

# GLOBAL EDUCATION: PASSPORT TO THE WORLD

By

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**HELP WANTED:** Citizens who are informed, tolerant, respectful, critical thinkers, and active in society. Applicants must be able to accept personal responsibility, welcome change and become lifelong learners. Send letters of application and credentials to The Office of the Future. Openings are unlimited. All qualified applicants will be accepted.

If this advertisement appears impossible or unrealistic, please read on. Recently, *SOCIAL EDUCATION*, the journal of the National Council for the Social Studies, published a series of articles on citizenship for the 21st century in which University of Minnesota professor, John Cogan, noted a common set of characteristics that make up the emerging citizen of the early 21st century—the kind of future leader teachers should be seeking to develop in the classrooms of today. He suggests that this citizen is a critical thinker who is well informed on a broad range of global topics and issues and is respectful toward others. This citizen seeks justice and equality for all, sees interdependence and cooperation as a way of life and sees change as a constant that can be managed and directed. He or she also views learning as a lifelong pursuit rather than a fixed period of instruction in a formal setting. (Cogan, 1989)

In order for our society to meet the social challenges of the future, it will be imperative that society produce such global-citizens. Teachers, some of the principle players charged with this responsibility, will need to be knowledgeable about the constantly and rapidly changing world. They will need to transfer this perspective by helping students develop a sense of global awareness while building their confidence, understanding, and optimism. These dispositions, coupled with a global outlook, will equip students for the future and will assist them in executing their roles and responsibilities as citizens of the 21st century.



I recently had the opportunity to refine my global outlook through firsthand travel experiences. In 1985 I was offered a JISEA Fellowship to Japan and two years later in 1987 I was awarded a Fulbright Summer Seminar to China. Both of these rich global experiences illuminated by responsibility as a global citizen and provided me with new windows through which to view the world.

By being immersed in cultures quite different from my own, I quickly recognized the degree to which the world is interconnected and interdependent. I developed a greater appreciation for my own culture and understood the importance of people-to-people communication. I also developed a deeper understanding of the need for educators to appreciate the unique qualities of humanity and the worth of individuals everywhere. As an educator, I recognize that through teaching, my colleagues and I are participants in international relations and we face a growing responsibility to teach our students how to become more environmentally responsible and world-minded. We also need to help students learn cooperation and collaboration skills that will be increasingly important in order for them to be productive members of the world community.

Since returning to Iowa, I have used these travel experiences to develop a greater global mindedness in my students. By infusing global perspectives into subject areas throughout the curriculum and building connections with student interest, I have discovered that any topic can be given a global focus.

The following sample activities illustrate an approach to curriculum which integrates a global perspective. They are designed to be used as part of a larger unit of study or as independent instructional units. They can be adapted to various grade levels and their use is limited only by the imagination of the teacher.

### **Foreign Currency: The Yuan Auction/Reward System**

This activity is very flexible and can be incorporated into the social studies curriculum as an ongoing project and it can be adapted to other currencies depending upon the country studied.

In this activity students collect replicated "Yuan Tokens" as



part of an award system while using the Chinese monetary system to learn more about China's culture.

Early in the year I introduce the students to the currency used in China. There are two types of money we discuss. The renminbi (the people's money), and the FEC, (foreign exchange currency used by tourists). The basic monetary unit is the "yuan" which is divided into "jiao" and "fen". We discuss its value in relationship to the dollar. Its design, pictures and history are used as a springboard to examine other aspects of the culture such as life style, average income and trade.

Student interest in the culture is heightened through this activity because they can examine actual currency (this can be obtained from foreign exchange banks) and are allowed to take it home and share it with their parents. Some have made graphs and drawn comparisons between the value of their allowances and the yuan.

I also design and make replicated "Yuan Tokens" of various denominations made to simulate Chinese Renminbi currency. These are used as tokens to represent yuan and fen awarded to students for various classroom activities. Students accumulate "Yuan Tokens" for a determined amount of time (1 semester). During this time students bring "treasures" from home to use in their upcoming "Yuan Auction." The activity pleases the parents by providing a way for households to get rid of those excessive "treasures" which multiply in closets and basements. An auctioneer is invited to visit the classroom and give a history of auctioneering in addition to conducting the auction. All bidding and buying is done in fen.

Since this study of currency is integrated throughout the year, it provides a natural opportunity for students to study other elements of the culture and can easily be infused into other subject areas such as writing, reading, mathematics and science.

### **Passport Activity Kit**

Another ongoing project that can be adapted to all subject areas involves the "Passport Activity Kit" published by the National Geographic Society. The objective of the activity kit is to involve

students in imaginary travel to another country. Included in the kit are instructions on making passports which are stamped as students travel from country to country. The kit also contains other interesting materials and activity ideas which draw upon inductive thinking and inquiry as well as cooperative learning. These include studying how a country's development is related to its geographic location, topography or climate, contacting specific embassies for information about a given country, developing a materials display illustrating a country's culture, making travel posters advertising the country's tourist attractions, and investigating various forms of government or political organization.

## Video Exchange

Video tape exchanges with partner classrooms are an ideal medium for extending students' knowledge of other states, regions or countries. They also provide an excellent opportunity for students to broaden their social horizons while developing friendships with children from other cultures or regions. Three items need to be taken into consideration when planning for classroom video exchanges.

First, involve students in every aspect of the production. Many students will be able to run the electronic equipment. In addition, students will be able to make suggestions on types of footage which would be interesting and motivating to exchange with another classroom of elementary children.

Second, communicate clearly with the other exchange teacher. Make certain that the equipment is compatible between the two classrooms. In addition, time lines for exchanges, length of each video, responsibility for mailing costs, and arrangements for any necessary language translation need to be decided prior to the exchange agreement.

Third, plan the content of the videos carefully. Exchange topics we found successful included footage of student reports, video presentations of historic buildings and landmarks in the community, student plays, tours of the neighborhood or city, and presentations of school sporting events and cultural programs.



## Conclusion

To prepare students to travel to the twenty-first century they will need a passport to the world issued with creativity, ingenuity, and ambition. These activities only start the journey and are limited only by the imagination of the user and the resources of the world.

## References

Cogan, John J. "Citizenship for the 21st Century: Observations and Reflections." Social Education 53, no. 4:243-45.

Kniep, Willard M. "Defining a Global Education by its Contents." Social Education. 50, no. 5:437-45

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