

Incorporating the Asia Program into the Library

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July 27, 2008

I am the librarian at a K-5 elementary magnet school. Each class comes once a week for 40 minutes. I instruct the students for twenty-five minutes and let them browse for books for the last fifteen minutes. This will be my first year as the librarian at this school, which has a strong history of classroom teachers and the librarian collaborating. I have an area set up in the library to pull/display books that deal with the subjects of the units each grade is covering during that time period. I also have a second area to display books on a topic I am emphasizing.

For the start of this school year, I want to set up a display on China as well as the Olympics. I have always enjoyed the segments the network does giving background information about the country that is hosting the Olympics. I don't want to do too much in depth, as two other grades will be learning more about China later in the school year. This is the time to keep it light and with a "did you know this?" type atmosphere. I can have trivia questions about China that encourage them to learn where books are in the library. I can do questions geared for the younger grades and questions geared for the older grades.

One use of technology I want to incorporate is Google Earth. This free software uses satellite images to view our planet. You can type in an address and it rotates the 3-D view of the Earth to zoom in on it. It's a great way for students to see just how far away a country is from the U.S. Because the satellite images can zoom in pretty tight, it's a fun way see a city or outlying areas. This will be especially useful during the Olympic unit the first 3 weeks of school. When an event is held in an outlying area, we can pull up the location on Google Earth.

The start of a school year is traditionally devoted to learning the layout of a library, how to take care of books, and how to use the online catalog. By taking the topics of China and the Olympics, I can teach the necessary knowledge while focusing on a current event. I plan on taping the evening sessions of the Olympics and then using any appropriate background segments the network shows. By using books on China, the children learn that the 900s are for states and countries. By using Chinese folk tales, the students learn where the fairy tales and folk tales are located. By pulling any picture books about China, such as *Zen Shorts*, students will

learn where the Everybody books are shelved. I can also book talk any fiction books that deal with China, therefore pointing out where the fiction books are shelved.

As I am new to the library, I am not familiar with what the library already has in its collection on China, Japan, or Korea. I want to increase the picture books and fiction books with settings from these countries. Sometimes children are more willing to learn things from fiction stories than non-fiction books. By exposing the younger grades to these stories, we could, in turn, move to the non-fiction books to see if the fiction stories are accurate. Some of the picture books I want to add to my collection, if not already owned, are *Kamishibai Man* by Allen Say, *Always Come Home to Me* by Belle Yang, *The Butterfly's Dream* by Ippo Keido, *The Cloudmakers* by James Rumford, *Daisy Comes Home* by Jan Brett, and *Chopsticks* by Jon Berkeley. There are many other titles, but the main purpose is to use these books as a way to discuss the lifestyles of China, the geography of the land, how people dress, and comparing their stories to our own.

Only one grade in my school already has an obvious way to work in a way to teach about China, Japan, and Korea. Second Grade does an annual unit on cultures of the world. They learn how to say "hello" in several languages and end their unit with a food sampling of recipes from several countries. It will be easy for me to use the instructional part of their library time to teach more about these three countries. The classroom teachers do not have time to talk about Japan or Korea. By using the library time, I can supplement what they are already covering by including these two countries. I will pull books on the countries they are covering, but I will also set up a display on Japan and Korea in my own display area. There are older books with unattractive covers that have recipes from around the world. There are also some older books with folk tales from around the world that the students would most likely never check out. I chose to not discard these books when weeding the collection this summer. I knew they would be useful with the second grade unit.

When it comes to working with the other younger grades (K and 1st), I want to supplement their units with information on Asia. First grade has units on biomes. When they have units that fit with the areas that pandas live, I can include non-fiction books and fiction books with these animals. Other animals to include are tigers and the Golden Lion Tamarin. This website has information on these animals (and others), along with a link to the Shanghai Zoological Park [http://www.tooter4kids.com/china/animals_of_china.htm].

Kindergarten has a unit on fairy tales. There is a website that has Japanese folk tales told audibly [<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/folk/index.html>]. While I do not plan on confusing these students with too much information, it would be good to introduce 2 folktales from just one country, such as from this website.

Following this train of thought, 5th grade students are a great age to introduce folk tales from other countries. 5th graders continue to learn to compare and contrast, and by using familiar stories they already know to compare with new stories from Asian countries. I would like to see the students verbalize why some stories are more appealing to them over other stories, to find out if any of the Asian stories are more interesting. If the new stories are not appealing, then it would be a good time to discuss if it might be due to the fact the students are just not as familiar with these countries. Time could then be taken to learn a little more about the background of one of the countries, then see if the story makes more sense.

I already have plans to expand the unit on explorers for my 4th graders by discussing Zheng Hu's explorations. This lesson has already been submitted.

One interest I have is origami. There are many great books available that teach this craft. Third grade had a weekly time set aside for this craft a year ago, rotating this subject with other subjects during their year. It helps to have smaller groups to learn this craft, but with the use of an Elmo projector this project would be easier to demonstrate. I would like to see this craft interjected in several ways: fold a boat during 4th grade's unit on explorers, fold a frog during kindergarten's unit on the rain forest, fold a heart during February, and fold a star for 3rd grade's unit on space. This type of activity does not have to involve the whole class. It could be done by myself while talking about the unit. Then the older students could learn the fold the item if interested. But sometimes just making something with your hands while talking about a subject holds a student's interest more than just talking about the subject. Origami is a great way to add some life to topics. There are already some books in the library on origami. Then time could be taken to explain the history behind this craft.

Overall, I want to not dwell on any Asian country during just one time period, but to introduce elements of these countries into any unit the students are studying, whether it is animals, plants, folk tales, culture, and any way those countries interacted with ours. While it is helpful to elementary students to have time to focus on a certain country, as each year passes and

they become more globally aware, then adding in small amounts of information to supplement their units can help them remember what has already been presented.

Lastly, since my oldest son's school has several exchange students each year, many of which are from Japan, I plan to see if there is a way to arrange a visit in person or maybe by phone. Having a chance to ask their own questions of someone from that country will help make that country even more real to them. If possible, an email exchange could be set up between this student and my school. There are safe ways to set up email accounts for children, and this would also depend on parental support. Other safety considerations would have to be put in place also, such as approval of emails before they are sent/received. It is hard to make a country come to life without actually traveling there in person. My goal is to bring the country to my students as much as possible through the use of books, DVDs, and the internet. I'm just excited that the start of Olympics coincides with the start of our school year, enabling me to bring China to my students right away. I look forward to seeing my students' interest in Asia increase this year and the coming years. I would also like to see the teachers from the two middle schools and high schools to which our students usually attend take advantage of this Asia program and then work with them in any way to increase the exposure of Asia.