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The Journey Box: Promoting Language Development while Exploring One's Identity

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The Journey Box: Promoting Language Development while Exploring One's Identity



Dr. David Wolff, Assistant Professor
Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS
Annual KGTC Convention - Impact 2023: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
October 9, 2023; 9:30-10:15am

David Wolff, ED.D., Pittsburg State University

Dr. David Wolff is an Assistant Professor in Teaching and Leadership in the College of Education at Pittsburg State University (PSU) in Pittsburg, Kansas. Prior to PSU, David was an Elementary Teacher, Gifted & Talented Interventionist, District Coordinator of Gifted & Talented Services, Instructional Coach, and Principal.

Email Dr. David Wolff at dwoff@pittstate.edu to share how you used this resource in your classroom or connect to initiate further discussion on the development of future resources!

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Introduction:

This workshop presentation was designed for attendees at the annual Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented and Creative convention.

Keywords:

Historical thinking, gifted and talented, Journey Box, cultural competence, culturally

responsive teaching, storytelling, social studies methods, ELA methods, instructional strategies

Presentation Description:

A Journey Box allows students to explore and share their family's historical narrative using primary sources like interviews and artifacts. Students explore different facets of their own family's history and journey to America while engaging in a larger shared experience among classmates to understand different perspectives. The Journey Box develops oral and written language skills while supporting individual's exploration of their culture and identity.

Idea Funnel

Problem of Practice

- Historical Thinking

Development of the Journey Box

Why use Journey Boxes?

- Cultural Competence
- Cultural Responsiveness

Storytelling and Language Development

Using Journey Boxes to Explore Identity

Here is the sequence of topics that I will be covering today to funnel ideas to my current practice.

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Problem of Practice

How might preservice teachers use historical thinking to promote language development and explore their own identity?

In my social studies methods course, I wanted a semester long project for my undergraduate students to apply skills they learned in my ELA courses, information they are learning in the SS course like SS:

Standard 1 Choices have consequences.

Standard 2 Individuals have rights and responsibilities.

Standard 3 Societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

Standard 4 Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Standard 5 Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic.

Math and Reading provide the task and thinking skills that we need for daily living.

For example:

Task: e.g., reading, talking, interviewing

Thinking: e.g., evaluating, analyzing, comprehending

However, Science and Social Studies provide the CONTEXT in which we use and apply the task and thinking skills.

Without science and social studies, students do not have a meaningful way to practice and apply their skills in the real world.

This lead to my problem of practice: How might preservice teachers use historical thinking to promote language development and explore their own identity.

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Historical Thinking (Seixas & Peck, 2004)

- Students ask critical questions about the history curriculum presented:
 - Who constructed this account and why?
 - What sources did they use?
 - What other accounts are there of the same events and lives?
 - How and why do they differ?
 - Which should we believe?
- Helps students move beyond memorizing facts and pushes them to make sense of the information we present
- Connect historic artifacts (e.g., documents, relics) with historic accounts (e.g., stories, authors' accounts, filmmakers, journalists)

Historical thinking allows students to question how history is presenting in the curriculum – the dominant narrative about US and World history.

According to Seixas and Peck (2004), students ask questions to help them seek multiple perspectives of the same historical account and think critically to make sense of the information rather than memorizing facts, names, and dates.

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Relevant Elements of Historical Thinking (Seixas & Peck, 2004)

- Thinking about Historical Significance
 - Considering the relationship of historic events and people to us, in the present
- Thinking about Change and Continuity
- Thinking about Progress and Decline
- Thinking about Historical Perspective-Taking
 - The ability to see and understand the world from a perspective not our own
 - It requires us to ‘imagine’ ourselves into the position of another

Seixas and Peck (2004) have six elements of historical thinking.

Four elements were used when creating and developing Journey Boxes:

Historical Significance – how was the historical event impacting/influencing current events today

Change and Continuity – what changes and what stays the same

Progress and Decline – how did things get better or worse

Historical Perspective Taking – seeing history through the eyes of another

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Previous Reiterations of Journey Boxes

Labbo & Field (1999)

- Teacher-created box from their own travels
- Allows students to experience a journey taken by their teacher
- Box that contains pictures, artifacts, maps, travel literature, informational text, etc.
- Travel journal that offers a factual account of the experience
- Artifacts are used to elicit questions, wonderings, curiosities, following hunches, and forming hypotheses
- Goal to tell a first-hand story of time, place, and culture

Alarcon et al. (2015)

- Used in a preservice teacher education Social Studies methods course
- Preservice teachers chose a topic of study that 1. was not represented adequately in the state curriculum and 2. was historically significant
- Students created boxes that contained student-created artifacts that help reconstruct the story (e.g., letters, pictures, speeches, news articles, propaganda posters)
- Each artifact had questions associated with it to scaffold toward deeper thinking
- Goal was to help students move toward deeper understanding of historical thinking

In my research of Journey Boxes, I found two reiterations of Journey Boxes.

Labbo and Field (1999) discussed how Journey Boxes were used by classroom teachers to share their trips and journeys with their students. When a teacher was traveling, they would collect artifacts like maps and brochures, take photographs, and keep a journal. Then they would collect these items into a box and engage students in an inquiry about the items with guiding questions to help the students discover what the teacher learned, saw, and experienced.

Alarcon et al. (2015) discussed how they would use Journey Boxes to challenge their preservice teachers to apply historical thinking to a historically significant event and present and discuss it using narratives that were absent from the dominant narrative (curriculum).

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Example of Labbo & Field (1999)

What are the artifacts? What do you notice?

What are you wondering about where Dr. Wolff went on vacation this summer?

What are you curious about the artifacts?

What might the climate be like? What evidence did you use to help your thinking?

What do you think Dr. Wolff learned? What evidence did you use to help your thinking?



Here is an example of a Journey Box using Labbo & Field's (1999) methods. This is from my trip taken during the summer of 2023.

Based on the artifacts –

What are the artifacts? What do you notice?

What are you wondering about where Dr. Wolff went on vacation this summer?

What are you curious about the artifacts?

What might the climate be like? What evidence did you use to help your thinking?

What do you think Dr. Wolff learned? What evidence did you use to help your thinking?

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Examples from Alarcon et al. (2015)



Here are examples provided by the publishing journal that were included with Alarcon et al. (2015) article on Journey Boxes.

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Why use Journey Boxes?

Building Your Cultural Competence

- Culture is the shared values, beliefs, patterns, and communication styles of a group of people (Mayfield, 2020, p. 20)
- Culture is the way that every brain makes sense of the world...culture is the software for the brain's hardware. The brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings into meaningful events (Hammond, 2015, p. 22)



By using Journey Boxes, students and teachers are able to build their cultural competence.

Mayfield (2020) defined culture as the shared values, beliefs, patterns, and communication styles of a group of people (p. 20)

Hammond (2015) compared brain's use of culture with an analogy. Culture is the way that every brain makes sense of the world...culture is the software for the brain's hardware. The brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings into meaningful events (Hammond, 2015, p. 22)

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Building Your Cultural Competence

Mayfield (2020, p. 15) defines cultural competence as:

1. The ability to use critical thinking skills to interpret how cultural values and beliefs influence conscious and unconscious behaviors
2. Understand how inequity can be and has been perpetuation through socialized behaviors
3. The knowledge to determined disposition to disrupt inequitable practices to achieve greater personal and professional success for yourself and others

Culturally Responsive Teaching is putting your cultural competence into action.

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Building Your Cultural Competence

Mayfield (2020, p. 15) defines cultural competence as:

1. The ability to use critical thinking skills to interpret how cultural values and beliefs influence conscious and unconscious behaviors *[awareness]*
2. Understand how inequity can be and has been perpetuation through socialized behaviors *[listening empathetically and active listening with intent to learn]*
3. The knowledge to determined disposition to disrupt inequitable practices to achieve greater personal and professional success for yourself and others *[act]*

Culturally Responsive Teaching is putting your cultural competence into action.

What does this mean?

Mayfield's definition means that as individuals, we need to be aware of how we think about the array of cultural values and beliefs, be empathetic to understand others' perspectives, and act to make change to disrupt inequities.

Perez (2021, August 30) described the difference between cultural competence and cultural responsiveness.

Cultural-competence is your ability to understand, embrace, and genuinely interact with individuals whose beliefs and cultural backgrounds differ from your own.

Cultural-responsiveness is the practice of putting your cultural competence into action.

<https://www.eatrightiowa.org/post/cultural-competence-vs-cultural-responsiveness#:~:text=Cultural%2Dcompetence%20is%20your%20ability,your%20cultural%20competence%20into%20action.>

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“A story is a powerful vehicle for sharing multiple perspectives and transmitting cultural values.”

Donovan & Pascale (2022, p. 30)

One meaningful culturally responsive teaching technique is to foster oral traditions through storytelling.

Hammond (2015, p. 28) explains that Oral Traditions:

1. Conveys, preserves, and reproduces knowledge from generation to generation
2. Sustain culture and cultural identify
3. Places heavy emphasis on relationship because it connects the speaker and listener in a communal experience

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“Everyone has a story to tell, and sharing stories provides an effective vehicle for giving voice to a teacher and students. The act of **sharing stories build community, strengthens appreciation for one another, and allows many perspectives to be heard and considered.** When students tell their stories, **it is their moment to have their voices honored.** Stories have a powerful vehicle for addressing issues such as bullying, racism, and bias around ability, gender, race, and sexual orientation...**by hearing the voices of others student build cultural bridges and have the opportunity to share their own personal stories”**

Donovan & Pascale (2022, p. 30)

Act of sharing stories
build community,
strengthens appreciation for one another, and
allows many perspectives to be heard and considered.
Have their voices honored

AND

The act of listening to others
build cultural bridges
Helps us be aware of others’ lived experiences, values, and traditions,
Builds empathy by considering others perspectives

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Echoes of the Journey Box

Using The Journey Box to Promote Language Development while Exploring One's Identity

Note the use of Historical Thinking, Children's Literature, Interviews, and Genealogy.

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Using Journey Boxes to Explore Identity

- Journey Boxes can create learning opportunities where students can ask questions, talk through their thinking, and have conversations with others about who they are.
- The Journey Box is an inquiry that uses primary sources (e.g., interviews, books, and artifacts) explore one's family story and to learn about one's identity while gaining a "deeper understanding of historical thinking from a practical standpoint" (Alarcon et al., 2015, p. 186).

Building off of the work created by Developmental Studies Center's (1995) Homeside Activities, I created a series of interviews between students and their family members to allow exploration and understanding of one's personal and family identity.

Homeside activities:

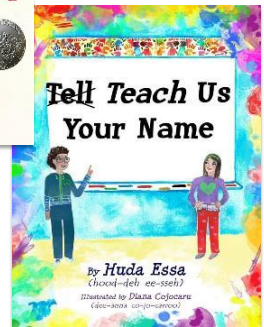
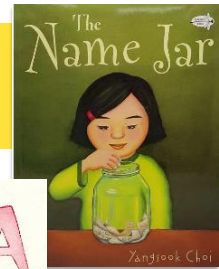
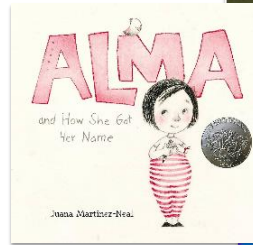
1. activities that are reciprocal parent-child interviews to share experiences and opinions in their home language (Developmental Studies Center, 1995)
2. recognize the social capital of the relationship children go home to when the dismissal bell rings every day. It is important for children to know that the adults guiding them at home are valued by the adults guiding them at school (Developmental Studies Center, 1995)

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Part 1: Story of My Name

Read 1 or more of the following picture books to explore the compelling question:

- *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits
- *Teach Us Your Name* by Huda Essa
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal
- *Thunder Boy Jr.* by Sherman Alexie



Begin with inquiry – have students explore each aspect of their individual and family identify through children’s books.

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Story of My Name Interview

Interview your own parent/guardian about how they choose your name (Developmental Studies Center, 1995). Some questions you can ask:

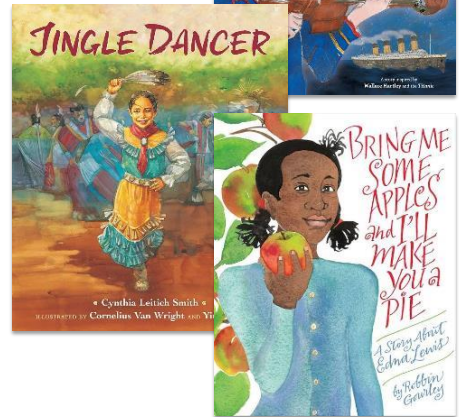
- a. What do you remember about why you chose my name (first, middle, nickname)?
- b. Was it easy to choose my name?
- c. How long did it take?
- d. Who gave you suggestions?
- e. Did you name me after a relative, celebrity, admired person, hero?
- f. Why were you given your name? Does your name have cultural, religious, or ancestral significance (Essa, 2011; Ahmed, 2018)?
- g. What language does your name come from (Essa, 2019)?
- h. What would you have named me if I had been a different gender?
- i. How has your name influenced who you are and how others view you (Ahmed, 2018)?

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Part 2: Family Folklore

Read 1 or more of the following picture books to explore the compelling question:

- *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Leitich Smith
- *Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story About Edna Lewis* by Robbin Gourley
- *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom
- *The Water Princess* by Susan Verde
- *Skysisters* by Jan Bourdeau Waboose
- *Aunt Chip and the great Triple Creek dam affair* by Patricia Polacco
- *The Bravest Man in the World* by Patricia Polacco



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Family Folklore Interview

Interview a family member about your family history (Developmental Studies Center, 1995). Some questions you can ask:

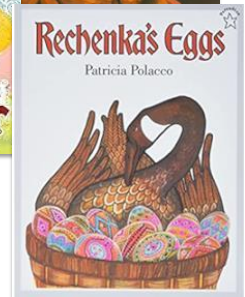
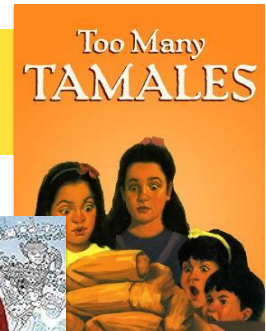
- a. Is there a family hero or “character” that you could tell me about?
- b. Is there a family member that is famous or notable?
- c. Do you have a story about how a family joke or saying got started?
- d. Can you tell me a story about a special family event?
- e. What is a favorite story you heard when you were growing up?

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Part 3: Family Artifacts

Read 1 or more of the following picture books to explore the compelling question:

- *My Mother's Pearls* by Catherine Myler Fruisen
- *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard
- *Drawn Together* by Minh Le
- *The Granddaughter Necklace* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth
- *Too Many Tamales* by Gary Soto
- *Shota and the Star Quilt* by Margaret Bateson-Hill
- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard
- *Rechenka's Eggs* by Patricia Polacco



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Family Artifacts Interview

Interview a family member about an object that belonged to your family before you were born. This could include items such as quilts, dishes, knickknacks, photographs, etc. (Seixas & Peck, 2004; Developmental Studies Center, 1995). Some questions you can ask:

- a. What is the family artifact?
- b. How old is the family artifact?
- c. What do you think the person who created it wanted people to think when they made it?
- d. Is this family artifact still in use? Why or why not? If not, what replaced it? What do you use instead?
- e. Where or from whom you got the family artifact from?
- f. What does this family artifact mean to you?
- g. Why is this object special to the family?



This is a small brass owl that sits on my desk.

It was given to my mom, sister, and me by a family friend when I was in PreK/K. To finish his dissertation, back in the early 1980s, my dad moved to St. Paul for a year while my mom, sister, and I stayed in Jamestown, ND.

This brass owl represented by dad – to show us kids that he was always with us, watching over us. I've had this owl all my life – sitting in office to remind me of him.

Ironically, in this photo, is a coffee mug my dad had in his office for years – since his retirement, its now in my office.

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Part 4: My Family's Journey

Read 1 or more of the following picture books to explore the compelling question:

- *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Mendez
- *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales
- *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest
- *New Hope* by Henri Sorensen
- *Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression* by Kate Lied
- *How Many Days to America? A Thanksgiving Story* by Eve Bunting
- *Going Home* by Eve Bunting
- *My name is Jorge on Both Sides of the River: Poems in English and Spanish* by Jane Medina
- *Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate (novel)
- *Refugee* by Alan Gratz (novel)



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My Family's Journey Interview

1. What does immigration mean to you? What is your family's story about their journey to America?

**Note. For students uncomfortable sharing their family's journey to America, they could research current events regarding immigration or a local immigration/refugee story in their community.*

2. What are significant events in your family's journey? How did your family's journey improve the lives of future generations (Seixas & Peck, 2004)?

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My Journey Box

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“Before a unified Germany existed, many Germans were demoralized by years of religious strife, political chaos, and economic hardship. In 1763, they received an enticing offer from the **Russian Czarina Catherine the Great**, a former German princess. She **promised colonists autonomy and free farmland** in Russia should they choose to emigrate. Catherine believed these highly skilled farmers and tradesmen would **promote progress leading to a more modern Russia**. Many accepted her offer and colonized the Volga region [East of Ukraine/West of Kazakhstan] first, to be known as the Volga Germans. In 1803, Alexander I issued another invitation for Germans to colonize southern Ukraine (the Black Sea Germans). Additionally, more emigrated from Württemberg and Prussia around 1812 and became the Bessarabian Germans.”

<https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/research-history/history-germans-russia>

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Volga Germans in the East

Black Sea Germans in the West

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My Great-Grandmother: Sophia Heinerich

- Born 8/8/1896
- In Wilhelmstal, South Russia
- Immigrated to South Dakota when she was 13 years old
- She told my grandma and mom stories of walking on the beaches of the Black Sea



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My Great-Grandmother: Sophia Heinerich

- Christian Albrecht was born 6/18/1890 in Odesa, South Russia
- Married Christian Albrecht in 1914 however she was in love with Christian's younger brother John. Christian forced John away since he was the eldest brother.
- Sophia and Christian had 9 children; eldest daughter was Martha Albrecht, my grandmother.

On 6/11/1971, John and Sophia were finally married.

The image shows a 'CERTIFICATE OF DEATH' form for Sophia Albricht, dated July 29, 1985. The form is filled out with her personal information, including her birth date (August 8, 1896) and her death date. It also includes a narrative section that provides a detailed account of her life, including her marriage to Christian Albrecht in 1914 and her children. The form is signed by a medical professional and a funeral home representative.

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In 1871, their privileges were revoked in the hope that Germans would now participate directly in Russian public affairs. In 1874, Russia instituted universal military service, which included German colonists.

<https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/research-history/history-germans-russia>

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My Great-Grandfather: David Job Sr.

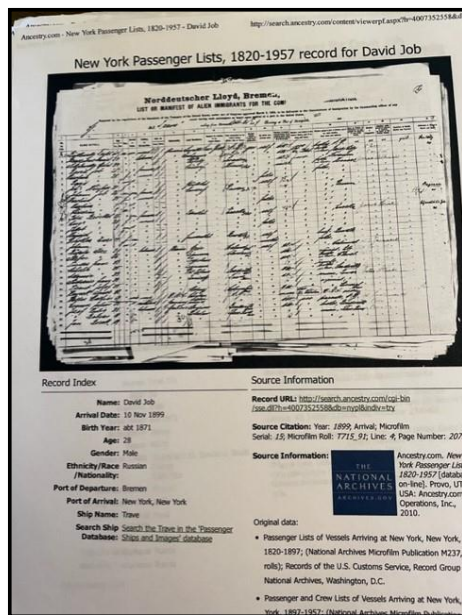
- Born 3/14/1871
- In Neidorf, South Russia
- Immigrated to America with wife, Caroline and son David Jr. in 1899
- Family story goes that this photo was taken the night that David received his Russian military uniform. He was ordered to report the following day to join the military. David took the photo, gathered this wife and son, and left in the middle of the night.



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My Great-Grandfather: David Job Sr.

- Records show that David left Bremen, Germany in 1899 and arrived in New York City, New York on 11/10/1899.
- The family traveled to America on a shipping vessel named the Trave
- He was 28 years old.
- Often, immigrants needed a sponsor that was already in America so that there was an intended destination and plan to settle.



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Job Homestead

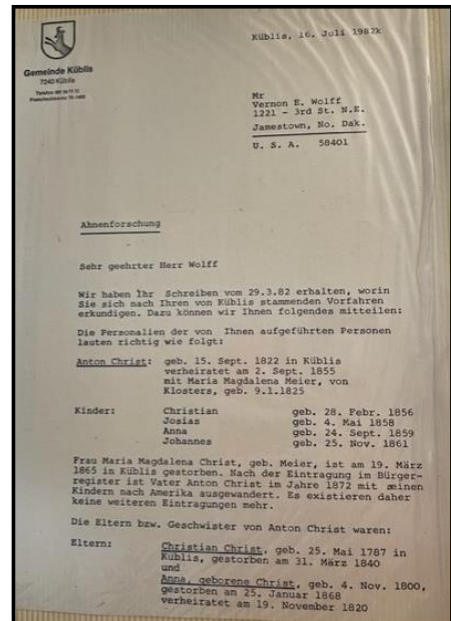
David and Caroline Job settled in Emmons County, North Dakota where he was one of the two largest farmers in the township; over 1,100 acres of which 700 were under cultivation.



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Off Wandering

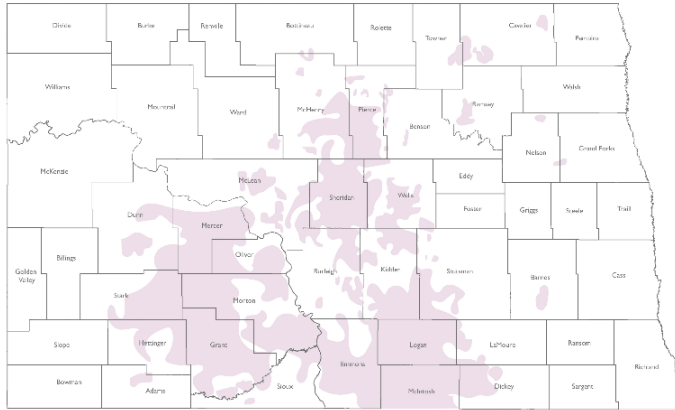
- Other family members were documented as: **“Eintragung im Bürger-register ist Vater Anton Christ im Jahre 1872 mit einen Kindern nach Amerika ausgewandert.”**
- *Gewandert* is a verb, to take a long walk for pleasure or exercise; to wander
- *Ausgewandert* is a verb, to emigrate
- Translated roughly as “Registration in the Bürger-register is Father Anton Christ [went off wandering], emigrated, with this children in the year of 1872.”



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THE "GERMAN-RUSSIAN TRIANGLE" IN NORTH DAKOTA, C. 1920

75 Mi



1:3,200,000

Source: County lines from North Dakota State GIS Portal, 1993. 1981; German-Russian Triangle: information adapted from W. Alan Sorensen, "Porch Music" - Fargo, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1982. Cartographer: Laura Lee Brost, August 2017.

German-Russian Triangle

What do you notice about where many Germans from Russia settled?

Why might German-Russians move to this area?

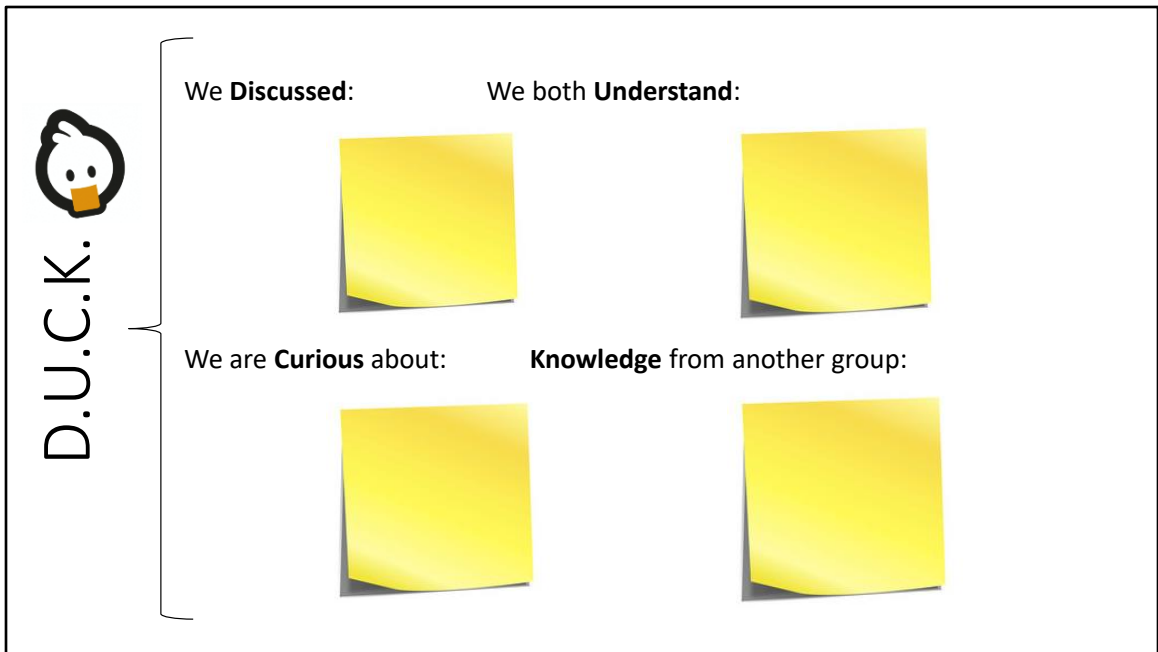
What other area in America did they settle?

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Extensions

- Engage in dialogue about defining concepts like change, courage, family, love, traditions, survival, freedom, adaptation, identity, independence, interdependence, memory, immigration, relationships, rituals, etc.
- The motto on the Great Seal of the United States of America is, “*e pluribus unum*,” Latin for “out of many, one.” Engage in dialogue about, “What does *e pluribus unum* means to you?”
- An art exhibition titled, *Flagged for Discussion*, at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art from April 8, 2023-September 25, 2023, provided different depictions of the United State flag in art to prompt discussions about individual interpretations of the flag. Engage in dialogue about, “What does the flag of the United States means to you?”

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In Pairs Complete this Cooperative Reflection

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Ideas

How might you foresee using journey boxes in your classroom?


How might you adapt these ideas to meet your course/grade level objectives?











How might the Journey Box help your Gifted, Talented, & Creative Learners meet their IEP Objectives?

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Flock of D.U.C.K.s



We Discussed :	We both Understand :	We are Curious about:	Knowledge from another group:
  	  	  	

Take your post its and place them on the large tree map; group reflection

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Resources

Handouts

1. Homeside Activities (Samples)

Links

1. Journey “Box” Assignment Description
<https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/oer-teaching/4/>
2. The Journey Box: Promoting Language Development while Exploring One’s Identity Presentation

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Wonderings & Connections

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Educator Support Series

https://www.kgtc.org/articles_reports.php



Google Scholar: David Wolff Pittsburg

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