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Click here to download the list of books used for the [Family Story Book Bags](#).

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Global Perspectives of Literacy and Social Studies

Jeanne Fain and the Hobgood Professional Learning Community

This project initially was conceived when I was sitting on the floor in a book center reading to young children in an urban elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee. I was continuing my exploration of how young children grapple with critical texts. The prekindergarten teacher quickly introduced me to a group of teachers that were visiting the elementary school. The English Language Coordinator asked me if I would be interested in starting a project at their school, Hobgood Elementary, in Murfreesboro. I invited my colleague Bobbie Solley to work with me on this project.

Our group was a professional literacy community and was school-based with a university partnership. This group met in January to discuss a plan to integrate global literature in the classroom and to expand teaching practices for bilingual learners during the next school year. The principal invited teachers from Kindergarten to Second Grade to establish a professional learning community. We started with a large group of teachers, but after outlining the expectations for our community, several teachers decided to postpone their involvement. For the purpose of our community, it was important that participation be voluntary and based upon desire to learn more about the use of global texts.

The final professional community consisted of the English Language Coordinator and eight classroom teachers who worked across this project. This project served Kindergarten through second grade elementary students and English Learners and their families. These classrooms had high populations of English Language Learners that need additional support academically so it was important for us to include a family-based component based upon funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Spanish was the dominant language of many of the students and additional languages represented included Hmong, Laotian, Swahili, Visaya, and Gujurati.

Our community discussed the real challenges of integrating global literature in the classroom with the newly adopted mandated scripted program. The push to stick to the script in the teaching of reading and writing was a real tension that the teachers had to grapple with and there were genuine concerns about meeting the state and federal demands that left little room for inquiry.

The solution to finding space in the curriculum for this type of work was to begin with the Social Studies Standards. We examined the social studies standards for the K-2 Classroom and discussed the teaching of the social studies objectives. We realized that we could use global texts in social studies. Teachers then moved to linking the global texts in writer's workshop. The construction of this project was based upon sociocultural theories of learning and literacy (Vygotsky, 1978) as well as discourse analysis and content analysis as related to book selection. We worked to build intentionality with the use of these texts in the classroom alongside students and their families (Short & Thomas, 2011; Short, 2009). Our professional learning community focused attention toward cultural authenticity of texts (Bishop, 1997) and developed ways of thinking about these texts alongside several classroom teachers.

This project has two significant components that included using global texts in curriculum and promoting critical conversations and connecting families with global texts. The first component, using global texts in curriculum, began with an examination of book selection. When teachers were asked to provide names of global literature that we could use, many weren't sure where to find these texts. I generated a list of literature from established websites that have carefully reviewed international, global texts, and dual language texts. In addition, we selected literature that

promoted a global view and teachers spent significant time reviewing the literature and reflecting upon the representation of the characters so that they would honor multiple voices and cultures. We met in grade level groups and discussed the possible titles that we wanted to use for this project. Initially, there was some hesitation with the range of difficulty in the texts and a general feeling that several books were too challenging. As a group, we made the decision to try out the books and see how the students would respond to the global texts.

As we developed this project, we initially held monthly meetings after school. However, we quickly realized that our group needed another meeting time that would be less rushed and lead to greater reflection. The principal arranged two different times across our project for the professional learning community to meet in the morning. We had graduate students cover the classes and we arranged a two-hour block of time to think about global texts and how to use them strategically in the curriculum. The move to finding space to reflect during the school day was significant for our group. We used this time to read books that we were using in this project and think about how to use them in authentic ways within the curriculum.

During this two hour block, I generated a list of response strategies adapted from Short (2009) that would fit Kindergarten through second grade. The strategies also were selected from a WOW vignette from the Worlds of Words website. We divided up the strategies and teachers selected texts and matched the texts with the strategies. We engaged in the strategies ourselves with the new texts during our professional learning block. Our community learned about response strategies and writing invitations to extend the literature in real ways and about critical talk and discussions with the texts. We worked at facilitating global perspectives about the literature.

The second component of this project included families. Books were sent home and families responded to the books in literature response notebooks. Families were encouraged to respond in their native languages and/or English. Many families responded to the texts and supported their children in their child's first and second language.

The first vignette written by Janna McClain (ELL), Andrea Sumrall (first grade), and Kimberly Swift (ELL) demonstrates the power of collaboration. Their work highlights the book, [*Gracias/Thanks*](#) by Mora and Parra (2009). Their work speaks to building upon the linguistic strengths and social capital of the first graders and the fifth and sixth graders who worked to create their own interpretation of the book in English and Spanish. Their work is captured in a podcast. The second vignette written by Martin Ridgley (first grade) examines how families supported children in making connections across many of the books that were sent home. Children used their knowledge from Writer's workshop to extend their thinking about the books.

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Recognizing the Global in Our Own Community: Janna McClain with Andrea Sumrall and Kimberly Swift

Suburban Murfreesboro Tennessee may seem like an unlikely place to find ethnic diversity, but at our school, approximately 1 out of 5 community members (students, teachers and staff) speak a language other than English at home. The most prevalent language is Spanish, but there are also some who speak Asian languages like Laotian, Vietnamese, Filipino and Visayan, as well as those who speak African languages like Bari or Swahili.

Our original intent was to establish a school to home reading connection. K-2 teachers read, discussed, and responded to picture books with global themes, then sent those books home to allow families to formulate their own ideas about the text. Many of the teachers in our cohort commented that this practice was a valuable way to capitalize upon the strengths families bring to students' learning experiences. As a specialist in working with English Learners, I wanted to extend the purpose of these books to include recognition of the global capital in our own community.



Unfortunately, the environment in education today emphasizes the weaknesses instead of the strengths of English Learners. The students are labeled “at risk,” “limited English proficient,” “below basic.” Attention is given to what they lack, rather than what they bring to the table. This can be particularly difficult for newcomer students, who in the “English only” state of Tennessee must take the math, science, and social studies sections of the state standardized test in English during their first year at an American school. They must begin the Language Arts assessment their second year. I proposed collaboration focused on Pat Mora’s *Gracias/Thanks* between a first grade classroom and our fifth and sixth-grade newcomer students that would capitalize on the strengths our newcomers bring to the building.

With their homeroom teacher, first graders read, discussed, and responded in journals to *Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora (2009). The homeroom teacher sent the text home for parents to read with the children, discuss, and respond in family journals. The parameters for these discussions were left intentionally broad, and the students expressed diverse thoughts about the book. Some students commented on the beautiful pictures in the books. Others appreciated the little details on each page. Some noticed a repeated pattern in the text. Some parents highlighted the moral implications of the text and shared that it helped their family find their own opportunities for expressing gratitude.

I did a mini-unit in Writer’s Workshop where we followed the steps of the writing process and used the text as a mentor and wrote our own “Gracias, Thanks” poem. On the first day, we reviewed the writing process. Based on what they had learned, students shared with me that, “You start with a

sloppy copy,” and “Then we do a published story.” I informed students we would begin with a list to help us come up with ideas for the book we would publish together. I modeled the format for the list, adding two of my own ideas before soliciting ideas from the students, which included “helping my mom cook,” “good books,” “my sister gave me a cookie” and “my furry pets.” Students then created their own lists. I reiterated that the purpose of a list is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Every student in the class generated at least 3 ideas. In our closing session, I highlighted two students, though not necessarily the strongest writers in the class, who had filled their entire page with ideas on their list.

On the second day, we revisited *Gracias/Thanks* with a discussion about whether it was a poem or a story. I reminded them that a story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Most students agreed that this poem was not a story because “nothing happens in the book.” Another student said, “It’s a poem because it keeps saying the same words.” I jumped on his statement and taught the students the academic content vocabulary of repetition. I shared that repetition is when a writer repeats the same words over and over in a pattern, and that lots of poems have repetition. Then I asked students to listen as I read *Gracias/Thanks* aloud to see if they could spot the repetition. I invited students to say the repeated words aloud with me as I read, and by the end of the text all students in the class had recognized the pattern. I modeled how to take the pattern and put in my own ideas. Students helped me take ideas from our brainstormed list to create lines in the format of *Gracias, Thanks*. Then they began writing their own lines.

On the third day, we began revising. Throughout the year, the first grade team had taught students how to make “skinny” stories “fat” with juicy details. We looked in *Gracias/Thanks* for examples of details that could make our writing more interesting. I modeled revising the phrase “For good books, thanks!” by adding the phrase “For good books, with pictures that make me laugh, thanks.” Students generated more examples to add to our list, like “For math because it helps me learn information,” or “For my dad, working hard as a fireman.”

On the fourth day, we reminded students of the writing conventions we had worked on during the year: making sure our written words include all their sounds, capitalizing words at the beginning of the sentence, and placing periods at the end. We also looked at the pictures in *Gracias/Thanks* and noted how colorful they were. We gave each student a revising/editing checklist to assess the model I had made for the class. Each student then assessed him/herself before conferencing with a teacher to turn in their page to be published.

In addition to the steps in the writing process that students were already familiar with, we added a final step: sending their words to translators (the fifth and sixth-grade newcomers) who would write their words in Spanish, just as the model text had been translated. Mrs. Swift, the ESL teacher who works with fifth and sixth-grade newcomers, typed up an edited version of the first

grade text and divided it among the fifth and sixth-grade students, who took great pride in translating the text accurately into Spanish. A mild debate broke out on whether or not “caballos” (horse) was an acceptable translation of the word “pony.” Having spent the past month preparing for daunting standardized tests in a language they had been learning for less than one year, these students were all too familiar with the feeling that they were inadequate. Conscientious and bright students, they expressed real concerns about their ability to perform well on the test. This project was a breath of fresh air—rather than focus on their inadequacies, it allowed them to claim their expertise.

Once the older students had completed their translations, we laminated and assembled the bilingual text and presented it to the first grade class. The newcomers beamed with pride as I explained to the class that they can read and write in English and Spanish, so they have the skill to translate the text for us. I called the first graders individually to record their voices reading their text in English, followed by one of the newcomers reading the same text in Spanish. One native English speaking first grader particularly enjoyed hearing his words translated into Spanish. His eyes grew wide and he exclaimed “Wow!” when he heard the recording played back. Later, when I asked him what he thought about having his words translated, he told me “I thought it was so cool and funny! I thought it was really awesome!”



Gracias/Thanks

The following week was the first grade author’s celebration, where parents and other community members come to celebrate students’ growth in writing throughout the year. Mrs. Sumrall and I

had the opportunity to thank parents for responding in their journals, as well as share the bilingual book we published as a class. While we shared the book, one bilingual family that has both first grade and fifth and sixth-grade newcomer children grabbed their cell phones to video the work their children did together.

After the celebration, I took the time to interview students about their experience. Some of their responses include:

We got to write and make our pictures. It was nice of them to do that so we could hear it in Spanish. -Juan, native Spanish Speaker

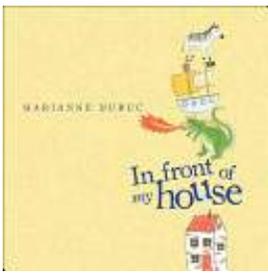
Spanish is a different language, and it's cool to speak Spanish. I hope people who speak Spanish like our book. -Jayda, native English Speak

This project encouraged our first graders to recognize and respect the global capital in our community. They began to understand that other languages are to be valued. The fifth and sixth-grade students definitely felt empowered as leaders, rather than burdens, in an academic context. They began interacting more with younger students, as well as primary teachers, in the building. They too recognized the global capital they possess, and ended the year confident of their ability to participate in our school community.

First Graders Connect Literature and Writer's Workshop: Martin Ridgley

It isn't unusual for students at Hobgood Elementary to participate in meaningful book discussions during the school day. The hope has always been that these moments of powerful discussion would find their way into the homes of our students. However, the catalyst for those discussions, the effective and carefully chosen books, never strayed far from the teacher's shelf. Therefore, the powerful discussions did not travel any further than the classroom walls.

During the past school year, an effort was created to send high quality multicultural trade books and a small journal home with students to share with their families. The hope was for families to simply participate in book talks. However, the end results far exceeded our expectations, as students began to make powerful connections to writing that they were learning about in a daily Writer's Workshop.



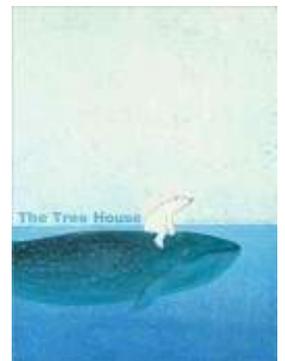
In March, [*In Front of My House*](#) by Marianne Dubuc (2010), was shared during class. The students enjoyed the imaginative twists, predicting what they would find on each page, and loved how the author took us “all around the world” before ending back in front of the house. After sharing the story, the discussion immediately went to what students could find in front of their own houses.

Suddenly the classroom was filled with discussions of “dogs on chains”, “parked cars”, and “old rusty lawn chairs.” The students worked in groups to create a graffiti wall of what was in front of their houses.

The students were thrilled to learn that this would be the first book to take home.

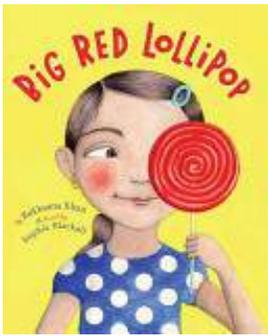
Every student was given a copy of the book along with a journal and writing supplies. The only stipulation was that the book and journal had to be shared with a family member and then returned to school. The first week we had complete participation and 100% of the books and journals were returned to school. The amazing part of the week was what happened at the homes and in the journals. Most families took time to write in the journals about their favorite part of the story or to share their feelings about the book. It was apparent that discussions were taking place and the students were returning to school eager to tell which page their parents liked most. One student and her family wrote a story in the journal and called it “In Front of My School”. She retold the story, telling us, “I made my story go all around the world, just like the author did.” She told the class that she remembered that writers get ideas from other writers and sometimes change the words around to “make it their own”. This conversation seemed to be the spark that ignited others into examining literature from a writer’s perspective.

[*The Tree House*](#) by Marije Tolman (2010) was the next book shared. This wordless picture book tells a very imaginative story about a bear that discovers a tree house. The students felt some discomfort with the book due to the absence of text. For many students a wordless picture book was a new experience. Some students expressed disappointment in not having the words tell the story. Others enjoyed the freedom to make up their own meaning to the story. Following the initial uneasiness by some, discussions followed that stirred creativity and the students again were eager to share this story with their families.



During the week, as children returned their take home copy of *The Tree House*, they were eager to share how their families felt about the book. As Jeremiah placed his book and journal on the table he laughed, “My mom said she didn’t get it! She liked the pictures, but didn’t get the story.” This was immediately followed with a whispering debate at several tables throughout the room about how other families felt about the book. The students were eager to begin sharing how their families felt and to tell what type of discussions they had at their own homes. As was the case with *In Front*

of *My House*, many students and families elected to analyze their favorite pages or favorite parts of the story. However, several students began to critique the story from a writer's perspective. One student, Erica, shared that her family used speech bubbles to give the story some text. In her version, the two bears were cousins who liked to spend seasons together. Another child's family created an entire text for the story. He said that he let his mom write the "sloppy copy," and that "he cleaned it up and added all the periods." One student asked why the illustrator didn't "collaborate" with an author. An unexpected connection was happening in the classroom in that students were participating in meaningful dialogue not only about the content of the stories, but their own language as writers. This book talk experience was turning into a discussion about the process of writing a story. Later that same day, students were interested in trying their hand at wordless picture books during writer's workshop.



The [*Big Red Lollipop*](#) by Rukhsana Khan (2010) was the final book used for the home and school book bags. In this story, a young girl, named Rubina, attempts to teach her family about birthday customs when she is forced to take her little sister, Sana, to a friend's birthday party. What follows is a story of sibling rivalry and cultural differences. The story was a family favorite with many quality responses from students and their parents. One parent wrote a lengthy response in the journal in which she felt that the parent in the story didn't treat the daughters the same and was too tough on the older child. This led to class discussions about whether parents treat older siblings different from younger siblings.

The most interesting moment came during a class discussion when one student identified this story as an example of an author writing a "small moment" story. This was a type of writing that we had explored in our Writer's Workshop class back in the Fall. He identified the character in the story as the author when she was a little girl, and cleverly used his index fingers to frame the author's name so that the class could easily see the name "Sana." The class was thrilled to learn that this was an example of a small moment and over the next few weeks students were in the library and book corner using their framing fingers trying to find other examples of authors secretly placing their names within stories.

The intent of this project was to place high quality literature in the homes of first grade students. The hope was for students and families to share time together and have dialogue around books. The connections that students made to their own writing were an added bonus. Many parents commented on the types of books chosen for the program. They were pleased with the multicultural aspects, enjoyed the fact that each book was different, and appreciated the opportunity to share their feelings about the books in the journal that accompanied the book bags.

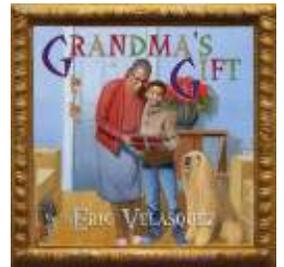
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Final Reflections

As a professional learning community, we had several conclusions about the power of this project. For this community, we learned that sending books home in small groups made more sense than sending them home with the entire class. The issue was one of organization in terms of sending books home and having all of them returned. Interest in the books made a real difference in the family responses that we received. Without some hype and perfect timing, less emphasis had a related impact on response. When we exerted substantial effort in highlighting the books in positive ways prior to sending them home, families engaged in higher quality responses related to the literature. Additionally, home letters that included family invitations with ideas for responses and contributions made a significant difference. The Latino families from this school overwhelmingly participated in the family response journals in Spanish and English. Families had discussions about the books and shared their knowledge and values with their children. There was a proud feeling among the children that their families had something to say about the global literature.

Teachers saw that connections were created with home “instead of us.” Children made different connections with home support. There was a circle of connections created where family, children, and teachers came together with their knowledge around the literature. Families and children were linguistic and cultural experts. Also, discussion wasn’t forced as children came to school with something to say about the texts. The connections felt less hurried. This project provided an authentic space for enjoying book without the pressure of producing a product to the point that teachers and children “became drained out.” In order for this project to work, we had to be prepared and we came with questions and children made real connections with the literature. Thus, their excitement was generated from the literature.

Book selection plays an important role in creating global connections. The books in this project pushed children to explore more to talk about besides wrestling. For example, [*Grandma's Gift*](#) by Eric Velasquez (2010) led to discussion about how it would feel to be in a place where no one looks for you. Children experienced the power of reading. Spanish read aloud for the first time and children helped us with the Spanish. We also realized that children were not fluent in their own languages so the literature helped to strengthen their knowledge of their languages.



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Promoting Global Awareness in Second Grade Students

Fran Wilson and the Madeira Literacy Community

Our school-based literacy group consisted of four second grade teachers as well as the elementary art, music, library, gym, and computer teachers in the Madeira City School District. All of the team members worked at the elementary building so it was convenient to meet in the mornings prior to the start of the school day. The literacy team met twice per month in the elementary school library starting in September. Rich discussions were the focus of our meetings. We began the year by establishing a goal for our learning together as colleagues and for the learning that we hoped would occur in our classrooms.

During our initial meetings each team member set a personal goal for our study. These goals helped to keep everyone focused during the year of learning together. The team's goal was to promote global awareness among our students due to the limited diversity within our school district's population. The first action step for the team was to select quality children's literature about children from around the world and use the power of reading aloud to encourage student thinking and understanding of the world. The read alouds would also be used to promote cross-curricular instruction as our students learned about the geographical locations and everyday life and cultures. In addition, we hoped that through our regular meetings our team would learn how to encourage an appreciation for all people of the world using global literature and follow up activities in the classroom and through working with other teachers in specials.

Our next step was to begin the process of selecting quality children's literature to use with our students. Initially we thought that we would determine specific countries around the world and find literature to depict the people and land of each. The Worlds of Words website enabled us to search for lists of books by both country and age of reader. The synopsis of each book provided on this site is very helpful.

The August/September issue of *Reading Today* included an article written by Kathy Short and several members of the Notable Books for a Global Society Award. This article became the focus of discussion at one of our team meetings. The team's thinking about our planned book selection for the year shifted. We decided not to select specific countries and books because we didn't want our students to acquire information about other cultures from the tourist perspective. Instead we