**[ ITEC 7430 ] Diversity & Global Learning**

In the not so distant past, people could go their entire life without really getting the opportunity to interact with other ethnicities or races. In the communities we live in there are only a few neighbors nearby, whereas within the online community, one could interact with many others of different religions, skin tones, and beliefs. Knowing what to say, and maybe even more importantly, what not to say, can be the difference in making a positive connection or offending someone without even knowing it. The website, Powerful Learning Practice ([plpnetwork.com](http://plpnetwork.com/2011/10/26/the-case-for-cultivating-cultural-awareness/)) comments about the age of the internet in educational settings as, “The beauty of living and learning in today’s connect world is that we don’t have to fly our students across the globe in order to engage in learning with peers from other cultures and nations.” Nowadays, there’s an app for that.

Sure, students can learn from a teacher in a traditional classroom setting, and the right knowledge can be delivered in an appropriate way, but what about after the lesson? Global learning while dealing with diversity issues and concerns needs to be addressed in an online learning environment to be used in an online learning environment. Learning how to use the internet properly, along with learning how to effectively interact with others online will increase students’ cultural understanding and global awareness

As educators, we need to prepare our students for jobs/careers that have not been invented yet! Not only do we need to prepare them for the jobs/careers, but how to interact, and maybe more importantly, not interact, with people from around the world. Sure, maturity has a lot to do with this, but the more we can prepare the students with the decision making process, the knowledge they possess will be waiting for them when they are ready to use it in real life situations.

If learning on how to become culturally and globally aware of others, blogging inside the classroom is one way to get this ball rolling. In my experience, each student has a voice that he or she wants to be heard, through some type of medium. Also, in my experience, each voice that he or she wants to express does need some alterations though tone, style, or even appropriateness. Through blogging, each student can express his or her own self through writing, while at the same time allowing for an online written communication process to occur. How one writes reflects a part of themselves online. How one responds reflects a part of themselves online as well. How one teaches and models directly contributes to the overall outcome of how the students interact responsibly in their online world.

One example of how blogging can help expand students’ ideas about diversity, cultural understanding, and global awareness is to matchup with another classroom from the other side of the planet that can conduct the same experiment. Blogging about the experiment online and commenting on the other classes’ blog can assist both classes with their global learning and enhance their awareness of diversity in our real and online worlds. Communication, understanding, and knowledge are the keys to making this a successful program for our students.

A large portion of students outnumber the teachers when it comes to internet savviness. Still, the students that outnumber the teachers are still students who operate at a student level of understanding when it comes to diversity issues and global awareness. Both students and teachers can learn with each other through this process and help make the real and online world a better place to learn and live within.

PEER REVIEW

Jan Anglade

<http://jananglade.weebly.com/blog/-diversity-cultural-understanding-and-global-awareness>

Hello Jan,

I agree with you that internet use will assist student in a multitude of ways which will in turn benefit each student in the long run. The children of countries can speak to other children of any country (that is allowed internet access) which is an incredible lesson on its own. In the not too recent past, I had my 8th grade students’ skype with a friends 8th grade students in Saudi Arabia. My friend went to go teach at King Abdula University of Science and Technology (KAUST) as an Instructional Technology Specialist and we used his resources to technology and students to make the connection from rural Georgia to the Middle East. It was pretty incredible as the majority of the time was both sides discussing what life was like and what was cool in both areas. It was an eye opening experience that those students, at least I hope, never forget. We continued that Skype connection a few times throughout the year.

Do you see yourself using video conferencing tools to connect from Roswell back to your home town area in Puerto Rico? I am sure that this would be fun for you and a great experience for your students as well. If you do, Skype and Google Hangouts are some options I would check out in using, as they are free and with high quality.

Chad DeWolf