

Beyond My Backyard

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INTRODUCTION

I grew up in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, a small town where one can still observe Amish buggies traveling across the rolling countryside. Throughout my elementary and middle school experiences, I rarely interacted with people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. However, my desire to learn a second language and learn about diverse cultures grew from the exposure I received in private school and the opportunities I had to live outside of the United States.

My elementary and middle schools embraced diversity by honoring missionaries from various parts of the world. My favorite time of the day was when we would hear a missionary story from places such as China or Papa New Guinea. I was completely fascinated by the unique cultures. Additionally, “exchange” teachers from different countries taught at the school for different lengths of time. We were also encouraged to be advocates of social justice. School-wide clothes and food drives, as well as a trip to a New York City soup kitchen opened our eyes to the inequalities in society. I believe these formative experiences led me to pursue a career as a bilingual educator.

Living in Quito, Ecuador and Reynosa, Mexico gave me the opportunity to develop fundamental Spanish language skills and interact with people who spoke, looked, and behaved differently than I did. Every time I walk into my classroom, I am thankful for both the gift of being bilingual and the understandings I gained from living abroad. As an educator, I see the importance of giving students the opportunities to learn new languages and about diverse cultures. This curriculum unit was birthed from these fundamental ideals.

ACADEMIC SETTING

Houston public schools reflect the diversity of both the city and the nation. Presently, the majority of immigrants coming to Houston, Texas are arriving from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Asia, and Africa. However, unlike past waves of immigration to the United States, recent studies indicate a greater tendency of these new immigrants to become linguistically and geographically clustered as they settle into large urban centers. Consequently, populations in Houston Independent School District (HISD) schools are becoming increasingly stratified and segregated along ethnic and linguistic lines. As a kindergarten teacher implementing a developmental bilingual program at Lantrip Elementary in the East District in HISD, I am concerned with providing my students with opportunities to discover what lies beyond their own backyards and neighborhoods.

Almost all of the children whom I serve at Lantrip are either Mexican immigrants or the children of Mexican immigrants, and, although they live in America's fourth-largest city, their personal experiences are extremely limited. While the academic culture at Lantrip affirms the culture and language of my Spanish-speaking students, they seldom have the opportunity to learn about people from different cultural backgrounds – except perhaps through the annual black history program.

This curriculum unit will give kindergarten students a basic understanding of who lives in Houston and stress the interdependence of people from diverse groups. The unit is intended to help students feel more responsible to a larger population and to raise student awareness of cultural differences and similarities. I want my students to develop a positive self-concept while they learn about the histories, cultures, and contributions of the diverse groups that inhabit Houston.

A KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

One of my most favorite places to be is inside my bilingual kindergarten classroom. Five-year-olds have a natural curiosity that compels them to learn by touching and manipulating, listening intently to books, questioning everything, talking with friends, and playing enthusiastically. Throughout a normal day, my kindergarteners paint, glue, cut, paste, read, sing, dance, and give many hugs.

My students are very inquisitive about other languages and countries. This natural curiosity aligns with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) objectives for kindergarten, which states, “The student understands similarities and differences among people” (Houston Independent School District). In this unit, students will begin by examining their own uniqueness and culture through the creation of a photograph autobiography. This also parallels with the TEKS objectives that state, “The student understands how people learn about themselves through family customs and traditions” and “The student listens and speaks to gain knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures” (Houston Independent School District). All of my students have immediate or extended family members living in Central American countries; therefore, they have the unique ability to empathize with students from Asian backgrounds who have recently immigrated to Houston or have family in other countries.

As students learn both about their own and Vietnamese and Chinese cultures, they will develop Spanish literacy skills. Through extensive opportunities to dictate their thoughts, write, and listen to multicultural books, we will meet the following Spanish TEKS literacy objectives: (1) the student develops an extensive vocabulary, (2) the student responds to various texts, (3) the student composes original texts, and (4) the student listens attentively and engages actively in a variety of oral language experiences. This unit is intended for use as part of the social studies curriculum heavily integrated with Spanish literacy.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Sonia Nieto eloquently explains the need for schools to embrace the rich experiences of our students:

But because schools have traditionally perceived their role as that of an assimilating agent, the isolation and rejection that accompany immigration have simply been left at the schoolhouse door. The rich experiences of millions of our students, and of their parents, grandparents, and neighbors, have been lost. Rather than using students' experiences as a foundation, curriculum and pedagogy have been based on the myth of a painless and smooth assimilation. (Nieto 3)

Lesson Plans for Reform

Of all student populations, Hispanic students have historically scored the lowest on achievement tests and experienced the highest rate of dropouts. Francesina Jackson recommends the implementation of specific strategies to combat low achievement and support a culturally responsive pedagogy. One strategy is to build trust by having students research and share information about their family's ethnic background (Jackson 300).

This curriculum unit places students and their life histories and experiences at the center of the teaching and learning process. The lesson plans below explain how students will learn to challenge stereotypes and prejudice as they learn about how groups are interdependent despite their physical, linguistic, or cultural differences.

Globalization and Immigration

New Asian and Hispanic immigrants continuously affect Houston. The city has become very ethnically and racially diverse in the last two decades. In 2000, the census administrators found that the city was 37% Hispanic, 33% non-Hispanic white, 25% African American, and 6% Asian American. Like other urban cities, these groups, however, are linguistically and geographically clustered (*Place of Birth*).

Census 2000 Foreign Born Population Data

	Houston, TX
Total:	516,105
Europe:	23,294
Asia:	92,366
China:	16,378
Vietnam:	27,080
Africa:	16,988
Americas:	382,527

Central America:	351,119
Mexico:	273,567
El Salvador:	47,402
South America:	17,256

Immigrant groups have formed enclaves throughout the city, and HISD schools reflect ethnic and linguistic separations. This reality is seen in the student population statistics at Lantrip, where 96% of students are Hispanic, 2% are African American, and 2% are white. Benjamin Barber explains the challenges associated with the new diversity in U.S. society: “America has always been a tale of peoples trying to be a People, a tale of diversity and plurality in search of unity. Cleavages among diverse groups . . . have irked and divided Americans from the start, making unity a civic imperative as well as an elusive challenge” (Gay 30).

Both linguistic and geographic clustering and unimaginative school curriculums prevent students from learning about people who differ from themselves. Gay makes the point that “the lack of a genuine community of diversity is particularly evident in school curriculums that still do not regularly and systematically include important information and deep study about a wide range of diverse ethnic groups” (Gay 30).

Chinese and Vietnamese constitute the two largest groups of Asian immigrants in the Houston area. My students have little to no contact with these people groups. In this unit, students will compare and contrast their own cultures, immigrant experiences, and neighborhoods with students of Chinese and Vietnamese descent. The purpose is to challenge students from a young age to think about people whose lifestyles, customs, language, and food, are unlike their own. By exploring specific Asian cultures, students will discover that although differences are often more obvious, commonalities can break down cross-cultural barriers. Immigrant families often share the desire to have a brighter future, achieve economic stability, and find freedom from oppression in a new country. Immigrants make many sacrifices in pursuit of these ends. The sacrifices and struggles that characterize many immigrant experiences connect people from diverse cultural groups.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Mexican Immigration to Houston

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 stimulated the first major Mexican immigrant wave into Houston. During this time period Houston needed laborers for “railroad construction, the building of the Houston ship channel, agricultural work in surrounding areas, and new manufacturing industries near the port” (Rodriguez 31). The new immigrant families created the first Mexican immigrant enclave, El Segundo Barrio, in the southeastern part of downtown. Due to continued economic prosperity in Houston and political disorder in Mexico, in 1920, immigrants formed a second Mexican enclave, Magnolia. Located near

the port, immigrants found work in “ship channel construction and maintenance, cement plants, cotton compresses, and other industries” (31). Smaller communities took shape north and west of downtown. This first immigration wave came to an end with the Great Depression. According to De Leon, about 2000 Mexicans left Houston for Mexico in the early 1930s.

Mexican immigration resumed at high levels during the mid 1970s while Houston experienced its “Golden Economic Age” due to a rise in oil prices. Mexican men “took jobs primarily in manufacturing, construction, and service work,” while Mexican immigrant women “found jobs primarily cleaning, cooking, and operating machines.”

In the 1980s, Mexican immigrant workers were greatly affected by another economic recession due to a drop in oil prices. Thousands of Mexican immigrants employed in factories lost their jobs. Additionally, the passage of a federal law in 1986 prohibiting the hiring of undocumented immigrants, created an even more restrictive labor market. Astonishingly, “89,000 Mexican immigrants arrived in Harris County during the 1980s, surpassing by far the 63,000 who arrived in the entire Houston metropolitan area in 1970s” (Rodriguez 34).

Asian Immigration to Houston

Whereas the United States embraced Mexican immigrants who desired to enter the labor-market, Asian immigrants faced national restrictions. However, the cold war politics that followed World War II set the stage for a United States and Chinese alliance. As a result, the 1965 Immigration Act opened the U.S. to a new wave of Asian immigration.

China

The formation of the city’s first “Chinatown” in the southeast side of downtown lured new Chinese immigrants to the area. A large Asian immigration wave to Houston occurred in the mid 1970s and continued through the 1980s. In 1980, the U. S. Bureau of the Census reported that 48,000 Asian immigrants lived in the Houston metropolitan area; this number increased to 90,000 in the 1990s. A second Chinatown emerged southwest of downtown and contains “large and small Chinese restaurants, bakeries, supermarkets, shopping centers, a mall, Chinese street signs, and annual Chinese celebrations” (Rodriguez 38). Vietnamese businesses can be found in Chinatown; however, a larger Vietnamese population congregated just south of downtown (Rodriguez 38).

Vietnam

Following the fall of Saigon, between 1975 and 1988, Houston became home to large numbers of Vietnamese immigrants. As a part of the federal refugee resettlement program, “Operation New Life,” the U.S. government directed Vietnamese refugees to

Houston. Voluntary agencies coordinated the refugee's resettlement with local sponsors – mainly families and churches – which provided them with food, clothing, and shelter until they became self-sufficient (*Asian-Nation: A Modern Exodus*). In Houston, many refugees found work fishing and shrimping on the Gulf of Mexico.

During the first wave of Vietnamese immigration, the majority of Vietnamese arrived on U.S. military cargo ships. Following the Vietnam War and the establishment of the new communist government, Vietnam experienced political volatility, growing corruption, and economic instability due to natural disasters, which led to a second wave of immigration to the U.S. in 1977. Unfortunately, the only means of escape were overcrowded and poorly constructed boats, leading to the term “boat people” (*Asian-Nation: A Modern Exodus*). By the 1990s, many Vietnamese migrated from the initial resettlement locations to create their own communities. Today, almost 40% of all Vietnamese Americans live in Orange County, CA and in smaller communities located in San Jose, Houston, and Washington DC (*Asian-Nation: A Modern Exodus*). In Houston, Vietnamese immigrants have created a business district that, according to Rodriguez, has Vietnamese street signs and contains “many businesses, including restaurants, music and video stores, grocery stores, medical and legal offices, hair styling shops, jewelry stores, and business service offices” (41). Numerous Vietnamese immigrants have become U.S. citizens and have contributed to the continual flow of new immigrants to Houston by sponsoring relatives and family members from Vietnam.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: “MY BACKYARD”

Students will begin the unit by creating a photograph autobiography and gathering information about Mexico through children's literature. The picture book, *En Mi Familia* by Carmen Lomas Garza will introduce my students to the concept of using a picture to tell a story. This children's book uses illustrations of family pictures to communicate information important family traditions and events such as weddings, birthdays, and dinners.

Viewing and Representing: Developing Critical Thinkers

Every student will receive a disposable camera as they begin their photograph autobiographies. The creation of a photograph autobiography will be a school and family endeavor. Sonia Nieto explains the importance of parent involvement and encourages us to explore the activities in which parents are involved in their children's education. As teachers become creative and critical thinkers, “we can develop a more hopeful and democratic model of parent involvement within the reach of all students, despite the level of their parents' schooling, their socioeconomic background, or the language spoken at home” (Nieto 332).

Photographs will reflect three specific themes: family history, aspects of ethnicity, and significant individual differences. Students will explore their family histories by

thinking about their origins, influential people in their lives, difficulties and hardships their families have faced, and family stories. Students will explore their past by interviewing an older family member (i.e., mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, etc.) Students will brainstorm ideas and questions that they can ask of a family member, such as “Where am I from? Do I still have family in my native country? What do I remember about my native country? Who is in my family? Why did my family come to Houston?”

Activating Background Knowledge

Students will learn more about their native land from various picture books. We will read Helen Arnold’s book, *Postcards from Mexico*. The book presents various places and people groups in Mexico through pictures and large print descriptions. *Saturday Market* by Patricia Grossman allows readers to visit a Mexican market and get to know the vendors and their products, such as the sandal maker, the childe grower, and the flower seller.

Children will think about their ancestry by making a family tree from a small tree branch and construction paper. This project will involve students’ parents in the unit. First, students will find a twig with many branches. Second, students will cut out big leaves from green construction paper to represent a person in the child’s family. With parent assistance, students will write the name of each person on individual leaves. Included on the leaf will be the relative’s relationship to the child such as “Tío José Ramos.” In the classroom, students will tie the leaves to the tree. The child’s generation will go at the top of the tree, the parents at the second level, and the grandparents at the bottom.

Individual Differences

Student will think about aspects of ethnicity including family customs, values, beliefs, and traditions. Students will propose questions about their families and look critically at the answers. The questions will go as follows: “Where do we live? What do we enjoy to do together? What special events or holidays do we celebrate? What special foods do we eat? What music do we listen to?” We will read the picture book, *Con Mi Familia* by Olga Romero. In this book, a young girl thinks about the special activities she does with each family member and how they make her feel. *Colors of Mexico* by Lynn Ainsworth Olawsky is another literary resource that illustrates the rich traditions and holidays from diverse parts of Mexico.

Students will reflect on their significant individual differences including talents, interests, and personalities. Students will complete a self-assessment by drawing a face with an emotion to depict how they feel about certain activities (i.e. painting, singing, playing soccer, etc). Students will create a collage using magazines to represent what makes them special.

Parental Involvement

During the second and third weeks of the unit, parents and students will work together to capture family history, aspects of ethnicity, and significant individual differences on film. At the end of the two weeks, students will bring in their pictures, discuss their importance, and dictate captions to accompany them in their autobiographies.

As students embark upon creating a photograph autobiography, they will become more aware of their uniqueness. The first month will be devoted to sharing photo autobiographies and learning about our immediate neighborhood. They will learn to communicate what makes them special by orally explaining the stories that accompany their photographs. The importance of oral language development is essential in literacy development in primary grades. Students will learn to use novel vocabulary words learned through interactions with their parents while taking pictures for their photograph autobiographies. They will use vocabulary words in meaningful sentences to communicate effectively.

Developing Community Awareness

After considering our own uniqueness, we will begin to think about our immediate neighborhood, our “backyards.” Students will create a list of buildings in our neighborhood and people who work in our neighborhoods. They will describe the places they frequent on a weekly basis. They will investigate answers to the following questions: Where do I live? Who lives near me? What buildings are near me? Where do I go to buy food? Where do I go to the doctor and the dentist? Where do I go to school? Who works in my neighborhood?

Students will bring in an object that represents something in the neighborhood that surrounds our school. Students will illustrate essential places in their neighborhood and create a class mural representing our immediate community. We will continue with the idea of using photographs to tell a story. Utilizing our class mural to begin discussing important people and places in our neighborhood, each child will choose to photograph one place or person using a shared class camera. Students will use the photographs to create a class book: “Our Backyard.” Every page will feature a specific person or place and an explanation of why the person or place is important in the neighborhood.

Science: Observation and Sensory Development

At the beginning of our unit, I will introduce our Caja de sorpresas mundiales/Global surprise box. The box will allow students to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste concrete items pertaining to the objective of each lesson. During the first lesson, students will find an inflatable globe in the box. I will help the children find their home country and Texas. We will then bounce the ball in a circle, and students will practice identifying both Mexico or their home country and Texas in a game format. In subsequent lessons,

students will discover other objects from their own and diverse cultures and neighborhoods.

These activities mark the beginning – not the end – of the journey towards understanding Houston. The next step is to give students the opportunity to learn how others came to Houston and understand special aspects of the cultures, histories, and contributions of other minority groups. Students will be able to compare and contrast their experiences with the experiences of Asian immigrants who also call Houston their home.

Language: Social Settings for Acquisition

As students learn about people groups outside of their own neighborhoods and within their own neighborhoods, they will be able to view the world from different perspectives. We will send “Our Backyard” neighborhood photograph book to other classrooms in HISD via pony mail along with a student-made questionnaire that goes with the book. During the entire unit, students will correspond with other kindergarten children across Houston via dictated messages and illustrations in an effort to maintain high levels of student engagement.

Communication with other schools within HISD will allow students to begin thinking about what they know and what they do not know about Houston, Texas. We will begin to create an interactive KWLH chart in our classroom with regard to: what we know about Houston, what we want to know, what we learned, and how we learned the information. This graphic organizer will enable us to track the questions that arise and the answers we find during the course of the unit.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: “BEYOND MY BACKYARD”

Vietnamese Culture Activities

Students will begin this phase of the unit by viewing a video entitled *Families of Vietnam*. This video allows students to experience the everyday lives of families from both rural and urban areas. Additionally, it gives interesting facts about the country. After watching the introductory video, students will compare aspects of their lives (including food, home, games, school, transportation, and family) with those of the Vietnamese families they observed. Students will share their thoughts with the entire class, and I will write their response on a large chart.

Students will learn more about Vietnamese culture through hands-on art and science projects, discussions surrounding photographs, and the recreation of Vietnamese holidays. An understanding of the geographic location of Vietnam is essential in order for kindergarten students to comprehend the distance from which other immigrant families have come to the United States. Students will use their own laminated world

maps to identify the location of Vietnam. They will outline the country in marker and discuss with the entire class the information they can learn about the country from just looking at the map. Discussion ideas include bodies of water and other countries that border Vietnam. Vietnam is located in southeastern Asia and borders the Gulf of Thailand, the Gulf of Tonkin, and the South China Sea. Land borders include China, Laos, and Cambodia. According to the *2003 CIA World Factbook*, Vietnam is slightly larger than New Mexico. Its climate is tropical in the south and monsoonal in the north with a hot, rainy season (mid-May to mid-September) and a warm, dry season (mid-October to mid-March) (*Vietnam: Geography*).

Students will think about the weather and what people do for a living in both Vietnam and China. To reinforce the geographic locations of these countries, students will complete an art project using an enlarged outline of Vietnam and China. They will glue beans around the outline of the countries. They will paint the inside of the countries brown and the oceans that surround them blue.

With an understanding of the geography of the countries, students will quickly grasp that growing rice, fishing, and shrimping are important to the economy of both China and Vietnam. China is the world's largest rice producer. Vietnam has been the world's second largest rice exporter since the mid-1990s. Furthermore, the Vietnamese are among the world's top five rice consumers. *Banh Chung* – or glutinous rice cake – is a popular dish during the celebration of the Lunar New Year (*Tet*) (*Rice Around the World: Vietnam*).

Students will begin thinking about the importance of rice by listening to *Everyone Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley. In this picture book, a young girl, Carrie, searches around the neighborhood, trying to round up her younger brother in time for dinner. Every household she visits represents a different ethnic heritage, including families from Puerto Rico, Haiti, China, and Vietnam. All the families are either preparing or consuming dinner, and Carrie discovers that despite their different backgrounds, “everybody cooks rice.”

As students think about the climate needed to grow rice, they will understand the necessity for traditional Vietnamese clothing. In our surprise box during this lesson, students will find an *Ao-dai*. The *Ao-Dai* is the traditional dress of the Vietnamese people. *Ao-Dai* literally means “long dress”. This long dress splits into a front and back panel from the waist down and is worn over loose-fitting pants. Both males and females wear them. Students will feel the fabric and even have the opportunity to try it on. Students will view photographs that reveal Vietnamese in traditional clothing including both *Ao-Dai* and *Non Bai Tho*, a traditional Vietnamese conical hat, which guarantees protection from sun and rain. Students will have the opportunity to create a *Non Bai Tho* from newspaper.

The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, a significant holiday in Vietnam, occurs during the rice harvest and when the moon is the fullest and brightest for the year. In Vietnam, it is celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth month and dedicated particularly to children. During this celebration, Vietnamese give thanks for the rice harvest. “Mid-autumn cakes” or moon cakes, made with sticky rice, filled with a mixture of fruit and other sweets, and wrapped in a thin crust, are sold during this season. Relatives and friends exchange moon cakes on the days preceding the Autumn Festival. On the night of the 15th, children form a procession, holding lighted lanterns and performing unicorn dances with drum and cymbal accompaniment. According to Le Ba Thinh, “to the Vietnamese, the full moon signifies completeness, the entire family gathered together in happiness” (*Vietnamese Customs: Vietnamese Mid-Autumn Festival*).

Students will begin to learn about this holiday by observing the moon. What does the moon look like? Does its form change? Students will illustrate what the moon looks like for a week in their science journals. They will return their journals every day, and during the beginning of social studies class, they will describe their illustrations to other students. According to a Vietnamese legend, as the moon becomes gradually full, there appears in it a man who is climbing a tree (*Vietnamese Customs: Vietnamese Mid-Autumn Festival*). After observing characteristics of the moon throughout the week, students will use large butcher paper and paint to illustrate their ideas of the images they see in a full moon.

The most important holiday in Vietnam is Tet, and it is celebrated on the first day of the first month of the lunar calendar, between January 19th and February 24th. According to Paul Rutledge, it is the “equivalent of Thanksgiving Day, Memorial Day, New Year’s Day, and birthdays all combined into one massive celebration” (136). This holiday symbolizes new beginnings, and is the time for paying debts, putting difficulties behind, correcting one’s own errors, and forgiving the errors of others. The idea of new beginnings is seen in the custom of thoroughly cleaning, repainting, and decorating houses with flowers and plum branches.

Additionally, during this holiday, Vietnamese hang banners and posters with wishes for happiness, prosperity, and long life. Although it is easier to buy a poster from vendors during Tet, traditionally, on the first day of the New Year, educated Vietnamese engaged in the “first writing of the new year” (*khai but*). Using red Hong Dieu paper and a new calligraphy pen, they write their own fortunes for the coming year. For example, one may write *Hoa-Binh* – peace (*Vietnamese Customs: The joy of “first writing of the new year”*). Traditionally, the holiday is divided into three days. The first day is dedicated to the family and paying respects to one’s ancestors. The second day honors teachers, and the third day reserved for uniting with friends for feasting and rejoicing (Rutledge 136).

An essential element of Tet is the dragon or unicorn dance. The Vietnamese believe that the unicorn symbolizes wealth and prosperity, and the purpose of the dance is to

scare away evil spirits to insure good luck and financial success for the New Year. There are two versions of this traditional dance. In North Vietnam, it is called the Lion's dance and is celebrated during the Mid-Autumn festival. In South Vietnam, the Unicorn dance is held only during Tet. Leading the procession are flag carriers. Merchants who desire to experience prosperity during the year donate the flags. Multiple men take turns handling the unicorn. In Saigon, the unicorn parade begins early in the morning on the first day of Tet. The unicorn visits every home and business in a defined area. The home or business owner gives a donation to the dragon, and the dragon continues to dance to the rhythm of drums and cymbals (*Vietnamese Customs: The Unicorn Dance at Tet*).

To learn about Tet through active engagement, students will recreate a dragon parade use Vietnamese characters to write a New Year's message. Students will create the dragonhead with two boxes – one large box and one shoebox for the mouth. They will cover both in solid color wrapping paper. The students will make the eyes, ears, and nose from cups and will glue them to the head. The horns will be paper towel tubes, and the long tail will be made from red and yellow plastic table clothes. Approximately 10 students will fit under the dragon at one time. The remaining students will play cymbals and tambourines as we proceed around the school, visiting other classrooms and asking for donations (*Vietnam and Vietnamese Culture: Make a Dragon Parade*).

Students will view Vietnamese newspapers and discuss their observations with the class. We will look at models of Vietnamese New Year's banners and translate the meaning of the characters. Students will choose the message they desire to paint on their own banners. I will provide my students with red paper, black paint, and a large paintbrush. They will paint their own New Year's message. Additionally, we will simulate other Tet customs by cleaning and decorating our room with flowers. The culminating activity will be the recreation of the dragon or unicorn dance.

Multicultural Literacy

Through the multiple sensory activities revolving around Vietnam and Vietnamese culture, students will be able to connect the new vocabulary and themes within storybooks to prior knowledge. Multicultural children's literature now becomes the basis of analysis as children gather more information about Vietnamese cultures and immigrant experiences.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One

In Vietnam, names are very important. According to Dana Sachs, Vietnamese tradition claims that evil spirits steal attractive babies. In rural places where old customs linger, parents attempt to make their children seem unappealing by naming them "ugly," or "rat" to trick the spirits into staying away (*Adopt Vietnam: Names are Important in Vietnam*).

Many urban Vietnamese families do not believe these superstitions; however, they continue to choose names for their children according to their meanings.

Students will begin today's lesson by choosing a Vietnamese name. Students listen to a list of female and male names and the meanings of the names (See Appendix). After choosing their new Vietnamese name, they will write the name on lined paper and illustrate the meaning of the name. Students will then come together to share the names they have chosen and the illustrations that represent the meaning.

We will listen to the first 11 pages of *Angel Child, Dragon Child* by Michele Maria Surat. In this story, Chi Hai and Nguyen Hoa, two Vietnamese children, begin their first day in an American school. The story begins with the American children making fun of their unusual clothes and names. Nguyen experiences anger and sadness during her first day, but comforts herself by looking at a picture of her mother, who is still in Vietnam.

After reading the first 11 pages, students will reflect on the emotions the Vietnamese children experience in school. We will list emotions such as excitement, nervousness, fear, sadness, and loneliness on chart paper. Following each emotion, we will discuss possible causes for it. For example, the girl became sad after another student said her clothing looked like pajamas.

Students will choose an emotion they have experienced in school from the list and discuss with another student why they felt the way they did. Students will then draw a picture of when they felt like Nguyen Hoa in their reading response journals and dictate and or write words to accompany their pictures.

Lesson Two

We will begin today's lesson by thinking about how we feel when we return home at the end of the school day. Students will answer the question using emotion words and justifying why they feel the way they do. Next, students will see a list of key words on chart paper from the beginning of *Angel Child, Dragon Child*. The list will include pajamas, Ut, Nguyen Hoa, dragon face, mother, and matchbox. The students will retell the beginning of the story using the key vocabulary words.

Students will listen to the next five pages of the story in which Nguyen Hoa returns home after school, prays for her mother at night, experiences her first snowfall, gets into a fight at school, and ultimately becomes friends with the class bully. We will review the emotions Nyugen felt in the beginning of the story, and add both new emotions and causes of the emotions. Students will create finger puppets of the main characters in the story. They will use the puppets to retell the story to other classmates and their parents as a homework assignment.

Lesson Three

We will begin today's lesson by retelling the first half of *Angel Child, Dragon Child* using one set of finger puppets and key vocabulary words. Student volunteers will manipulate the main character puppets while other classmates retell the story using the following new key words: snowflakes, snowball, principal, Raymond, cry, cookie, and story.

Students will now consider what they know about Vietnamese celebrations. I will explain that the school will have a Vietnamese fair to earn money for Nguyen's family so that her mother can come to the United States. I will ask students to predict what they will have at the Vietnamese fair. On chart paper we will list our predictions based on our prior knowledge.

Students will listen to the last part of *Angel Child, Dragon Child*. They will review their predictions concerning the Vietnamese fair and evaluate if they were accurate. Additionally, students will return to the emotions chart and add new explanations for the new feelings Nyugen has experienced at the end of the story.

Students will now role play how they would treat a new students coming from Vietnam. Students will take turns trying on the *Ao Dai* and entering the classroom. Students will consider how the new student feels and respond to those feelings in an appropriate and kind manner. We will think about what the student will need to know about our classroom and school to feel comfortable and secure. In reading response journals, students will choose one way they will help the new Vietnamese student feel at home in our classroom.

Additional Lesson Plans

In successive lessons, students will discover more similarities between themselves and students from Asian descent. Students will consider why some Vietnamese families came to the United States. It is essential to explain the important distinction between immigrants and refugees. Paul Rutledge defines immigrants as people who migrate from one geographical location to another because of a personal choice (9). Refugees, however, experience a forced migration toward an unknown destination. Often refugees have little time to prepare for the move and experience trauma (Rutledge, 10).

The Lotus Seed by Tatsuro Kiuchi will introduce students to the Vietnam War and why some families had to leave their native land. The story reveals a young Vietnamese girl who is determined to remember the homeland that she has to flee by saving a lotus seed. This picture book will provide images of Vietnamese rice fields, war scenes, and the new life refugees experienced in New York City. Due to the information they gained from family members while creating photograph autobiographies, students will have an

understanding concerning why their families now live in Houston. Students will compare their experiences with Vietnamese refugees after listening to *The Lotus Seed*.

In *Ve Nha, Tham Que Huong/ Going Home, Coming Home* by Truong Tran eight-year-old Ami Chi makes her first trip to Vietnam, her parent's homeland, and stays with her uncle and grandmother. After encountering the heat, the small house and a strange language, she realizes that her two homes are vastly different. Students will discuss how they feel when they visit family members in their native countries. They will compare their own experiences and emotions with the main character of the story. Likewise, *Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea* by Cynthia Chin-Lee will introduce students to Chinese American culture. In the story, Erica, a European American girl, visits the home of Nancy, her Chinese American friend. Together the girls learn that the more they share, the less embarrassment they feel about their unique ethnic heritage.

Chinese Culture Activities

Traditionally, Kindergarten curriculums include the study of Chinese culture during Chinese New Year (between January 21 and February 19). Popular children's books including *Chinese New Year* by Tricia Brown and *Lion Dancer* by Kate Waters and Madeline Slovenz-Low introduce students to Chinese culture and holiday traditions. During this time of the year, students in my classroom create a Chinese calendar, paint Chinese characters, and dance to tambourines with paper bag dragons. As students engage in Chinese New Year activities, students will be able to make connections with recently acquired knowledge of Vietnamese culture and traditions.

APPENDIX

Vietnamese Names for Girls

- Dung: beauty; nice appearance
- Ha.nh: nice behaving; good conduct
- Ngo^:n: good, soft & polite communication
- Ly: Lion
- Phuoung: Phoenix
- Qui: Turtle
- Long: Dragon
- Ai': beloved, gentle
- An: peace
- Anh: intellectual brightness
- A'nh: light ray
- Be': baby
- Bi'nh: peace
- Ca,nh: scenery
- Chi: tree branch, twig
- Da'o: peace blossom
- Do^ng: winter
- Ha': river
- Han: faithful, moral
- Hung: pink rose
- Kim: gold, golden
- Lang: sweet potato
- Le^: pear
- Linh: gentle spirit
- Mai: cherry blossom
- Nhung: velvet
- Thanh: bright, summy, light
- Thu: autumn, poem
- Truc: wish
- Tuyen: angle
- Va^:n: cloud

Vietnamese Names for Boys

- An: peace, peacefulness
- Anh Dung: heroism, strength
- Bao: protection
- Chinh: correctness, righteousness

- Da.o: religion
- Due: physical exercise, desire
- Hung: prosperity
- Huy: sending light out, brightness
- Lanh: quick-minded, smart; street-smart
- Minh: bright

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