

# 'ELECTING' GLOBAL EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS- ROOMS

By

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The internationalization of human existence is increasingly apparent to most Americans. Whether it be reflected in Chinese businesspersons shopping in Iowa for imports, the increasing ethnic diversity of Iowa's people, or the current talk about the "greenhouse effect" as a cause of the current drought, the global village is a recurring and potent reality in the lives of Iowans. The intent of this article is to demonstrate that the global realities of the late 20th century are "basic" to the curriculum of Iowa schools and to illustrate how the perspective of global education might be incorporated into the teaching about the upcoming Presidential election of 1988.

The essence of global education might begin with these objectives. First, the student needs to make contact with various perspectives (both Western and Eastern) on the data, topics, and issues presented in the school curriculum. Second, students need to see teachers as role models of active, lifelong learning, and acquire the skills to do the same. Third, students need to value diversity and recognize its predominance in the social and physical world. Fourth, the student needs to have the opportunity to engage in the dynamic process of conflict as a positive and omnipresent process by which humans act out their differing world views.

As this article is being written, members of the Department of Education in the state of Iowa are dealing with the issue of internationalizing the curriculum in Iowa. They are preparing models and strategies which will enable individual school districts, and ultimately teachers, to provide a global perspective on those topics, units, skills, and courses which educators have consciously chosen as the most important components of the curriculum.

The following standard for global education will influence educational design in Iowa after 1989:

GLOBAL EDUCATION: THE BOARD SHALL ADOPT A PLAN WHICH INCORPORATES GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES INTO ALL AREAS AND LEVELS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM SO THAT STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON WORLD ISSUES, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS FOR AN AWARENESS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN INDIVIDUAL'S SELF INTEREST AND THE CONCERNS OF PEOPLE ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. THE PLAN SHALL INCLUDE PROCEDURES FOR A REVIEW OF ITS EFFECTIVENESS.

In light of this statement, all areas of the curriculum will provide students with a global perspective. Undoubtedly, the leadership for this commitment to global education falls, in part, on the shoulders of the social studies staff. Two questions then need to be addressed to the social studies teacher. Are students being prepared to evaluate the data, issues, and patterns of human existence which profoundly affect life in the late 20th century? Are students becoming, as a result, capable leaders and empowered followers? Specifically, many social studies teachers will be engaging students to investigate the upcoming Presidential election in the United States. Placing this event in a global perspective will enhance the process and provide students with an active understanding of the forces which affect its conduct and outcome. It is increasingly evident that this task is not the job of American government teachers alone. To expect this is to expect the impossible. Students do not magically gain the skills prerequisite to active participation in the political process when their eighteenth birthday arrives. On the contrary, the job of instilling in students an attitude of lifelong learning needs to encompass the entire social studies experience.

One important component of global education involves encouraging students to actively participate in global issues. The 1988 election presents numerous opportunities for hands-on experience with the local political party machinery. Bringing in the local party chairs to introduce each party's approach to political issues is just one way to begin giving students firsthand experience with the political process.

Another idea is to assign groups of students to participate in mock Bush and Dukakis campaigns. Students should role-play the candidates, as well as members of the candidates' staffs. Students may produce formal position papers, media presentations, speeches, and formal debates (sponsored by the League of Student Voters) presented to the entire school prior to the actual election day.

The global education connection is most visible as students investigate specific issues, such as arms control, the Arab-Israeli conflict, politics in Central America, the world debt crisis, the nation's proposed trade policy, or the status of NATO. The writing of a research paper as a function of "the campaign" gives the students a sense of solidarity with others and encourages enthusiasm for the task.

The nightly news will provide a readily available source of information as students develop their campaigns. Have the students tape the statements of the candidates and bring them to class. Utilizing the expertise of the speech teacher, analyze the technical and public relations value of the speeches, and have the "local campaigns" produce their own speeches. In addition, have students role-play reports at a news conference for each of the candidates.

As another idea, have each student bring to class one picture of a leader taken from a newspaper, book, or magazine, and explain how this person illustrates leadership. Make a list of leadership traits and evaluate current nominees in light of the list.

You may also wish to use the liberal/conservative paradigm to analyze the current philosophies of the major political parties. Compare the perspective of each party as it relates to the domestic and international issues of the campaign and ask students to identify which candidate they would support. Hold an election in the class and announce the winner in the school newspaper.

The use of comparative election techniques can be achieved through the use of Ballots or Bullets, a simulation experience replicating the election in Guatemala. The dynamics of this nation's experience can be used as a comparison point with American elections. In using this simulation, published by the Roosevelt Center for Policy Studies, other colleagues and the writer have

never seen it fail to excite students about the election process.

Global education has the potential of enhancing the quality of education in the state of Iowa. The study of the election process, and virtually all aspects of curriculum, can be given an international dimension “basic” to what students need to fully function as citizens.

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