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Kindergarten Action Plan on East Asia

I returned to Jones Paideia Magnet Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee this fall exhilarated and excited to share all that I learned this summer as a participant in the 2008 National Consortium for Teaching About Asia. My excitement was met by the excitement of my principal and colleagues, who were eager to engage in conversation about the insights I gained over the summer. As I shared with my colleagues at Jones Paideia, I further realized the importance of the opportunity that I had been given and my hope is to do justice to the NCTA through the action plan, which I am proposing below. Furthermore, I hope to use this action plan to expand the horizons of my kindergarten class through several lessons allowing them to be exposed to various aspects of Asian culture.

Through our instruction, teachers play a major role in the lives of children on a daily basis. Part of our role, I believe, is changing the world through the children we teach. Or perhaps a better way to say it is that our role is to teach children to change the world themselves. It is with this in mind that I have designed the teaching unit “My Changing World.” One way that we can help children to change the world is by introducing them to different cultures at an early age and helping them develop an appreciation for all cultures. As children are introduced to other cultures, they will be able to make connections between their own cultures and the cultures that they are learning about in class and in their daily lives. I believe it is especially important to begin teaching these things to my five and six year olds in order to expose them to cultural diversity early in life. To aid my students in making these connections between cultures, and learning to appreciate cultural diversity, I plan to use much of what I learned this summer at NCTA. I would like to extend my students knowledge and build connections in all their curricular areas by exposing them to a variety of aspects of East Asian culture. Realistically, “East Asian culture” is an enormous subject to cover. In order to make it more manageable, I would like to begin this endeavor by focusing on China because most of my children were so engaged in watching the summer Olympics in Beijing. In the future, as I refine my action plan, I would like to expand the lesson to include Japan, using the same outline as the lessons on China.

So that I do not become overwhelmed, I thought the best place to begin would be to

introduce my lesson plan on Feng Shui. When introducing the lesson plan I intend to incorporate the lesson within the unit “My Changing World.” Here, I will encourage an open discussion, inviting the children to share their thoughts and feelings about the particular lesson. In addition, I would like to encourage an understanding of why this particular lesson is relevant to the unit we are studying. Students will have the opportunity to be creative in their own way. Because our unit of study is on “My Changing World,” the children could create their own picture or story to recreate what a changing world looks like as it relates to a diversity of people (though the original lesson is intended to focus upon changing seasons). The primary resource that will be used at this time is the DVD *My Brown Eyes* (a diversity resource).

The school district where I presently teach, Davidson County in Nashville, Tennessee, focuses on “balanced literacy.” Balanced literacy includes math, science, social studies, reading and writing. As I mentioned earlier, I want to extend my students’ knowledge and build connections in all of their curricular areas- focusing on balanced literacy will help to accomplish this goal. I will begin this effort by reading picture books about Asia and books that incorporate the Asian culture. We will compare Asian cultures to those of the children. Students will graph and/or discuss similarities and differences. Some books that I will use are as follows (some are from the school and public libraries):

- *Chinese New Year: Festival of New Beginnings (First Facts: Holidays and Culture)* by Terri Seivert
- *Houses and Homes (Around the World Series)*
by Ann Morris, Ken Heyman (Illustrator), Ken Hayman (Photographer)
- *Children Just Like Me*
by Susan Elizabeth Copsy, Barnabas Kindersley, Anabel Kindersley, Harry Belafonte
- *Find Out About China*
- *A Boy Named Chong*
by Brian & Heather Marchant, Ya Lee (Illustrator)
- *Children Just Like Me: Celebrations!*
by Anabel Kindersley (Contributor), Barnabas Kindersley (Photographer)
- *A Look at Japan* by Helen Frost

Modeled writing is a type of writing that we use daily in the classroom. Children know that writing is a form of communication. At this time I will expose the children to Chinese characters

and discuss calligraphy. I will use *Fun with Chinese Characters* by Tan Huang Peng as resources along with the website www.afk.com (Asia for kids). This site is awesome. It has a kids corner section that lists twelve Chinese characters that children can learn to write based on their birthdays. Each character describes positive characteristics that a child may possess based on his or her birthday. After completion of this activity children will be familiar with another type or way of writing. They will learn that writing can take on many forms. Also, children will learn that calligraphy is read and written right to left and top to bottom and when you learn to write in Chinese you have to use correct stroke order. Stroke order, for the sake of kindergarten, is not going to be as important as the children learning that there are different types of writing. Children will connect what we learned in our Feng Shui lesson with what I will teach about how writing in Chinese was considered to display ones harmony (or chi) through their movements (i.e. seeing the written characters is like seeing the person).

Not mentioned above as part of balanced literacy is “academic vocabulary.” The purpose of Academic Vocabulary is to expose children to terms that they may not get outside of the classroom setting. During our academic vocabulary time I plan to introduce Japanese Samurai terms. These terms will be drawn from a glossary of Japanese terms that I received as a part of the NCTA course. The first term to be introduced, of course, is “Samurai” (a servant). Because the Samurai is one of the most common, and also one of the most misunderstood images in Japan (according to Rich Rice, UTC History Department), I want to teach my students some of the realities surrounding this image. “Sensei” (a master, a term of respect for teacher) is another important term to be introduced as a means of teaching children to show respect to their teachers. “Bushido” (“the way of the warrior”, an ethical code to be followed by all samurai) will teach children the importance of following their sensei in order to be the best “warrior” for learning. Bushi (the warrior class) is what all of the students are as a group. Children will learn to follow the way of the Samurai by following the various traits which will be defined for them: Loyalty, Courage, Honor, and Bravery. Children will also learn that a warrior is not a fighter, but a “polite thinker.”

Math is often neglected in some schools because so much of the focus is on reading. To include both the reading and the math children will be introduced to *Sam and the Lucky Money*, by Karen Chinn illustrated by C.V. Wright and Y.H.Hu. In this book, a young boy by the name of Sam receives lucky money for Chinese New Year and makes a trip to China town to see what

he can buy with it. Yet, Sam does not have enough money to buy what he wants. At this point in the story, I will introduce the name of Chinese currency/money and its value. I will use the website www.chinatoday.com that will show children pictures of Chinese money and its value. I will explain to children the name of Chinese money, renminbi (literally "people's currency") and explain that it is the legal tender in the mainland of the People's Republic of China just like dollars and cents are the names of the money we use in the United States.

In addition, I will also explain that the money is issued by the People's Bank of China (PBOC, central bank) and that we cannot get Chinese money in America. The official abbreviation is CNY, although also commonly abbreviated as "RMB". Chinese paper money usually comes in fen, jiao, and yuan. One yuan is divided into 10 jiao. One jiao is divided into 10 fens, pennies in English. The largest denomination of the renminbi is the 100 yuan note like we have the 100 dollar bill. The smallest is the 1 fen coin or note. RMB is issued both in notes and coins. The paper denominations include 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 yuan; 5, 2 and 1 jiao; and 5, 2 and 1 fen. The denominations of coins are 1 yuan; 5, 2 and 1 jiao; and 5, 2 and 1 fen. Some of this money will then be compared to American money. Children will learn that money is used not only in America but also in China and although it may look different it is spent just the same in order to purchase things that we need and want.

In Social Studies, we will refer to the books that we have read, *Sam and the Lucky Money* *Chinese New Year: Festival of New Beginnings* along with the activities that we have done on Chinese characters. We will make a good luck banner for the Chinese New Year out of red construction paper and black markers. Children will attempt to write the Chinese character for "fu" which means good luck (children will write the word "good luck"). Children will enjoy learning how to write a new character by writing "fu" on a New Year's banner. It will be very exciting to watch them because as they learn more and more to make connections from past activities. After finishing the activity we will hang the banner upside down so the "fu" can pour onto their heads! We will sit under the banners and discuss how we celebrate New Years in America.

Cherry Blossom trees will be the focus for our lesson on Science. In the unit taught on "My Changing World" children learn how the seasons change. We go into detail about what happens to the leaves during each of the seasons and what seasons changing mean for us. Children will learn the term "Sakura," another word for a Cherry Blossom. It will be explain to

the children that the Cherry Blossom tree is considered to be good fortune like the “fu” symbol is considered to be good luck that we learned during our lesson on Chinese New Year and that it is also an emblem of love, affection and represents spring. Children will also recall a 100 yen coin that was shown to them when we discussed money depicting the picture of a Cherry Blossom. We will discuss The National Cherry Blossom Festival (while showing them pictures of the tree) in the spring and how we celebrate it in Washington, D.C. commemorating the March 27, 1912, gift of Japanese cherry trees from a Mayor by the name of Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo to the city of Washington. Mayor Ozaki donated the trees in an effort to enhance the growing friendship between the United States of America and Japan and to also celebrate the continued close relationship between the two countries. Children will draw pictures of the Cherry Blossom and discuss what they learned. From this lesson children will not only learn about the Cherry Blossom tree but they will learn the importance of building relationships with people who do not look like them.

Last but not least, it is so important that as I share what I have learned at NCTA with my classroom that I will share the resources, lessons and action plan with my kindergarten colleagues. Believing in the importance of early childhood education, it is necessary for me to share information on Asia with the other three kindergarten classrooms. I will also make my action plan available to the classroom teachers throughout the school (this includes related art teachers as well) so that they may adjust it to meet the needs of the grade level that they teach.