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IMPROVING CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND ELL WRITING
THROUGH CULTURALLY RELEVANT DIGITAL STORYTELLING

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

May 2016

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To my husband and children who continually supported me through this process. Thank you to my Capstone Committee. Your guidance and patience helped me to complete this project. Special thanks to my research participants who helped shape this Capstone. I have learned a great deal from you.

“Live your life and forget your age.”
-Norman Vincent Peale

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my school district for permitting me to do this research.

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Preface

The study focuses on elementary students' interactions with digital storytelling platforms as a relevant way to tell immigration or other personal stories to improve writing performance and increase cultural competence.

Question:

Can a culturally relevant constructivist digital-storytelling project improve ELL elementary students' writing performance and improve the cultural competence of the school as a whole?

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This Land is Your Land

Hamil stands before me in her hijab and reads her story. Though smiling and radiant now, she reflects on a time when she was directed by her parents to leave everything behind, including her favorite blanket, and get out of Pakistan. She was told to say goodbye to her grandparents, whom she has never seen again.

I have attended several annual middle school events where ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students and their families gather in the school library to share their immigration stories. For each, the students and their parents bring ethnic dishes to share, wear their native country's typical clothing, and display memorabilia from their respective countries. The students read, often in beautiful accents and with difficulty, their emotional memories of coming to the United States. Next to her, a board with facts about each country is displayed. It is a multi-sensory, multi-level event.

Teachers and administrators are invited, and are astounded by the journeys of these students. Prior to the ESOL event, most teachers had no idea the students sitting in front of them in class all year had been in refugee camps, smuggled across borders,

and/or had been apart from other family members, often fathers, for years. The students appear at times eager and at times shy about bringing some understanding of their complicated past to this new community.

I came away from the events feeling as though the students were better understood by their peers and teachers, and through this understanding, closer to becoming an integral part of the community. The community is immeasurably enhanced by these new additions, and I propose to add this element of personal narrative at the elementary level.

My connection to this project

I am sure I am not alone in seeing a disconnect between our school's majority and minority populations; the chasm of misunderstanding has been well documented in our St. Louis Region. Although we are an elementary school in West County, located in a more affluent part of the metro area about 40 minutes from Ferguson, the effects of disparate treatment are felt here too, as students are bussed in from just south of Ferguson. Some of these students are ELL (English Language Learner) Somali students. The displacement of their parents, first from Somalia or refugee camps in Kenya, and then to urban St. Louis, would be a study in itself. While it is their race that qualifies them for our Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Program, the Somali Americans are culturally a world away from African Americans. These differences often lead to misunderstanding and mistreatment. My other students, too, are often misunderstood by staff and peers. The broader need for cultural competence and understanding cannot be overestimated. Last year, in our first annual International Day Festival, the amount of students and teachers

who just learned of our students backgrounds and ethnicity was interesting. It was truly an eye-opening day. I see my role as an ESOL teacher at the elementary level to be vital in forming connections with families who are often just learning the intricacies of the American education system, after never having been a part of it themselves. I also see my role as an advocate for these families and a person who can not only help students achieve their academic goals, but realize true inclusion in the system.

The Professional Significance of this Project

My interest in this topic stems from a desire to combine the district goals of raising student achievement for minority students with my personal goals of improving the quality of student writing. Annually, the ESOL department gives an ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) test. The ACCESS for English Language Learners is a secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment given to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as English language learners. Upon completion of the ACCESS test, we most often find that the ESOL students who are high functioning in listening, speaking, and reading still struggle with the writing modality. Personally, I have found that nothing is more difficult to teach than writing. The students' initial organization, writing and editing processes are difficult to manage. Peer editing is sometimes successful and sometimes disastrous. Through the Writer's Workshop, students are trained on how to peer edit successfully. For this project, students choose topics that motivate them, add photographs and illustrations that bring their writing to life—all in an effort to improve writing and writing scores. This topic is relevant for educators in that it will demonstrate

whether digital storytelling can measurably improve writing, either independently or through improved ACCESS scores.

Student as a Maypole

The analogy of the learner as a Maypole is both instructive and vivid. In this analogy, the learners have many ribbons dancing around them and it is the teacher's mission to tie English content and skills to these ribbons and to make them accessible. A teacher can throw facts and content at learners all year, and yet, if done continually with no connections to experiences, the material never gets tied to the ribbons and falls forgotten to the ground. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening modalities are tied to the ribbons of learners' past experience. Students need to construct new understandings through social constructivism, the theory that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their social experiences and community ideas, is crucial to this learning process. The social constructivist nature of this endeavor is clear. Students should engage in a process in which they work on all modalities of language in a meaningful context. 1.) They read research on their countries, often gaining information about the reasons for their abrupt departures. 2.) They write summaries of their research and extensive personal narratives about their own memories of these sometimes traumatic, sometimes celebratory events. 3.) They speak to interested attendees, who engage them in meaningful conversation about their experiences.

Goals

At the upper elementary level, I propose that students begin to explore their pasts, research their countries, illustrate or add photographs, and write extensively. The

cumulative project will be a digital immigration story. I hope the project will inspire students to be more creative and academic writers, become a more integral part of the community, and in the long term, have more success as a student and as a citizen.

Conclusions of the Chapter

In the introduction, I have discussed my personal and professional connections to this project and its goals. ELL Students need more opportunities for a social-constructivist curriculum—that is, they need more opportunity to learn English language skills by making connections to their own meaningful world. I propose this can be more fully accomplished through personal digital storytelling. In the remaining chapters, I hope to bring some clarity to the question of whether a social constructivist, digital storytelling platform will help ELL students significantly improve writing skills. Chapter Two describes the research that supports the use of digital storytelling in the learning process, especially as it relates to language learning. Chapter Three describes the methods used for this study, as well as the demographics of the participants, the school setting and instruments used. Chapter Four delineates the results, gives examples of actual student work produced through this process, and shows student and teacher surveys produced in order to guide research. Chapter Five summarizes the possible implications of my research as well as possible further research applications.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Most teachers find themselves in front of a sea of faces that is varied, but perhaps none more so than the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher. She may have students who range from a newly arrived refugee with no English exposure and no literacy in the first language, to a corporate transfer—someone who's parent has been hired by a university or company, with advanced degrees, but who speaks only the native language at home. One student may have a large vocabulary in their native language and have been raised in a print-rich environment, while another may have been raised in a refugee camp where his family used a non-native language in order to converse in a common language with others whose tribal language differed from their own. The academic starting points among these children are astonishing.

The Question

In an effort to improve student writing, this research raises the question: *Can culturally relevant constructivist digital-storytelling improve elementary ELL students writing performance and promote cultural competence?*

This chapter contains an overview of language development, writing theory, pedagogy, practice pertinent to curriculum and constructivist learning. The cultural proficiency of the school and its impact on students' acceptance and their ability to learn without interference will also be addressed with an emphasis will be on the need for a culturally proficient school environment which contains culturally relevant curriculum. The chapter also presents a case for constructivist learning wherein the student is the proprietor and creator of their content. The chapter contains a discussion of digital storytelling: its advantages as well as disadvantages, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of using technology with the English Language Learner (ELL). It will also present some of the content structures for digital storytelling, as well as the media through which these stories may be told.

The Literature Review

The contributions of Lev Vygotsky to the fields of language, education and child development are far-reaching. His groundbreaking sociocultural theory demonstrated children are heavily influenced by their interactions with the people of the culture surrounding them. (Vygotsky) For the ELL population, this informs instruction, as a child from an Eastern culture will inherently have a very different worldview than someone from the West. The child may also have differing skill sets, as one culture may stress

rote memorization and a very structured learning environment, while another will focus on creativity and problem-solving. The child's environment will not only influence how they think, but what they think about.

Language Development

Linguistically, the universal grammar with which a child is born, according to Chomsky, begins to develop distinctly according to the language heard by the child in the early years (2003, p. 180). Vygotsky believed the cognitive functions were actually co-constructed by children and adults, as well as by children and their peers through social interaction. Thus, the tools of intellectual adaptation vary from culture to culture. (1986, p. 58). This informs ELL instruction and social constructivism as it should be tailored to the specific cultural knowledge that the student brings to the table from prior experiences.

Elementary mental functions develop into higher mental functions through attention, sensation, perception, and memory. Most ELL students have already been through this process with socio-linguistic interactions in their first language. In the second language, i.e., English, the child is presented with background knowledge from the first language. The background knowledge will at times synthesize with new linguistic English knowledge, while at times it will interfere. Similar structure and cognates of some languages may be exploited by the ELL teacher to make connections for the student, while understanding the differences in pronunciation, tone, structure and vocabulary between English and the specific first language of the child will help to expose where dissonance may occur.

At the beginning of this school year, Owen and Marcus, two new students from the Czech Republic entered Ellisville Elementary. The children learned to speak English well from their father, an American who had been living in the Czech Republic for 20 years and had married a Czech woman. The children learned German as a second language in school, but had no formal English instruction. Upon assessing the two, it was clear the children had adapted to reading English almost instantly, making the connections between what they had heard to the written word. They understood a wide vocabulary and read with excellent comprehension. Although the children had mastered the modalities of listening, speaking, and reading completely, they had not yet learned to write in English. This presented immediate challenges for the classroom teacher and ESOL teacher. For example, Czech is a phonetic language with few irregularities in spelling, so the students simply transferred their knowledge of Czech to their English writing. The letter “d” was used to represent the English /th/ sound, as in mader and fader. The letter “w” was used in place of the /v/ sound as in waleybal, the sport. There were other many other transferences as well. Owen, the fifth grader, a studious and hard-working boy, made the transition easily. He studied high-frequency word lists and began to see the English patterns very quickly. Marcus, a more outgoing, vivacious, and less studious sort, has made less progress. Teachers enjoy watching the two develop as they almost see the wheels turning in their brains as they make the connections Vygotsky researched so long ago.

The sociolinguistic and sociocultural theories presented by Vygotsky provide a springboard for writing instruction which is scaffolded, or built up with increasing difficulty, for the ELL to transfer linguistic and cultural knowledge to their storytelling.

Writing Theory

The medium of digital storytelling has the advantage of allowing the student to use all four modalities, including writing which is often the last modality to be mastered by the ELL. Writing is also one of the most challenging. When acquiring *first* language, a student first learns to understand, then speak, then read, and then write. However, in order to succeed in school, the student learning an additional language must work on all of the modalities concurrently. Unlike the receptive skills of listening and reading, writing is productive in nature; students cannot be passive in this endeavor and simply absorb. They must produce.

The challenges writing brings to the ELL are outlined by David Sousa in *How the ELL Brain Learns* (2011). He explains there are three major categories that make writing difficult for the ELL: “the mechanics of writing, English proficiency, and content knowledge.” First, the ELL has particular challenges because of their limited vocabulary; they will tend to repeat the same words and phrases over and over. Secondly, they often write in the present tense because they do not use verb tenses correctly. Lastly, because of its complex grammar, the English structure of the ELL may be particularly difficult to comprehend (2011, pp. 92-93). While sharing their stories in class, students test for understanding through peer and teacher reaction of their work.

According to Lucy Calkins in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, “...when we teach writing, we will probably not begin by talking about writing, but rather, by demonstrating the power and purposes writing has in our lives, and by inviting students to discover ways that writing can enrich their lives as well” (1994, p. 31).

To that end, teachers should continue to scaffold the writing process, so those who began the year as emerging writers will continue to grow their expressive language by writing about what they already know. As Dorn stated in *Scaffolding Young Writers*, “all writing instruction must be based on what children already know. Anything less can promote passive learners who feel inadequate about writing.”(1998, p. xi)

The young Czech students will be especially excited to write about their lives in the Czech Republic, since their memories are so fresh. They may be assigned to write about their school day, weather, childhood hobbies and the cultural significance of holidays, food, religion, clothing, language and government, among other things. Other students who have been in the United States for longer and whose memories have faded, may do some research with parents, grandparents, or other family members and discuss how they continue to honor the culturally significant events of their native country while here in the United States.

Even though the children are invested in their topic, as they sit down to write, one of the greatest obstacles they face is they can not get started. Exacting more information from them may be done by using the strategies of Dorn and Saffos in their book *Shaping Literate Minds: Developing Self-Regulated Learners*. The especially useful prompts engender long responses from students that may have otherwise gone unstated. For

example, to invite elaboration by simply saying “tell me more about that,” (1998, p. 6) will give the student an open-ended chance to elaborate aloud to an interested listener. The teacher may ask to “say it slowly and write what you hear” to get it down on paper. Or the teacher may admit to being perplexed about what the child is trying to say. Again, the teacher asks the student to explain it aloud, then say it slowly and write what they hear. The teacher may ask for evidence of the student’s assertions, or ask them to restate or refine the language, by questioning, them “does that make sense to you?” The student speaks more when the teacher speaks less, inserting simple questions or comments to draw them out and create a fuller writing piece.

The student may use the checklists put forth by Dorn, French and Jones in *Apprenticeship in Literacy Transitions Across Reading and Writing* for editing. Through the checklists, students ensure that their writing makes sense, they add relevant information while deleting excess. They edit for misspelled words and proper grammar and punctuation (1998, p. 71). The final draft is then ready for peer evaluation. During this stage, as defined in *Making Sense of the Writer’s Workshop*, a student, when he feels his piece is ready for review, reads it aloud to another student. The students have already been trained in Writer’s Workshop to ask appropriate questions at this time, such as “What is the piece about?, Is any part of the piece confusing? What do I like best about the piece? What do I want to know more about?” (2012, p.41). During the teacher conference, and as a teacher of ELLs, additional questions specific to the population are added, such as “are the tenses appropriate to the situation?” Allowing for their level of

proficiency, it is also appropriate to ask about the coherency of the piece, such as “Will this make sense to a fellow elementary-age student?” (2012, p. 41).

The students feel a sense of belonging as they begin to prepare for the International Day where they will display their digital stories. They feel a sense of urgency due to the real world deadlines. They feel a responsibility as they begin to understand the enormity of their job as peer editors and content selectors. The students begin to understand their work must be polished because they will receive very public feedback from their classroom peers, family, teachers, and administration.

Preparation for International Day acts as a springboard for the group process. Marzano believes this is a critical component of academic achievement in which the students’ interactions with the information and their peers promotes a cohesive group which in turn enhances learning. They gain interpersonal and small group skills which promote trust, leadership, decision making and conflict resolution. They process as a group, reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better. They get a sense of positive interdependence---a sense of sink or swim together. Children have face-to-face interactions---helping each other learn, applauding others’ successes and efforts. And lastly, they possess both individual and group accountability--each has to contribute to achieve the group’s goals (2004, p. 59). The group of ELLs, although quite diverse, becomes a cohesive unit in the ESOL classroom among their peers working toward a common goal. However, it is still in the whole school environment where they sometimes feel alienated. From this stems the need for cultural proficiency education in the broader school community.

Curricular Alignment

It is important to note project aligns with the Rockwood Language Arts Curriculum, the following are goals of the curriculum program:

- “Writers compose for a variety of audiences and purposes.” This writing component gives students an opportunity to compose a story that will be tailored for the purpose of educating and entertaining the entire student body and staff.
- “Writers create and share their writing.” Writers will share their writing in mini-conferencing with me, in group and peer editing, and most importantly, a project may be shared with the student body at the International Day.
- “Writers use a variety of sources to enhance their writing.” Students will write using primary sources, gleaning information from parents and grandparents and secondary sources researching their individual country’s culture (2015).

Additionally, due to Common Core, a standards initiative that delineates what k-12 students should know in Language arts, the focus in writing has made a dramatic shift to reading and writing about nonfiction. In a relatively short amount of time, it has become evident students have not been exposed to the kind of personal narrative writing with which they had typically been inundated just five years ago. The personal narrative nature of this project is essential to the whole writing development curriculum.

WIDA Standards

WIDA, World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, is the standard organizing body for assessment for ELLs. The WIDA Access test is the measurement used by the Rockwood School District to ascertain whether improvement in student

writing has been achieved. This is a standardized assessment used to measure the ELLs proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. When a student has reached the level of proficiency in speaking, listening, and reading, their WIDA scores often indicate a persistent disparity with their native speaking peers in writing. It would be very common for a student who has reached proficiency in the first three modalities to still be emerging as a writer. These scores indicate, even when an ELL is bridging, or ready to leave the ESL classroom due to their proficiency in listening, speaking, and reading, the writing modality continues to hinder them from exiting the program.

Cultural proficiency

Schools have always needed to be culturally proficient; however, to be culturally proficient today with an ever-broadening array of nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and languages requires more from schools than ever before. The demographics of Ellisville Elementary School have changed dramatically in just the past four years. The school is currently composed of a 27.73 percent minority population. It comes as no surprise to most that schools have had to adapt to changing needs of students. Schools have typically done this through *academic differentiation*. As the school culture becomes more and more diverse, teachers have seen first hand, how they need to be responsive to the cultural complexity of the students, not just their different reading levels and learning styles.

Are the incoming students ready for school?

Students come to the ESOL classroom in a variety of ways: through both legal and illegal immigration, adoption, corporate transfers and as refugees. Each of these

students bring a unique background and worldview to the ESOL classroom. Students also bring special challenges as teachers decide how to meet each of them on their individual journey. The vast differences in preparedness of the students when they come to school is broken down into four categories by Freeman in *Between Worlds Access to Second Language Acquisition*. The first category, “newly arrived with adequate schooling” describes a student who comes with full academic language in their first language, and often some preparedness in English as well. These students sometimes end up writing better than native English speakers due to their broad vocabulary from other languages. Evita, age 8, and Viviana, age 6, came to the district from Mexico as their father was a corporate transfer to Nestle Purina. Dad is fluent in Portuguese, English and Spanish, while mom speaks Spanish. The girls had learned English vocabulary prior to coming to the United States, through word to word translation. Evita was already a competent writer in Spanish. She organized her sentences and paragraphs logically and with variety and was quite a great little storyteller. Viviana had learned her sound-letter correspondence in Spanish, and this gave her quite a lot of interference while trying to learn her new English sounds, especially the corresponding vowels. After 2 years, Evita has exited the program, scoring all 6s on her ACCESS test last spring on a scale of 1-6. Viviana still needs a little help in writing but has 6s on listening, speaking and writing. Both have quickly assimilated into their school’s academic and social life. In fact, they have recently learned they are moving back to Mexico and are very reticent to do so. These two had adequate schooling in Mexico and here. They have benefited from the dual curriculums and languages of Mexico and the United States.

Freeman's second category, "newly arrived with limited formal schooling," is a far more difficult manifestation of an ESOL learner. Diego came to the district from Mexico, after a tumultuous childhood of surviving on the streets. His aunt asked his mother to give her custody because his mother had been unable to care for him and he was literally living on the streets. Although Diego mastered the speaking and listening modalities of English very quickly, his struggles are of another sort. He has almost no ability to organize himself or his things and has a tendency to hoard everything, including little pieces of paper. The psychological effects of the traumas students sometimes incur before they arrive at school can not be overestimated. Diego's new family ensures he gets all of his homework done, but he has been unable to master turning it in. All systems of organization have been unsuccessful thus far. His teachers report extreme frustration with his frequent outbursts, inappropriate school behavior, and inability to complete tasks and follow directions.

The third category, "long-term English learner," refers to students who have been in the United States for seven or more years. These students are typically in secondary school and have limited literacy in both their native language and English. An indicating factor of a category three student is one who struggles with content and has no background knowledge. One such example is Ahmed. Ahmed struggles with academic reading and writing. Furthermore, he has a low interest in academics and a high interest in soccer.

Category four is, in the Rockwood School District, the most prevalent type of student. It is the "potential long-term English learners" who were born in the United

States and spoke another language at home and only became exposed to English upon entering school. The parents have low levels of education and are typically struggling financially. Here I introduce you to Sergio, a kindergartner whose family is from Mexico. Mom reports they have lived here for ten years. She speaks no English and just had her third child. Sergio is the oldest, and as such, is the trail-blazer for mom and dad to learn the system. Sergio was not enrolled in preschool and came with no letter or number knowledge in English or Spanish. After four months, with interventions from ESOL, Reading Intervention, and one-on-one aid from classroom assistants, he can identify 13 letters. As an ESOL student with no English, this is understandable, however, to the larger school system, Sergio is already so far behind; one can see why he is a “potential long- term English learner” who will be in the ESOL system for the foreseeable future.

There is one more extenuating circumstance to add to Freeman’s categories of students. The identified, misidentified, or unidentified Special Education ESOL student. The problems here vary as school psychologists have to make a judgement call for ESOL students. Depending on the experience and worldview of that person, students may or may not be tested for learning disabilities based on their English language ability. If testing proceeds, test practitioners often disqualify students on the basis of invalid tests. All special education diagnostic tests are considered invalid if given in English, because it is not the student’s first language. However, they are also deemed invalid when given in the student’s native language, because the student most often has no academic vocabulary in that language.

Such was the case with Ikara, a Somali girl, who was born in a refugee camp in Kenya, then entered St. Louis City Public schools. It was determined that she had not had adequate schooling in St. Louis prior to her arrival in our district, and until we could adequately intervene, she would not be tested. After two years of well-documented interventions, proving that adequate and consistent instruction was provided, and upon entering 6th grade with a first grade reading level, Ikara was admitted to the special education program. On the opposite end is Cyril, a corporate transfer with bilingual parents. It took a very long time to get a language processing diagnosis for him, because this appeared to be a second-language issue, when in fact the child had a learning disability (2002, p. 4).

There are many factors which lead to the success or failure of the ESOL population. According to Freeman, some of the discredited single-cause perspectives for academic failure of minority groups have been debunked in favor of a more interactive model (2011, p. 23). The debunked models argued that there is a genetic inferiority of some populations, that there is a cultural inferiority, or there is simply a cultural mismatch. These were simple explanations to a very complex situation. However, the “contextual Interaction model” diagram illustrates the intersecting phenomena of the life of an ESOL student and their background, giving credence to a wide variety of circumstances that shape the readiness of the ESOL student. In that analysis, the role that the native country, culture, education and political systems play should be considered. Second, the host country’s legal mandates, mass media and attitudes toward immigrants all play a role in the assimilation or non-assimilation of immigrants. Third, and most

importantly for the discussion here, are considerations of the attitudes of the school which include the school facility, climate, resources, peers, student attitudes, level of staffing, parent involvement, student language proficiency, teacher attitudes, teacher knowledge and skills. It is from this springboard that a discussion on whether or not schools are ready for the vast linguistic and cultural diversity that they are presented with can be addressed. If not, how can cultural proficiency can be reached? (2011, pp. 35-39).

Are schools ready for CLDs?

As discussed previously, the CLD, or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse student is more common than ever in the American public school system. Addressing the writing performance of these students is partly a matter of grammar and syntax, but the way the student integrates as a member of the school system may be a far more important factor. The guidelines for achieving cultural proficiency, as put forth in the book *Cultural Proficiency* by Randall Lindsey, recognize that whatever the culture of the school, it is a predominant force, and people are served by it to varying degrees. ESOL students come to the school and are at least bicultural, and must learn how to respond to that dichotomy. School systems that acknowledge, adjust to, and accept these cross cultural interactions will find more success with their students (2009, p. 6).

In an effort to reach more of this “super” subgroup population which includes minorities and low-incomes students as well as ELLs who sometimes fit both categories, and sometimes neither. The Rockwood ESOL Department’s goal is to reduce the performance gap between minority and majority populations. Lindsey puts forth six stages on a continuum of preparedness to reach cultural proficiency. The stages are

divided into the “unhealthy” and head toward “healthy” as one proceeds on the continuum from a low of cultural destructiveness, where the group seeks to eliminate the cultures of others, to cultural proficiency. In between are “Cultural Incapacity”--seeking to make minorities appear wrong or inferior, “Cultural Blindness”--not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures with the school; treating everyone in the system the same way without recognizing the needs that require differentiated interaction, “Cultural pre-competence”--increasing awareness of what you and the school do not know about working in diverse settings, and “Cultural competence”--aligning your personal values and behaviors and the school’s policies in a manner that is inclusive” (2009, p. 6).

Although it may think it is culturally proficient, Ellisville Elementary’s level is really teetering between unhealthy and healthy, between cultural blindness and cultural pre-competence. In an effort to raise the level of recognition of differing cultures, last year the school initiated the first step in reaching cultural proficiency-- to identify the differences among the people in our environment at International Week.

At the beginning of the week, all students in the school of more than 500 students, put multiple stars on a map of the world in the location of their ancestry. Stars were color-coded for students who were born in another country, were first generation immigrants, second generation, etc. Only Native Americans could place their star on the United States. This was a very hard concept for students to grasp, but also gave an indication that this was a needed curricular piece of education. Throughout the week, students followed PAWS, the school’s tiger mascot, as he travelled around the world

identifying the countries from which our students originate. On the final day, families set up tables of cultural information about their countries of origin and dressed in traditional clothing to greet the students. The student body filed around to stamp their passports and learn about the countries and cultures. Dance troupes performed amid the crowd, and participants were allowed to don saris, serapes, bindis and hijabs. Eighteen countries were represented. The adult education table was also well represented with a Cameroon woman in her colorful headwrap, as well as several Mexican, Chinese and Bosnian women. It was truly a loud and colorful festival. Many commented they had no idea the school was so diverse, or that they had no idea that Nahed was from Tunisia or Aadeeb was from Bangladesh. It was a fantastic avenue to identify the differences.

The truth is the school's population is much more diverse than this festival would indicate. The school is represented by 60 countries, but most students chose not to participate. Year two will likely bring more people to share their stories as the next five steps on Lindsey's essential elements for cultural proficiency are implemented-- "valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to adversity and institutionalizing cultural knowledge" (2009, p. 7).

Acculturation

ELL students in differing stages of acculturation to the United States present differing degrees of challenges to the school system and its educators. There are many extenuating circumstances which determine the ease with which a child will acculturate, but it is very difficult to determine that process, as it will differ even within the same language group, immigrant group, and family. Acculturation is cited by Herrera and

defined by Collier in *Assessment Accommodations for Classroom Teachers of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* as “ the type of culture change that occurs when an enculturated individual comes into proximity with a new or different culture” (2003, p. 93). For the successful acculturation of new students, many processes, trainings and curriculums need to be in place.

It is essential that teachers and staff are trained to work with incoming students in a way which encourages the students to maintain their culture and language. Some people find this to be counter-intuitive, as the myth is the more quickly a student drops the old language and culture and assimilates, the quicker they will learn English and detach themselves from the perceived interference of the first language and culture. The families themselves can often be the biggest perpetrators of dropping the old language and culture in an effort to quickly learn English. Educating everyone on the importance of maintaining the home language is something that needs to be done early.

It is also important to note the differences between assimilation and adaptation within acculturation. Although assimilation may sound like a good goal for ELL students, it is actually defined by Herrera as the “replacement of his or her native cultural patterns and language with those of the new or host community”(2013, p. 97). It is, however, preferable that a student integrates his experiences through adaptation, defined by Herrera as “the degree to which the CLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) student is capable of and comfortable participating differentially in the norms and customary routines of different groups”(2013, p. 97). Using curricular material that promotes the

exploration of a student's primary culture while educating the broader school promotes the wellbeing of all.

Sam demonstrates the process many CLDs go through upon arrival to the United States. Sam, age 7, came as an adequately educated recent arrival from China. He arrived with his baby sister and his parents, who are college educated but have limited English. Sam's family demonstrates the transitions and stages a family goes through as they adjust to the new culture they encounter in the United States. The family arrived in January and they went through the stages of what Herrera calls "Acculturation Dynamics" which include "euphoria, culture shock, anomie and adoption" (2013, p. 96).

At first, Sam was euphoric. Although he could not understand much and could say less, he approached everything with enthusiasm and curiosity. In China, he had learned a broad English vocabulary of animals, colors, etc. but was unable to use them or understand what was being said to him. He giggled often and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the freedom that the American school system afforded him. As time progressed, when he saw a picture of an animal he knew he would yell "ZEBRA" in the middle of class. He learned to cut and glue to make a variety of projects, he got to play outside, and he seemed giddy at the relative chaos of his classroom atmosphere. The second stage of culture shock was more difficult. Sam became frustrated as the reality of his situation set in. Although he came with a wide vocabulary, he was still unable to communicate with his peers and teachers. As an expressive and social little boy, he became increasingly disruptive and upset. The classroom teacher reported that he would leave the classroom abruptly, or quit doing the activity the class was working on. He was treated with care

and concern and eventually proceeded to the next stage of the dynamics, Anomie. Anomie is perhaps the most dangerous of the stages, as a student may remain here forever if the system does not incorporate appropriate acculturation techniques and maintain a culture that sees diversity as an asset rather than a problem to be solved. Sam began to adjust to his new role in the class and school. However, he is currently still in this stage and there is a fear that he will end up in, as Herrera describes, “a cultural “no man’s land,” estranged from the home culture but not yet accepted into the mainstream of the host culture.”

When Sam first arrived, he reported they were only speaking English at home. This was alarming, as none of the family members were even close to proficient in English. The parents were given information and resources on the advantages of maintaining the home language. They were encouraged to meet with other Chinese American and enroll Sam in the Chinese school that meets on Sundays at the middle school. At the time, Dad was not receptive. This interaction is an example the difficulty one can have in reaching level four; one can remain in Anomie briefly, or for a lifetime. However, it is important to note that Anomie is often associated with negative overall socialization. Sam was being instructed to forget his Chinese culture. By contrast, “the ability to adapt to the norms of the new culture while retaining affiliation with the old correlates with much more positive acculturation” (2013, p. 96).

The last stage can take two forms, either adoption or adaption. Adoption describes when the new culture replaces the primary culture, while adaptation describes an individual who is able to function within and between both cultures. Nahed is an

example of someone who has adapted. Her Tunisian family is proud of their heritage; they maintain the Arabic language, they celebrate the Tunisian Nobel prize winners, they go to Arabic school on Saturdays. This maintenance of the heritage is intertwined with their competitive swimming and dancing schedule, sleepovers and trick-or-treating with friends. Nahed is a happy and well adjusted girl who has learned that both cultures are valued and worthy of attention.

What can be learned from this? That students need to stay connected or reconnect to their culture of origin. One way to do this is through thoughtfully delving into the variety of cultural aspects that make the children who they are. Studies show that it is beneficial for students to maintain a strong connection to their ethnicity. “Ethnic identity is the strongest predictor of overall wellness for CLD students” (Dixon Rayle & Myers, 2004). Studies also show that when a student can identify positively with both cultures, they will have more positive socioemotional development. “Higher levels of positive socioemotional development are consistent with a student’s positive identification with both his or her own and the majority group’s culture” (2004, pp. 601-622). Furthermore, when a student has negative identification with their ethnic group, it produces distress. “Low levels of ethnic identity, characterized by negative attitudes toward one’s own group, can result in psychological distress, including feelings of marginality, low self-esteem, and depression” (1993, pp. 143-152).

This is why it is so important to incorporate storytelling which allows students to express their cultural norms, while also educating the broader school population. Howard summarizes succinctly in *Why Race and Culture Matter*, “Interpreting the activity of

people without regard for *their* meaning system and goals renders observations meaningless. We need to understand the coherence of what people from different communities *do*, rather than simply determining that some other group of people do *not* do what “we” do, or do not do it as well or in the way that we do it or jumping to the conclusions that their practices are barbaric” (2010, p. 65). The diverse nature of the school community gives the students a learning opportunity to see other points of view and other ways of defining “normal” through storytelling.

Constructivist Learning

“Constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment”(2008).

In his *Hole in the Wall* project, Sugata Mitra goes so far as to suggest that non-English speaking students in poor rural Indian areas were able to modify their pronunciation of English in order for the computer to “understand” them when they spoke, without any supervision or teaching. He has done interesting studies which suggest that letting students lead their own learning is paramount to holding their attention and maintaining creativity.

This is an extreme version of constructivist learning, where the students literally meander through the digital world looking for answers. His original research was groundbreaking and truly transformational, because it not only helped to bridge the digital divide, but provided education where there was none. In his newer research, Mitra expounds on the limits to this entirely student-led approach to digital learning (2010, pp.

673-688). He has tempered his initial excitement at the results from the student-run outdoor classroom to recommend this method only be used in the extreme cases where no teachers are available.

Contrast this with Fountas and Pinnell's extremely scripted and decidedly non-constructive guided reading program. After finding that elementary schools nationwide have widely adopted the practice of guided reading with fantastic results, they have added to their original curriculum. They state that "this practice has led to pushing students up levels without evidence of their control of the competencies that enable them to think within, beyond, and about texts at each level (2013, pp. 268-284). In essence, the program did not contain enough of the higher level thinking skills that are needed in order to produce independent thinkers. In between these two vastly differing approaches, there lies a middle ground where the student is allowed to construct her own meaning, yet is guided in a way that produces a sound product, constructivist in nature and rich in learning. The medium of digital storytelling allows students from a broad range of backgrounds and abilities to benefit from this instruction and to create their own meaning.

Digital Storytelling

How does one reach all of these students? According to Educause, a nonprofit association that promotes the intelligent use of technology, there are many ways to answer this question, but an effective method may be to allow students to construct their own digital stories. For the purposes of this paper, the definition of digital storytelling is "the practice of combining narratives with digital content, including images, sound and

video to create a short movie (or slideshow), typically with a strong emotional component” (2007). This broad definition allows the research to incorporate multiple forms of writing and multimedia components without limiting it to traditional storytelling.

Bernajeau Porter is a pioneer in researching, honing, and facilitating digital storytelling. She has come up with parameters in which to produce content for the stories. She calls this method “take six.” It gives the student tips for making the story come alive. Although these tips may seem obvious to the experienced writer, they are revelatory for the ELL. Porter claims the student needs to “live inside the story” or become one with the story and tell it from an unrelenting first person narrative. In doing so, the reader is drawn into the trials and tribulations of the teller. Secondly, one must “unfold lessons learned.” This is particularly instructive in the use of the word “unfold.” The student literally unfolds the story, and does not state it in a pedantic or instructional way. This creates reader buy-in and empathy. Next, the student must “develop creative tension,” often easily done because of the nature of their dramatic stories. The student must economize the story told, which is often *too* easy for the inexperienced writer. The student obviously needs to be concise, but often struggles even more with expounding on details and descriptions. “Show not tell” is a great adage that encourages the student to include descriptive adjectives and action verbs. Lastly, Porter believes students should “develop craftsmanship” an ambiguous and un-measurable trait built over a long period of time.

It is clear that the ELL needs a structure within which to work. It also should not be forgotten that the point is to improve language ability. “After a digital storytelling is shared, it should be remembered for its soul, not the bells and whistles of technology” (2013). The use of technology in the classroom must be closely monitored to ensure the efficacy of the tools for improving writing.

As depicted in the immigration stories of Chapter One, there are many benefits to students in bringing their own stories to life. At the aforementioned event, during Hamil’s exodus story from Pakistan, she had physical props and storyboards, food and realia. It was a tactile experience, with no technology. To add to the project, she could take her moving immigration story digital. The digital nature of the process would engage her writing process, while the digital nature of the product would also engage her mostly millennial audience. It is no secret to anyone who has observed child behavior recently that children born in the mid-1990s to the present are unlike those that came before. Prensky described them as “learners with highly developed visual-spatial skills who seem to prefer images to text” (2001, pp. 1-6). This age group has an intuitive ability to communicate using images and multimedia. One can assume that the generations to come will remain or grow even more attuned to these media.

Some additional prompts that would elicit moving and emotional stories according to Cloud in *Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners* follow.

- Things I find strange about this country
- My two Languages
- My two countries

- The people I left behind
- The things I miss most about...
- A time I didn't understand what was being said
- My first days in the United States
- What it means to be Polish American
- When my parents were children
- How I got my name(s)
- First day of school in this country
- What people do with my name in this country
- People I miss from back home (2009).

These prompts could be a part of a broader Writer's Workshop, a place where students write every day. Chen explains how a classroom that contains a structured Writer's Workshop, also contains a daily component of brainstorming ideas, revising, and editing (2006, p. 118).

Writer's Workshop

The structure for the writing block of the class is predicated on the Writer's Workshop. In that respect, Andrews states that the beginning of the year is primarily spent on instructing students on how to be a part of the Writer's Workshop. Students learn how to begin by listening to whole group instruction. They are then given time to write on their own. They become established in the routine of one-on-one conferencing with the teacher, based on what type of feedback and instruction they need. They also become accustomed to peer-editing: both how to receive and give peer edits. This is especially

difficult because the students, as noted, vary widely in their reading and writing abilities (2012, p. 7).

During the writing process, students create extensive amounts of prewriting based on memories, personal photographs and experiences (2012, p. 27). Students may research place photographs and find these to be a great source of inspiration as they remember their home country. The ELL student often has a deep wealth of knowledge to draw from for prewriting. The challenge for the teacher is to draw this information from the student, because the student often has no idea their background information may be different or more interesting.

After the prewriting, students proceed to the drafting stage. It is during this stage they hone their point of view and decide how to organize and emphasize the various content items. Students then revise and elaborate, focusing on word choice. Students also make decisions about removing or adding and rearranging ideas. Students spend a lot of time in the editing stage for several reasons. First the student must edit his own work. Then, the student conferences with the teacher and gets needed feedback and instruction. Next, the student works with his partner to edit the work. This stage is developmentally instructional not only for editing, but also for serving as an avenue for students to learn to interact appropriately and diplomatically in a situation where this is often difficult. Students improve as they realize the difficulty and importance of receiving and giving effective critiques. Finally, students are ready to publish. In this case, the polished pieces are narrated to a wider audience through the photostory media. (2012, p. 35).

Technology and ELLs

Sousa indicates there are many advantages to using technology with ELLs. Exposure to technology, especially interactive and social media, can narrow the digital divide that many ELLs experience from their native peers. Technology has a tendency to encourage learner-centered classrooms and enrich learning experiences, as the teacher automatically becomes secondary to the task and screen at hand. The *share* and *collaboration* features of newer technology allow for immediate communication and feedback. Furthermore, technology is intrinsically motivating to children (2011, pp. 220-221). Students can be highly motivated, both literally and figuratively, to get to the next level.

The disadvantages of using technology with ELLs are few and more easily fixed. In fact, some of the disadvantages that Sousa cites may, in fact, be seen as opportunities. The ELLs inability to access technology because of their limited language can be highly motivating, as noted by Mitra. Students' strong desire to enter the digital world can expedite language learning. Also, because of their varying levels of experience, which Sousa labels a disadvantage, all students are able to enter the digital world at their own speed and ability.

The cost of technology, and speed at which software and hardware need to be updated continues to create a challenge for all districts, but often and especially those with high populations of ELLs (2011, pp. 220-221). Another disadvantage is the length of time these units take to implement. The student may spend an inordinate amount of time on non-writing tasks. It is a concern whether the amount of time spent is equal to

the value brought by the medium. Also, students become entranced by the illustrating and/or choosing clipart portion of the project. As noted previously, the visuals are an especially important tool for the ELL to make connections between their vocabulary and its meaning. However, the question remains, is the amount of time spent commensurate with the benefits reaped?

Furthermore, the teacher must have a structured writing content development strategy. The teacher must implement it in manageable stages in order for the student to create a readable and interesting, yet personal work. As Calkins states in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, “we care about writing when it is personal and interpersonal.” This project is very personal, as students tell their digital stories. It is also interpersonal, as they share them. So often as teachers we get to the basics and technicalities of writing first. But first, we must have something important to say, and someone to say it to. We must begin by “demonstrating the power and purposes writing has in our lives, and by inviting students to discover ways that writing can enrich their lives as well... and help students to see and value the precious particles in their lives (1994, p. 31). The Project demonstrates vividly the communicative nature of the writing and the profound effect the writing can have on a student’s personal life and on the school environment through mutual understanding.

Digital Storytelling Platforms

Sylvester states that, “Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters, situations, experiences, and insights” (2009, pp. 284-289).

There are many excellent programs to transport the content created by the ELL student. In general, they all allow the students to organize and separate their thinking into manageable steps. This is especially important to the ELL. The various programs all allow for either drawing by the student, adding clip art, videos, or photos. This, too, is especially important to the ELL, as visuals support their comprehension of vocabulary and ideas. What follows is a brief review of easily available digital storytelling media which can be used as assets to the ELL.

Schiffer and Danoff report that Pixie software has a talking interface that allows students to use both receptive and expressive language skills. This feature helps them with writing too, as they can read their own writing and listen to it, or have their peers listen to it for grammar and syntax. It has special benefits for the ELL as the language component is omnipresent. Students can create talking pictures, make a word bank, use stickers for vocabulary, draw, make “cool word” vocabulary, share and collaborate all online (2012).

Thesen and Kara-Soteriou report that PhotoStory 3 and Moviemaker offer similar features to Pixie without the drawing component. Additionally, these programs both allow the slideshow to have a soundtrack, which is a feature that Wixie does not contain (2011, pp. 93-100). This is a feature especially motivating to the upper elementary student.

Conclusion

ELL students have an important story to tell. Telling the story may motivate them to write while giving them an added sense of “place” in the community. For the

elementary school culture, the importance of *hearing* the story is perhaps underrated. The cultural competence of the school community can be enhanced by first identifying the differences among cultures.

The research on digital storytelling is many and varied. Most researchers agree the medium allows for student differentiation, that is, it allows for students of varying levels of competency to interact with the digital media, while allowing students to be constructivist in all modalities of language. What the studies lack is a quantitative analysis of the efficacy of the medium. The following chapters will demonstrate the methodologies used in validating or invalidating the use of digital storytelling to improve writing in the ELL curriculum. Chapter Three outlines the mixed methods approach to research that was used to collect the data reported in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

Introduction

The avenue for the research paradigm was a mixed method procedure of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This analysis was two-fold in scope, addressing both writing improvement and improvement in the cultural competence of the school. Hence the question: *Can a culturally relevant constructivist digital-storytelling project improve ELL elementary students' writing performance and improve cultural competence of the school as a whole?*

The combination of the two methods provided a more comprehensive picture of actual change, both in student behavior and performance. Creswell states, "There is more insight to be gained from the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research than either form by itself (2009, p. 203). A mixed methods model allowed for a more complex and deeper understanding about what motivated students to improve their writing.

Data alone could not address the intangibles of student feelings toward their writing skills, performance, and ability to communicate to an interested audience.

Additionally, data alone could not address that a student's boost in performance may have been attributable to an enhanced feeling about their place in the school. On the other hand, simply discussing how students felt about their writing and honoring the feedback students got from staff, families and fellow students did not demonstrate or quantify the inherent need for real improvement in test scores among this group of students. There was a lack of quantitative analysis on the efficacy of digital storytelling and its effects on writing.

Qualitatively, students filled out surveys that addressed their feelings about the digital story writing process. Student surveys allowed the researcher to gain access to the student's thoughts about the writing process. Specifically, the researcher found out what the students found productive about the process of digital storytelling. For example, was it helpful to discuss immigration with mom and dad, or were mom and dad hesitant to discuss this topic? Was it helpful to write about family photographs and have a visual to give impetus to writing? Was it helpful to narrate and hear back what one wrote in one's own voice? Did this process allow the student to make needed corrections that he would not otherwise have made? Did it help to have a conference with the teacher regarding writing? Did it help or hinder progress to have another student read the writing? Did other students point out places where it was difficult to understand? Did writing on the computer make it easier to correct and make changes? Did sharing it with a broad audience bring pride or embarrassment? These questions could be answered through open-ended surveys where students felt comfortable responding honestly.

Quantitatively, data from writing test scores was valuable on the personal level for student and parent information, on the staff level for teachers to understand what worked and did not work in their instruction, and on the curricular level to decide what elements should have been taught and in what manner they should have been taught. It also shed light on whether curricular items were ineffective and should be removed. Additionally, data may lead districts to add some elements to the curriculum.

The Research Plan

1. The plan was to first analyze the data from the WIDA ACCESS writing scores of the sixteen participating students. Virtually all students in the ESOL program had a sub-par writing score which needed to rise in order for the student to exit from the ESOL program.
2. Students were then instructed in the Writer's Workshop model and created a personal narrative immigration story. This story was self-edited, peer edited, group-edited, and teacher-edited.
3. Students then created a multimedia digital story on *Photostory 3* for both primary and intermediate grades.
4. Students displayed their digital story, along with other cultural artifacts, at an all-school International Day.
5. Students were interviewed by the teacher to ascertain efficacy of the project, using surveys, one for intermediate grades (Appendix I) and one for primary grades (Appendix II).

6. After the entire student body of 550 attended International Day, student body members in grades 2-5 completed the surveys in the appendix to ascertain improved level of cultural competence.

Rationale for the plan

The rationale for the plan was two-fold. First and foremost, the goal was to improve ELL student writing. The ELL students felt the constructivist project allowed them to share important information with the student body. Because the project was relevant to them, they were incentivized to succeed in communicating the information effectively. A second goal was to improve the school's overall cultural competence. Improved cultural competence served to enhance the learning environment for all students through shared knowledge and mutual understanding.

Research instruments

The research instruments to measure writing improvement included the writing prompt schedule, the WIDA writing rubric, and the research survey to measure student feedback and efficacy of the project as it related to writing improvement.

Data analysis technique

The ESOL department administered an elementary level, district-wide writing prompt during the first, second, and fourth quarters of the school year. During the third quarter, the WIDA ACCESS test was administered, so no writing prompt was administered at that time. The writing prompts consisted of grade level appropriate content intended to correlate to the specific writing goals of the grade level. Students needed to demonstrate an ability to write about cause and effect, personal narrative,

compare and contrast, and an argumentative essay. Teachers analyzed writing improvement through the WIDA writing assessments rubric. The quantitative analysis of writing improvement between the second and third writing prompts gave an indication of the writing progress students made through their efforts on the digital storytelling project.

The prompt schedule can be viewed on the following pages:

	September Administer (Oct 5 score)	December Administer (1/12 score)	Administer after spring break (as MAP Prep) (4/25 score)
KG	<p>Use September Kindergarten picture (Playground)</p> <p>Teacher says: "Write about what is happening in the picture. You can write words." If student is unable to write, then turn over the paper and let them draw a story or picture.</p> <p>Teacher will scribe student responses. After asking student what they wrote (or something along those lines).</p>	<p>Snowman Sequencing - page 15 of sequencing book and complete on kindergarten writing paper</p> <p>Teacher says: "Lay these pictures out to tell a story and glue."</p> <p>Teacher says: "Write about what is happening in the picture. You can write words." If student is not writing, then prompt with, "What do you see? Can you write that?" If not trying, "Can you sound out that word?"</p> <p>Teacher will scribe student responses. After asking student what they wrote (or something along those lines).</p>	<p>No picture - Use kindergarten writing paper</p> <p>Teacher says: "Write at least four sentences that tell about your day at school."</p> <p>Additional prompts: "Write about your favorite activity, class or teachers."</p> <p>Teacher will scribe student responses. After asking student what they wrote (or something along those lines).</p>

<p>1st grade</p>	<p>visual prompt</p> <p>Life Cycle (chicken) Sequential</p> <p>Teacher says: "Write three to four sentences describing the life cycle of a chicken."</p> <p>If you can't read what a student wrote, please scribe their response.</p>	<p>picture prompt with four seasons - student sequence the four pictures</p> <p>Give students access to picture (printed copy or show on smartboard)</p> <p>Teacher says: "Pick two seasons and write sentences to tell how they alike or different. Write three to four sentences."</p> <p>If you can't read what a student wrote, please scribe their response.</p>	<p>Share the Reading A-Z Goldilocks story the day before.</p> <p>pictures on page 47-48 of Make and Take Sequence Book. Teacher will have pages cut apart, student will sequence and teacher will staple for student to use for reference.</p> <p>Teacher says: "Please write the story of Goldilocks and the 3 Bears. You may use the pictures to help you tell your story. Remember to write in complete sentences."</p> <p>If you can't read what a student wrote, please scribe their response.</p>
<p>2nd grade</p>	<p>What do I want to be when I grow up?</p> <p>Give three reasons for your choices.</p> <p>Expository</p> <p>Expectation is 4-6 sentences.</p>	<p>Do you think you should have indoor or outdoor recess when it is cold ?</p> <p>** we need to add a picture to prompt**</p> <p>Give three reasons to support your opinion.</p> <p>Expectation is for 4-6 sentences for response.</p>	<p>Describe a time that you learned something.</p> <p>Write about a holiday celebration.</p> <p>Write about a new friend you made this year.</p> <p>Write about an embarrassing moment that you had.</p> <p>Choose one from the above 4 to write on.</p> <p>Expectation is a response of 4-6 sentences.</p>
<p>3rd Grade</p>	<p>Unit 3 Flowers and Insects</p> <p>Read or Listen to Article/Prompt</p> <p>Independent vocabulary</p>	<p>Unit 11 We need sleep</p> <p>Read or Listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p>	<p>Unit 8 Size of Asia</p> <p>Read or Listen to article / prompt</p> <p>writing focus : Explanatory</p>

	<p>writing focus : sequence</p>	<p>writing focus : Cause and effect</p> <p>Read article to student. Student follow along in their copy of text. Students will write 4-6 sentences.</p>	<p>(timeline and organization; charts)</p> <p>Read article to student.</p> <p>Student follow along in their copy of text.</p> <p>Students will write 5-7 sentences.</p> <p>Take copy of article away before students write.</p> <p>No complete sentences on planner</p> <p>One day only!!!!</p>
4th Grade	<p>Unit 5 Peanuts, Please!</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus : informative</p> <p>Remember post-writing checklist</p>	<p>Comparing and Contrasting Plants and Animals</p> <p>4th grade prompt in Dec Folder</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus : C and C</p> <p>Remember post-writing checklist</p> <p>Read article to student. Student follow along in their copy of text. Students will write 4-6 sentences.</p>	<p>Unit 9 Genetic Traits</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus :Argument</p> <p>Remember post-writing checklist</p> <p>Read article to student.</p> <p>Student follow along in their copy of text.</p> <p>Students will write 5-7 sentences.</p>
5th Grade	<p>4th Grade Unit 2 13 Colonies</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus : C and C</p> <p>Remember post-writing</p>	<p>Unit 2 Beef or Bugs?</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus : Cause and Effect</p>	<p>Unit 11 One nation, one language</p> <p>Read or listen to article / prompt</p> <p>Independent Vocabulary</p> <p>writing focus : argument</p> <p>Remember post-writing</p>

	checklist	Remember post-writing checklist Read article to student. Student follow along in their copy of text. Students will write minimum 5-7 sentences.	checklist Read article to student. Student follow along in their copy of text. Students will write 6-8 sentences.
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The department used the WIDA Writing rubric to ensure the group grading system was consistent and fair. The rubric aligned with the WIDA ACCESS scores that the students received in the spring from the standardized test administered in the 3rd quarter. The rubric described the levels from *Entering* to *Reaching* and what elements a writing piece needed to contain in order to earn that level. The chart can be found on the WIDA website at <https://www.wida.us/> It was adapted from the ACCESS for ELLs Training Tool Kit and Test Administration Manuals.

Student data was then charted to ascertain whether students were progressing appropriately. All names on the chart are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participating individuals. Parents signed a waiver to allow student digital stories to be shown at International Day and/or in the student’s classroom.

Mikael	2	2.6	4	4.3	Enterin/Beginning 1-2.9
Juan	2	1.6	4.6	5	Developing 3-3.9
Sam	2	2.6	6	6	Expanding/Bridging 4-5.9
Julia	2	0	new 2/15	0	
Aaron	3	2.5	5	5	
Mohammed	3	2.3	4.3	4.3	
Nahed	3	2.6	5.6	6	
Marcus	3	3.3	6	6	
Miguel	3	2.6	3.3	4.3	
Sri	2	2.3	6	6	
Jesus	3	3	3.6	4.3	
Silvia	3	2	5	5.6	
Marisol	4	2	5.6	6	
Lakshmi	5	2.5	2.8	4	
Owen	5	4	6	6	
Hallah		2.8	3.5	4.6	
Viviana		3.3	moved	moved	

Curricular Theories

The principles of good curriculum development in ESOL required differentiation for the various levels of language proficiency, as well as for differing learning styles. The theories that grounded my work were many and varied. I was interested in Vygotsky's theories on the correlation between language development and culture. I was also drawn to the work of Herrera on assimilation and acculturation and promoting the healthy identities of ELLs. I was interested in Prensky's theories of the digital generation and how they inherently learn differently. I was also drawn to Sugata Mitra's constructivist digital world, where students enter and travel at their own pace and in the direction they choose. I was fascinated by the groundbreaking work of Fountas and Pinnell and their ability to transform the world of reading instruction. I believe it is effective because they have revisited their initial research and are asking more of teachers

then to simply follow a script. These researchers, in particular, have led to a path that is constructivist and digital in nature.

Setting and Participants

The sixteen students who participated in the study were 2- 5th grade ELL students at three elementary schools. My ELL students came from a variety of home language settings as well as a variety of levels of English proficiency. The home languages represented were Burmese, Telegu, Czech, Tamil, Mandarin, Cantonese, Polish, Spanish, French, Somali, Bantu, Mai Mai, Indonesian, Bengali, Arabic, and Korean. These students were given ESOL instruction in small, grade-level groups.

The final product took the form of an International Day where ELL students displayed their digital immigration stories and where families, classroom teachers and friends came to view the story, ask questions, eat ethnic food and see the typical dress, customs, and realia of the students' homeland. This event served to educate not only the student, but the larger community about the lives of the students. Unlike other elementary schools in the district, which hosted picnics and fashion shows and International Evenings for only the International community, the Ellisville event strove to unite the entire school community by sharing stories. While the International students set up displays and shared their digital stories with their fellow students, the broader population discussed their own unique heritage with their parents so they could place their stars on the school map to represent their ancestries. All students were encouraged to wear traditional clothing or soccer jerseys from the places of their ancestors. Logistically, while it was more difficult to move 550 kids through the displays in an

organized fashion, it was more rewarding for both presenters and the general population to share and learn about the various cultures. The International Families met as a group during lunch time, where they shared ethnic food brought by all, built camaraderie, and spoke in whatever common language they shared among their multi-linguistic backgrounds.

The method for the cultural competency data analysis was purely qualitative in nature. To determine whether an improvement in the cultural competence of the school resulted through the sharing of digital storytelling at International Day required participant feedback. The participants consisted of 550 students and 24 staff members. The 370 students in grades 2-5 filled out the survey (appendix iii) through google forms in the classrooms following the International Day event. The 24 staff members also responded to survey questions through Google forms (appendix iv). Parents in attendance also took a survey regarding their reaction to the cultural competence of the school and International Day's effect on that competence.

Conclusion

The chapter discussed the research plan for the digital storytelling project, beginning with the Writers Workshop structure of the ESOL classroom, and continuing through the researching of the country, writing of the story, adding photographs, narrating and adding music. The plan continued through the display of the story at International Day and in the classroom to an audience of peers, staff, and families. The chapter also discussed the rationale for the mixed qualitative and quantitative research paradigm. The plan addressed how quantitative data analysis was collected and analyzed

through writing prompts and the department-graded WIDA rubric to measure writing improvement. The plan went on to address how qualitative data was collected by surveying student writers. The survey addressed student writing growth and feelings of cultural competence. The survey method was also used to ascertain cultural competency improvement among families, the general student body, and staff.

The following chapter will outline both the quantitative and qualitative results of the research regarding improvement of writing performance and cultural competence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Improved Writing Performance

The results of the study correspond directly to the research question in that both qualitative and quantitative pieces attempt to ascertain writing improvement. The question asks, in part, “Can a culturally relevant digital-storytelling project improve ELL students’ writing performance?” The quantitative data collected on writing improvement indicates that, while writing improvement is affected by many factors, this project likely influenced writing performance positively. The qualitative data on student’s reactions to the Project also indicates a likely improvement. The data collection process is as follows:

Sixteen students were given the fourth quarter ESOL department writing prompt in the same setting and manner as it was given in quarters one and two. By grade level it breaks down as follows:

- Students in grade two were directed to choose between the following topics:
 - 1.) a time they learned something

- 2.) a holiday celebration
 - 3.) a time when they made a new friend this year or
 - 4.) an embarrassing moment that they had. 66 percent of students improved and 33 percent earned the same score as 2nd quarter.
- Third graders were instructed to write an explanatory paragraph after having an article entitled *The Size of Asia* (2016, p. 73) read to them. The third grade results indicated that 50 percent of students improved and 50 percent earned the same score.
 - Fourth graders were instructed to write an argument essay entitled *Genetic Traits*, and whether animals would be able to survive without their special genes. (2016, p. 98). 100 percent of fourth grade students improved.
 - Fifth graders were instructed to take a position and write an argument essay on *One Nation, One Language* article, discussing whether Americans should or should not learn a second language. (2016, p. 118). 100 percent of fifth grade students improved. The overall results showed that writing improvement was consistent across grade levels with 40 percent of students receiving the same score and 60 percent showing improvement.

The relationship between the writing improvement and the writing prompt is correlative for the second grade, in that the digital storytelling project is a personal narrative, as was the second grade writing prompt. The first, third, fourth, and fifth grade correlations are more tenuous. Yes, most students' writing improved. It is difficult to ascertain whether there is a cause-effect relationship between the personal narrative

nature of the digital storytelling project and the increased performance on fourth quarter writing prompt, which addressed students ability to compare and contrast, or write an explanatory or argumentative essay.

Next, students were surveyed about how constructivist digital storytelling affected their writing performance. The responses were many and varied. Qualitatively, the results are difficult to group thematically or within a consistent pattern. For example, Miguel did not like the Project at all, emphatically stating “I don’t really like to talk about Mexico at school. I would talk about it at home, because here people don’t really get it.” Miguel was clearly agitated by talking and writing about Mexico at school. International day did not change his perception that all things Mexican were to be kept at home and separate from school. Sam, on the other hand loved writing about the friend he missed from China and said, “Mrs. Harrell and I practice writing. I think it got better because I practiced a lot of writing.”

The constructive nature of the project appealed to many of the students, but not all. Marcus liked it because “your (sic) free it’s your project writing is made by you and no one tells you to do stuff.” Nidal, however, disagreed, “I just want to do regular work and not think so much.” Additionally, Hallah, who dresses in hijab everyday commented that her favorite topic to write about was “Ramadan, because I like talking about it and I actually like fasting” and “ My three languages because I get to tell about it.”

As Lucy Calkins states that students’ writing performance improves when students write about what they know, as they did in the digital storytelling project (1994, p. 31). Students reported that it helped to write about themselves, because they knew

what they were talking about, who they were writing for and why they were writing. Silvia stated the obvious, “I like writing about myself because I know more.”

As Sugata Mitra noted, students reported that they preferred to make their own decisions about what they could write about (2010, p.680). The constructivist nature of choosing what to include and exclude gave them the ownership of the project which led to improved performance for most students.

Not surprisingly, however, students who showed improvement on the WIDA scale through writing prompts between the first and second quarters also showed improvement between second and fourth quarters. Those who did not improve or went down between first and second quarters also showed minimal or no growth between second and fourth quarters. The digital storytelling Project is not equally effective among students. The wholistic nature of the project, grouped with peer and teacher editing, does not target specific deficiencies in student writing. It also does not offer remediation for those deficiencies.

Here are the results of the fourth quarter writing prompt as compared with the first and second quarters.

Mikael (Nidal)	2	2.6	4	4.3	Enterin/Beginning 1-2.9
Juan (Joel)	2	1.6	4.6	5	Developing 3-3.9
Sam (Mark)	2	2.6	6	6	Expanding/Bridging 4-5.9
Julia (Jessica)	2	0	new 2/15	0	
Aaron (Aameem)	2	2.5	5	5	
Mohammed (Ali)	2	2.3	4.3	4.3	
Nahed (Nour)	2	2.6	5.6	6	
Marcus (Alex)	2	3.3	6	6	
Miguel (Matthew)	2	2.6	3.3	4.3	
Sri (Amyra)	2	2.3	6	6	
Jesus (Jose)	3	3	3.6	4.3	
Silvia (Sandra)	3	2	5	5.6	
Marisol (Mia)	4	2	5.6	6	
Lakshmi (Supraja)	5	2.5	2.8	4	
Owen (Oliver)	5	4	6	6	
Hallah (Nimo)		2.8	3.5	4.6	
Viviana		3.3	moved	moved	

Improved cultural competence among participants/families

Perhaps the most striking results came from the families who participated in International Day. This is a population is heavily invested in the outcome and took on the effort with zeal. After a planning luncheon attended by moms with ethnic food to share, I had to return to my classroom and left the moms to visit for three more hours! It seemed as though they really needed a place where they could get together and support each other. As described by Freeman, when people feel like they are a part of the school, not only are the children more successful in school, but the families are more likely to be involved in school activities, thus driving more success for students (2011, p.40). 100 percent of respondents felt like they were better understood after the International Day, and felt they were a part of a very diverse school, one they had not previously known was so diverse. One mom stated, “I had no idea Ellisville had so many different cultures. I

think that it's important for all kids to realize that not everyone is like them, and that diversity is a wonderful gift.” “It makes me feel happy and celebrated.” “Getting to understand more kids like me.”

The statistics for participation in International Day are as follows: 145 different families from 47 different countries were invited. Not all of those students receive ESOL services. They are representative of first or second generation families in the United States. Sixteen countries chose to participate representing 31 families. Students receiving services presented their digital stories at International Day and showed their stories to their classmates in the classroom.

In total, 31 families participated and were surveyed about their feelings about the school and International Day. The themes and patterns that emerged were several fold. Most families thought the day was essential in educating the broader population about differing world views. When asked, “Why is International Day important to our school community?” The responses were similar. One commented, “It is very important to teach other kids new cultures from all over the world. Foreigner kids and their family are very proud about their countries and in some how they would like to show their customs, beliefs, food, arts,...to their friends and share them.” Another continued, “It helps celebrate our diversity and educate children to embrace differences.”

A second theme that emerged was that parents felt they and their children were understood better after International Day. 100 percent of families thought that students and staff learned something new about their child at International Day.

When asked whether any contradictions or tensions seemed to exist between the cultural practices and traditions that students bring to the classroom and the practices and traditions that we operate on at school, one respondent said, “We just have to be very flexible, try to practice the culture where we live and on the same time we keep our tradition home. The most important thing is to be open minded, we have to accept the culture where we live and of course we don't and never lose our traditions.” Another respondent continued, “Communication is the best way to overcome or clear any tension.” Another said, “I tried to avoid those that may have been too different and focus on a few areas that would be interesting and even similar.” One teacher, whose mother is from Iran, was initially hesitant to participate due to the negative attention Iran was getting in the media. When I suggested this was exactly why she should participate and give an alternate narrative to the debate, she agreed. One mother in particular from Syria chose to take current event issues head on and included the ruins bombed by ISIS in her video presentation. She was a firm believer that education and communication were the keys to cultural competence.

100 percent of respondents said their experience at International Day changed their view of Ellisville Elementary for a variety of reasons. Not only did it highlight the school's diversity, one respondent thought that, “It's nice to see an effort from school to open the eyes and brains of students and help them think outside the box of local thinking (food, sports & languages) this is an essential part in my opinion to teach kids how to accept other people no matter what color, accent or clothes they have. It helps building a loving community and open minded adults for the future.” Another reported that, “It

shows that the school give importance and show respect to foreign families...and of course as I mentioned it, it gave us an opportunity to show our culture which is we are very proud about it!”

When asked, “How did your child feel about sharing their story, proud? inhibited? embarrassed? excited? Why do you think they felt that way?” The majority of parents said that their child was proud and excited. “My daughter felt so proud to be an Indian after the International Day celebration. Earlier, she was shy in sharing her cultural beliefs.” One notable story comes from Sam, whose family moved to the United States. in January of 2015. Sam wrote eloquently about his life in China. While the audience viewed the photographs of Sam in Tiananmen Square with his best friend, Sam about to climb the Great Wall in Beijing, and Sam looking at the Pandas in the National Zoo of China, Sam narrated with a thick accent his journey from China to St. Louis. He created tension in his story by describing his several long plane rides to America, one of which resulted in an emergency landing. He was able to draw on his fascination with flight to describe this harrowing journey. Sam insisted on choosing his own airplane photos from Google based on whether they were in flight, landing, or taking off, even though one of them was a United Arab Emirates plane.

Sam asked me how to say his heart had a jagged line it, motioning a jagged line. I said it’s broken! He says no, no, no, just a little crack, not broken. So we found a photograph of a cracked heart that he used to describe his sadness at being away from his best friend. His solution was talking to his best friend on the phone. They had a

conversation about the full moon in China and whether it is a “mooncake day” or not, when the tradition in China is to eat a moon shaped cake.

Sam’s family has come a long way in a year and a half. They have traveled through Herrera’s stages of Acculturation Dynamics when initially it had appeared the odds were insurmountable. Mom said to me, after meeting another Chinese mom from the same city in China, “This day help me.” Mark gave me a thank you note after the International Day that said, “Thank you for helping me make my perfect video. I really like my perfect video.”

Improved Cultural Competence among student body

Of the 350 students in the general population who were surveyed, 166 responses were received. Ninety percent of students felt their experience at International Day made our school more unified. That said, the general pattern that emerged was that kids think it is fun to dress up in Indian clothes, get bindis and henna, see traditional dancing and hear traditional singing. Generally, what the kids liked about International Day is what kids like in general--a break from routine and lots of interaction with people who are interested in sharing with them. This is important because the cultural competence of the school affects the learning of every student in the school, those in the minority and those in the majority. It can be difficult to extrapolate data from elementary student comments, however, many students were insightful. Students thought that “People should know about other people, and International Day is a great way to ensure that this happens.” “It makes our school more welcoming and powerful that we get to do this, and also just for a fun activity to do and learn”, “More people are uniting to make one school”, “I like to see

my friends be confident” “We all saw things that we have in common, therefore, we have all seen how united we are.” To the question posed, “What was your favorite part of International Day?” One student responded, “I didn’t know that my friends were from a different continent/country, now I know a lot more about my friends.”

94 percent of students felt used Steven Covey’s Habit 5 “seek first then to be understood.” Students were reminded to incorporate Habit 5 which also encourages them to see things from other viewpoints (2008).

Improved Cultural Competence among staff

Twenty four faculty members participated and were surveyed. One pattern that emerged from the staff survey fairly consistently is that most teachers felt they already knew their students very well and already valued, encouraged and accepted the diversity the students bring to their classroom.

Another pattern that emerged from the staff surveys was, although they already valued the diversity, International Day was a day where a student could be comfortable showcasing that diversity. Teachers felt that it “reminded me to be mindful of all the wonderful learning opportunities that our diversity can bring to my students.”

To the question “Did students feel proud, inhibited, embarrassed, excited?” 100 percent of teachers said that students were proud and excited. Again, this shows that International Day provided not only a reason for students to learn about their countries through research with their parents and me, but also a shared platform where parents and students have a shared investment in the outcome. “International Day always teaches me

more about my students. It deepens the understandings and strengthens relationships. It helps me to grow closer to my students.”

To the question, “Did students express themselves differently at International Day than they do in your classroom?” 100 percent said yes, with responses varying from the sense of ownership, confidence, comfort and pride students felt. One teacher commented that “she saw her students not shying away from their culture, but instead embracing it.”

To the question, “What, if any, contradictions or tensions seem to exist between the cultural practices and traditions that students bring to the classroom and the practices and traditions we operate on at school?” “I think sometimes we push students to follow the norm instead of use their differences to create knowledge among others. We have all our traditions and celebrations in place and we aren’t always open minded to others ideas and cultures.” “I feel it is a teacher’s responsibility to create a classroom that is consistently accepting and compassionate. Possible contradictions or tensions shouldn’t exist if a teacher and school community look upon cultural differences as an ever growing opportunity to learn about and appreciate one another.” To the question, “Will what you learned change your view of students or how you react to them? If so, how? If not, why not?” The responses were as follows, “I already try hard to understand the different cultures my students possess and get to know that part of them. I try to learn from them and encourage the students in my class to learn from them. The differences we all possess can be a great way for all of us to grow. I like to look at it that way, instead of differences separating us. I think International Day just helps to justify and reaffirm why this is important.”

Conclusion

This chapter delineated both the quantitative and qualitative results of the research. The quantitative data showed that writing improvement occurred as a result, in part, of the digital storytelling project. Results were measured by a department-wide grading group which used the WIDA writing rubric as its overarching standard. The qualitative data also showed an improvement in cultural competence as evidenced by surveys of participating students and families, as well as the staff and student body.

The following chapter will reflect on major findings that emerged from the research, and revisit the literature review, including discussions on language acquisition, Writers Workshop, cultural proficiency, constructivist learning, and digital storytelling. It will consider possible policy implications for our school community. It will also consider the limits of the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Concluding Chapter

Major Findings

The major learnings that emerged from the research are instructive. First, allowing students to construct meaning through personal narratives improves writing; when students get to choose how to represent themselves they are motivated to perform. Second, Writer's Workshop works as a structure for the classroom. Self editing, along with peer and group editing and teacher conferences improves writing. Students need personal and interactive feedback to be able to visualize how to make improvements in their writing. Also, writing for a specific audience improves writing; when students know their story will be on full display for the classroom and school, the final product improves. Finally, cultural competence in all members of a community is advantageous to student growth and learning; exposing all stakeholders to the cultures of others is advantageous to the school community as a whole.

Literature Review

The structure of the Writers' Workshop is essential for student preparation in the digital storytelling writing project. Not only did it provide an editing board for their work, but more importantly it provided an arena for students to share their personal stories and get feedback on the content. The realizations that students came to within the classroom, i.e. that other students had similar stories and home situations, provided a nice support system for students to express their ideas comfortably. There was confusion at times, between culture, religion, language, and country which ended up bringing even more understanding to students regarding their place in school community and in the world. For example, Hallah and Mikael appear as different as can be. One is a shy Bosnian boy, with longish blonde hair and blue eyes. One is a Somali girl, with a hijab and a huge personality. As the two read each other's stories about their cultural traditions, they were confused. They had a long and convoluted discussion about whether they were from the same country or religion or language or state or continent. The realization they were both Muslim was almost too much for the pair to believe. Now they have a connection that is sweet and surprising.

Curricular Alignment. This project not only aligns with the Rockwood curriculum, but it would be a great addition to it. The Rockwood writing curriculum states, "Writers compose for a variety of audiences and purposes." This Project gives students a comprehensive audience of parents, teachers, and peers who respond to the digital storytelling project.

This digital storytelling project aligns with the WIDA standards as it attempts to move the students from writers who generally began the process at the developing or third stage, to show emerging complexity and enter the fourth stage of expanding, where they start to vary their linguistic complexity to the fifth stage of bridging where they can form an organized paragraph and into the reaching phase where they are proficient on statewide assessments.

The Four Stages of Preparedness for Second Language Acquisition

The International Day gives a unique opportunity to see student interactions with families and ascertain in exactly what stage of language preparedness the families arrived. It was again easy to see why the different categories of “newly arrived with adequate schooling, ” “newly arrived with limited formal schooling, “long-term english learner, and “potential long term English learner” exist and how knowledge of these categories can inform instruction.

Policy Implications for the District

A comprehensive diversity plan should be instituted in the district. The plan would include teacher training in the benefits of acculturation--teaching them to work with incoming students in a way which encourages them to maintain their first culture and language. It would instruct teachers on the differences between assimilation and adaption

The ESOL curriculum committee may wish to implement a digital storytelling curricular component that uses constructivist learning and technology to instruct personal narrative.

Limits of the Study

One obvious limit of the study is, although writing improved quantitatively for most students between the writing prompt before the digital storytelling project and after, it is difficult to declare causation.

The limits of qualitative surveys are also clear. In surveying the 2-5th grade attendees of International Day, the goal, of course was to get a complete picture of the students reactions and be able to prove improvement of cultural competence among the student body. The results, however, were representative, as only 50 percent of those students completed the survey, and not all students completed the survey thoughtfully and thoroughly.

The limits of the staff survey were similar. Although the entire staff received the survey request, only the very diligent responded thoughtfully and thoroughly. A sampling bias was inevitably created. Also, because wording is a delicate matter and teachers did not want to admit to a previous bias or a lack of cultural competence, the results were perhaps compromised.

The survey of the students who actually wrote and responded to digital storytelling project was, in fact, representative, because all students were required to respond, and they did so with, at times, brutal honesty.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, the recommended Project would be part of an ESOL push-in model, where the general population also writes and shares stories by researching heritage and improving writing. The final event would be best coordinated with the third

grade immigration unit, an extensive curricular unit where students study the immigration patterns of the United States.

Although the digital storytelling allowed for mass distribution, to parents and classes who were not able to see the display, live storytelling is more personal and can be more dynamic. It also allows for students to prepare to present and act.

Plan for Implementation of Results

Our school is a lighthouse school for Steven Covey's *Leader in Me* program. It allows students to plan school-wide activities that support the leadership theme (2008). This required engagement in the *7 habits* which provides a conduit to produce an action team to plan and prepare for the implementation of a year long cultural competency improvement plan. Through this model, the International Day would be the culmination of a year of activities designed to enhance the cultural competence of the students and staff through educational and cultural activities. The action team would be made up of both presenting and attending students.

Professional Growth

My professional growth was greatly enhanced through this project. The considerable time and effort to research and carry out this project gave me a forum to realize my strengths as a teacher, as well as my deficiencies. Throughout this long process, I was able take a metacognitive look at how I relate to my students, the general student body, my colleagues, and parents. I will now be able to intentionally adapt my teaching in a manner which will promote growth and identifiable, data-driven results. I will also have stronger, data-backed recommendations for teacher training. I will be able to plan

all-school student activities with a specific goal in mind, not just student interaction and entertainment. The demanding nature of the capstone process gave me confidence and a springboard for the next challenge.

Appendix I
Intermediate Survey

1. My favorite topic to write about was...
2. My least favorite topic to write about was...
3. When I asked my parents about their home country...
4. What I liked about this project...
5. What I disliked about this project...
6. What page of writing are you most proud of? Why?
7. What was the most helpful part of this process?
8. What did you like best about International day?
9. What was your least favorite part of International day?
10. What did your classmates learn about you at International day?
11. What else would you like to tell me about you as a writer, or what else
would you like to tell me about your writing?

Appendix II


Primary Survey

Digital Storytelling Survey


Name _____

Date _____


This survey is to understand how you felt about our digital storytelling unit and how it affected your writing. Circle your answer to each question. After you complete it we will discuss your answers so that we can find out what works best for you and set goals that will improve your writing.

1. Overall, this is how I feel about digital storytelling.	
--	--


Explain:

2. When I add a picture with my writing I feel...	
---	--


Explain:

3. When I record my writing I feel...	
---------------------------------------	--


Explain:

4. When we work in a group, I feel...	
---------------------------------------	--


Explain:

5. This is how I feel when other people see or hear what I wrote...	
---	--


Explain:

6. This is how I feel when others tell me what they think about my writing.	
---	--


Explain:

7. I like to write with a pencil or pen.	
--	---

Explain:

8. I like to write on a computer.	
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Explain:

9. It helps to have someone read what I wrote before I make changes.	
--	--

Explain:

10. It helps to have someone read what I wrote before I make changes.



Explain:

11. This is how I feel about showing my work at International Day.



Explain:

Appendix III

Follow-up Questions after International Day

Follow up Questions for Students after International Day

1. Did you learn anything new about a classmate's home life? If so, what?
2. Did you learn anything new about a classmate's dual cultures between home and school? If so, what?
3. Did you learn anything new about classmate's celebrations and holidays? If so, what?
4. Did you learn anything new about classmate's language?
5. What was your favorite part of International Day?
6. What was your least favorite part of International Day?

Feel free to add other comments:

Follow up Questions for Teachers after International Day

1. Did you learn anything new about a student's home life? If so, what?
2. Did you learn anything new about a student's dual cultures between home and school? If so, what?
3. Did you learn anything new about student's celebrations and holidays? If so, what?
4. Did you learn anything new about parents' school experiences? If so, what?
5. Did students express themselves differently at International day than they do in your classroom? If so, how?
6. How did students feel about sharing their story, proud? inhibited? embarrassed? excited? Why do you think they felt that way?
7. What, if any, contradictions or tensions seem to exist between the cultural practices and traditions that students bring to the classroom and the practices and traditions that we operate on at school?
8. Did classmates learn anything new about their classmates at International Day? If so, what?
9. Will what you learned change your view of students or how you react to them? If so, how? If not, why not?
10. What were the topics, issues and themes at International Day that generated the highest levels of student engagement, effort and interest?

Feel free to add other comments:

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