

TEACH GLOBALLY: GLOBAL LITERACY INVITATIONS

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There has been growing consensus among educators, business and government sector about the urgency to have globally competent teachers who can prepare globally ready students to thrive in today's diverse, complex and interconnected world. Although numerous global competence frameworks and matrices emerge, there is lack of transparency about what teaching globally looks like in classrooms and the types of learning experiences that help students develop their global competence. A team of experts from Indiana University and, more recently, mentor teachers, has engaged in systematic efforts to teach globally by providing professional development to K-6 teachers throughout Indiana on how to use globally-themed picture books to create global literacy invitations, i.e., teacher-created and student-led learning investigations. The aim of the Global Literacy Invitations project is to help in-service teachers develop their own and their students' global competence while engaging in meaningful inquiry-based global

exploration beyond the pages of globally-themed picture books.

Why Teach Globally?

Rapid technological, economic, social, and environmental changes are making today's world increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Consequently, the world in which students live and work is increasingly different from the world in which their parents and teachers grew up (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Although many people do not realize how global everyone's lives have become, recent societal trends (e.g., career readiness, digital connectivity, demographic diversity, and cross-border challenges) have confirmed the urgency for global focus in education (Corapi & Short, 2016; Tichnor-Wagner & Manise, 2019). Educators have the role to tailor students' educational experiences so they engage in more powerful, relevant and transformational learning to meet these continually evolving demands and opportunities (Gardner, 2007).

Teaching globally and global education are often mentioned in the United States. However, as West (2012) observes, they are rarely systematically integrated into everyday classroom practices. The ever-evolving scope of teachers' skills has come to include skills that address the demands for twenty-first century student skills. In line with highlighting the need for critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, literacy "has gone from being about 'learning to read' to 'reading for learning' (West, 2012, p.1). In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education recognized the importance of global competence and added it as one of the components in the definition of twenty-first century education. By recognizing the need for a globally competent task force, the Department of Education's goal has been "to increase the global competencies of all U.S. students, including those from traditionally disadvantaged groups." (as cited in West, 2012, p.2). Many experts also agree that the majority of American students are not globally competent and thus do not possess those twenty-first century skills (West, 2012). Concurrently, in non-US contexts, educating students to be globally competent means to simply educate them. As a result, global education in the United States is often considered as an add-on and is oftentimes

reduced to one Cultural Night per semester or year, if at all.

Nowadays, culture in schools is integrated and celebrated in minimal ways. On the one hand, our classrooms have never been more diverse linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically (De La Garza & Lavigne, 2019; Jaumont & Stein-Smith, 2019). With the current trends in global migration, the student population of our classrooms will become even more diverse in the upcoming years (Tichnor-Wagner, Parkhouse, Glazier & Cain, 2019). Although teachers are expected to address the needs of our increasingly diverse students, many of them are not sufficiently prepared to do so (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010; Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Kouritzin, 2004). On the other hand, culture in today's schools is only celebrated through the Five Fs: food, fashion, famous people, festivals, and flags (Richards, 2015). The experiences, values, backgrounds and cultural practices of our students are rarely integrated in a structured way into those students' learning practices. Weaver's (1986) cultural iceberg distinguishes between two levels of culture: surface and deep culture. Surface culture includes a culture's visible aspects: language, food, flags, holidays, and music. Deep culture includes aspects such as religion, values, social norms, and attitudes

that are very often the aspects that underlie and drive our day-to-day behaviors and decisions (Richards, 2015; Weaver, 1986). The Five Fs of culture correspond to surface level in Weaver's cultural iceberg. By solely focusing on the Five Fs of culture we, as educators, fail to provide opportunities for our students to reach deeper understanding and appreciation of their own culture as well as other cultures.

There are numerous global competence definitions and frameworks emphasizing its multifaceted nature and including knowledge, dispositions, and skills as its three domains (Landorf, Doscher & Hardrick, 2018). Although there is more discussion about the importance of global competence among our teachers so that they can prepare students who are globally ready and involved citizens of the world, it is not transparent enough what global competence looks like in today's classrooms. Tichnor-Wagner and Manise (2019) have emphasized the need to work directly with teachers in order to expand their knowledge and skills related to developing empathy among their students, appreciation of diverse perspectives and cultures, familiarity with trends and conditions in their own communities and the world, and students' ability to communicate and solve problems with people of diverse backgrounds. Mansilla (2016) emphasizes

that "educating for global competence is no longer a luxury, but a necessity" (p.12). Furthermore, she highlights that in order to nurture global competence, we need to do more than simply add "more continents, rivers, and capitals to our already full K-12 curriculum" and calls for revisiting our instructional practices and education in general by examining the types of learning we are after and how best to nurture such learning (Mansilla, 2016, p.12).

As a response to Mansilla and Jackson's call for our students not only to have capacities in reading, mathematics, and science, but also be knowledgeable about world regions and global issues, sensitive to diverse perspectives, able to communicate cross-culturally and to act toward the common good, we find the use of quality globally-themed picture books and global literacy invitations around them as powerful practice for teachers and their students.

Why Global Picture Books?

Global picture books are emerging as a powerful tool for developing global competence among teachers and their students. Fiction and nonfiction books that feature not only differences but similarities of people and places have the potential to provide contexts to examine ongoing and

historical events while at the same time viewing the world as a whole (Esteves, 2018). Additionally, carefully chosen globally-themed picture books that do not reinforce stereotypes but rather represent an array of people's lived experiences and places from various parts of the world may develop a sense of belonging among the students and build knowledge about benefits and challenges of living in a culturally diverse world (Esteves, 2018, Monoyiou & Symeonidou, 2016). Picture books help provide access to the world and people of different cultures to students and teachers that have historically lacked access to study or travel abroad programs. Although students and teachers may lack firsthand experiences with some parts of the world, picture books allow them to learn from and with people who look and sound different than themselves (Esteves, 2018). Increasingly, educators have been commenting on the scarcity of available stories and resources from the cultures that are represented in their classrooms (Mansilla, 2016). Although in English, globally-themed picture books help fill the gap and attempt to expose students to cultures that are represented in their classrooms and thus bring the world into those classrooms and communities.

Global literature provides rich learning experiences for our students as it expands our

worldview, adapts to curricular needs, serves as a stepping stone for learning to think critically and is a path to academic achievement (Corapi & Short, 2016). In addition to learning about near and remote parts of the world, global books, as Corapi and Short (2016) confirm, align well with states' academic standards and lend themselves to connections across the different content areas and the development of critical thinking skills.

What are *Global Literacy Invitations*?

Global Literacy Invitations (GLIs) are student-centered intellectually rich learning investigations based on globally-themed picture books. Invitations, by definition, advocate for a student-centered approach to knowledge acquisition as "knowledge is co-constructed by students while teachers play the role of a facilitator during the inquiry process" (Lee, 2015, p. 64; Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008; Van Sluys, 2005). Moreover, invitations are both interrelated and grounded in critical literacy as they draw students in a personally-driven inquiry as well as invite them to examine power relations and social justice issues (Lee, 2015).

Global literacy invitations utilize globally-themed picture books to engage students in the inquiry process.

Figure 1

A selection of carefully selected, quality global picture books



Driven by the philosophy that all teachers are global educators, teacher participants experience how their global competence develops as they create authentic learning experiences for their students through the global literacy invitations in a naturalistic setting, i.e., their own classrooms. While integrating teacher and student learning, the GLIs aim to actively and intentionally engage students with global phenomena as well as promote an understanding of interconnectedness. The project aims are met by engaging in two types of inquiry-based global learning experiences: global learning experiences for teachers and global learning experiences for students.

Teachers utilize GLI strategies to incorporate global learning and thinking through:

- Reading their self-selected picture book.

- Researching and acquiring background knowledge about the country represented in the book. *Teachers can't teach what they don't know!*
- Creating 4-5 original, intellectually rich, cross-curricular GLIs, guiding students to make connections between their own culture and the target culture of the book (Appendix 1).

Figure 2

Global Literacy Invitations on Siberian Wise Sayings developed by Leana McClain following the read aloud of Little Lost Tiger



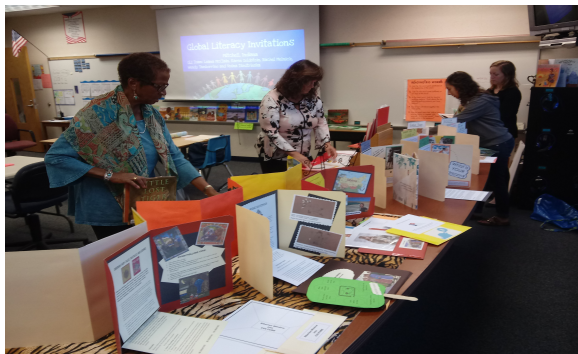
Students in the GLI collaborative learning environment:

- Are provided with the opportunity for further inquiry

- Are able to express themselves with open-ended responses
- Understand that there are no right or wrong answers, only thoughtfully formed responses based on newly acquired knowledge
- Work together to reach new insights
- Expand prior knowledge
- Make personal global connections.

Figure 3

Global Literacy Invitations developed by mentor teachers



Global picture books, short text with illustrations, makes them excellent for class read alouds. Read alouds provide a shared experience for the class and take the students on a journey outside of the classroom without leaving the classroom. Since invitations are a shared learning experience, it is critical that the students hear the story read aloud by the teacher as a whole class. Reading the book aloud will activate the students' prior knowledge, generate questions, provide an

opportunity for grand conversations, and provide an opportunity for students to begin their global journey together.

Critical literacy helps students read texts in a deeper and more meaningful way. Critical literacy and global literacy invitations link together in that they promote a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts- intercultural understanding, recognizing common feelings shared by all people, valuing the unique differences that each culture brings to the world, reflection on one's own culture as they learn about other cultures. Global literacy invitations go beyond the Five Fs of culture and beyond adding more continents, rivers and cultures to our curriculum and instead promote and support the concept of building bridges across cultures through high quality children's literature.

Global literacy invitations are of open-ended nature by design. Their open-ended nature allows endless opportunities for differentiation of instruction. As Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) state, differentiation of instruction is no longer optional nor supplemental, but rather imperative as teachers have the responsibility to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of their students. Some examples of differentiating the instruction through the global literacy invitations is the use of cultural artifacts,

graphic organizers, Google Earth, guest speakers, etc. In addition to explorations that are directly related to the selected picture book, students are invited to explore the topic and the target culture beyond the book. Using companion books, flexible groupings, and open-ended inquiry are some of the ways that support the beyond-the book exploration and invitation to engage and interact with the target culture and part of the world. The combination of having the same starting point (i.e., the read aloud of the same global picture book), differentiating the instruction to meet students' needs and inviting the students to explore beyond the book motivates the students to engage in learning experiences that are driven by their own backgrounds and interests while at the same time they are held responsible for their own learning. All these aspects of global literacy invitations align well with the tenets of culturally responsive teaching (i.e., assets based, simultaneously challenging and supporting students, students at the center of learning, and valuing students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds) (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017).

Global Literacy Invitations as a Game Changer

The combination of its theoretical underpinnings and instructional practices

make the global literacy invitations a vehicle towards developing globally competent teachers and globally ready students. Teacher preparation programs are currently saturated with state-mandated standards and bound by accreditation requirements. Neither of those foreground global competence as one of the critical skills that our teachers of today and the future should possess. Since global competence is not systematically integrated in those programs, it is oftentimes considered as “a good idea”, “an add-on” or “an if-time endeavor”. Professional development focused on global literacy invitations fills the existing gap in teacher preparation programs to prepare globally competent teachers. Three cohorts of teachers who have completed professional development on the creation and use of global literacy invitations have praised the transformative nature of the global literacy invitations and the global picture books for students' deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures and their own culture. Ms. Melnick, a teacher participant from the first cohort and a current mentor teacher shared the following experience: *I loved how accessible teaching global topics for kids can be through these global literacy invitations.* Ms. Tamborinno, another teacher participant and a current mentor teacher urged us to: *Create opportunities for teachers to get this [global literacy invitations] into*

more schools. Preparing globally ready students is an obligation of all the educators of today and tomorrow. Only globally competent teachers can nurture global readiness among their students.

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