



New Mexico and the World

Curriculum Resources for New Mexico Teachers



Home Away from Home

Students identify personal cultural traits and compare them with classmates and other students of their age around the world, or at least the cultural ways of groups in different countries.

Remember: In any given nation cultural diversity may be slim or very broad. You may be studying rural tribal culture in one country and modern urban culture in another.

Submitted by: John Egbert

Grade Level: 5-12

Area: Social Studies

Strand(s): Geography

NM Benchmark(s):

Length: 3 Days

of Students: One Class

Learning Objectives: Understanding cultural differences
Appreciating cultural similarities
Creating tolerance and acceptance

Introduction: In order to appreciate similarities and differences between our own families and others here and in other nations, students need to identify cultural aspects of their own lives, share stories amongst themselves, and research similar traits elsewhere.

Materials: 3" by 5" cards = two for each student (minimally)

Procedures: Students will write down cultural traits on their first card based on any one or more cultural trait. Using the peer group of the class, easy traits to use may include greetings and courtesies. Others can include food (name the meal), shelter (housing), clothing preferences for school, religious practices, favorite music, heroes, etc.

Background Info: "We are conditioned or brought up to think that what we do is the right way. That idea defines our comfort zone. Now, let's describe our own cultural traits and make some fun comparisons with other peoples."

What we are doing is called intercultural studies.

References-Resources: Culturegrams are a fantastic resource, but you will need to subscribe to their database or buy the hardcopy.
<http://www.culturegrams.com/>

For free, use national websites, CIA Factbook for basic info., and the Nations Online Project. Also try Lonely Planet's country website.

To take this one step further, sign up for Epals at www.epals.com/. This site gives your students the chance to be pen pals with peers around the world.

Student Activities:

1. have students write down how they greet different people: friends, mother, father, other relatives, teachers, peers.
2. share these "ways" within the class. Note" this activity sets the tone for exploring similarities and differences.
3. Discuss what other cultural categories you want to explore, such as breakfast, lunch, dinner, or perhaps music choices, or preferred movies, TV shows, computer games, sports, foods, etc. Remember when "foreign" research begins, students will soon find out that their home choices may be vastly different, or in some cases similar.
4. Next, ask students to use cultural research using books in your library or Internet sites to find out how people in specific nations compare. I prefer to have students choose enough geographically different nations so that the class gets a feeling for globalism. This information can be put on a new 3" by 5" card. The researcher should print his or her name on the upper right hand corner, or initial it. It's a simple way to give credit or to know whom to ask.
5. Cards can then be circulated and kids can find the cards that are most like or different from their own families "ways".
6. Discuss similarities and differences and how "you" the student would feel either having an exchange student or being one.

Assessment: Writing simple paragraphs on what would be difficult or easy for "you" living in any one of these countries.

Or perhaps, what intrigues the most about foreign travel and what concerns you?

Technology Integration: Web searches, library use

Accommodations: Read/write materials for students, have students use word processor.

Review Questions: See above for examples

- Related Careers:** Diplomat, International Business or NGO work, Peace Corps
- Career Education:** foreign language study improves cultural sensitivity; intercultural communication courses; international relations or studies; religious studies; anthropology and sociology; international literature; exchange programs
- Hints and Tips:** Make the classroom as real as possible so that your students feel they are going to a student summit where kids from all over the world will be meeting to talk about youth culture. Perhaps create a conference prompt using "How Can We Learn to Get Along? The future of peace."
- Have students enrich their experiences with web searches for pictures, and even do a PowerPoint on another culture, ideally transposing student photographs into the program, to make it look like your student actually made the trip. Try activities of this sort regularly and deepen the lesson with foreign made films that show how people live.
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- Lesson Evaluation:** Observe early attitudes and reactions and progressively changing comments and writings