

Introduction and Editors' Note

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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