


A WORLD CLASS ADVENTURE

Honors Thesis (Honrs 499)

by

Beth Kloser

Advisor: Dr. Barbara Stedman



Ball State University

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Abstract

The following is a description of the cultural program, "A World Class Adventure," designed for elementary students and implemented on February 23, 1998. The purpose of doing this program is explained, as well as the development and organization process. I also described the games that were played and the reactions of students and teachers. Finally, I evaluated how this program met my goals. Photographs of the event are found in the Appendix.

Purpose

I have met many people from other countries and cultures throughout my life. Each person has thoroughly enriched my life and provided me with insight. I find the more I learn about others, the more I learn about myself, and the less I tend to judge or stereotype. Lorraine Barbarash writes that "facts can destroy discriminatory and racial barriers" (vii). I therefore wanted to incorporate my interest in other cultures into a thesis project. I also knew that I wanted to be able to share my enthusiasm about other cultures with children, because I felt they would benefit the most and would be open to learning about other cultures. Multicultural activities, according to Barbarash, "provide children with information they can use to form opinions and practices for their own lives" (vii).

As a result, "A World Class Adventure" was launched in the ballroom of the L.A. Pittenger Student Center on February 23, 1998. Approximately 234 students, representing four schools, participated in the program. The purpose of this program was to expose elementary students to other cultures, in a manner and medium which they could relate to, such as games. According to Wayne Nelson and Henry Glass, authors of International Playtime, "the effect of doing a Caribbean dance or playing an Israeli game is to 'walk a mile in another's shoes.' Children can begin to understand and appreciate cultural differences" (7).

I hoped that participating in this program would help spark an interest in the children to learn more about other cultures.

PREPARATION

During the fall semester of 1997, I began formulating a plan to implement a program that would complement Ball State's International Festival in its cultural celebration. I had many ideas as to what direction this program should go. I wanted students from invited elementary schools to learn about and enjoy the differences between peoples from faraway places, yet discover that all humans are intrinsically the same.

The challenge was to design a fun, yet educational program in which students could participate. After all, writes Barbarash, "a good way to explore other cultures...is through play" and "games are an open, nonthreatening forum in which everyone can participate easily and equally" (vii, xiii). To help me stay focused and on task, I first created a rough, general outline and a timeline to use as a guide. In doing this, I realized that this program was going to require an enormous amount of organization in order for it to succeed. My next step was to meet with Deb Goens, a Program Coordinator at the Center for International Programs. I explained my idea to her, to which she was receptive. She was willing to assist me with what she could. We discussed reserving space for the International Festival, and she agreed to notify me later about the date for

the Festival's organizational meeting. I attended this informational meeting in December and learned what would be involved in putting together each part of the Festival.

Along with gathering information about the Festival, I realized that I needed to determine which elementary schools would be invited to participate. Schools not located near Ball State's campus were considered more seriously than those nearby. My rationale was that schools situated close to Ball State might have more opportunities to participate in cultural events held at the university. I chose to invite schools located in what are typically considered among the lower socioeconomic areas of Muncie: Garfield, Longfellow, and Sutton Elementaries. Later, I invited St. Mary's School, located near Ball State, as a "back-up," in case none of the other schools were able to attend. (Transportation would not be a problem for students at St. Mary's.)

Introductory letters were drafted and mailed to the school principals in December, along with response forms and self-addressed stamped envelopes. When a few weeks had passed, I made follow-up telephone calls to the principals. Early in the spring semester, I began to receive response cards from the schools. Every school responded affirmatively, except for Garfield Elementary, which never responded at all. Later, a Grissom special education class was added to the roster, after the Longfellow class had to cancel its reservation. The number of participants

was overwhelmingly positive. Joe Stokes, principal of Sutton Elementary, stated that he planned to bring four second grade classes, totaling 74 children, and three classes each of third and fifth grades, involving 62 and 58 students, respectively. The students included in these ten classes numbered 194 children. Additionally, St. Mary's principal, Sandy Benkeser, planned to bring two classes of third graders, totaling 30 children. Lastly, Julie Meyers, a special education student teacher from Grissom, planned to bring ten children to participate in the event. Altogether, I expected 234 elementary students to participate in my program. I corresponded with these schools, by mail and by phone, in January and early February to confirm RSVPs and give last-minute details.

At the beginning of the spring semester, I focused on program development. I had envisioned setting up various stations representing the continents of the world. The elementary students would spend a certain amount of time at each station and then move on to the next station. Each station would represent a continent, where a specific country or region would be highlighted. Games, stories, and songs native to those particular lands would be presented to the elementary students. Accordingly, each child would be given the chance to participate in hands-on activities. I wanted to enlist international students to help out by introducing the children to some of their own favorite childhood stories and activities.

My ideal plan was thwarted somewhat by reality in a few ways. One of the biggest difficulties I experienced was in trying to recruit volunteers to help. The situation could be frustrating at times. The international students were extremely busy working on their own projects for the International Festival and did not have the spare time to assist with my project. I therefore turned to other American students for help, but had difficulty recruiting even these volunteers, because of schedule conflicts. I managed to find a minimal number, however, who assisted in various ways. Jenni Frey, an art education major, agreed to create a posterboard sign, which was set up outside the ballroom to guide the invited schools to the correct room. Janet Dillingham also assisted beforehand, by cutting out decorations, and helping arrange the ballroom. However, I was unable to find as many volunteers to help the day of the program as I had hoped. Volunteers, who worked at various times during the program, included Jeremy Hamman, Emily Huff, Nikki Lamka, Mercedes Morera, and Patrick Swift. Kristie Thorpe also stopped in for a short time to document the event by taking pictures. Each person's assistance was invaluable.

Due to my inability to locate enough volunteers, I had to adjust the program format slightly. Originally, each volunteer was to be assigned a certain station, where he or she would conduct that station's activity. During the sessions that I was short on volunteers, I remedied the situation by dividing the elementary students into the same number of

groups as the number of volunteers present. The volunteers moved from station to station with a group of students, and conducted an activity at each station, rather than just one. Both situations worked out well.

I also decided it would be easier for everyone just to focus on playing games from around the world rather than delve into stories or songs. The students moved to a different station approximately every 15 minutes. These time constraints would have made it difficult to fit in more than games and cultural trivia. At each station, I had a typed sheet of trivia about a certain place, along with a game description and materials to play the game. Volunteers introduced a particular country or specific region to the elementary students. The trivia about that particular place was briefly discussed, and then volunteers instructed the children in a game native to that area.

The room arrangement was kept simple. Stations consisted of two medium-sized chairs placed side by side, with the backs facing toward the center of the room. On the backs of the chairs hung large signs stating the name of a continent and a black-and-white map outline of the continent and country boundaries. The featured area on the continent was highlighted in a different color (see Figure 1). The chair seats were used to hold props and materials. Quite a bit of space surrounded each station, providing ample room for all of the elementary students to participate in the games (See Figure 2). Fifteen to twenty minutes later, the students

were "traveling" to a new continent.

"STATION" - VIEW FROM SIDE

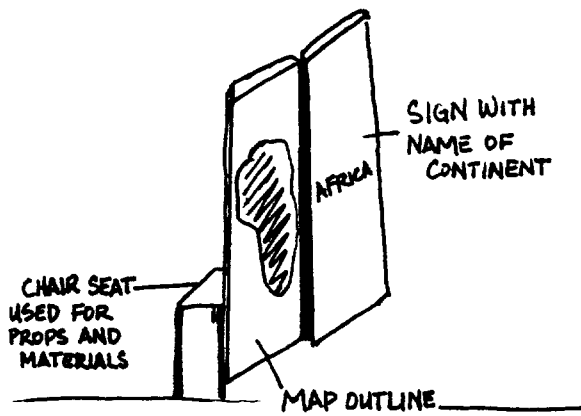


Figure 1.

BALLROOM ARRANGEMENT - VIEW FROM ABOVE

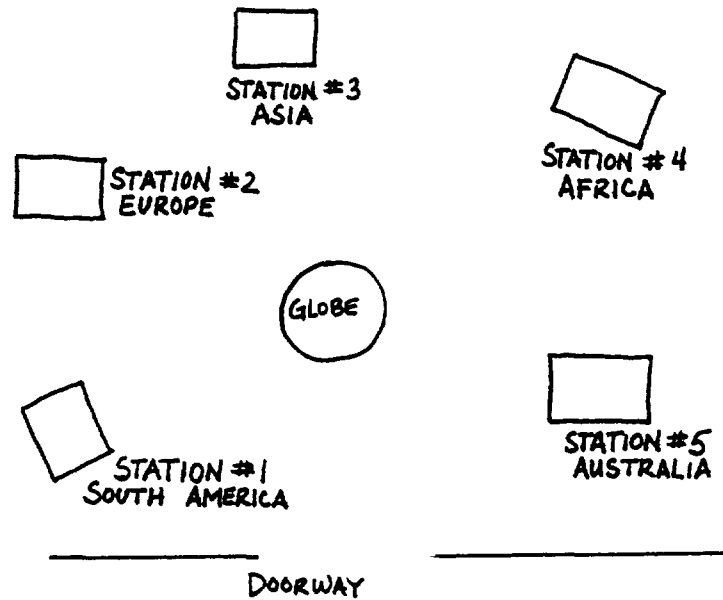


Figure 2.

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

The entire ballroom was reserved for my program, which eased the congestion and chaos that might have occurred, if it had been held in the same room as the rest of the Festival.

The elementary students arrived at staggered times, according to the following schedule:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Arrival</u>	<u>Departure</u>
Grissom Special Education	9:00 A.M.	10:00 A.M.
Sutton 2nd Grades	10:10 A.M.	11:20 A.M.
Sutton 3rd Grades/ St. Mary's 3rd Grades	11:40 A.M.	12:50 P.M.
Sutton 5th Grades	12:55 P.M.	2:05 P.M.

Grissom's session was slightly shorter than the other ones, because the student teacher believed the program would not be able to hold the attention of her students longer than an hour.

Upon their arrival, the elementary students were gathered as a group around a globe of the world, which was situated in the center of the ballroom. I gave a general welcome and started out by asking if anyone had ever traveled to another country. Usually, only a few children raised their hands. Some had traveled to places like Canada or Mexico, while others had traveled much farther. Some students had never traveled at all, but eagerly named their relatives or friends who had. I explained to them that they were all going to have a chance to take a "journey around the world" that day.

The classes during each session were combined to create the same number of groups as BSU volunteers present. Each group was directed to a different station at which to begin their journey. The groups moved in a clockwise rotation to the various stations, which were set up in a circular formation (see figure 2).

The first stop was the station representing the South American continent, featuring Argentina. The BSU volunteer relayed some information about Argentina, including the fact that *gauchos*, or Argentinian cowboys, were prominent in the 1800s. Many Argentinians created stories and dances about them (Nelson and Glass 207). The game chosen from this country was called *El Hombre, El Tigre, y El Fusil* ("The Man, The Tiger, and The Gun"). This time-honored game is similar to a giant game of "Scissors, Paper, Rock." Each element, (man, tiger, and gun,) has a pantomimed symbol. These symbols are ranked in a certain way:

The tiger kills the man, therefore the tiger wins.
The gun shoots the tiger, therefore the gun wins.
The man operates the gun, therefore the man wins.
(Nelson and Glass 208).

On the advice of elementary education majors, I modified this game. They believed that it would not be wise to have the "gun" pantomime included in a school game. As a result, I decided to change the name to *El Gaucho, El Toro, y El Lazo*, or "The Cowboy, The Bull, and The Lasso." This tied in well with the talk about the *gauchos* of the 1800s. The *gaucho* was pantomimed like "the man" in the original version: players crossed their arms across their chests with a confident attitude. The *toro* was symbolized by placing both index fingers, slightly bent, on top of one's head to represent horns. The *lazo* was pantomimed by swinging a hand high above one's head in a circular motion. The ranking system was as

follows:

The *toro* pokes the *gaucho* with its horns,
therefore the *toro* wins.

The *lazo* ropes the *toro*, therefore the *lazo*
wins.

The *gaucho* operates the *lazo*, therefore the
gaucho wins.

Once the instructions were given, two teams were formed and they huddled together to decide what symbol they were going to pantomime. The BSU volunteer then counted "*uno, dos, tres !*" On *tres* the teams pantomimed their chosen action. The BSU volunteer, acting as referee, then proclaimed one of the teams the winner for that round. Each time a team won, it received a point. The team with the most points at the end of their time was the overall champion.

The elementary students then "traveled" to the next station. Their destination was Europe. The students followed a path of construction-paper boats, which lined the floor between the two stations. The boats signified that they were crossing a body of water, the Atlantic Ocean, to reach that continent. The Netherlands, sometimes referred to as Holland, and Scotland, a part of the United Kingdom, were the places featured.

With Grissom's special education class and the Sutton second graders, we spoke about the windmills and canals found in Holland. The elementary students then played a popular children's game, entitled *Alle Vogels Vliegen* or "All the Birds Fly" (Nelson and Glass 94). A BSU

volunteer began the game as "the leader." Later, elementary students acted as leaders. If the leader named something in English that flies, the participants raised their arms as if they were flying. If it was an object that does not fly, they players were to keep their hands at their sides. The leaders named objects quickly and often raised their arms at the wrong times, to fool the other players. Players, who mistakenly raised their arms at the wrong time had to pay a *pand*, a penalty incurred for making an error. The *pand*, or "forfeit" as it is known in English, is usually a silly stunt or payment of tokens. I chose to have the students pay their tokens with beans. Players had to pay the leader with a bean, until they used up all of their beans, in which case they were "out" of the game.

The third and fifth grade participants learned about Scotland. The volunteer spoke about aspects of Scottish culture for which they are well known, such as kilts and bagpipes, and about popular Scottish foods. The students then played the game known as "The Wee Bologna Man." Once again, a leader was chosen. The leader recited this rhyme: "I'm the Wee Bologna Man. Always do the best you can to follow the Wee Bologna Man" (Nelson and Glass 194). The leader of the game pantomimed actions and the other students were required to imitate. The leader changed actions quickly to confuse the other students. Students making an error were required to pay a forfeit with beans, similar to the Netherlands' *Alle Vogels Vliegen*.

When it was time to move on, the students followed a path of footprints to Asia, symbolizing that they were traveling over land. The featured area in Asia was Hong Kong. Hong Kong, now officially a part of China, has a remarkable growing season which lasts all year long. The students therefore played the game, *Chung Tou Teh Tou* (“Plant Beans, Reap Beans”), which reflects traditional Chinese farming by hand (Nelson and Glass 39). The group of elementary students was divided into two teams. Five plates were situated in front of each team. To start off the game, each team received five beans. The first players ran to the plates and had to “plant” a bean in the center of each plate, then run back to their respective teams. The next players ran to the plates and had to scoop up the beans one at a time, as if “reaping” the harvest. They ran back to their teams and passed the beans onto the next players. The game continued in this manner until everyone had “planted” or “reaped” the beans. The team that finished first was declared the winner. At the conclusion of the game, the students followed a path of footprints to the continent of Africa.

The fourth station represented the African country of Ghana. The BSU volunteers kept the elementary students guessing, when asked to name the official language and the most important crop. They were surprised to learn that English is the official language and that the cacao bean, used to make chocolate, is one of the most important crops. Various other aspects of Ghanaian life were discussed, including the fact that games

with songs and rhymes are popular with the children there. Next, the BSU volunteer introduced the game, *Kye Kye Kule* (Nelson and Glass 28). This game was described as a combination of “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” and “Simon Says,” with the exception that it was going to be played in the Ghanaian language of *Akan*. The BSU volunteers had 8” X 11” flashcards with each Ghanaian phrase on the front and the pronunciation and meaning on the back. Each phrase had a corresponding action. The words and actions are as follows:

<i>Kye kye kule</i>	= Place hands on head
<i>Kye ko-finsa</i>	= Place hands on shoulders
<i>Kofi sa langa</i>	= Place hands on waist
<i>Ketekyi langa</i>	= Place hands on knees
<i>Kum adende</i>	= Place hands on ankles
<i>Kum adende hey!</i>	= Touch ankles and then jump upward with arms extended.

The BSU volunteer initially went through each flashcard, pronounced each phrase, and explained the corresponding action. The children were invited to repeat the phrases after the volunteer and perform the actions. After reviewing several times, the volunteer started going through the flashcards faster and stopped giving the English translation. The students had to test their memories and perform the appropriate actions. Once the children seemed to catch on, the volunteer mixed the flashcards and challenged the students to try to match the correct action with each phrase. The elementary students seemed to enjoy learning the phrases and actions, especially when they were able to jump and shout “Kum

adende hey!"

Lastly, the children followed a path of boats to the continent and country of Australia. The Australian station highlighted the way of life in the "outback." Students found it interesting that many children in the "outback" attend school by two-way radio and mail. Another fact is that many people living in the "outback" are sheep ranchers. Australia is one of the largest producers of wool.

This discussion led to participating in "Sheep Dog Trials" (Nelson and Glass 194). The group was divided into three teams. Each team was given a large cardboard piece, called a "sheepdog," and two small balloons, called "sheep." Each team had to use their "sheep dogs" to herd their "sheep" into square pens, which were outlined on the floor with crepe paper. The sheep could only be herded through the doorway of their pens. Once the sheep were in the pen, the player picked them up and brought them to the next player. The first team to finish all of their herding won.

The first session of "A World Class Adventure" began at 9:00 A.M. and the last session finished at 2:05 P.M. During each hour-and-ten-minute session, I worked with students at various stations, introducing cultures and leading games. At the end of the program, I gathered the teachers and students together and thanked them as a group for their participation. They were encouraged to take time to explore the rest of the International Festival right down the hall.

Evaluation

The purpose of this program was to introduce children to other cultures and in the process learn a little more about themselves. I achieved these goals through the use of "stations," cultural trivia, and activities.

The use of "stations" was important because it helped orient the children to the locations of places around the world. Moving from station to station emphasized to the children that each featured place was located in a different part of the world. The children might not have been able to pinpoint exactly where a country or continent was situated on a map, but the stations gave students a rudimentary idea where places are located in relation to each other.

The cultural trivia presented before each game was also helpful in reaching my goals, because it provided a general outline of the country being introduced. Additionally, it provided information as to why the games were significant to a particular culture. The elementary students were free to ask and answer questions, which helped the volunteer and children to become comfortable with each other.

The games provided a way for the children to become involved in what they were learning. They allowed students to compare and contrast their own culture with cultures of other peoples. Certain games bore striking similarities to ones played in the United States, such as *El Hombre*,

El Toro, y El Lazo and “Scissors, Paper, Rock”. Other games emphasized an important aspect of a particular region’s culture, such as growing beans in Hong Kong’s *Chung Tou Teh Tou*. Playing these cultural games helped “connect” the children to people and places they might never have contemplated before.

If I were to do this program again, I would try to give the students something tangible to take with them, like the stamped “passport” that was used in the main room of the International Festival. While planning “A World Class Adventure,” I had originally considered creating something the children could take with them, but eventually decided against it. In retrospect, I believe a written record would have enhanced the children’s experiences by serving as a reminder of what they learned from this program.

Nevertheless, I firmly believe that “A World Class Adventure” was successful, for a variety of reasons. The program was carefully planned, yet it was easily adapted for the different groups who came. Most importantly, both elementary students and BSU volunteers were eager and enthusiastic about participating. Many teachers even chose to join their students in activities, commenting that this program was both informative and fun. Without everyone’s willing participation, this program would not have succeeded.

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APPENDIX