



### ***Cultivating the Classroom Culture***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Elementary Students, particularly grades 2-5 Language Arts and Social Studies

**Keywords:** culture, identity, reading, writing, social studies, background, city life

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix I](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

#### **Synopsis:**

The readings and lesson in this curriculum unit promote the ideas of cultural identity and identity of urban life. Over the course of three to four weeks students will engage in various activities such as reading mentor texts, creating a quilt, conducting research, interviewing family members, integrating poetry writing and technology, and writing short stories to build a better understanding and respect for their peers. These skills will hopefully set a foundation for how students should interact with others throughout their lifetime.

Through this curriculum unit, students will take an interest in learning about their peers in order to show respect and give value to the individual lives that we all live. This curriculum unit also aims to create a collective identity where students can unite under a common ideal related to who we are as a class.

This curriculum unit integrates the second grade Common Core Standards for English Language Arts along with the North Carolina Essential Standards for Social Studies.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 20 students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Language Arts and Social Studies.*

*I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.*

## **Cultivating the Classroom Culture**

**Torriann M. Dooley**

I just finished reading *The Kitchen House*, a novel by Kathleen Grissom that offered a unique perspective about servants on a plantation. Almost every page introduced a new idea, thought or perspective that I have never studied or considered before. It made me reflect on my own life and the world that I know, but even more importantly, the things I do not know. I want to learn more about the world I live in, and about the people with whom I interact. I want to understand various cultures and practices, especially those of my students, in order to understand and relate to them better. I also want to foster a community in my classroom where students will take an interest in learning about their peers. I want to teach them how to show respect and give value to the individual lives that we all live. By engaging in a seminar titled “Urban Encounters: Hispanic and African American Literature” led by Brenda Flanagan at Davidson College in North Carolina, I was encouraged and excited to learn about and read literature that highlights various cultural identities. Through what I learned in the seminar, I feel like I am more knowledgeable about the cultural groups and identities of my students, as well as more curious to learn and acknowledge the differences that make them special contributors in our classroom community.

My school is located in Charlotte, North Carolina. It is within the city limits of Charlotte on the outskirts of the downtown area. The students in my classroom represent a wide variety of demographics, socio-economic statuses, and other distinguishing background features. Some of the themes we will explore relate to city living and literature about the city, with connections being made to how my students interpret city life in their own neighborhoods which may or may not be more suburban than urban. My school is part of a large urban school district and this unit will relate to students understanding and making connections to urban life, however it is important to share that I will need to provide background knowledge to my students about city living, because even though they live in the city, it is different than the way one would visualize “city living.” My students live in the north part of Charlotte. Our school is approximately 12 miles outside the downtown area. Features of what students see as they ride the bus to school include single family homes in a range of sizes all contained within neighborhoods, town homes, apartment homes, and duplexes. Also around our school are several strip malls containing restaurants, grocery stores, dollar stores, fast food places, and nail/hair salons, among other things. Numerous businesses exist in our area. Our school is four miles to a large mall that includes department stores like Belk, Dillards, and Macys. The mall is surrounded by lots of additional chain stores like Target, Lowes,

and Old Navy, just to name a few and restaurants like Olive Garden, TGI Fridays, and Outback. There is no public transportation available for my students to get to our school from their homes or from our school to the mall area; however, there are some sidewalks and bike paths through neighborhoods, but driving would be a requirement for the families of my students to get from their homes to a grocery store or shop. Differing from our suburban area is the center city of Charlotte. Charlotte's urban area can be described as being in the center city. Tall skyscrapers that are home to banks, insurance companies, and other corporations surround it. There are multiple public libraries, satellite campuses of universities, restaurants, bars, and hotels. The landscape also includes public parks, museums, art galleries, theaters, and churches. Our downtown includes the Bank of America stadium for a national football team (Carolina Panthers), the Time Warner Cable arena for a national basketball association (Charlotte Bobcats) and minor league hockey team (Charlotte Checkers), as well as the BB&T Stadium for a minor league baseball team (Charlotte Knights). People can navigate the city by being pedestrians as well as using cars, trolleys, a light rail train, buses and taxis. I'm sharing this information, because depending on where your students live, they may have different understanding of urban life and varying levels of background knowledge will have to be provided to teach this unit.

I am designing this curriculum unit for second grade students, but it could easily be applied to other elementary grades, especially 1-5. I am a second grade teacher in a self-contained classroom in a large urban public school district, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Teachers on my grade level work together and create thematic units with integrated connections across the subjects of math, science, social studies, and language arts. We develop and use a relevant and rigorous curriculum. As we implement the national Common Core standards for Language Arts and Math, and state-created Essential Standards for Science and Social Studies, prior knowledge of students along with observations and assessments, inform instruction in the classroom. Student assessments include district-mandated tests in the subjects of reading, math, science, and social studies. We gather information about our students through self-reflection, portfolios, grade level pre- and post-unit assessments, formative and summative assessments, and classroom observations. In the classroom and at the school, students have access to numerous technologies including computers with internet and instructional software, calculators, overhead and data projectors, TV, VCR/DVD player, CD player, cassette players, and iPad. Some students have access to technology at home, while others have limited resources. My PreK-5 school has an average student population of 850 students. There is an approximate one to twenty-two teacher to student ratio. The student population of my school includes 66.2% African American, 14.6% Caucasian, 10.6% Hispanic, 3.9% Asian, and 4.7% other. Approximately 63.6% students live in poverty.

Students spend the first few weeks of school engaged in getting to know you activities where they are learning the procedures and routines for the classroom and school, and

learning about their peers. I want this learning about their peers and sharing about themselves to deepen throughout the school year to promote a greater sense of awareness and respect for cultures, and their similarities and differences. Second grade students are expected to “explain how artistic expressions of diverse cultures contribute to the community through stories, art, music, food, etc.,” “recognize the key historical figures and events that are associated with various cultural traditions,” and “exemplify respect and appropriate social skills needed for working with diverse groups.”<sup>1</sup> It is my goal to use this curriculum unit as a vehicle to address all of these standards through class discussions, read alouds using mentor texts, projects where students engage in displaying information about the contributions and culture of their family, music, art, poetry, and more. I envision teaching this unit during our social studies time over the course of the first three to four weeks of school.

The ideas included in this curriculum unit stem from the learning I am engaged in as a fellow in the seminar “Urban Encounters: Hispanic and African American Literature” with Seminar Leader Brenda Flanagan from Davidson College. With a focus on literature that revolves around life in the city, students will connect with various characters from stories that are appropriate to the reading level of elementary school students, particularly second graders.

### **Content Objectives**

Our culture is at the heart of who we are. It informs our language and communication, our values and belief systems, our attitudes and our customs. Our culture impacts who we are as individuals as well as who we are in the various roles that we play. The children in my class have an identity in their culture as a child in their home, as a member on their sport team or their church organization, but the students also begin to identify themselves as a member of our school and classroom culture. Our personal culture contributes to how we see the world and want to be included in it. For young children, culture is a mystery that needs to be learned and appreciated – both their own and that of others. It is important for children to begin to learn about their own culture and how their family members understand and interpret their immediate world, but it is also important to learn about other cultures so they can appreciate and respect varying points of view. This year, I hope for my students to engage in the process about learning about culture in two ways. First, I want them to understand their own culture well enough to share it with their peers. And second, I want my students to begin to relate to others and show empathy toward other cultures through the use of various genres of literature, as well as music, and art.

To investigate the process of learning about other people’s cultures, one must tackle the task of learning about one’s own. Some of this knowledge students will already have from being part of their families and their current culture, but I want to train my students to be curious and ask questions about the world around them. I don’t just want them to know who they are and what their family does, but also why. Why do they live in the

neighborhood that they do? Why do they attend the school that they do? Why do they go to their church? Why do they do the activities and sports that they participate in? These are just some of the guiding questions that I want my students to generate to get them to think about who they are as individuals in relation to their family. In addition to learning about these ideas, I want my students to dig deeper into knowing much more background about their family's culture as they can. What are their practices and beliefs in religion, traditions, language, cuisine, where their family originates from, as well as other questions that might drive their curiosity.

The book Soul Looks Back in Wonder by Tom Feelings is a collection of short poems written by African American authors describing the lives and cultures and values of the various authors of the poem, as well as giving a brief biographical description of each author. Poetry is a great way for people to represent their ideas and stories. Students can use this text as an example and model for how to turn what they know and learn about their families and their culture into a poem.

Simultaneously with learning about individual culture, I want students to create the culture of our classroom. This is a good back to school activity to do to get students to buy into creating the identity of our class. What are some things we're going to do as a class and why are they important? As students share what they learn about their individual cultures with their peers they can get into the practice of learning, understanding, and appreciating others. If students know something about someone else, they are more willing to accept and respect them. In developing our classroom culture, our class will form its own identity. It's important for people to feel a sense of belonging and children in my class come from various backgrounds and experiences. They look different; vary in race, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, learning styles, levels of achievement, etc. All of those things need to be respected and acknowledged and shared, but to create a shared purpose, students need to be united under a central theme or idea. In the article "What Jim Crow's Teachers Could Do: Educational Capital and Teachers' Work in Under-resourced Schools" the author Hilton Kelly says teachers "prepared students with skills and knowledge combined with good moral development, a positive racial identity, and a solid basic education to enter the world of state-sponsored segregation, racial discrimination, and economic deprivation." In developing a classroom culture, it is important to meet the needs of the "whole child – not only educationally, but also socially, morally, and spiritually."<sup>2</sup>

Students will develop their ideas and responses to personally reflect about who they are into a written composition they can share with other students. This allows each student to define his/her identity and document a personal racial or cultural pride as well to begin identifying him/herself as a writer. Students in second grade are expected to write for a variety of purposes, and writing their own autobiography will give them the opportunity to do that. Throughout this unit, autobiographies, biographies, and memoirs will be used to model for students how to write their own stories.

This curriculum unit will extend into literature in the form of stories and poems. Through reading a variety of genres, students in my second grade class will meet different characters from various cultures and backgrounds and generate questions they have about the people they are reading as well as building a bridge to understanding the characters better.

Through literature, second grade students “begin to understand how characters’ points of view differ” (Common Core State Standards in Language Arts). This will be accomplished through reading stories from various cultures. Additionally, second graders need to “understand how various cultures influence communities” (North Carolina Essential Standards in Social Studies). Bridging these two standards of language arts and social studies, students will explore a variety of stories that promote the ideals of cultural respect and relevancy.

My goal is to create a curriculum unit that allows students to read literature from different cultures. This will serve as a spring board for increasing students’ curiosity of the various cultures. Students will choose a book and research aspects of the culture that contributes to the ideas presented in the book. They can also compare their book and what they learn about the culture they researched to books that peers present on in order to better understand the similarities and differences among cultures.

Stories set in different places from various authors also include vocabulary that is new and unusual to second grade students. Using literature that has unfamiliar vocabulary I can teach students how to use context clues to figure out what various words, phrases, or expressions mean. In the story Show Way by Jacqueline Woodson, there is a lot of new vocabulary that is repeated. The story introduces generations of African Americans and the author uses the phrase “jumped the broom” to describe the practice of getting married in that culture. Students can learn to figure out new words by using picture clues and clues from the context of the sentences or on the page. Students can also engage with the story by asking questions and seeking out answers. The first time the phrase “jumped the broom” appears they may just read over it, but I like that it is in the story more than once, because it will make them think about it more and wonder what it means. After students learn the strategies of asking questions and using context clues to figure out the meaning of new words, they can apply it to books they read independently.

One of the characteristics of urban living is the variety of transportation that is available to people. From pedestrian walkways to city buses, taxis and airplanes, to trains and trolleys, transportation is a hallmark of most cities. Some books that highlight the variety of transportation and its impact on a community include Langston’s Train Ride by Robert Burleigh. This train ride extends outside the city on a journey from Ohio to Mexico, it describes the landscape of our country, but also tells the story of Langston

Hughes becoming a writer. We encourage our students to be writers by taking notes and jotting down things they observe in the world around them, and that is exactly what Langston Hughes does and it is described in this story. The author, Robert Burleigh zooms in on the moment where Langston is gathering details from his life to create the poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” It is a great model and motivation for students to be encouraged as authors.

D.H. Figueredo wrote *The Road to Santiago* to describe an autobiographical story about obstacles his immediate family faced trying to reach his abuela’s home for Christmas one year. This is the story of a family determined to travel from Havana to Santiago, Cuba during the time of the rebel revolution. The story is told from the perspective of a young boy, a character in the story, and gives historical information about that time period in that place as well as the feelings and memories of the young boy. It also describes the various modes of transportation a family used to travel. The seminar I learned from was Urban Encounters: Hispanic and African American Literature. This story was set in Cuba and gave an insight to city life there during a specific time period. It’s important for students to understand that not every city operates the way that their city does, and students may meet people who have the same experiences that the boy in *The Road to Santiago* experienced. So students can develop a respect and appreciation for others, they need to learn about others and sharing this literature is one way to do that.

An Essential Standard for second graders in North Carolina is to “identify contributions of historical figures (community, state, nation and world) through various genres.” In keeping with the theme of city, students can be introduced to various people who came from or lived in different cities and influenced history in some way. There are so many historical and contemporary people who had or continue to make contributions and second grade students can be taught to create questions they want to research to learn more about people. People that they may be familiar with are:

- Benjamin Franklin: scientist, author, politician, and hugely influential in the founding of our country – from Boston, MA
- The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.: Civil Rights Movement leader – from Atlanta, GA
- Harriet Tubman: helped African Americans escape slavery and travel to freedom through the Underground Railroad – brought people to Philadelphia, PA
- Michael Jordan: professional basketball player and majority owner of the Charlotte Bobcats – born in Brooklyn, NY
- Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington: composer and jazz musician – born in Washington, D.C.
- Bobby Flay: chef and restaurant owner – born in New York City, NY

- Jennifer (Lynn Muniz) Lopez – singer, actress, business woman – born in The Bronx, New York
- Romare Bearden: artist – born in Charlotte, North Carolina
- Shel Silverstein: author, poet, and cartoonist – born in Chicago, IL

There are many famous people who grew up in a city environment and have made contributions. Second grade students can be taught to research famous people who were born in a particular city of their choice, and then read about what contributions that person made. Using a generic search engine like google.com students can start researching famous people born in a city. Once they identify a particular person they hope to learn more about, there are several student friendly websites they can use to access information written on their reading level. These websites include:

- Biographies for Kids: Famous Leaders for Young Readers - <http://www.gardenofpraise.com/leaders.htm>
- Biography – For Kids Life Stories - <http://www.ducksters.com/biography/>
- Multimedia Biographies - <http://www.harcourtschool.com/activity/biographies/index.html>
- Meet Amazing Americans - <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/index.php>

## **Teaching Strategies**

### Field Trip to the City

At the beginning of this curriculum unit, students will take a field trip to the downtown area of Charlotte so they can explore city life and have a varying perspective of different neighborhoods. We will walk through an historic neighborhood right off the hustle and bustle of the main street. Students will see the fire station as well as be introduced to homes that were built long ago like the Berryhill House which is across from the (current) restaurant Alexander Michaels which used to be the Cromwell Berryhill store which was a pharmacy and candy store. Students will also walk down several busy streets busting with people and businesses. Students will experience what life is like in a downtown area during a weekday as well as be introduced to various places that make up our community. Students will get to go into the children's library, Imaginon, as well as the Main Public Library. I will make sure to point out important sites like the Arena, Discovery Place museum, Belk theater and Spirit Square arts center, as well as historic sites like the First Episcopal church and the First Presbyterian church. For some of our students, this is the first time they will travel to the downtown area. This becomes quite evident through student conversations while we're walking around downtown. Some of them will talk and make connections to a prior trip or time they spent in the city and some will not. Through this field trip students will get a brief glimpse of urban life in a city.



## Food Integration - Recipes

Each student will make a recipe describing who they are. We'll read a variety of recipes from different food genres or types (Mexican food, Asian food, Southern food, American food, etc) so students can learn the basic components of a recipe and how to make something and then they will think of different ingredients that make up each of them. This can promote students sharing about recipes or dishes that are special to them and their family and why. I will use the mentor texts: *Too Many Tamales* by Gary Soto and *Jalapeño Bagels* by Natasha Wing to introduce special foods and the idea of selecting a special food to represent who you are. In the story *Jalapeño Bagels*, the boy needs to choose a food to bring to school for International Day. The character's mother is Mexican and his father is Jewish and he wants to choose something that is a perfect blend of both their heritages – like himself. In *Too Many Tamales*, the main character shares about a special tradition of preparing tamales for her family at Christmas and includes the excitement of losing a family valuable and having to recover it.

Inspired by the book *Yum! ¡MmMm! ¡Que rico!* by Pat Mora, students will be motivated to choose a dish native to their family and write a poem about it. In the book *Yum! ¡MmMm! ¡Que rico!* Pat Mora writes Haikus to describe different foods original to America. She includes foods that students will be familiar with like blueberries and pumpkins, as well as introduces foods that they might not know like prickly pears, papayas, and chilies. Connecting to the ideas in this story I will either bring in a selection of food described in the poems so students can experience them using all their senses; or share with them pictures as visuals for what the different foods look like. Ultimately it would be great if students could travel to the international market to build a curiosity for all different types of food to extend their learning, or if someone from the international market could come to our school to share with the students about the different produce they import and supply to their consumers. Food is one way people are similar to and different from others. There is produce and dishes that we all eat and share, but then there are different ways to prepare the same thing that make it special to the person or family. Students need to recognize those similarities and differences and realize what is common to them may be different for someone else.

## Poetry Writing & Technology

Modeled after the “Where I’m From Poem” by George Ella Lyon, students will create their own “Where I’m From Poem.” Students will read a variety of poems about people or memories as mentor texts. They will brainstorm a list of words or phrases about things, events, places, and people who are important to them and turn it into poetic work. Students will visualize their lives creating a map of places that are important to them. Then students will put all of these things together and integrate technology by combining all of their ideas into a poem and illustrate their poem using words, pictures, and music through PowerPoint or Prezi.

## Geography and Map Skills

Geography influences our stories and our experiences. Children living in New York City experience things different than children living in Charlotte or in the Congo. It is important for students to be able to know where their story starts – for students to track their history through geography as far back as they can. In the book *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* by Langston Hughes and illustrated by E.B. Lewis various places are referenced that contribute to the history of Langston’s life. Students can be taught to look for places on a map when they are reading literature that references various places. Each time a new place is mentioned in the book, the class can pause and find it on a world map and discuss what they may already know about that place. Students who are curious and would like to know more information can be taught to research how to find out current and historical information about a place.

## Conducting Interviews

Second grade students are expected to compare various interpretations of the same time period using evidence such as photographs and interviews. Students in class will generate a list of questions they can ask their parents, grandparents and other family members. These questions can include how the city of Charlotte has changed during the time that they have lived there? What did it look like when they first moved here to the way it looks now? Did their family move here from another city, state, or country? What attracted their family to move to Charlotte? What does this city offer that other cities do not? What opportunities do they think that Charlotte provides for people (young children as well as adults)? Students can also create a list of other questions they are curious about their family and why their family has settled where it lives now. The responses to these questions may be interesting for some students because their families move throughout various areas of the city frequently due to economic needs, and other students in my class may not be able to trace their family history back very far because of lack of preserved lineage data.

## Creating Artistic Expression - Quilting

Students will listen to the mentor text *Show Way* by Jacqueline Woodson. This book tells the story of survival of slavery through a family quilt that gets told about through generation. We’ll create a class quilt to be a visual representation of all the individual students and stories coming together to create our classroom community and culture. Students can select fabric from home to contribute to the quilt and I’ll have craft materials available for them to decorate their square or students can select fabric from scraps that I have to decorate their square. Then students will learn how to sew their squares together to make a class quilt which we will keep on display in the classroom.

## Reading Short Stories as Mentor Text

Related to Autobiography and Biography, students can depict their own lives through the telling of short stories. *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros illustrates this idea through several short stories describing scenes from her life. Short stories can focus on the setting in various places. I will have my students brainstorm a list of places that are important to them. Then from that list begin to describe events that have occurred in each place to make it significant, or people with whom they interact with in each space that have brought meaning to their lives. Although the whole book *House on Mango Street* is not appropriate to share with second grade students, there are several chapters that can be read to them as mentor texts for how to write a short story about their life. Several chapters that can be read aloud to second grade students include:

- “My Name” is the chapter where the author introduces the different ways her name is said and the reactions to what her name is. She also describes where her name came from. Students can begin to think about their names and ask questions of their family as to where their name came from and why it’s important; also why it’s important to call people by their names.
- “Our Good Day” describes the author pitching in to get a bike to share with two other girls. It really highlights a small, but happy moment in the author’s life. Students can use it as a model for what a small moment looks like and start writing small moments of their own.
- “No Speak English” is about a neighbor who moves in but does not interact in the neighborhood. The author infers it is because she does not speak any English and that she continues to be homesick for her home. Students can use this chapter as a springboard for thinking about something that was hard for them to learn and brainstorming reasons why it is important to do so.
- “Four Skinny Trees” is a chapter that talks about four trees that grew out of concrete. “When I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.”<sup>3</sup> This is a great chapter to promote student thinking about what their purpose is and encourage how they can overcome obstacles that might stand in their way and continue to persevere and stand tall.
- “A Rice Sandwich” is a chapter where the author tries to break from the normal schedule and do something different. She convinces her Mom to write her a note so she can stay at school and eat in the canteen with other students who do not go home for lunch. This will probably be a foreign idea for my students because they all stay at school and eat in the cafeteria, so this chapter will introduce them to the idea of how people do things differently in different places. Students will be encouraged to think about what they would do if they had the choice and why. I could introduce the figure of speech “the grass is greener on the other side” and

students can discuss what that expression means in general and what it means to them.

- “Laughter” is the chapter where the author compares herself to her sister. Students can be encouraged to compare themselves to a sibling or someone they know in order to think about ways they are like someone else and ways they are different.

### Conducting Research - Transportation

An important thing about cities is the variety of ways people can get around. Citizens of a city can choose to walk to their destination, hail a taxi or in some cases take a subway or trolley. Other citizens in a city may travel by ferry or boat, or if traveling from one city to another would probably take a plane or train. Students can be introduced to different types of transportation available to citizens who live in a city. I will introduce students to various types of transportation by showing them a prezi presentation I created (available at <http://prezi.com/a7c12udmyddt/transportation-in-the-city/>) that includes pictures and words of the different types of transportation. After students learn the vocabulary related to modes of transportation, they will choose one to conduct research on. Students can choose from pedestrian, bicycle, airplane, car, taxi, bus, boat/ship/ferry, train, and trolley/subway. With a partner or in a small group students will research their mode of transportation and create their own prezi presentation introducing the class to what that mode is, an example of cities where it can be found, who would use it, and what the pros and cons are about that mode of transportation. Students will practice and present their prezi to the class so all the students can learn about each mode of transportation more in depth. Students will also listen to read alouds involving modes of transportation. *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* is an interactive book about adventures that could happen on a bus. *Langston's Train Ride* describes the sounds and sights as seen and interpreted by Langston Hughes on a journey traveling from Ohio to Mexico. Students can also learn and practice the song *The Wheels on the Bus* which is a folk song anonymously written that describes how a bus travels through the town and some things someone might encounter on the bus. There are several videos available on You Tube including [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR\\_CB8Mz9I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR_CB8Mz9I) by Oh My Genius.

### Classroom Activities

Who am I? Who are we?

One of the primary goals of this curriculum unit is for students to develop a sense of self identity as well as an identity within the culture of the classroom and school. Students will create a poster describing their individual self using pictures and words. Most people are united under the ideas of having hopes, dreams, ambitions, and the means for achieving them. Students will include this information on their poster. They will also include information about their family and heritage. What they think is important for

other people to know about them and their ideas, beliefs, and practices. Students will be encouraged to include any background information they know that can paint a picture to describe who they are. We will put all these posters together in a display and use the information to help develop a class image.

As a whole group students will brainstorm what our class should be known for and what our values are. Students need to decide what they want our class identity to be. Students need to think about how they want other teachers and classes to view and perceive our class and what they want our class reputation to be. They will choose a class name and slogan for our class as it relates to their educational capital. Students can also create a class mascot that illustrates our class identity. All of these artifacts will be displayed outside our classroom door so students can be reminded everyday when they walk in who they are and what they are about in the school learning space, and also as a visual for other students and classes to (hopefully) admire and respect.

### Cultural Practices

Students will research a topic they want to know more about within their own culture. Second grade students are expected to “write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.” They also, “recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.” Students can achieve the ideals of these two standards by digging deeper into a concept related to their culture. As a class, we will brainstorm topic ideas for students to choose from. These ideas can include holidays or celebrations, weddings, religious practices, significance of family members, travel or pilgrimages, death, burial and service, art, literature, music, dance, clothing, schools, occupations, etc. After we brainstorm as a class possible topics, students will select their topic and in a group with other students studying the same idea, they will brainstorm a list of questions they want answered related to the topic.

To give students background information about various wedding practices, we could read *Snapshots from the Wedding* by Gary Soto which describes different weddings in different cultures. To introduce the significance of clothing to a culture, we would read the story *My Dadima Wears a Sari* by Kashmira Sheth where an Indian grandmother defends her clothing choice to her American granddaughter. In reading the nonfiction book *A School Like Mine* published by DK students will read about the characteristics of schools around the world and can make comparisons among them or to their own schools. *Roy Makes a Car* by Mary E. Lyons serves as a mentor text describing an occupation that would be held by someone in the city.

Independently students will interview members of their family as well as conduct research using books and the internet to discover the answers to their questions. Students will then create a presentation to share with the class about what they learned. Second

grade students are expected to “with guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers.”<sup>4</sup> Students will present their findings about the cultural topic they chose to research and learn more information about in order to teach their peers about the new information they have learned.

### The People Important to Me

The poem *Ellington Was Not a Street* by Ntozake Shange describes a little girl’s interactions with various historically significant African American musicians, artists, athletes, composers, and diplomats who came through her house and interacted with her family. In the story *My Name is Not Isabella* written by Jennifer Fosberry, Isabella denies who she is, “I am not Isabella” and tries to be a lot of influential American females, including her mother. In the back of both books, each person who is mentioned in the poem has a biographical paragraph. Students will read these books as models to think about who is important in each of their lives. After students brainstorm a list of the people important to them, they will create a poem or a series of poems describing something valuable about each person who is important to them. The goal is for students to thoughtfully reflect about the significant people in their lives, either immediate family or historically famous person who have shaped their destiny in some way. Students will illustrate their poems and share their poems with their peers so others can get a picture of how people have shaped their life.

The ideas and lesson in this curriculum unit contribute to students’ understanding of cultural identity and of urban life. Students will engage in various activities to gain background knowledge of people who are both similar to and different from themselves; and they will deepen their respect for their peers which will hopefully be transferred to all social interactions they have during their lifetime. I intend to use this curriculum unit during the beginning of the school year as a way to gather information about my students as well as encourage them to develop relationships with their peers. Because I’m finishing writing it in November and am very excited to teach it, I intend to integrate most of the lessons in Language Arts and Social Studies during the third quarter. That is typically a time when students become really comfortable with each other and I think this unit will allow them to interact and learn more about each other on a deeper level. I hope it will also foster stronger relationships.

## Resources

100% Educational Videos. *City, Suburb, and Rural Communities* From Discovery Education. Full Video. 2002. <http://www.discoveryeducation.com/> (accessed 30 October 2013). This short movie introduces students to the three different communities. It gives them background information so they can understand what the different areas are like.

"America's Story." Meet Amazing Americans.  
<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/index.php> (accessed October 27, 2013).  
This website provides links to biographies on an elementary reading level.

Banks, James A. . "Multicultural Education: Goals and Dimensions | UW College of Education." College of Education & University of Washington.  
<http://education.washington.edu/cme/view.htm> (accessed June 12, 2013).  
This website describes what multicultural education entails in the classroom.

Burleigh, Robert, and Leonard Jenkins. *Langston's Train Ride*. New York: Orchard Books, 2004. This story describes Langston Hugh's train journey and writing of a poem.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.  
Sandra Cisneros illustrates various scenes from her life and describes the immediate world in which she lived.

Dooley, Torriann. "Transportation in the City." Prezi - Ideas matter.  
[http://prezi.com/a7c12udmyddt/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/a7c12udmyddt/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)  
(accessed October 20, 2013). I created this Prezi presentation to pair pictures with vocabulary words introducing children to various types of ways to get around a city.

"Ducksters." Biographies for Kids: Inventors, Athletes, World Leaders, Women.  
<http://www.ducksters.com/biography/> (accessed October 27, 2013).  
This website links to biographies of various people and can be read by elementary students.

Feelings, Tom, and Atha Tehon. *Soul Looks Back in Wonder*. New York: Dial Books, 1993. This book is a collection of poems "celebrating the African American spirit."

Figueredo, D. H.. *The Road to Santiago*. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2003. This story describes a family's Christmas trip from Havana to Santiago, Cuba when they could not rely on the train they usually do.

Fosberry, Jennifer. *My Name Is Not Isabella*. Naperville: Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2010. This children's story narrates the day of a young girl who denies her own name and says she is someone else - a famous woman, like Sally Ride, Annie Oakley, Rosa Parks, etc. The back of the book includes a biography of each person Isabella references.

"Garden of Praise." Biographies for Kids, Famous Leaders for Young Readers. <http://www.gardenofpraise.com/leaders.htm> (accessed October 27, 2013). This biography website has links to information of various famous people and can be read by elementary readers.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Making Magic Windows: Creating Papel Picado/Cut-Paper Art with Carmen Lomas Garza*. San Francisco, Calif.: Children's Book Press/Libros Para Ninos, 1999. This book gives directions for how to cut paper to make paper art.

Grissom, Kathleen. *The Kitchen House*. New York: Touchstone Books, 2010. This novel introduced by my bookclub describes the life of a plantation from the unique perspective of a poor white girl alongside black servants and workers who serve an affluent plantation family.

Higgins, Jennifer Johnson. "School of Education at Johns Hopkins University- Multicultural Children's Literature: Creating and Applying an Evaluation Tool in Response to the Needs of Urban Educators." Johns Hopkins School of Education - Home. <http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/multicultural-education/multicultural-childrens-literature/> (accessed June 12, 2013). This article defines multicultural literature and how to evaluate it. It also suggests thirty multicultural titles.

Hoffman, Mary, and Caroline Binch. *Amazing Grace*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991. This picture book describes a young girl acting out different stories that she reads and overcoming adversity to play Peter Pan in the class play.

Hughes, Langston. *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*. New York: Disney Jump at the Sun Books, 2009. This book beautifully illustrates Langson Hughes' poem.

"Instructional Support Tools." North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. [www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/support-tools/unpacking/social-studies/2nd.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/support-tools/unpacking/social-studies/2nd.pdf) (accessed August 25, 2013). This pdf file details the North Carolina Essential Standards for 2nd grade Social Studies.



- Kelly, Hilton . "What Jim Crow's Teachers Could Do: Educational Capital and Teachers' Work in Under-resourced Schools." *Springer Science+Business Media, LLC* 2009 42 (2009): 329-350.  
[http://www.academia.edu/297233/\\_What\\_Jim\\_Crows\\_Teachers\\_Could\\_Do\\_Educational\\_Capital\\_and\\_Teachers\\_Work\\_in\\_Under-resourced\\_Schools\\_](http://www.academia.edu/297233/_What_Jim_Crows_Teachers_Could_Do_Educational_Capital_and_Teachers_Work_in_Under-resourced_Schools_) (accessed October 24, 2013). This article describes teaching and "educational capital" in all black schools during segregation.
- University of Wisconsin Madison. "Multicultural Literature." Cooperative Children's Book Center. [www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/multicultural.asp](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/multicultural.asp) (accessed June 12, 2013). This website lists 50 multicultural books children should read.
- "Multimedia Biographies." Biographies.  
<http://www.harcourtschool.com/activity/biographies/index.html> (accessed October 27, 2013). This interactive website has biographies that can be read by elementary students.
- Oh My Genius. "Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round." YouTube.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_gR\\_CB8Mz9I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gR_CB8Mz9I) (accessed October 20, 2013). This You Tube video plays an animated video of the song "The Wheels on the Bus" as well as offers written lyrics on the page. Students can increase fluency pairing reading the words while singing the song.
- Shange, Ntozake . *Ellington Was Not a Street*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1983. This beautifully illustrated book introduces the biography of several African American's who contributed to the landscape of America.
- Soto, Gary, and Ed. Martinez. *Too Many Tamales*. New York: Putnam, 1993. This story describes the Christmas tradition of making tamales and something that happens to a family diamond one year.
- Willems, Mo.. *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2003. This interactive children's book details a pigeon trying to have an adventure in the city.
- Wilson, Keith. "Multicultural Education." EdChange - Diversity, Multicultural, Cultural Competence, & Inclusion Education Training.  
<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/keith.html> (accessed June 12, 2013). This website argues pros and cons for multicultural education.
- Woodson, Jacqueline, and Hudson Talbott. *Show Way*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005. This book describes a family through generations.

## **Appendix I – Implementing District Standards**

### **Common Core State Standards - Language Arts**

Throughout this curriculum unit students will read a variety of stories, both independently and mentor texts read aloud to them. These stories, through discussions and activities, will serve as a model for how to read and comprehend other stories on their grade level. Students will also compose several pieces of writing for various purposes in order to meet Common Core standards in both writing and language, but also to clarify their identity for themselves and share it with their peers.

RL2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson or moral.

RL2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

RL2.9 Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story by different authors or from different cultures.

RL2.10 Read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range.

RI2.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

W2.3 Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

W2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

SL2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

SL2.6 Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

L2.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading or listening.

### **Essential Standards for Social Studies**

In this curriculum unit students will be working both independently and collaboratively to learn more about themselves and their backgrounds and to gain an understanding of others including their peers and historical people that have made key contributions to their lives or society.

2.H.1 Understand how various sources provide information about the past.

2.C.1 Understand how various cultures influence communities

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<sup>1</sup> “Essential Standards for Social Studies,” North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. [www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/support-tools/unpacking/social-studies/2nd.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/support-tools/unpacking/social-studies/2nd.pdf) (accessed August 25, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> H. Kelly, What Jim Crow's Teachers Could Do: Educational Capital and Teachers' Work in Under-resourced Schools.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cisneros: *The House on Mango Street*, 75.

<sup>4</sup> “English Language Arts Standards,” Common Core State Standards Initiative, <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy> (accessed August 25, 2013).