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The Global Competency Lesson: Preparing our Students for the Modern World

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The Global Competency Lesson: Preparing our Students for the Modern World

What type of project might encourage students to work hard in class, retain what they learn, and help their communities, while also preparing them for future careers? Projects that students create with the goal of sending them to “authentic”—or real—audiences may have all of these benefits and more. For example, if a class investigated chemicals in foods, the teacher could send the work to a national food organization such as the FDA, which then could use the work to advance its own mission. The teacher could motivate the class by showing the learners what other classes have done to help change the world. We want students to learn how to explore and investigate topics; if students are actually interested and invested in the outcomes of their explorations, they will be more likely to work hard and to retain the information.

Students should know what is going on in the world, and lessons with the goal of Global Competency will have them investigating serious current international issues. The process begins with students exploring books, websites, magazines, and other resources and creating projects based on their investigations—papers supplemented by video clips or artwork, for example. Then the work is sent to an organization relevant to the issue. When students know which organization will receive their work, they will research the organization beforehand and then (with the teacher’s guidance) consciously cater to that audience. Knowing how to craft their work for a target audience is an essential skill that will help students in their future careers. Since the work will be sent to professionals, the students will produce more polished projects too, and knowing that the work might have a real-world impact will engage students and motivate them to do their best.

Additionally, a Global Competency Lesson (GCL) could theoretically benefit the community. If the class investigated “Happiness verses Salary,” for example, the organization that

received the students’ work could publish a student’s essay or video online. Readers or viewers would then become informed about the topic and possibly change their way of thinking. The work reaching the community will help further one of the critical goals of the lesson, which is to demonstrate to students that their efforts are important and relevant, and that the students can have an impact on their world.

The teacher can use technology to harvest student work and allow students to interact with each other and exchange ideas. A website where students can upload projects and converse about them would be especially useful. “Educational Technology and Mobile Learning” lists some good sites, such as Issuu, ePub Bud, Calameo, Docuter, Scribd, and Share Zoho (Kharbach 1). Helpfully, many of these websites have no registration fees. Using a site, the teacher can monitor students’ progress and scaffold assistance. Students will be able to see what they have completed and what their fellow students are up to. Twenty-First Century students are digitally advanced; they expect to use technology in projects, and they look forward to using it and to discovering what it can do to help them. It is crucial to both harness and develop this pre-knowledge and enthusiasm by incorporating technology into the lesson.

According to a presentation given by members of Kean University at the Rutgers Global Competency World Forum, when teaching a Global Competency lesson, a teacher should have four main learning objectives for the students:

- **Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment**, framing significant problems and conducting well crafted and age appropriate research.
- **Recognize perspectives, others’ and their own**, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.

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- **Communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences**, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.
- **Take action to improve conditions**, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively.

These four objectives will ensure that students get the maximum amount of learning from the GCL, start to become proficient public speakers, and take an altruistic position towards society. The teacher could cover each objective and give examples of what he or she is looking for. The instructor also could create a dynamic model for the objective, from which students could work (i.e., giving examples of “appropriate language” for the second objective, “Recognize perspectives, others’ and their own.”)

An example GCL could be “Illiteracy Around the World,” for a seventh grade English class. The teacher should start the lesson with some solid, relevant text, before assigning the project and sending students to start their research. The teacher may want to have the class read *Fahrenheit 451* (a classic novel by Ray Bradbury that questions society’s indifference to books), and then complete a unit on the importance of reading. The teacher could then give an informational text to the class, such as an article from *National Geographic* discussing illiteracy around the world and where it is most prevalent. The teacher could then show an informational documentary and ask the students to free-write to release their first opinions on the topic. The key is to incorporate different mediums: literature, informational texts and films, and so on.

After the class has studied the texts/videos on the subject, the students can then investigate on their own. The teacher should review the objectives of the GCL and the aim of the project: “What can we do, as students, to stop illiteracy around the world?” The teacher will then need to review the website with the students so that they will know how to use it to publish and share their research, writing, videos, and/or artwork.

Unit essential questions are vital to empowering the Global Competency lesson. By answering the essential questions, learners will recognize their own and others’ perspectives about the issue explored in the project. According to Kean University’s presentation, these questions

should not be easily answerable but should require assiduous thinking and research. Two possible unit essential questions for the “Illiteracy Around the World” are as follows:

1. **“How does illiteracy in various countries impact understanding of perspectives related to education?”**

This question will require students to do research. Students will need to investigate online and think about how illiteracy can affect our perspectives of others: “How do illiterate people view literate people and vice versa?” “How does this have a negative or positive impact on society—on the world?”

(2) **“How can we use language arts skills to effectively communicate a position on this issue?”**

This question calls for reflection. Students will have to analyze how they communicate and will have to assess the best way to write their opinions on the subject.

For this lesson, the teacher may want to cover terms and attitudes that are appropriate and professional, versus those that are juvenile or hurtful; the students should not slander countries or illiterate persons.

Students are expected to **analyze, synthesize, and appropriately cite sources of evidence collected to express their own and others’ perspective about the issue**. It is imperative that students can synthesize what they have researched. Analyzing is the first step, but after reading and watching many different mediums, students will need to synthesize. *Merriam-Webster* defines **synthesize** as, “to make (something) by combining different things” (“Synthesize” 1). During the GCL, the teacher may want to use a class period to provide organizational strategies for students to categorize their thoughts. Many will feel inundated by all the information and may not know where to start.

The teacher may also want to use a class to cover how to cite. The GCL may seem like a lot of extra work for the teacher, but once the students understand how to synthesize and cite, they will use those skills in future projects. Students with these skill sets will have a much better chance of succeeding later in school and in their professions.

The finished projects will be uploaded to the teacher’s chosen website, and the teacher will

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most likely want the students to present them to the class before sending the projects to the organization. An organization relevant to the GCL “Illiteracy Around the World” is called First Book, and it provides books to children in need. The organization would most likely be thrilled to receive seventh grade students’ scrupulous work, and even more, the students will be psyched to send it.

In a fun and active way, the Global Competency Lesson calls for students’ best efforts and helps prepare them for the future. In a world where technology and global commerce unite us all, everyone needs to have an understanding of international perspectives and a real sense of connectedness to others. Students will be creating work to benefit the world.

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Kristen Hager graduated from Kean University in 2013, dual-majoring in English Education and Special Education K-12. She was chosen by Kean University to present at the 2013 Rutgers Teaching the World Forum. She is a bibliophile and writes poems and short stories in her free time.



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