

Global Learning for Young Children by Kathryn Starke

I recently presented at an out of town literacy conference and took advantage of some downtime in my hotel room. I flicked channels on the tv remote and tuned in to *ellen*, one show I always miss during the school year. There was a segment called "Know or Go," where three contestants stood above a platform answering questions about a particular topic. If a player knows the answer they are safe, and if they miss it Ellen pressed a button for them to "go" (get dropped down through a shoot). This particular topic was geography with questions ranging from the number of continents to locations of cities; the contestants were three teenagers (who were all dropped down the shoot).

I answered the questions in my head and got them all correct but realized that geography is no longer a strong emphasis in schools across our nation. I remember when I was in second grade, I had to learn to say the fifty states in alphabetical order and the capitals of each state. In fifth grade, I had to locate all of the states on a blank map, and in seventh grade, I had to identify every western European country and its capital on a blank map. Since I was in school, curriculum has changed. Today, our students are often not exposed to the geography and culture of other locations all around the globe. Instead, most children really only understand the culture of their own neighborhood and community.

I have always taught at the elementary school level in the primary grades. I have observed in lessons and conversations that whether I ask my students the name of our city, state, or country, the answer is always Richmond-proof that another curriculum change is needed. Children have a natural curiosity and interest in travel, exploration, and learning about places around the globe. These are the reasons that we should provide geography and global awareness as part of our daily instructional practices at home and at school. Family vacations and roadtrips are the first way to introduce travel and geography to young children. Another easy way for parents and teachers to provide a global perspective to children is to discuss the setting in every book, poem, or magazine article during reading. Setting is an essential element of text that encourages children to travel and learn through reading. This daily practice sets the stages for global learning for young children. Ima! gine all of the places we can visit simply by turning the pages in a book.

Kathryn Starke is an elementary school literacy specialist in Richmond, Virginia. She owns Creative Minds Publications, an educational company that promotes creative and educational materials for young children. She travels around the nation participating in book nights, international nights, and assemblies for children and presents educational workshops for elementary school teachers. Kathryn is also a children's author; her first book *Amy's Travels* is a multicultural children's book, based on a true story, that teaches the geography, culture, and diversity of our world through the eyes of young child. *Amy's Travels* is available

for purchase through amazon.com or www.creativemindspublications.com;
please visit both websites to learn more about Amy's Travels and Kathryn Starke.
She is available for public speaking engagements that promote literacy by calling
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