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Major Instructional Approaches to Teaching Culture

In this chapter we will highlight multiple ways to teach elementary students about culture. In addition to providing multiple strategies for teaching culture to students, this chapter will indicate the appropriateness of each of the strategies to specified grade levels, the advantages and effectiveness of teaching culture each way, and examples of how to implement each strategy in the classroom. However, before we can fully understand how to implement cultural instruction in the classroom, it is important to understand what culture is. The term culture refers to the combination of beliefs, attitudes, values, ways of thinking, and patterns of behavior commonly shared by a group or groups of people (Culture, 2008). Keeping this in mind, let's now explore the instructional approaches to teaching culture in your classroom.

Methods for Teaching Culture

Direct Instruction
1. Teacher Presentations
2. Class Discussion

Indirect Instruction
1. Independent Study, Research, and Presentations
2. Interest Centers
3. Simulations

Direct Instruction

Direct instruction, or expository learning, is “the transmission of knowledge from a source to a receiver” or, when students receive information directly from the teacher, a textbook, records, films, encyclopedias, or trade books (Ellis, 2010, p. 155). Direct instruction is generally very efficient because it provides students with information rather than having them search for it on their own. We will explore two different expository learning strategies: teacher presentations and class discussions.
**Teacher Presentations**

Presentations for children at such a young age can appear to be a bad idea, but if the presentations are used along with other strategies and given in meaningful contexts, students should be able to apply the information in a meaningful way.

Presentations in the elementary school classroom should be short, focused and well thought out by the teacher ahead of time. Additionally, it may be beneficial to pause from time to time when presenting information and allow the students to share with a partner what has been learned. Along with being well prepared, outline a few key points that you would like your students to know about the culture of whichever area you are talking about; less is more (Ellis, 2010, p. 156). Furthermore, use examples when presenting information to the class. It is important to make real world connections between the information being presented and the lives of those in your classroom. Making these connections will not only aid the understanding of your students, but will also help them remember what they have learned.

This method of instruction is effective when information needs to be delivered to the whole class at the same time. This method uses whole group instruction and can benefit children at every level in the elementary school. It is important to remember, though, that the younger the group of children, the shorter their attention span may last. While teacher presentations can deliver information to students at every grade level, be sure to make the presentations interesting, well prepared, and a length suitable for the age group in which you are working.

There are many ways to incorporate teacher presentations in the classroom. Some of the most effective ways include, but are not limited to; direct teacher instruction, the use of textbooks, filmstrips, video, the internet, or even having a guest speaker (Ellis, 2010, p. 159). Textbooks and the internet can become great resources when learning about culture in your classroom. Due to the fact that this information is delivered directly to the students from the teacher, these resources can be used for instruction at any grade level without the complications of having to first teach how to research. Additionally, videos and filmstrips can be informative ways to deliver information about culture to your students. Of course, you would have to find informative and
meaningful segments of film to share with your students that are also age appropriate. Preparation in teaching is key. Finally, having guest speakers or members from the community come into the classroom is a great way for your students to learn about culture. Guest speakers could talk about growing up in their native country and how living in the United States was different or similar to how they lived at “home.” Guest speakers can be very informative and give learning about different places and people an exciting edge.

Overall, teacher presentations (though not limited to only the teacher talking) can be an effective way of teaching at any grade level. The key to making presentations work in your classroom is preparation and purpose; if you lack either of these in your lesson then this technique won’t be successful. It is also important to keep your students in mind and keep the presentation appropriate for the age level, attention span, and interest levels of your students.

Class Discussions

Class discussions fall under the category of direct instruction because although the students are participating and interacting with one another, the teacher is the one responsible for keeping the flow of the discussion going and is also in charge of the topics being presented in the discussion. Like any lesson in the elementary school, class discussions must be thought out and organized before being implemented in the classroom (Ellis, 2010, p. 157). Additionally, discussions should be on topics that the children are familiar with so that the discussion has content and can last the desired amount of time. In order to lead a meaningful discussion, keep these four components in mind:

1. A base of information,
2. A central focus,
3. Effective questions, and
4. A supportive classroom environment

The information base will come from what the students already know and can communicate with their classmates. It is important to remember that this information base will need to be built and that children may not have a strong base at the beginning of a unit. Classroom discussions could be used to both
introduce and reflect on a topic, allowing students to see the difference in what they did know and what had been learned. Discussions should lend to students’ ability to build answers and information off of what others had said.

Furthermore, discussions need to have a central focus. Before beginning a discussion with your class, think of one or two main ideas that the discussion should keep coming back to. During the discussion remind the students of what the initial focus for the discussion was and try not to let students get side-tracked with irrelevant information. While extraneous information can be interesting, it is not useful in the purpose of discussing to examine an idea (or culture) in depth (Ellis, 2010, p.157).

As a teacher you must also formulate effective questions before entering your students into a discussion. Keep in mind Bloom’s taxonomy when formulating your questions and remember to indulge your students in higher level thinking questions. In addition to using effective questions in your discussion, be sure to implement the use of wait-time, allowing your students enough time to both comprehend a question and come up with an answer or response.

Finally, when having a discussion in the classroom, it is important to create a safe environment for all of your students. The students in your classroom should be supported by their peers as well as yourself and should feel comfortable participating. Construct a safe and welcoming environment for all students to ensure that they will feel comfortable participating in classroom activities and thought.

Classroom discussions are effective only when the students are willing to participate and have sufficient background knowledge on the subject matter. It is important to keep this in mind and to also realize that this strategy may be most effective in the review or summarizing stages of learning about culture, after information has already been presented to the students. This strategy may also be most effective after special experiences such as watching a video, listening to a story, or hearing a guest speaker (all mentioned above). Classroom discussion can be an effective means of summarizing and pulling together what has been taught in a different way. Discussions can be effective at any grade level as long as the students and the teacher are prepared with the
necessary information. The important thing to remember is to plan discussions ahead of time and to also keep the topics age appropriate and focused on information in which the students have prior knowledge.

One way to implement the use of discussion in the classroom is to reflect on a shared experience. Using the idea of having a guest speaker, as previously mentioned, the teacher can build a discussion topic based on what the speaker previously presented to the class. This discussion could be performed the day following the guest speaker's visit. Remember, discussions should be thought of ahead of time and should have a focus and planned questions. These questions should relate directly to the information that the speaker presented to the class. Make the discussion meaningful and engaging for the students. Additionally, this could be a good opportunity to write thank-you notes to the speaker that clearly outline what the students learned from the experience.

**Indirect Instruction**

Indirect instruction is instruction in which the students take responsibility for much of their own learning through reorganized classroom activities (Ellis, 2010, p. 159). The students are active learners and your role as a teacher is to facilitate learning. The teacher must provide the environment and resources to make the learning possible, but the students are ultimately in charge of what is accomplished and learned. Sometimes called democratic learning, indirect instruction highlights student initiative and leadership, reflective thinking, and interdependence where students are actively and purposefully involved in their learning. We would like to discuss four different approaches to indirect instruction in the classroom; independent study, research, and presentations, group investigations, role playing, and simulations and computer simulations.

**Independent Study, Research, and Presentations**

While it is important to let children work together in building their knowledge, it is also important to see what children can do on their own. Independent study and research are very closely connected. These tasks should be age appropriate and in an area of interest to the student.
Research and study should be independent in terms of the students formulating and finding answers to questions, yet the teacher should provide the resources necessary for each student to be able to complete the task. Especially at the younger elementary level (K-3), teachers should provide resources (textbooks, internet sites, trade books, articles, etc) for study to the students. At the older age levels, 4th-6th grade, students may be expected to locate these resources on their own. In addition to providing resources for younger students, you as a teacher must demonstrate how to research and study material since this could be the first encounter that the students have had with “research.” Furthermore, interactive games, videos, or audio-texts may be beneficial to those students still learning how to read on their own.

After the information has been found by the students, you could have the children present their findings to the class. Presentations are important because they help build communication and interpersonal skills as well as allowing students to deliver information to their peers. In depth presentations should be expected of students in the late elementary years (grade 5-6) and shorter, more basic presentations can be expected of those from grades K-4. A presentation in the primary classroom could include basic information such as the who, what, when, why, and how of a specific idea related to a specific ethnic group or culture (holiday, event, belief, etc), whereas a presentation from a fifth or sixth grader could contain more detailed information about an entire culture or group of people (rather than one specific event). Like research, presentations should be age appropriate and also demonstrated to show the desired outcome.

An example of how to implement independent study and research in the primary classroom would be to have centers set up in the room with different media and ways for students to gain information on the cultural topic of their choice. At this age you could have the entire class studying one culture, but have different students research different aspects of the culture; holidays, food, traditions, language, environments, family life, etc. After the students “found” information relating to their topic, you could have the students share what they learned and compose a book or graphic representation with information from the entire class. For older students, research can ultimately be done individually with much less assistance. These students could complete the research on their own, covering many aspects of the culture of one group. Then, the students could present their research to the class in any chosen form; powerpoint, poster, research paper, game, etc. As you can see, students at any age can perform independent
study and research, but there may be a vaster way of learning and presenting material at the older age levels.

Study, research, and presentations can be implemented at all levels in the elementary school. As previously mentioned, these tasks must be age appropriate, meaningful, and may have more expectations or requirements of the older children (grades 5-6). Independent study and research is beneficial to the student because it allows for children to figure out what they can do on their own and also allows them to build self motivation and presentation skills.

**Interest Centers**

Interest centers are strictly child-centered and allow children to explore information in a self-directed manner. Additionally, children are able to choose the centers in which they are interested, promoting motivation in learning. The key concept in using interest centers is the freedom of choice for the students (Ellis, 2010, p. 164).

Interest centers, like all learning in the classroom, must be meaningful in addition to being both appealing and self-sustaining (Ellis, 2010, p. 164). When planning centers in your classroom think about what you want the children to be learning and if they can learn it on their own. Interest centers can include some of the following resources; “games, maps, puzzles, activities, computers, videos” literature, and books on tape (Ellis, 2010, p. 165). These items will not only aid the learning process and sense of autonomy for the students but are also appealing and make learning interesting. Once again, planning and preparation are extremely important when using interest centers in your classroom. As a teacher you must think about what centers you would like to have, the materials and resources needed, and then actually set up the center for your students to use. While your students are using the learning centers in the classroom you must be walking around the room making yourself available to the children if they have questions, concerns, or need help in a center. You should also be making mental notes of what is working well and what could be changed for the next time you use these centers in your room.

One way to use interest centers in your classroom would be to pick one culture to focus on and then create a different center for different themes related to that culture. For example, when looking at the Japanese
culture, you could create centers based on Japanese traditions, holidays, language, dress, cuisine, and/or etiquette. While there is a primary focus, Japanese culture, there are clearly possibilities for centers about different aspects of the culture. Any center could include relevant videos, story books, maps, pictures, artifacts, food, or customs for the students to explore in order to gain a better understanding of Japanese culture and lifestyle.

Interest centers are generally most beneficial to younger aged, primary children (K-3). In these centers the teacher plans material and includes resources appropriate for his or her students and allows the children to explore on their own. This is a beneficial form of instruction because it helps the students gain a sense of autonomy and also allows students to learn in ways in which they are interested (through picking which center to go to). While centers could be adapted into a teaching process suitable for children in the later elementary years, learning interest centers are generally seen at the primary level.

Simulations

Simulations are ways to represent social systems through different mediums, most commonly in the form of a game. The key to having an effective simulation is making sure that it represents reality and makes plausible connections to what is real life (Ellis, 2010, 179). While you will not find a simulation that has every aspect of reality portrayed, you must determine if the aspects that you find important for children to learn are accurately portrayed.

Simulations are effective with children at all grade levels, creating more in-depth rules and guidelines as the children get older. Simulation games are beneficial to understanding culture because it allows the students to see firsthand what it would be like to be in a place where people have different practices, and also what it is like when people make assumptions or form stereotypes about certain cultures or ethnic groups. Below I would like to explore the game, Bafa Bafa, as adapted from the Ellis (2010) text.
Bafa Bafa:

In this simulation, the class is divided into two separate groups. Each group is responsible for developing their own “culture” with certain rules, languages, attitudes, appearances, and dress. After the group has established these things for their culture, the students from each group will intermingle in order to experience foreign culture. The students will try to communicate and share ideas keeping their culture’s set of rules in mind.

This experience will help students understand the meaning of culture in both graphic and physical ways and will also show students how misconceptions or misunderstandings occur, and how stereotypes and prejudice evolve. Additionally, this is an enjoyable and interesting experience for students in which they can gain an emotional understanding of what it is like to be a visitor to another culture. Furthermore, this game helps show that values and customs very important to each culture and that there is not necessarily any culture or people better than another; they are simply different. This game is good for creating understanding about culture, cultural attitudes, and cultural norms (Ellis, 2010, p. 180).

This game could be used at any grade level in the elementary school, but older students may be able to draw more from this experience. While this was just one example of how a simulation can aid understanding about culture, other (simpler) games may be used in the lower elementary grades. In addition to making simulations age appropriate, remember that simulations must represent the real world, or aspects of the real world, that are important for students to learn.

Summary

There are many approaches to teaching culture to elementary aged children, some of which are outlined in this chapter. When teaching children it is always important to keep in mind the age and ability levels of the students you are working with. In addition to knowing what your students are capable of, you must also take into consideration the planning and organization needed to keep instruction in the classroom moving at a steady pace.

This chapter outlined different strategies for teaching culture in terms of direct and indirect instruction. Direct instruction refers to the teacher (or book, video,
guest speaker) delivering information to the students. In this form of instruction, information is given directly to the students and they do not need to create any knowledge on their own. This chapter gave detailed descriptions along with activity ideas for teacher presentations and class discussions. This chapter also talked about how to use forms of indirect instruction in your classroom while teaching culture. In this kind of instruction it is important to remember that the teacher acts as a facilitator of knowledge, but that the students themselves should be constructing this knowledge. Strategies for teaching in this way include, but are not limited to independent study, research, and presentations, the use of interest centers, and implementation of simulations and games. While all of these strategies are beneficial to learning, an effective teacher will not only choose one strategy for teaching his or her students. A combination of the strategies will be most beneficial to the understanding and constructing of knowledge in the elementary school classroom.
Strategies to Integrate Technology in Instruction and Class Activities

In this chapter we will be discussing the ways to incorporate technology into your classroom to build your students’ understanding of different cultures. The first example is using Nings in your classroom. The second way you can incorporate technology into your classroom is to introduce your students to Google Earth and have them explore the countries that may practice a certain culture. The third and last idea is to have your students use websites, such as http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/. These websites can be used to explore the history and aspects of another culture.

**Nings**

A Ning is a website that readers can post their opinions on a number of different topics and have discussions with students from all over the world about those topics. You can create a Ning as a class or students can create a Ning of their own that centers their attention on a particular topic. After creating a Ning, students can receive feedback from other students from different areas of the world. This can allow students, from different cultures to communicate with one another and discuss world issues and various content areas. They can also post their opinions on preexisting Nings. Students can also use Nings to research topics for projects they may have. Nings not only allow students to connect with others from different cultures, but they also help to expand their writing skills.
You, as the teacher, can set up a Ning with a password so only your class can post on it, or you can have it open so anyone can post their opinions on it. There are some guidelines you should review with your students before you allow them to log on and use a Ning. You should remind your students that anything posted on their ning should be school appropriate i.e. posts, pictures, videos, comments, etc. You should review with your students that it is never safe to give out any personal information over the internet. You should discuss with your students that things that they post on the internet will remain on the internet over a long period of time and explain why it is so important to be careful about what they post on a web page. This activity will help your students become more respectful of others' cultures and help them understand that different ways of thinking can be a useful way to come up with different perspectives on one topic. For more information, or to set up your Ning; go to www.ning.com.

**Google Earth**

Google Earth can be used for many different themes of Social Studies. It can be used in learning about Culture as well as Geography and many other topics. You can use Google Earth to demonstrate, to the students, where a particular culture is practiced throughout the world. While teaching about a certain culture, you can show your students where the culture would be practiced. If you are learning about the Spanish/Latino culture you show your students the many areas throughout the world that practice this culture. You can show them that there are several different countries and continents where this particular culture is practiced. You can have your students choose a country, that has a Spanish background, and take a virtual tour of the streets. You can also have the students find different, important landmarks within these areas of the world. Google Earth is a fun, easy way to get you students to explore the culture in which you are having them study.
Interactive Culture Based Websites

There are several websites out there that can help teachers provide their students with ways to discover cultures from other areas of the world. The Scholastic website is a great resource for many different topics, for teachers. There are several links within the Scholastic Website that teachers are able to use with their students to learn about different cultures. These links provide a variety of different activities that pertain to different cultures. [Http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic) is a link within the Scholastic Website that focuses on the Hispanic culture. This link provides interactive games for the students, biographies about famous Hispanic people, and stories about the Hispanic culture. There are several different online resources you can use to help your students learn about culture.

Summary

There are endless ways to integrate technology into cultural instruction in your classroom. While these ideas may take time to explore and set up before introducing them to your students, they will be well worth the effort. A Ning is a great idea for students to be able to connect to other people around the world, but remember, the posts that are used should be monitored by you as a teacher before shared with the class. Furthermore, Google Earth is a wonderful interactive experience that all students are sure to enjoy. Take your students on a virtual field trip to learn about culture in their own back yard, or half-way around the world! Finally, using websites such as scholastic.com is a great way to use educational resources for the students to reference and learn from in your classroom. Scholastic is for the teacher and the student, so take full advantage of all resources you are given in your classroom.
In this chapter we will emphasize several strategies for elementary teachers to use to integrate cultural instruction in daily, weekly, and monthly routines in the classroom. We will not only state strategies, but also explain the importance of having a multicultural classroom. We will also show how you can be cost effective in the use of these strategies and how to involve families in this process of creating a multicultural classroom. Before we go into detail about the strategies it is important to first understand what a multicultural embedded classroom is. The term *multicultural* refers to the appreciation or promotion of multiple cultures. In the classroom, this can be done at an organized level. A teacher can advocate for many cultures; showing that all cultures are equal and important in their own way. Now that you have an understanding of what makes a multicultural environment, we will go into more detail in how to incorporate multiculturalism in your classroom.

**Strategies to Embed Culture in the Classroom**

1. Visuals
2. Children’s Literature
3. Holiday Celebrations

**Visuals**

Using visuals is a key component in any multicultural classroom and can be used in different ways to meet different purposes. Visual representations in the classroom combine to make a culturally respected environment. One way to add visuals is through cultural diverse
pictures and posters. These types of visuals can be either bought through catalogs, online, or found at local teaching supply stores. Please visit http://educationalwarehouse.com/, www.lakeshorelearning.com, or www.scholastic.com/teacherstore/ for more information.

Cost Effectiveness

If buying posters or other culturally diverse materials is not in your budget, you could always make posters or find ways to incorporate different cultures in the supplies that you use every day. Posters can be made by simply cutting out culturally diverse pictures in magazines or catalogs and creating a collage. Some magazine ideas include Parenting magazine, Parent and Child, as well as American Baby. These magazines are kid friendly and you could even have the children help you find and cut out pictures to make a multicultural collage. Another resource that is teacher appropriate would be National Geographic. This magazine provides many cultural diverse pictures but you would want to cut these out on your own because sometimes the pictures or articles are not kid friendly.

Magazines can be bought, donated, or sometimes found at the local library. Oftentimes, at the end of the year, libraries will get rid of their old materials in order to get new ones. Take advantage of these free and reduced resources when getting materials for your classroom.
Family Involvement

Another way to create a diverse classroom through the use of visuals is with pictures of the families of the children in your room. At the beginning of the year you could encourage families to bring in pictures to be hung around the room. This would be useful because it would show the diverse culture of the students and their families in your classroom as well as add a sense of security for the students who will see their families on the wall every day. It will also show that the families of the students in your class are a part of the classroom and welcome at all times.

Children’s Literature

Using children’s literature is an important aspect of every classroom. When it comes to culture, there are many multicultural books that can be used in the classroom. These books inform children about culture in both visually stimulating and textual ways. The use of literature is exciting to children and can provide for multicultural learning with integrated literacy experiences. It is important for teachers to provide a wide range of multicultural books in the classroom and to be respectful and recognize as many cultures as possible. One way teachers can do this is by providing bilingual books that incorporate English as well as another language in the text. These books would also be great for you to send home to bilingual families. The family can read the book in their native language and in English. This would help children and families who are learning English to connect the languages and better
understand some of the vocabulary in the text. You can purchase these and other children’s books at stores such as Barns and Nobel or online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Please see Chapter 6, Books and Materials to Accompany Cultural Instruction, for a more detailed list of resources.

**Cost Effectiveness**

A more cost effective way for teachers on a budget to do this is by going to the library and finding culturally diverse books to borrow. You could do this every week or so depending on your schedule.

**Family Involvement**

Families can also be a great resource for children’s literature. You can ask families to donate used books to help with your classroom library, or for families to send in books for their children to share with the class. Additionally, families can be involved with their children’s literary development when you send home books for students to read on their own or share with their families. When parents and guardians see literature that include diverse cultures, they will appreciate the awareness and acceptance that has been built into the classroom.

**Holiday Celebrations**

The first two strategies, the use of visuals and incorporation of diverse literature, can be implemented into the classroom on a daily basis. The third strategy, Holiday Celebrations, should be incorporated only when appropriate and on a varied basis. You would not want to have a celebration every day or week for example. An example of a holiday celebration would be Kwanzaa. Knowing that this holiday is celebrated at the end of December, you should choose to talk about and explore the traditions of this holiday at this time. You may even want to integrate this is your morning meeting or during your calendar time.

There are so many cultures you could teach to your students, and with that, so many different holiday celebrations. The holidays that you plan to celebrate should depend on the diversity in your classroom and the importance of the holiday to that specific culture. If you plan engaging activities for every culture the children will enjoy the experiences. As
they are learning they will gain a sense of respect and understanding of the different cultures around the world and in their classroom. They will learn that although we are all very different and come from different cultures, we all have similar cultural aspects. This is an important concept that the children will learn to grasp when diversity is accepted and celebrated in the classroom.

**Cost Effectiveness**

Often, after holiday seasons, you will find Holiday items on sale at local stores. This is the best time to stock up on holiday items such as puzzles, art supplies, or multicultural decorations. You can then store the items until they are needed. This will help you cut cost and be prepared for upcoming events as they happen throughout the year.

**Family Involvement**

Celebrating holidays with families can be one of the most rewarding experiences and children benefit in many ways when doing this. Celebrations with families encourage family involvement in their child's school and educational process. Additionally, children whose families are involved will gain a sense of pride by showing how their families celebrate different multicultural events. You will most likely have some cultural diversity in your class, so family involvement can provide many culturally diverse experiences. Some experiences that you can encourage include having families bring in food dishes from their cultures and sharing them with the students in the classroom. A family might want to bring in a dish from their culture for the class to try. A good way to incorporate this would be setting aside a specific day for this. You could even do this once a month and have different families sign up to participate in this experience each month. This will not only provide a fun experience but also an educational one that integrates family involvement. Be sure to check with families and students in the classroom for any food allergies before setting this experience up.

**Summary**

There are many different strategies for elementary teachers to use when embedding cultural instruction in daily, weekly, and monthly routines. We
believe that the most effective ones are using visuals, building a multicultural library of children’s literature, and incorporating holiday celebrations and observances. When using these techniques, teachers can integrate their curriculum in a way that is both educational and respectful towards many cultures. Children will learn in a way that will not only benefit them now in their school years but also throughout life. With the United stated becoming more and more diverse it is important to build an understanding and acceptance towards cultural diversity in school and outside of school. As teachers, we need to guide children into having a multicultural state of mind, and demonstrating that even though everyone is different, we all have similar values, and beliefs, and that no one culture is any more important or superior than another.
We have decided to include three different project ideas that you could incorporate in your elementary school classroom to help build student understanding of culture and the world around them. The first idea, Pen Pals, is a project that can be incorporated at any grade level. The second project entitled Family Heritage can also be adapted to fit any grade level in the elementary school. Finally, the third project idea, Planning a Trip, is relevant to older students in the fourth to sixth grade range. We hope these ideas are helpful in constructing knowledge in your classroom!

**Pen Pals**

This project is suitable for students at any grade level in the elementary school. In order to get this project started, you (the teacher) must make arrangements with another school in the United States or in another country. After establishing these connections, assign each of your students a pen pal to communicate with in the form of friendly letters over the course of a few months to the rest of the school year.

This project will establish communication between your students and students in another part of the country or world. In the first letter, you should have your students describe themselves and their interests. After these initial facts have been shared between each pen pal, allow the students to talk about whatever it is they have in common with their new pal. Letters should be sent out as an entire class so that each student will send and receive the same amount of mail. In addition to learning about someone else and where they live, this project will also allow students to work on their handwriting.
skills, communication skills, and letter writing skills. Students can be graded based on the inclusion of the following items:

**Pen Pal Checklist:**

- ✓ Proper Letter Format
  - o Date
  - o Greeting
  - o Body
  - o Closing
  - o Signature
- ✓ Written Neatly or Word Processed
- ✓ Asks at least one question
- ✓ Includes information about school activities, home life, interests, and/or hobbies
- ✓ Completed on time (designated by teacher) so that it can be mailed with the rest of the class’s letters

**Family Heritage**

In this project, students will research their family heritage. The goal of this project is to show students how they all have different backgrounds but have still come together as one class, school, and community. This project can be adapted to fit the age appropriateness of any grade level in the elementary school.

**Adaption for grades K-2:**

Have students ask their parents about their family heritage and where their ancestors were from. From this information, have students write a few sentences (5-10) telling where their family came from, customs that their family shared, traditions, cuisine, and languages. In addition to writing about their family, provide students with a map and help them locate the original
countries in which their ancestors lived. Compare each child's ancestry to show the differences in where they came from.

Checklist:

- Information gained from parents/family/guardians
- Completion of required 5-10 sentences
- Use of neat handwriting
- Teacher: provide map and help students locate countries of origin
- Compare ancestry of students in your class

Possible follow up activity: have the students draw comparisons between their family heritage and that of their classmates. Graph the countries of origin to show how many students have similar and different ancestries.

Adaption for grades 3-6:

In addition to having students ask their parents about their heritage, have students conduct research based on the information provided by their parents. Have the students prepare a report, powerpoint, slide show, or poster that outlines the important information that they found in their studies. This could include, country of origin, traditions, customs, dress, cuisine, language, etc. In addition to sharing this information with the class, have the students bring in an ethnic food dish that reflects their family heritage.

Checklist:

- Information gained from parents/family/guardians as well as through research (citations or references provided)
- Completion of required essay, powerpoint, slide show, or poster
- Use of neat handwriting (where applicable)
- Brought an ethnic food dish to share with the class

**Planning a Trip**

This is a project designed for an upper grade level, perhaps fourth to sixth grade. The project is for the students to plan a trip. Give the students a budget of $5,000 and have them plan a trip to a place of their choice. Have them find a round-trip flight and hotel stay for a
Start out with $5,000 and keep track of how much is spent in an organized manor.

Find a round-trip flight to the city of your choice. (Outside the US)

Find a hotel to stay at for a week.

Find places to visit that are culturally significant.

Explain why you are going to visit the places you chose.

Find a mode of transportation.

Find places to eat dinner each night.

Compile your schedule, budget, and reasons for visiting each place in a word document.

Sample Project Budget and Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Item</th>
<th>Starting Balance</th>
<th>Amount Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round-Trip Flight</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
<td>$4,357.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel ($80/night)</td>
<td>$560.00</td>
<td>$3,797.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Rental</td>
<td>$282.35</td>
<td>$3,515.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$500.00</td>
<td>$3,015.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending Money</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$2,015.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money for Sights</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
<td>$1,015.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departure Flight:**

**6:00 am** Depart Harrisburg (MDT) Arrive Quebec (YQB) **11:36 am**

**Duration:** 5hr 36mn

**Continental**

8664 / 2199

Connect in Newark (EWR)

**Return Flight:**

**5:45 am** Depart Quebec (YQB) Arrive Harrisburg (MDT) **9:53 am**

**Duration:** 4hr 8mn

**Air Canada**

8909 / 7388

Connect in Toronto (YYZ)

Hotel Stay:
Hotel Le Saint Paul
229 Rue Saint-paul Quebec, Canada

Car:
1 week 190.00/with taxes 280.80($282.35)

Schedule:

Tuesday-
3:00pm- Arrive in Quebec and check into the hotel.
5:00pm- Dinner- Le Retro Restaurant
7:00pm- Back to Hotel room

Wednesday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel
9:00am- Montgomery Falls Park
6:00pm- Dinner – Le Veravin
7:00pm- Back to Montgomery Falls Park
9:00pm- Back to Hotel room

Thursday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel
9:00am-Shrine of Saint-Anne-de-Beaupre
12:00pm- Lunch
1:00pm- Old Quebec
7:00pm- Dinner- Buffet de l'Antiquaire
9:00pm- Back to Hotel room

Friday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel
9:00am- Parliament Hill
12:00pm- Lunch
1:00pm- Wendake
6:00pm- Dinner- L'Entrecote Saint-Jean
8:00pm- Back to Hotel room

Saturday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel
9:00am- Choco- Musee Erico
12:00pm- Lunch
1:00pm- Musee National des Beaux-arts du Quebec
6:00pm- Dinner- Café Riviera
8:00pm- Back to Hotel room

Sunday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel
9:00am- Musee du Fort
1:00pm- Lunch
2:00pm- Fortifications of Quebec  
6:00pm- Dinner- Creperie le Petit Château  
8:00pm- Back to the Hotel Room

Monday-
8:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel  
9:00am- Maison Vezina
12:00pm- Lunch
1:00pm- Parc du Bois-de-Coulonge  
6:00pm- Dinner- Restaurant Café de Paris  
8:00pm- Back to the Hotel room

Tuesday-
4:00am- Breakfast at the Hotel  
5:00am- Arrive at Airport  
10:00am- Arrive back in Harrisburg
Lesson Topic: Latin American Culture
Subject Area: Culture
Grade Level: 3-6
Time: Over the course of 3 days (Day 1: Geography and Language, Day 2: Belief Systems and Customs, Day 3: Celebrations and Food)

PA Standards:
7.3.B: Identify the human characteristics of places and regions by their cultural characteristics
   - Components of culture (language, belief systems and customs, social organizations, foods, ethnicity)
   - Ethnicity of people in the local community (customs, celebrations, languages, religions)

NCSS Standards:
Culture: Human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture; Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place
People, Places, and Environments: The study of people, places, and environments enables us to understand the relationship between human populations and the physical world

Learning Objectives:
Day 1:

After reading *Latin American* by Dorothy Chaplik to introduce the unit, students will examine the world and locate Spanish speaking countries in the world (Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Peru, etc) *Google maps or a standard classroom map*
Students will be introduced to the Spanish language by watching and participating in singing the letters of the Spanish alphabet. See video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUcu9PUh9_A

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the numbers 1-10 in Spanish after viewing the video “Spanish Counting Song” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYobdydz-KQ) and practicing the numbers multiple times.

Day 2:

Students will comprehend what is being read to them about beliefs and customs and answer the questions posed by the teacher.

Students will compare and contrast their beliefs and customs to those learned about in the text The History of Latin America using a Venn diagram.

Day 3:

After reading Latin American Cooking students will compare and contrast two Latin American dishes using a Venn diagram after research the dishes' histories and origins.

Materials:

Day 1:

Map (Google maps or a regular classroom poster/map)

Individual Student Maps

Access to a computer/internet to view the Spanish counting song

Cultures Around the World is a great book to introduce culture to students at any grade level. The book also includes facts at the end of the story.


Latin American breaks down Latin American culture into seven parts; the past, art and religion, built to last, a love of color, ceremonial art, everyday life in art, and the modern world. It is very organized and easy for children to use. I would suggest this text for students in upper elementary school. The language and text structure would be hard for primary students to understand.


Day 2:

Venn Diagrams (one per student)

Markers
**Hispanic Holidays** breaks all the Latin American holidays down into different sections. It describes each holiday in detail. This would be an excellent resource for students to start research for a specific holiday. The book also has a glossary to help students with words they may not understand.


**The History of Latin America** describes Latin American culture and goes into great detail. The text is broken into four parts; three peoples converge, building empires and societies in a new world, forging a new order, democracy, development, and identity. Each of those sections are broken down into smaller sections.


**Day 3:**

**Latin American Cooking** is full of different recipes. Along with the recipes the author describes the culture of different Latin American areas. This book also includes maps highlighting specific areas where the recipes originated.


**Additional Resources: (books in the classroom)**

**The Rooster Who Went to His Uncle’s Wedding** is a Latin American folktale. It is a great way to engage students in the culture. The text has bright and colorful illustrations. The text also has a good message for children about being a good friend. It is appropriate for students in any grade in elementary school.


**Cool Latin Music** highlights the history of Latin American music and shows it in a timeline. The text also describes the instruments used and shows you how to make your own instruments. This text is very child friendly because it is very organized. It is appropriate for third through sixth grade.


**Instructional Activity:**

**Day 1:**

Students will begin to learn about culture in general with a focus on Latin American culture. The students will listen to the books *Cultures around the World* and *Latin American* to get a strong introduction to the topic. Furthermore, the students will examine a map to learn about and locate the different Spanish speaking countries in the world. After locating the countries where Spanish is spoken as a class, the students will put stars (or another form of indicator) on their own copies of maps of the world to show where Spanish is spoken. It is important that students understand that people all over the world speak Spanish, not just those in Spain or Mexico.
After examining and locating the Spanish speaking countries of the world, the students will be introduced to the Spanish alphabet and numbers 1-10. This is a good introduction to Latin American culture because language is a key factor of a people’s culture. See video links in the objectives.

Day 2:

Activity 1: The students will follow along in the book *The History of Latin America* as the teacher reads the book to the students in a large group. Students will have to comprehend what is being read to them and answer the questions posed by the teacher.

Activity 2: The teacher will group the students in small groups of between three to four students, and then the student will fill out a Venn diagram that would be given to them by the teacher. They have to think about our cultural beliefs and compare them to the ones we learned about from the text that was read to them. They will right how they are each different and in the middle how they can be viewed as the same.

Day 3:

Students will choose, as a class, two recipes and each student will research those two dishes and the background behind them. They will then create a Venn diagram on the computer comparing and contrasting the two dishes. As a class the students will choose one of the two dishes they want to eat and we will make it as a class the following day.

Assessment:

Day 1:

Day one is just an introduction to the topic and therefore does not call for a formal assessment. The teacher can, however, informally assess the students based on their participation in the read aloud, mapping, and language video activities.

Day 2:

The teacher can assess the students informally when observing them while they work on filling out their Venn diagrams. The teacher will also then get to use the Venn diagrams as documentation to show how the students were able to comprehend and make connections to their world compared to another culture.

Day 3:

Students will be assessed on the accuracy of their individual Venn diagrams. Each one of the Venn diagrams must have at least four facts in each part of it.
Books and Materials to Accompany Cultural Instruction

We have compiled a list of children’s picture story books that can aid the instruction of culture in the classroom. The book list includes information such as the title and author and also offers a brief description of what each story book is about. Enjoy!

**Children Just Like Me** by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley


This book is a non-fiction text. It describes the lives of children from different countries around the world. It first describes the region that several children live in then goes into detail about each child’s family and community. I believe this book would be more appropriate for older children grades 3-6 because it is very content heavy.

**Ashanti to Zulu** by Margaret Musgrove


This book is an alphabet book describing different cultures throughout Africa. It is a beautiful picture book with great facts about cultures in Africa. I think it would be appropriate for grades 2-6 because it is long and content heavy.

**A Country Far Away** by Nigel Gray and Philippe Dupasquier

This book would be great for Kindergarten to 2nd grade because it is short and uses vocabulary that is easy for children to understand. This fiction tells the story of two boys that live in different countries. The text is the same for both boys but the illustrations show the differences within their communities. It is a great book to compare and contrast different cultures.

**Going Home by Eve Bunting**


This fiction describes a Hispanic family’s journey back to their home town in Mexico. The children in the family have never been to their parents’ hometown. The book talks about some of the differences the children notice while they travel to their hometown compared to the town where they live in the United States. I believe this is a good book for grades kindergarten to fifth grade.

**Abuela by Arthur Dorros**


This is a good book for children from kindergarten to third grade. This fiction piece integrates Spanish into the text between a girl and her grandmother. The girl thinks about what it would be like if she and her grandmother could fly. They travel to different places and describe it in Spanish and English.

**Dear Juno by Soyung Pak**


This book is a fiction piece about a Korean boy who receives a letter from his grandmother. Juno, the young boy, lives in the United States and his grandmother lives near Seoul Korea. The letter Juno receives is written in Korean and he needs his parents help to read it. Juno writes his grandmother back by drawing her pictures. I think this book is appropriate for students kindergarten to third grade.

**Celebrating Ramadan by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith**

Celebrating Ramadan is a non-fiction text about the religion of Islam. A young boy named Ibraheem describes the religion and the holiday of Ramadan. I think it is appropriate for students in second grade to sixth grade. It is very content heavy and uses a lot of new vocabulary.
Free Online Resources

Websites

National Association for Multicultural Education

http://nameorg.org/

Critical Multicultural Pavilion: Research Room

http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/keith.html

Education Through Cultural and Historical Organizations

http://www.echospace.org/

Countries and Their Cultures

http://www.everyculture.com/

Culture and Diversity: Scholastic

http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=10627

Worksheets

Worksheets by Topic

http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/soc_studies/

World Languages Matching Worksheets

Holiday Worksheets

http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/holiday.html

Religious and Holiday Worksheets

http://www.tlsbooks.com/kidspagearchive.htm

Make Your Own Worksheet


Games

Connect the World Game

http://pbskids.org/arthur/games/connectworld/connectworld.html

Mancala

http://www.aflcio.org/unionshop/games/game_mancala.cfm

Fact Monster Interactive Crossword Puzzles

http://www.factmonster.com/xwords/mlk.html

Spanish Hangman

http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/adventure/spanish6.htm#

Interactive White Board Games for the Teacher to Use in Class

http://teacher.scholastic.com/whiteboards/socialstudies.htm

English to Spanish Word Matching/Cycle Race

http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/adventure/spanish1.htm#

Games from “Postcards from Buster” Show

http://pbskids.org/buster/games/index.html

Videos

“Ichii Ni San” Big Bird Goes to Japan

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4al06d9TqX8

(the entire video can also be found on youtube)
Houston: Children of Many Nations

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15FAGRkVIKc&feature=related

We All Sing the Same Song

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYXJlfcfFKU&feature=fvw

Postcards from Buster

http://pbskids.org/buster/videos/index.html

America the Melting Pot – Schoolhouse Rock

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpggZ9hDxC4&feature=related

Celebrating Differences

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFWZd4lsPgw&feature=related

Sesame Street Videos


**Online Quizzes**

Cultural Etiquette Quiz


American Cultural Awareness Quiz


Cultural Sensitivity Quiz

http://www.quibblo.com/quiz/Zgywlu/Cultural-Sensitivity-Quiz

The Culture Quiz: Situational Responses

http://www.everythingsl.net/downloads/culture_questions02.pdf

Pearson’s Multiple Choice Culture Quiz

References: