

Navigate@NIDES

December 13, 2013

Final weekly update from Ms. Garstang

Dear Families,

I want to send out a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you, and your learners especially, for helping to make these past 8 weeks, my final teaching practicum, such a treasured time.

On Thursday we wrapped up our "What the world eats" unit in a very profound way. As students arrived and got settled with books, they each drew a piece of paper from a basket. On the paper was the shape of a continent. This was to be the continent from which they came from for the day. Students identified the continent using an atlas, and gave themselves a name tag to identify themselves; Asia, North America, South America, Africa etc.

We then discussed basic needs/human rights. Students generated an impressive list of things that are essential to human survival, touching also on things necessary to human thriving like "feeling safe".

Our next step was for students to attach a value, a dollar amount, to each of these listed items to figure out how much a typical day "costs". Students chose values for items in the range of \$1.00-\$10.00. When we added everything up we found that we would each need \$35.50 to get through our day. School supplies, warm clothes, the right to relaxation and fresh air at recess, shelter, clean water, safe food, feeling safe, etc. we added our special Pizza Party cost in this as well, using actual cost to figure out how much the pizza slices cost per person.

Once we'd sorted all of that out, I handed out their money for the day. I had calculated the ratios of numbers from each continent to our classroom so that actual population density was represented. I took the average dollar amount spent on groceries per continent from previous work the students did on this, and found the average daily amount, calling this our daily living amount. How much money you had, or the distribution of wealth, depended on where you came from, and this varied significantly. Luck of the draw, so to speak, just like where we happen to be born...

In our class, we had 11 people from Asia, 3 from Africa, 2 from Europe, 1 from South America, 1 from North America. As only a fraction of a person would have represented Australia, we left them out (sorry Australia!).

When students received their bags of allotted money based on the estimated daily living allowance from that continent, they were shocked. Only Europe and North America had enough to cover the students \$35.50 cost for the day! This drove a very thoughtful and provocative conversation. Asking questions like "What do we do about this?", "How does it feel to not have enough?", "As a collective, how can we make sure everyone is cared for?" etc. This conversation lasted all day. Even after we took back the baggies and gave them free passes to go about their day. I was thrilled by the depth of discussion that took place amongst the students. Un-facilitated, they planned how to ensure everyone was included and cared for. They came up with the idea to live together, to share costs, and to share money. I overheard one student say "If we share our money, then everyone can survive!". It was a beautiful collaboration.

Later, in the computer lab, students visited the website <http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/decisions/index.htm>. Here, students explore survival decisions from the perspective of either a man or a woman in Africa. With 16 possible outcomes, there is much to explore and understand. Students worked in teams of 2 or 3 to run through these scenarios, and make decisions with this family's reality in mind.

Before our pizza party, students contributed sticky notes to our table for what they are grateful for. We celebrated the end of this good work, and then watched a powerpoint on generosity and the power to help out not only internationally, but in our own communities as well. Students then took a silent vote on which charity they would like to donate their proceeds to, from the money raised at the Winter Faire. They decided to donate money to Y.A.N.A.

All in all, this was a very powerful unit. It was deeply integrated across many subject areas, and it got students really thinking about themselves, and others, in a local and global context.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to explore this important stuff with them.

Thank you again for your support, and please stay in touch via my website.

Be well,

Samantha Garstang

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