten class from the previous school year, who had just begun developing their love of reading. We expressed our request to our principal to "Loop Up for Literacy!" The main benefit of moving up with the class was the rich strong relationships among students and with us that had already developed during the previous school year.

Our school is developing a curriculum around global literature. The focus of this curriculum is on helping students appreciate the individual cultural beings they are and how their identities shape the ways they act and think; encouraging open-minded perspectives towards children whose ways of living, valuing, and thinking may be similar to or different from theirs; inviting students' inquiries into curiosities they notice in their world; challenging students' critical thinking about themselves, others and events; and expanding students' intercultural understandings. As Kathy Short (2016) states, readers "immerse themselves into story worlds to gain insights about how people around the world live, feel, and think—to develop emotional connections and empathy as well as knowledge" (p. 5).

Our first grade class consisted of 15 returning students and five students new to Creation School. In developing our curriculum we wanted to support students as readers and writers on their personal literacy journeys through authentic literacy experiences. Stephanie Affinito (2021) points out in *Leading Literate Lives* that "we might find ourselves focusing more on the skills needed to read and write rather than on the dispositions needed to sustain those practices" (p. 10). Our goal was for the students to identify as readers and writers, not just know how to read and write.

In this vignette, we share some of the ways we integrated literature, particularly global literature, as much as we could into our curriculum.

Learning About Ourselves and Others through Read-Alouds

Read-alouds are a critical part of our curriculum. Global literature such as I'm an Immigrant Too! (Fox & Ghosh, 2018), Your Name Is a Song (Thompkins-Bigelow & Uribe, 2020) and This Is How We Do It: One Day in the Lives of Seven Kids from Around the World (Lamothe, 2017) were important in helping students understand themselves, others, and the world more deeply. One aspect was helping students learn from their parents about their family's origins which they marked on a world map. Figure 1 shows Austin's map with Canada, Ireland, and Germany marked in yellow for where his ancestors came from prior to coming to the United States. Austin even added a map key in the lower left corner of his map.

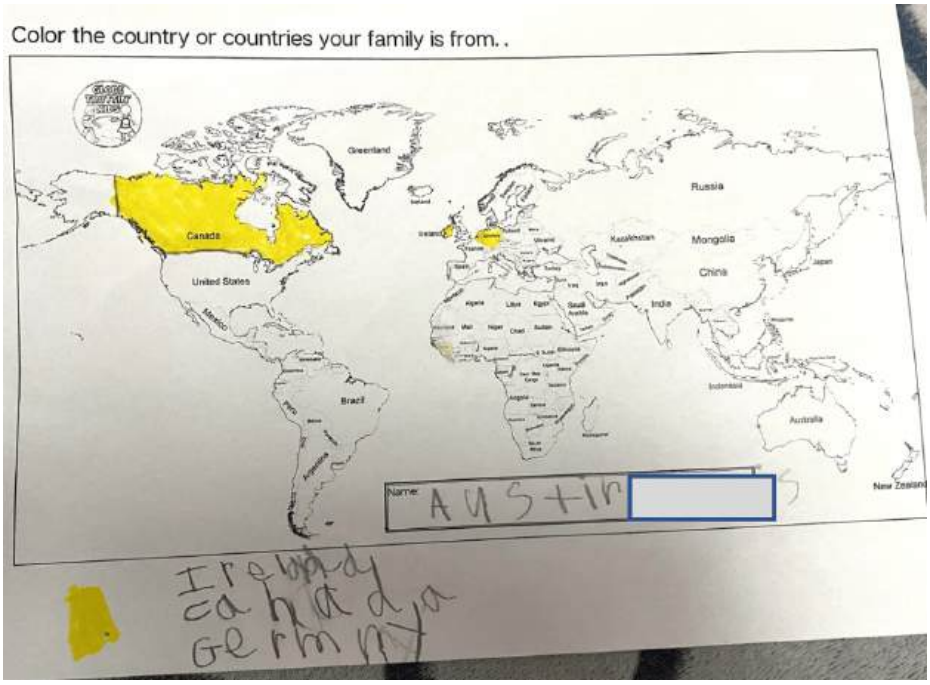

Figure 1. Austin's map of his family's origins before coming to the United States

Figure 2. Anna's family tree (L-R: Deby, Marvin, Maria/Vicente, Andy, Samantha, Emily, Me, Lucas, Cats, Birds)

To further explore our families, students created family trees. Each student's tree was different and included many people or just a few. Students shared their family trees with the class. They enjoyed hearing the different names of family members and how their classmates refer to their parents and grandparents. Figure 2 shows Anna's family tree. Anna included four tiers: grandparents, parents, siblings, and pets.

Read-Alouds and Learning about Others

In kindergarten our read-aloud experiences began with the *Magic Tree House* series by Mary Pope Osborne (2008). This read-aloud time was a transitional afternoon "down time" activity but in first grade became a coveted opportunity for first graders to read-aloud to their peers. Lacey typically did the read-aloud until one day, on her own, Emelyn naturally engaged in choral reading by reading aloud with Lacey. Emelyn was seated next to Lacey. When Lacey noticed Emelyn looking at the pages, she began to track the reading with her finger. Once Emelyn saw where Lacey was in the book, she read out loud with her. Lacey trailed off reading and Emelyn continued to read until the end of the chapter, with Lacey joining back in when Emelyn needed support. Soon after Emelyn's read-aloud debut, her classmates eagerly and voluntarily followed suit. This gave students confidence and helped them identify themselves and each other as readers.

The *Magic Tree House* series also provided an opportunity to research and learn more about faraway places. For example, students were excited to learn about the Olympics in our classroom and in physical education and art (see the Sutherland and Elisea vignette in this issue). With the Winter Olympics in Beijing, China, around the Lunar New Year, we read *Day of the Dragon King* (Osborne & Murdocca, 1998). In this book the main characters, Jack and Annie, travel back to ancient China. While in China, a powerful emperor called the Dragon King orders that all books be burned. We located China on the world map, discussed the

symbolism of the dragon in China, and researched if there was really a Dragon King who ordered books to be burned. The students "lived" their way through *The Magic Tree House* books rather than merely listened to gain knowledge (Rosenblatt, 1938).

Our study of China extended beyond this with other read-alouds. One example is *The Great Race: Story of the Chinese Zodiac* by Christopher Corr (2018). This book explores the Chinese zodiac by having the animals take part in a great race. We learned what the animals represent and how they relate to the Chinese New Year. After reading the book, we researched the year students were born, what the animal was for that year, and the traits of that animal. We invited students to think about what they saw in themselves that was the same as their animal. Kat's response to being born in the Year of the Horse is in Figure 3.

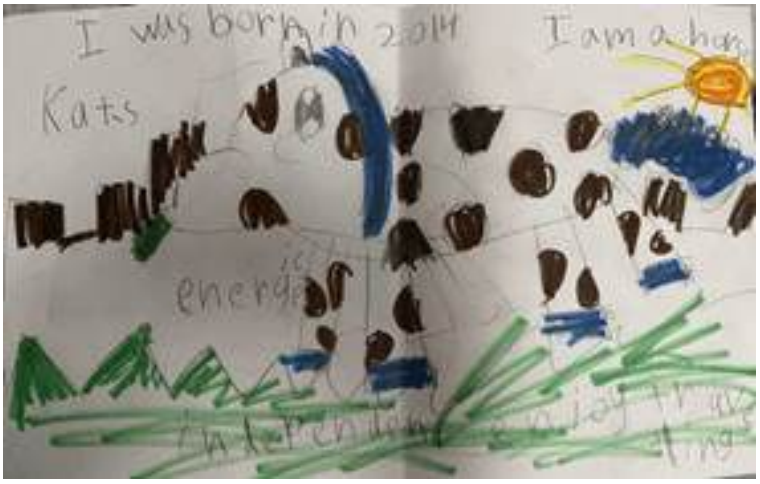

Figure 3. Kat's response: I was born in 2014. I am a horse. Energetic, independent and enjoy traveling.

Figure 4. Riley's kite with Bing Dwen Dwen, the 2022 Winter Olympics mascot

We also explored other Chinese traditions and symbolism with read-alouds. Grace Lin's (2004) *Kite Flying* celebrates the Chinese tradition of kite making. In the book a family makes kites together. The book includes a summary of the history and importance of Chinese kites, including how the shape of a kite can symbolize the traits the person flying it wishes to possess. We invited students to make kites. Their kites included lizards, dragons, and many more animals. Riley drew Bing Dwen Dwen (the 2022 Olympics panda bear mascot) on her kite. She said that while studying the Olympics she learned that Bing Dwen Dwen was lively (see Figure 4).

Our study of China included many other read-alouds, including folk tales like *Two of Everything* (Hong, 2017), and concluded with a Lunar New Year parade for which students made tigers, drums, dragons, and other items. Noel and C.J. brought oranges from home to hand out to parade patrons because we learned that oranges symbolize good luck. They also made a box to carry the oranges on which they glued Chinese characters that said, "Happy New Year" on the side (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Students in the Lunar New Year parade that included a box of oranges

Through our read-alouds students grew in their knowledge and understanding about themselves, others, and the world without ever leaving the classroom.

Bringing Home-Reading into the Classroom

To strengthen our home-school connection, we invited students' parents to visit and share their favorite childhood books and/or their first grader's favorite book. Students loved parents coming to the classroom and asked many questions.

Jenna's mother bought books from her childhood growing up in the Czech Republic. She explained that she read the books when she was in first grade. We located the Czech Republic on a globe in reference to where we live in Arizona. Students looked through the books and compared our first-grade books with first-grade books in the Czech Republic. They recognized words that were similar to English and differences in letters. They enjoyed hearing about Jenna's mother's first grade experiences.

Figure 6. Students making boas with Noel's mother

Nolan's mother shared one of Nolan's favorite books, *The Ninja Club Sleepover* by Laura Gehl and MacKenzie Haley (2020) about a group of girls who are best friends. The girls learn to face their fears and celebrate their true selves. When asked what the message in the book was, Riley said, "To love who you are and do not try to hide who you are because your friends will still love you." She asked Lacey to send the title to her mother because she wanted a copy for her own library at home.

Noel's mother visited and read *Amy Wu and the Perfect Boa* (Zhang & Chua, 2019) about an Asian-American girl who tries to make the perfect boa (a steamed dumpling/bun, traditionally with a pork filling). Everyone in the family makes boas perfectly except Amy, but Amy continues to try. Noel's mother demonstrated how to make boas, wrote out the steps, and invited students to make their own perfect boas (see Figure 6). Students commented on how the boas looked like tacos and the dough felt like regular bread. In their journals, they wrote their favorite recipes to make at home or their favorite foods. Nora wrote a recipe for cookies [see Figure 7 (left)] while Taylor listed her favorite foods [see Figure 7 (right)]. Taylor commented, "My family likes to barbecue."

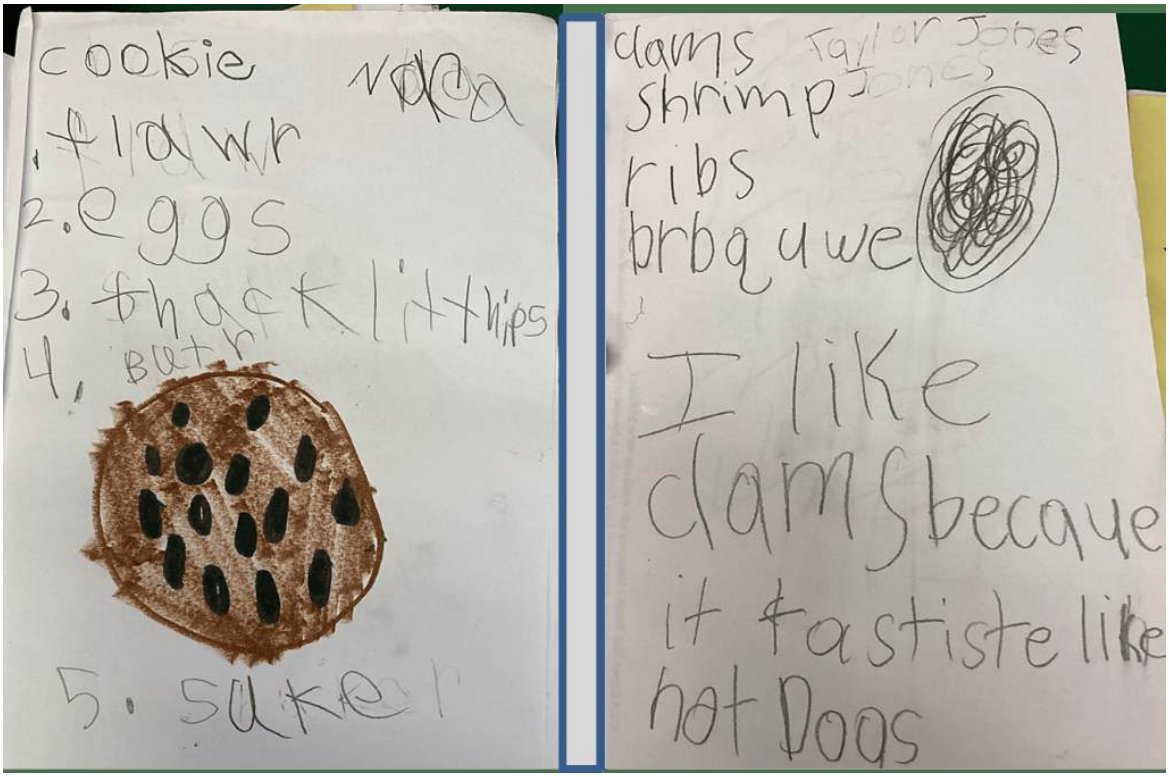

Figure 7. Nora's cookie recipe (left: cookie, 1. flour, 2. eggs, 3. chocolate chips, 4. butter, bake). Taylor's favorite foods (right: clams, shrimp, ribs, barbeque; I like clams because it tastes like hot dogs.)

These varied experiences allowed students and parents to share their favorite books from home, bringing reading personalities into the classroom so we could better understand the types of literature they enjoyed now or in the past. Bringing books from home offered children an opportunity to experience books from different genres and diverse backgrounds and cultures that may not have been in our classroom library.

Book Clubs

As readers ourselves who enjoy participating in book clubs, we decided it's never too early to invite students to join book clubs. Our first graders responded more enthusiastically than we envisioned and became voracious readers!

Our first-grade book clubs consisted of three-to-four students who read the same book. Each student had a book club folder which contained suggestions on different ways to respond to what they had read. These suggestions included writing details after each chapter, creating a cultural x-ray for a character, writing/drawing connections the reader made with the book, or creating a book report. It was important to us to provide students with choices because, as Stephanie Affinito (2021) states, "If we consistently require artificial responses to reading, the reading will become artificial to our students" (p. 52). Our hope was that providing space for students to choose how to express their responses to what they read would maintain a balance between assessments and enjoyment of reading. Figure 8 shows students preparing for their book clubs.

Figure 8. Students preparing for their book clubs

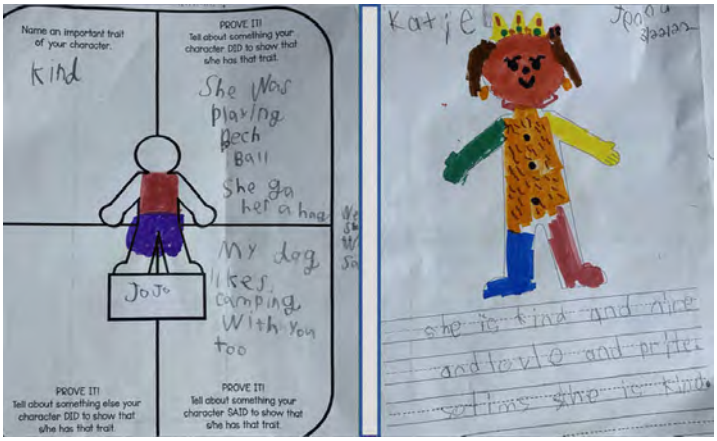

Figure 9. Avery's analysis of Katie's friend JoJo (left: Kind. She was playing beach ball. She gave her a hug when she was sad.; My dog likes camping with you too.) Jenna's character analysis of Katie (right: She is kind and nice and lovely and pretty. Sometimes she is kind.)

One of the favorite books among the book clubs was *Katie Woo and Friends* (Manushkin & Lyon, 2012). This book series is part of a beginning reading collection of short chapter books that follow the characters through multiple adventures. Katie Woo, the main character, is Chinese-American. After reading *Katie Woo and Friends*, the book clubs asked for more *Katie Woo* books. Students' responses indicated they not only related to Katie Woo but also empathized with her struggles. Figure 9 (left) shows Avery's analysis of Katie's friend JoJo and Figure 9 (right) shows Jenna's character analysis of Katie.

Students began requesting to sit in the esteemed Author's Chair to share book responses with their classmates. They were invested in the books and wanted others to know what they enjoyed and didn't enjoy. Once in the Author's Chair, students shared their thoughts, ideas, opinions, character maps or other ways they captured their reflections on the book. While sharing about *Stink the Incredible Shrinking Kid* (McDonald & Reynolds, 2021), Riley said, "I prefer nonfiction books about animals. If you enjoy fiction stories about boys, I would recommend this story." When Emelyn shared her response to Flat Stanley (Brown & Pamintuan, 2013) she said, "This book is not really my style." This led to a discussion about what she meant about style. These interactions allowed us to witness first graders' journeys in literacy and discover their passions for literature.

At first the book clubs were a structured time in the classroom but then developed into a more natural organic experience. The book club members would discuss the books and decide what to read next. Even the members in the book club became organic as students gravitated toward classmates who had similar reading interests instead of those at the same reading level.

We were able to watch relationships form over literature and the differences in reading level disappear. When a student needed help reading or understanding the book, the book club members helped each other. The clubs selected books from our diverse library, and they had the opportunity to form stacks of books of various genre/interest levels. All books were easily available and accessible to them. Stephanie Affinito (2021) states that the best piece of advice to strengthen reading communities is to "find a

reading partner: a fellow reader who is ready and willing to talk books, swap titles, and kibbitz about the contents" (p. 74).

Figure 10. Nolan's book about Mat and Peg (L-R: 1. Mat and Peg, Peg is not happy by Nolan; 2. Mat and Peg had a bad day. Peg is mad. Mat is sad.; 3. Mat is happy. Peg is sad day. Peg and Mat sat on a rug.; 4. Mat and Peg is sad bad day.; 5. The end.)

Writing and Illustrating Experiences

Choosing how to respond to books in the book clubs helped transform students into writers and illustrators, too! Nolan came to us in first grade as a novice in literacy, without much reading and writing experience. He took such an interest in our Mo Willems' (2018) *Elephant & Piggie* book series that he was determined to learn to read his favorite books and succeeded in doing that. Nolan's parents realized his desire to learn how to read, so they purchased the *Elephant & Piggie* book series for home use. Nolan then began creating his own books. Figure 10 shows Nolan's book about Mat and Peg. For him, it reveals his amazing growth as a reader and writer over the year.

The *Elephant & Piggie* books introduced students to speech bubbles, jokes, and silliness which they added to the books they were writing. The addition of the *Dog Man* series by Dav Pilkey (2022) to our library ignited students' curiosity and desire to create their own hysterical (at least to a first grader's sense of humor) "comic books" (graphic novels). Dean continued to add more pages to his book. He said, "Did you know that I am learning how to read and write doing this? I just wrote words I didn't even know I knew." By watching students' delight in adding page-after-page of silly, funny scripts, and corresponding cartoon-like drawings, literally put a proverbial "smile on our faces" as we prepared to proudly promote readers and writers into second grade, confident that they would continue their quests of their love of literacy.

Reflection

Stephanie Affinito (2021) writes, "Curious people wonder and question, inquire and investigate" (p. 53)

and this is what we hoped to instill in our first-grade class through a variety of experiences with global and other literature. Students grew and identified themselves as readers and writers as they were learning. From experiences, discussions, and students' comments, actions, and writings, we also have evidence that students saw, appreciated, and respected themselves and others as cultural beings with different understandings, perspectives, and backgrounds; valued similarities and differences they shared with each other; were curious and wanted to learn about the others and world; and continued to develop intercultural understandings.

As we look towards next year, we hope to further develop our curriculum with more global literature emphasis and continued curiosity and enthusiasm. Our goal is to provide books that not only mirror the students' lives but also provide windows into new perspectives and ideas (Sims Bishop, 1990).

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Learning About the Olympics: An Integrated Curriculum and Multi-Class Celebration

Cassandra Sutherland and Lacey Elisea

We are educators at Creation School, a private Lutheran school located in Vail, Arizona, a small community approximately 20 miles southeast of Tucson. Creation School is developing a curriculum using global literature. This curriculum focuses on challenging students' thinking, encouraging open-minded respectful perspectives towards others whose ways of living may be similar to or different from theirs, inviting students' inquiries into perplexities they notice in their world, and expanding their intercultural understandings (Short, 2016).

Lacey Elisea is the first grade teacher and has been teaching preschool to first grade for six years. She has been in the Vail community for most of her life and has strong ties to the community. Cassandra (Cassi) Sutherland has been at Creation School for three years. Initially, she taught preschool (2-3 year-olds) and for the two years she has taught both physical education (P.E.) and art for the K-5 school. She focuses on classroom collaborations with teachers to create relevant learning experiences and rigorous school projects that encourage students' critical thinking about themselves and the world.

Our desire to collaborate across content areas and bring authentic experiences to our students led us to an integrated curriculum study of the Olympics (see the Elisea and Metzger vignette in this issue). Due to Covid, both the 2021 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics were held in one school year. The Olympics provided us with an opportunity to build a curriculum with different world cultures/countries coming together to celebrate individual and team abilities, teamwork, and sportsmanship. We believed a study of the Olympics would expand students' perspectives of the world, their understanding of themselves and their abilities, their respect for those who are different from them, and their realization of common human experiences, desires, and emotions that they share with others in the world (Short & Thomas, 2011).

Learning About the Olympics

Jonathan Barnes (2011) points out that cross-curricular learning can strengthen "left brain – right brain" connections by providing students with real life scenarios and opportunities to experience and apply their learning in different areas and contexts. By integrating areas of the curriculum students have broader contexts to connect information and concepts which expand and deepen their learning and understanding.

To introduce the Olympics Cassi read *All About the Olympic Games* by Marisa Boan (2021) in art class. The book describes how the Olympic games began in Greece and how the Olympic flame is lit in Olympia and passed hand-by-hand to runners all the way to the Olympic Stadium. Cassie and the students located Olympia and Tokyo, where the 2021 Summer games were being held at the time, on a world map. This led to questions such as, "What do they do if they have to cross an ocean or other water?" and students suggested possibilities. Students talked about uniforms and representing a team or country. Some students wanted to wear uniforms for P.E. the next day. Many wore USA apparel, but some wore soccer uniforms from different countries like Brazil and the Czech Republic. Students made torches with card stock and tissue paper (see Figure 1) which they took turns passing to each other.

Figure 1. First graders holding their Olympic torches made in art class

Cassi shared information about the opening ceremony and lighting the Olympic flame and the closing ceremony where the Olympic flame is extinguished. She kept many Olympic books in the art classroom for students to browse and for her to pull to read. This also helped cultivate students' reading habits (Affinito, 2021).

Summer Olympic Games

The Summer Olympics were held in Tokyo, Japan, in 2021. Students studied the Olympics in their classroom with Lacey and in P.E. and art with Cassi. Cassi and Lacey read as much global literature as they could related to the Olympics but not all read-aloud books were global literature due to availability. P.E. classes were two days a week. Cassi used one day to read about the Olympics and practice events and the other day as the Olympic Game Day for each class in Kindergarten through fifth grade.

To begin, Cassi read *I Live in Tokyo* by Mari Takabayashi (2004) to provide first graders with information about Tokyo. Cassi also read *The Triumphant Story of an Underdog Olympig* by Victoria Jamieson (2016). This book is about a pig who competes in many events and never wins but keeps trying until he eventually gets discouraged. During the book the pig talks to his mother. Cassi asked the students how they thought Olympig's mother would respond. Students agreed she would reply, "It's ok if you don't win, I still love you." Kora said, "Mom would say, 'It's ok, try again.'" While reading the book, students noticed the differences in the animals' bodies and said that a pig couldn't win a race against a cheetah. This led to a discussion of how body types relate to abilities for them, animals, and Olympic athletes.

After reading the book, students talked about the importance of practicing the sport or event that an Olympian competes in and how no one can win the Olympics without practice. They had a broader discussion of the importance of practice in everything, including things other than sports, such as math, reading, writing, and drawing.

Figure 2. Kindergarten performing the torch relay

Figure 3. Kindergarten lighting the Olympic flame

Events for our Summer Olympics included sprint, long distance, discus (throwing a frisbee), and shot put (throwing a wiffle ball). Students practiced these during P.E. in preparation for Olympic Game Day. Each class had a torch relay to signify the torch moving from Olympia to Tokyo (see Figure 2).

On Olympic Game Day Cassi entered the classroom carrying an Olympic torch with the Olympic theme playing on her phone. Students had an Olympic parade as they walked over to a bowl with the Olympic torch and threw the tissue paper in the bowl to signify the start of the games with the lighting of the Olympic flame (see Figure 3).

Summer Olympics Game Day

In kindergarten, students had individual sports but the focus was not on winning and losing. Students participated in shot put (throwing a wiffle ball), discus (throwing a frisbee), and some short distance sprints. Kindergarten students finished with a team relay after which each of them received a gold medal after crossing the finish line. The whole class stood on the podium while the national anthem was played.

In first through fifth grades, students competed against their classmates in the four individual events they practiced and the team relay event at the end of the class. Children chose whether or not to participate in the individual events. Participation was high and no child sat out every event.

The first three finishers in each event received a medal (gold, silver, or bronze) in our medal ceremony where we held up the American flag while the USA National Anthem played. The finishers stood on the podium and received their medals (see Figure 4). The medal ceremony encouraged students to be happy for their classmates who won the event. Cassi discussed with the students that it's natural to be disappointed to not win but important to celebrate that they tried and participated; everyone has different talents and abilities. Students took turns presenting the winners with their medals. This encouraged sportsmanship and helped those who were upset they didn't win to process their emotions and move on for the next event.

Figure 4. First grade winners of the sprint event

The last event of our Summer Olympics Game Day was a relay in which everyone in each class participated. There was one team that consisted of the whole class. One by one students ran a lap around the playground and passed the baton to the next child. When the last child was running, we held up a finish line to mark the end of the relay. The last child of the team relay ran through the finish line (see Figure 5).

When the class relay finished, all students stood on a large podium for the medal ceremony as a class "team." Every child in the class received a gold medal while the National Anthem played (see Figure 6). This was a great way to end the events.

After the relay medal ceremony, each class walked over to the Olympic flame and removed the tissue paper to represent extinguishing the flame for the Summer Olympic closing ceremony.

Winter Olympic Games

The Winter Olympics occurred in Beijing, China, in 2022. As an introduction, Cassi read *Team Sports of the Winter Games* by Aaron Derr (2020). Each class had a torch relay in which every student participated. Students cheered for their classmates as they finished a lap with the "torch." As they took turns running, Cassi would ask, "Where are they going?" and students would respond, "Beijing, China!" For the opening ceremony Cassi arrived at each classroom with a "torch" in her hand and the Olympic theme playing on her phone. Students paraded with her to the bowl to "light" the Olympic flame to begin their games.

Figure 5. First grader Nolan finishing the relay for his team

Figure 6. First graders celebrating their gold medal victory in the team relay

Our Winter Olympics included four sports: speed skating (felt attached to shoes to move on the gym floor), luge (two scooters tied together), curling (using air stones and a mat, like air hockey), and ice hockey (played as field hockey). Cassi designed these events to support students with different abilities and skills, giving everyone opportunities to win. Speed skating was as much about students keeping their feet with felt attached on the floor as it was about being fast. It also required patience if the participant "lost" a felt skate. Luge was easier for students who weighed less and were smaller. Scooters were tied together and students lay on their backs and pulled themselves to the fence with a rope. Curling was good for students with a light touch and consistent throw. Students also needed to understand the rules quickly and know how to add and subtract.The last event, ice hockey (field hockey) was a team sport in which everyone received a medal. As an active exercise it catered to the competitive students who were fast and coordinated.

Figure 7. Kindergartners participating in the luge event

The first event was the luge. Two participants raced at a time in elimination rounds. Each would lie on a sled with their feet pointed toward the finish line (a fence). Cassi gave them a rope attached to the fence and each child pulled their body to the fence while trying to keep control and not fall off the sled. The first child to the fence won. The winners moved on and competed against each other in elimination brackets.

To learn about speed skating and the rules, Cassi read Speed Skating: Global Citizens: Olympic Sports by Ellen Labrecque (2018). Speed skating required practice and once again Cassi and students discussed the importance of practicing something to improve skills. To speed skate, students stood on pieces of felt and tried to scoot around a loop of cones in the gym (see Figure 8). After the individual speed skating event, the whole class participated in a speed skating relay where the class was divided into two teams and they relayed around the cones with batons.

Figure 8. First graders practicing speed skating

Figure 9. First graders competing in curling

To introduce curling, Cassi read *Curling: Global Citizens: Olympic Sports* by Ellen Labrecque (2018). Curling was similar to air hockey. Students were divided into teams. In every round, the air stone closest to the inside of the circle won. Participants could count all their stones that were closer to the center of the circle than their opponents, but none that the opponent had beaten. The last stone thrown in a round was the hammer which was used to, hopefully, hit an opponent's stone out of the circle while simultaneously putting the participant's stone into the center circle. Curling was a favorite of the students.

An awards ceremony occurred after each event. Students stood on the podium to receive their medals while the National Anthem played. For curling, each smaller team competing on a mat received a gold or silver medal depending on which team won the game. Everyone medaled in curling as long as they participated.

The final event was ice hockey. Cassi read *Ice Hockey: Global Citizens: Olympic Sports* (Labrecque, 2018) to introduce the event. For this event, the entire class was split into two teams to play field hockey (see Figure 10). Everyone in this event got a medal. In the case of a tie, both teams received gold, otherwise one team received gold and the other silver.

Figure 10. First graders competing in field hockey

The end of the P.E. Winter Olympics was marked by each class extinguishing the Olympic flame.

Classroom Connections

Students were excited about the Olympics and discussions of the events, rules, teams, winning and losing bubbled up in the classroom. During class, Lacey showed clips of events occurring in Tokyo or Beijing and the award ceremonies. Student experiences at school encouraged them to make connections with the Olympic events at home and they came to school talking about what they'd seen on television or discussed with their families.

Lacey saw this as an opportunity to invite first graders to write about their Olympic experiences. As Stephanie Affinito (2021) states in *Leading Literate Lives*, it's important to provide students with outlets "to write from their own personal experiences to learn more about themselves" (p. 121). Students wrote

opinion papers on their favorite winter sports, providing reasons for their choice. Many students also discussed their enjoyment of P.E. and art in their reasons for picking the sport. The topic was relevant to their lives, which created an ease in the writing process.

Olympic learning occurred across other content areas. For example, in math students interviewed their classmates to collect data on favorite sports. Noel selected soccer, speed skating, curling, and baseball as categories in which students could vote "because these are my favorite sports." Prior to the Olympic study, Noel and other students did not know what speed skating and curling were. Noel converted his data into a picture graph showing what he discovered (see Figure 11).

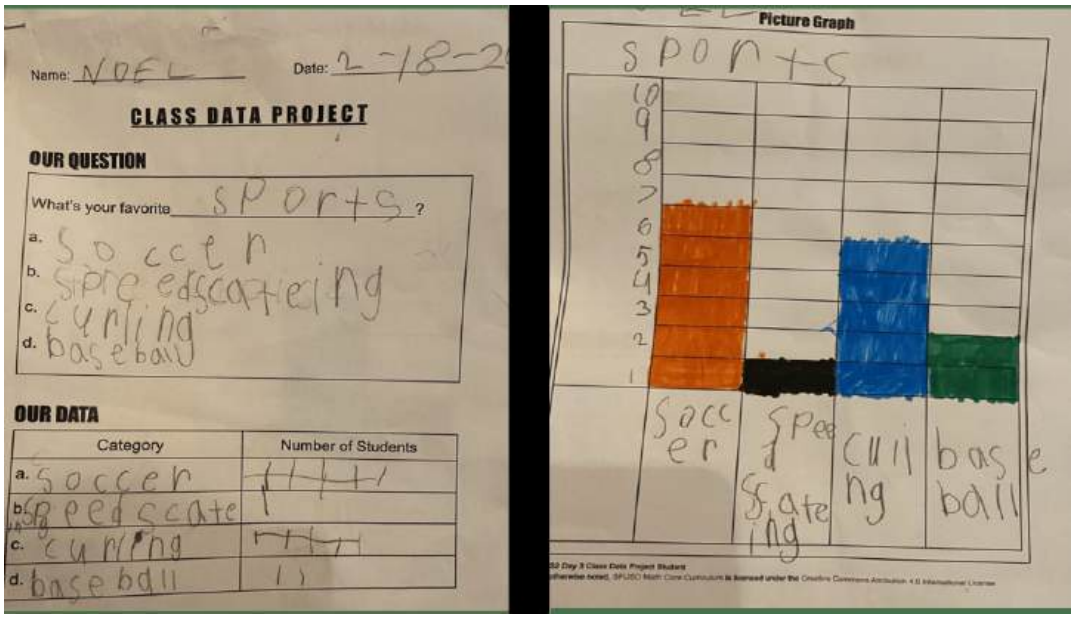

Figure 11. Noel's data (left) and picture graph (right) of his classmates votes

Figure 12. C.J. sharing his findings about the Olympics in the *Scholastic Children's Dictionary*

During free reading, C.J. was browsing the *Scholastic Children's Dictionary* (2002) and was excited to find information about the luge (see Figure 12). He then looked for the other sports he'd learned about in class. He said, "I love reading more about Olympic sports."

Social Emotional Learning

Our Olympics study also invited students to reflect on themselves. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2022) defines social and emotional learning as "the process through which children develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." Studying the Olympics offered students an opportunity to use and develop many social emotional skills.

One of the books Lacey read for the Winter Olympics was *What are the Winter Olympics?* (Herman, 2021). In the first chapter Herman shares Shaun White's story, including how he grew up in San Diego, California, a place without snow, yet became a gold medalist in snowboarding. Students related to his story because we do not get snow in southern Arizona. Herman explains how White had won gold medals in the 2006 and

2010 Olympics and was favored to win the gold medal in 2014 but finished fourth. Students discussed how they would feel if this happened to them. Riley said, "I would continue to practice for next time," while John stated, "I would be proud of my other gold medals."

After reading about Shaun White, Lacey the students watched a video clip of his triumphant return to the Olympics in 2018, when he again won the gold medal. White was behind the other snowboarders until his last run but he won the event. Olympians who lost after being ahead of White congratulated him. Lacey asked the first graders, "How do you think the Olympians who lost are feeling?" Dean responded, "Disappointed because they lost!" Most of the class agreed. Lacey discussed with the students how the video showed Olympians who lost smiling as they congratulated White and enjoying the moment of White performing at his best with him. Students discussed emotions and ways to handle those emotions when events do not happen as one might want, reflecting also on their own experiences with our Olympics.

Reflection

We decided to study the Summer and Winter Olympics as they were happening in Tokyo and Beijing because we believed that study would expand students' perspectives and connections with different parts of the world, their understandings of themselves and their abilities, their respect for those different/more skilled than them, and their realization of the common human experiences, desires, and emotions they share with others around the world (Short & Thomas, 2011). We are confident that occurred. Through experiences with global literature, nonfiction books, news reports, video clips, and practicing and competing themselves, students learned about unfamiliar places, sports, and athletes.

The study also provided us with an opportunity to celebrate individual and team abilities, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Students saw how countries and athletes from around the world came together for a global event. They learned to challenge themselves, work towards common goals, celebrate individual and team abilities, and show disappointment if they lost, but also congratulate the winners. They learned and experienced that people of all ages around the world share a universal humanness related to desires, needs, and emotions. In addition, the study provided the opportunity to integrate reading and writing across the curriculum offering multiple broader contexts for students to connect information and concepts and expand and deepen their learning in authentic ways (Barnes, 2011).

As we continue to grow our curriculum, we hope to incorporate more global literature and in-depth studies of multiple cultures/countries. We also hope to incorporate more teachers and provide more opportunities for these types of learning experiences.

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