

The Story of the Universe is My Story

Initiate Infusion 2007 Proposal

Francie Wallace and McKenzie Wren

1st Key Component: Metaphorical thinking

Through the use of storytelling, 6th grade English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students at the International Community School will investigate the relationships between the individual body and the global environment using the four elements of fire, water, earth and air as guiding metaphors. Students will create stories for each element by exploring their own personal connection with the element with emphasis on memories from their home country. For example, students will learn the role of water in their bodies using basic anatomy. From this basic physiology, students will then expand their awareness of water to consider the role of water on the planet. They will also explore common metaphors about water. They will reflect on how water was used in their home countries and begin to develop stories of those memories. From there, we will explore water using metaphorical, spiritual and religious iconography. Students will write, draw and speak using personal, planetary and spiritual metaphors to increase awareness of their roles as planetary beings, global citizens and responsible earth stewards.

Following immersion in each element, the class will create composite stories based on their new understandings using the creation stories structure as guiding principle. Students will perform the stories for the greater school in English with inclusion of key or repeating phrases spoken in the multiple languages represented including Amharic and Eritrean; Somali and Swahili; the distinctive English dialect of Liberia; Azerbaijani; Lingala; and Spanish. The performance will also include drumming and movement.

Artistic goals include immersing the children in stories from around the world, introducing students to the tools and techniques of storytelling including understanding the components of good narrative, using poetry and prose to weave personal mythologies, creating enjoyable and provocative stories which explore the deep connections between humans and the environment and presenting a captivating, environmentally-centered performance. Also key is exposing children to the rich artistic symbolism of the elements and how humans have woven these symbols into art and stories through the ages.

Academic goals include acquisition of vocabulary, improved facility in articulation, and improved confidence in speaking English, speaking in groups, confident articulation and improved writing skills. The project will enhance ESOL goals of improving student confidence and capacity in English while providing a venue for deepening student understanding of global relationships, personal connection and metaphorical exploration. It also offers ESOL students a chance to share their native language and culture with the audience as well as demonstrating their increased facility in English.

Academic and artistic goals support and influence each other perfectly: ESOL goals include improving comfort in speaking and writing; storytelling builds linguistic richness thus enhancing language acquisition through metaphorical thinking and exploration of specific topics. High-level thinking is encouraged through reflecting, imagining, remembering and drawing the connections between the environment and the body. In addition, by asking children to reflect on aspects of their home countries, we are

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1st Key Component: Metaphorical thinking (cont.)

helping to honor the sometimes difficult process of becoming "third culture children." Third culture children are children who are from one culture yet live in another and must of necessity meld the two. Often, the experiences of immigrant children and the richness of their home country go unrecognized by their peers.

The International Community School uses the International Baccalaureate (IB) platform for learning. *The Story of the Universe is My Story* aligns with the stated IB goals of "develop[ing] inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect." The IB curriculum framework consists of five essential elements: concepts, knowledge, skills, attitude, and action. The knowledge component is developed through inquiries into six transdisciplinary themes which are:

- Who are we,
- Where are we in space and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we engage ourselves
- Sharing the planet

These six themes are supported and balanced by the six subject areas of mathematics, arts, language, social studies, science and technology, and personal, social and physical education. Finally, three interrelated questions help guide the process of inquiry:

- What do we want to learn? *The written curriculum.*
- How best will we learn? *The taught curriculum.*
- How will we know what we have learned? *The learned curriculum*

The IB framework has inspired our residency development and will continue to inform our goals and objectives.

The Story of the Universe is My Story aligns with APAL's goals of allowing students to engage deeply with the subject matter, helping students make connections, offering opportunities for students with different learning styles to shine, and using a student-centered process to explore language.

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2nd Key Component: Co-teaching

The ESOL teacher, Francie Wallace, herself a storyteller, understands how students acquire language and where each of students is in his/her process of becoming fluent in English with competent social skills. Francie assists ESOL students in learning how to learn, both socially and academically as well as learning how to think critically in English. Both the IB framework and the ESOL standards encourage students to adjust to the dominant culture while preserving their native culture. McKenzie Wren, the teaching artist, brings her expertise in the art and craft of storytelling and her understanding of both the components of a good story and the process of creating and performing stories. She also has been working with elemental metaphor through her own art for over 15 years as well as being a passionate environmentalist. The two complement each other in that both teachers work together to ensure understanding, to facilitate metaphorical thinking and to guide the practice of writing and speaking. Both teachers will research stories and elements and both teachers will be present in the classroom at all times. Both will have responsibility for overseeing the writing and speaking. Francie will ensure that ESOL goals are met while McKenzie will instruct in storytelling techniques including posture, gesture, articulation and the elements of a complete story. Though these educators have not partnered before, they both have worked in successful partnerships and have a great deal of combined experience in the classroom and in their art forms.

McKenzie Wren has been a storyteller since 2000, presenting at numerous festivals and events around Atlanta such as *Sunday in the Park* at Oakland Cemetery, Grant Park *Summer Shade Festival* and the Candler Park Festival. She has taught storytelling workshops to elementary school students and has collaborated with other performers in creating shows. She co-created and performed in two performance art programs - *Fire in the Belly* and *Cowgirls, Goddesses and other Guises* - in 2001, combining myth, ritual and storytelling. She also uses her storytelling and performance skills in conducting rituals such as naming ceremonies for new babies, girl's rites of passage, women's circles and others. In these ceremonies, she weaves stories of personal and planetary connections and places it all in the context of becoming earth stewards. During the summer of 2007, McKenzie was responsible for creating or assisting in creating a weekly performance at Circus Camp – a summer camp dedicated to the circus arts including drama. This process involved distilling the ideas of other camp teachers and integrating student ideas into a cohesive (mostly!) framework.

Francie has been teaching ESOL to immigrant and refugee students since 1998, grades 6 through 12 in the Dekalb County School System and grades 5 and 6 at the International Community School where she has also taught debate, speech and drama. Storytelling and the reading, exploration, writing and performance of stories are the groundwork of her individual IBPYP curriculum. She has been telling stories off and on professionally for 23 years. She has co-created and/or directed multiple performances including a shadow puppet theatre, *Wiley and the Hairy Man* by Molly Garrett Bang at the Nashville Public Library in April, 2007. In 1990 she wrote, co-directed and danced in *Hope Held Captive*, a multi language work performed at 7 Stages theatre in Atlanta and elsewhere about Rigoberta Menchu, a Quiche Mayan from the Guatemalan highlands,

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2nd Key Component: Co-teaching (cont.)

winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 and current presidential candidate in Guatemala. She is also a published poet who is working in collaboration with other environmentalists to create a cohesive and captivating mythological paradigm for performance to help raise consciousness, passion and practical commitment to the health of our planet.

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3rd Key Component: Equity

The order of exploration of the elements and the shape of the final project will be guided by the students. In addition, students will have different options to present their stories – drawing, speaking or writing. Those students uncomfortable with writing may create their stories verbally and the teachers will record them or scribe for them. Students will collaborate in translating English back into their native tongue during the final project and will also interview people in their homes about various stories or myths from their home countries.

Students and teachers will communicate through the use of student journals as well as through "talk back" sessions held weekly on what is working, what is not, why not, what would they like to do differently for the next section and other relevant topics. Students will also know that they are welcome to make suggestions or modifications for activities during the sessions.

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4th Key Component: Research

The project will run for 30 45-minute consecutive classroom days with four weeks dedicated to exploration of the elements, one week for creating the composite story and one week for rehearsing. Woven throughout will be skill building in performance skills including articulation and diction and stage presence. The stories listed below are tentative.

Planning

Teacher and artist will work together outside of classroom to create daily activities based on the outline written below. We will research the cultures represented within the classroom. As part of the larger whole, we wish to visit each family one time to talk about stories from the home country, demonstrate to the children the importance of their home cultures and encourage dialog between the children and the family about the importance of sharing stories about the home country.

Implementation

We will use the metaphor of the process of manifestation beginning in the East (Air) with the dream, the desire in the South (Fire), the attachment in the West (Water) and the final product in the North (Earth) as our framework. The students will explore the metaphor of the elements at all parts of the process. We will use any difficulties as opportunities to make linkages between environmental and global stewardship and how nations must work together to overcome obstacles.

Writing: Students will keep Unit journals and folders for their writing, drawing and doodling

Reading: Students will read in chorus, pairs, alone, large and small groups. Outside reading is encouraged and required for advanced students.

Speaking: Students will do storytelling, call and response, repetition, chanting and discuss material in an atmosphere of support and appreciation.

Listening: Students will be guided to wonder, ponder, question, infer, prefer, choose, apply, integrate and symbolize through their discoveries. Students will explore authentic materials for similes, metaphors, rhythm, rhyme, onomatopoeia.

Week One: East, Spring and Air

The Horse Head Fiddle, a folktale of Mongolia

Guided breathing meditation, awareness of role of lungs and oxygenation process. Rainforests as lungs of planet, air currents. Air in Atlanta, memories of sky and quality of air in home country. Physical theater with metaphor, moving with scarves. Exploring the metaphor of beginning, envisioning, setting goals and clear vision.

Week Two: South, Summer and Fire

The Story of Icarus, a Greek Myth.

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4th Key Component: Research (cont.)

The role of our heart and spirit in our body. Our personal spirit as expressed through our personalities. What gives us passion, what do we love. Human history of fire, the sun. Type of climate in home country, awareness of sun and seasons. Storytelling around the fire represented by candlelit, talking stick circle. Light in the darkness. Ozone layer, UV rays, human relationship to the sun, shelter from the sun. Global warming.

Week Three: West, Autumn and Wind

Nomi and the Magic Fish by Phumla M'bane, a Fingo Zulu story from South Africa
Liquids in our body – blood, water, tears, sweat. Metaphor of emotions, exploring how we express, hold, deny our emotions. Global interconnected waterways, water tables, local watershed. Where our water comes from. Water cycle. Memories of any bodies of water, where water comes from in home country, how much water is around. Swimming at Kenilworth lake (weather permitting).

Week Four: North, Winter and the Earth.

Skeleton Woman, an Inuit folktale from Alaska
Taking care of our bodies, nurturing our bodies, awareness of how things we eat, drink feel affects our "home." Living our lives fully, living in our bodies – not just our minds. Stone Mountain guided nature walk looking at rock and tree. Role of interplanetary connectedness, responsibility for stewarding the Earth, representations of the planet as a whole as seen from space. Explore stories of the Earth from home country (creation stories), remembering the character of the land, the poetry of the landscape.

Week Five:

The Stonecutter by George McDermott, a Japanese folktale
Putting the whole together. Creating the story from the weekly stories. Working as a team to co-create through exploring the larger metaphor of our ESOL community as microcosm or hologram (our community represents the global Earth community). Exploring the challenges in how we work together.

Week Six:

The Story of the Universe is my Story as created by the children. Rehearsal, translation.

Assessment

Every effort will be made to keep all assessments formative to support, guide and enhance individual and group learning process and to ward off interruptions, sabotage, humiliation or discouragement. As an IB protocol, assessment permeates every session with opportunities for reflection and further growth.

Quantitative Assessment **will** use tools such as student's skills chart, games, quizzes and a rubric used in all ICS classes which looks at four areas: effort, following directions, completing the assignment and use of time. This rubric allows for individual assessment and avoids a one-size-fits-all approach to the assignment.

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4th Key Component: Research (cont.)

Qualitative Assessment contains elements of the above as well as tools such as student journals, teachers' written and verbal observations, anecdotes and self-assessment by the students through comparing their own work to prior weeks' work. Students will also engage in constructive peer critique of stories with an emphasis on positive feedback.

We anticipate that this project will be thought provoking for all participants. We hope that it leads children to greater appreciation of the unique nature of being Third Culture children and greater appreciation for the richness of their home country and culture. We hope it inspires children to take action on being global stewards with greater awareness of the power of stories to galvanize action. We hope that students and teachers come up with ways to improve the environment in their own school and recognize possibilities for deeper involvement in environmental stewardship.

As artists, we hope to be inspired by working with this rich array of children and learning more about the individual countries, world views and meaning-making process. We hope that our own meaning-making process is stimulated and that we are encouraged to greater depths of metaphor. We envision possibilities of using this performance for ICS in other ways including at an evening fund raising opportunity in partnership with a local theater. If the project is successful, we envision being able to offer it not just to ESOL students but to anyone wishing to deepen their relationship with multicultural, global and mythical metaphor. We envision expanding to include a visual arts component or adding puppetry. The possibilities for potential action are immense!

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5th Key Component: Witnessing

The project will culminate in a performance by the children for their peers, parents and classroom teachers. The performance will include storytelling, movement and music and will be multi-lingual. The final performance will be videotaped, edited and presented as part of the final documentation.

The IB PYP requires that a portfolio be kept for each child. Each of the child's stories will be added to her or his portfolio. Both teachers will keep their own journal documenting the process including any challenges or difficulties that were faced. We will also videotape certain elements throughout our time together. In addition, we will create a book containing the children's stories; the stories used throughout; a picture, the names, country of origin and first language of each child; and narrative from both teachers.

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Proposal Budget Form

| BUDGET – EXPENSE DESCRIPTION | AMOUNT |
|--|---------------|
| Teaching Artist fees | |
| Contact hours – 30 days for 45 minutes a day at \$75 an hour | 1,687.5 |
| Performance hours – 2.5 hours at \$75 an hour | 187.5 |
| Planning hours – 10 hours at \$50 an hour | 500 |
| Home Visit hours# – 10 hours at \$25 an hour | 250 |
| <u>Video editing/documentation hours – 7.5 hours at \$50 an hour</u> | <u>375</u> |
| Total Teaching Artist fees | 2750 |
| Educator fees | |
| Planning hours* – 10 hours at \$50 an hour | 500 |
| <u>Home Visit hours# – 10 hours at \$25 an hour</u> | <u>250</u> |
| Total Educator fees | 750 |
| Materials | |
| Copies | 25 |
| Notebooks | 15 |
| Class supplies (material, glue, paint, etc.) | 50 |
| <u>Performance supplies (costuming, music, programs, sets, etc.)</u> | <u>125</u> |
| Total Materials | 215 |
| Documentation | |
| Printing photos | 10 |
| Paper supplies | 15 |
| <u>Video supplies</u> | <u>10</u> |
| Total Documentation | 35 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | 4,000 |

* Please note that Francie Wallace has no planning period during her day. She teaches ESOL and Language Arts Enrichment as well as being the librarian at the ICS Stone Mountain campus and thus each hour of her day is accounted for. As such, we have built 10 hours planning and wrap-up time for her outside of the classroom.

Included in the budget are home visits with the students' families. There are 10 children in the class. We budgeted \$25 per hour each for both teacher and artist for home visits. We feel this is an important component for upholding IB PYP principles as well as enhancing the impact for the student.