

# **Peace Initiative: Art as a Vehicle to Build Peace**

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## **Abstract**

In today's global society, students are constantly exposed to violent images on the television, through video games, music, magazine/newspaper articles, and the internet. Violence has become commonplace and seemingly accepted; war and conflict viewed as the norm (McMillan, 2015). One way to prepare students for their place in the global economy is to have them investigate topics of global significance, such as the topic of peace (Jackson, p. 3). Through this paper, I propose that a thematic approach, using the topic of peace, be included in the art curriculum.

This paper poses four essential questions: 1) What is peace? 2) Why should peace be included as an important theme in the art curriculum? 3) What projects can students do to express themselves concerning their thoughts on peace? 4) How can students share their message of peace with others?

Peace must first be found within us; through art, students can explore their ideas and feelings (Barton, 2015, p. 22). By investigating and creating artwork on the topic of peace, students begin to understand their selves and others better (pp. 22-23). Exploring and expressing their ideas can help students come to a new understanding/comprehension of an issue.

Many projects and programs are discussed and presented using the theme of peace. Different options are given to allow students to participate in peace initiatives and to share their work locally, nationally and internationally. Students can create artworks and participate in public art installations that express their ideas and feelings towards peace—allowing for an increase in public awareness (McMillan, 2015). Using peace as a platform for teaching art allows the integration of art history, world history, and current events while teaching how to use traditional and contemporary methods of creating art. While addressing fundamental human

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concerns, such as the need for peace, students are given an opportunity to use their art work as an expressive tool--students come to the realization that their art work can make a powerful

statement which could make a difference in the world.

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Peace is essential to our lives, our very existence. In the increasingly global society that we now live, students must learn to understand the people and customs of other cultures.

Tolerance and cooperation are important ideals to learn in order to work with people of different cultures. Students will be interacting and working with people of all cultures from around the world and need to practice these skills. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is an extremely important part of the “effort to develop a culture of peace” (UNESCO, 2015).

In 2000, The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution, Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. In article nine, this resolution directs “actions to foster a culture of peace through education” (General Assembly, United Nations, 2000) and lists specifically in section (c) to “involve children in activities designed to instill in them the values and goals of a culture of peace” (General Assembly, United Nations, 2000). The United Nations recognizes the importance of promoting world peace by educating students on the culture of peace. By employing the theme of peace in the art curriculum, students are able to explore contemporary art work on peace. Students will develop their own meaning of peace while creating and sharing their own artworks expressing their message of peace to the world.

### **Creating a Visual Arts Classroom Centered Around Peace**

Before creating a more global classroom centered about peace, the term “peace” must be defined. Peace can mean different things to different people, but basically peace is described as “a state of calm and serenity, with no anxiety, the absence of violence, freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or groups of people” (McMillan, 2015). Engaging in a thoughtful

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study of art made by adult artists on the topic of peace, then creating their own artistic expression of peace, students are developing their own ideas and feelings on the topic (Anderson, 2009, p. 233).

Student's perceptions on peace are formed by their family, their community, and increasingly by what they view through technology. By engaging students in conversations on peace we can broaden their understanding on the need for peace in their lives and in the world (Duncum, 2001). While discussing global issues in the classroom, students are learning about the world, how they could have an impact on it, and begin to develop the understanding that they are a contributing part of the global community (Melvin, 2014). "We validate their effort, by allowing them to speak. This facilitates the evolution of their personal voice through their art which in turn, demonstrates the importance of discourse with a global mindset" (Melvin, 2014).

### **Exploration of Global Peace Initiatives**

Art exists in all cultures and can be a primary tool for making peace (Anderson, 2009, p. 235). Art is a vehicle that can be used to help build peace and understanding between cultures (p. 237). Facilitating student interactions with students of other cultures is essential. Through information gathered from technology, travel, exploring artworks with the theme of peace, and peace initiatives students can create personal, group, or public works of art that express the need for peace in the world (Melvin, 2014).

Outlined and discussed in the ebook, *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World*, are four competencies that can be used to help prepare students for action in the global society:

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1. “Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, framing significant problems and conducting well-crafted and age-appropriate research.
2. Recognize perspectives, others’ and their own, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.
3. Communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.
4. Take action to improve conditions, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively.” (Jackson, p. 11)

Because of increasing global interactions, what happens in one part of the world affects all parts of the world. In the art classroom, technology can be used to bring students of different cultures together so that they may learn to work together cooperatively and solve problems together. Through exchange programs, travel, and virtual interactions students can learn about each other and learn to develop new ways of thinking that help them form a new global identity and become better global citizens and learn how to live peacefully together. Participation in international programs allows students to use artworks to voice their ideas on peace, allowing students to work together with others globally on peace initiatives (see Appendix B).

Students should be active in the investigation of international peace initiatives that exist and, as a class, decide which to participate in. There are many organizations that help students to explore peace initiatives allowing students to participate in global programs that bring to the forefront the need for peace. Through participation in international programs, students realize their art is an effective avenue to express and communicate ideas and feelings (Barton, 2015, p. 5).

Art educators need to help facilitate opportunities for students to share their work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally through art shows, contests, art installations, programs, web based communities, the internet, and other venues.

Beginning locally, students may exhibit their work at school or in the community. They may have art shows, paint murals, have art installations, programs, and create permanent public

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art. One example, on the local level, is to produce a modified PRISM Concert<sup>1</sup>. Involving the entire cultural arts department, this program has visual and performing arts components. Starting the evening in the performing arts center (or other large venue) with a large group performance featuring music, dance, choral performances, and drama accompanied by slide shows of artwork. The rest of the evening is spent throughout the school where small continuous performances (music, drama, dance, even magic acts) as well as art demonstrations and exhibits centered about the theme of peace. Hands on art making activity areas would allow the viewer, turned participant, to create images of peace—for example: miniature peace poles, simple printmaking, and painting. Different symbols of peace from many cultures are posted throughout the building and encouraged to be used in the hands-on activities. An unveiling of a public art peace (maybe a peace pole made by art students) could be featured. Another program could be presented as an assembly or Chapel Service (if your school has Chapel) with the theme of peace on or near September 21<sup>st</sup>, International Peace Day.

In the community, students may exhibit art work with the theme of peace at local galleries, art coalitions/councils, libraries, and restaurants. Local galleries could sponsor an art show that focuses on peace (with sections for students and adults) (Barton, 2015). Students can create posters with their message of peace that can be distributed and displayed at local businesses and can also be posted on the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE)<sup>2</sup> Facebook page (Barton, 2015). Students and classes may participate with many different peace initiatives and partnerships through web based programs.

The integration of peace projects into the arts curriculum and sharing of work on different platforms allows students to contribute to spreading the message of the need for world peace



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(Barton, 2015). While creating artworks on peace, students will be able to evaluate and form their ideas on peace and are able to share what peace means to them (Barton, 2015).

September 21<sup>st</sup> has been set aside as International Peace Day by the United Nations. Established in 1981, this is a day to help promote peace and understanding of global cultures. It is a day without conflict where nations at war observe a cease fire. Participation in International Peace Day activities is a way that students may become involved with sharing their artwork while expressing their ideas on the need for peace (International Day of Peace September 21st, 2015).

Art work from contemporary artists should be included in the study of peace. After students research different artists and artworks, students share their findings with the rest of the class in the form of a PowerPoint or other type of media. Below are a few examples of contemporary artist's works that express the idea of peace:



*Figure 1. "Parading for Peace" by Bel Haj Taib from Tunisia. This piece shows peaceful tortoises that were created from soldier's helmets which creates a sort of military parade which holds the promise of peace. (Dak'Art Biennial of African Contemporary Art: 2006 Recollections 2, 2011).*

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Figure 2 (left). "Please Let There Be Peace"  
(Sothy, 2002).

Sothy, a Cambodian contemporary



artist, uses the dove as a symbol of piece in his  
artwork (Sothy, 2002).

Figure 3 (left). Picasso  
created powerful  
symbols of peace  
through simple contour  
drawings of doves  
(Biographies on Line,  
n.d.)



Figure 4 (right). Peter  
Max, "Be About

Peace" (Max, 1960) This poster is not an official Peace Corps  
poster, but was used to help raise money for the Peace Corps.



Figure 5. Rose Garrard, "Hands of Peace" (Garrard).

There are a multiple of sculptures that use hands as a symbol of peace.

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*Figure 6. Picasso "Guernica<sup>1</sup>",  
1937*

Picasso's "Guernica" was commissioned by the Spanish government to depict the suffering of war. This artwork ended up as symbol for peace (Picasso, Guernica, 1937).



*Figure 7. Marc Chagall "Peace Window." This stained glass window was made for the United Nations.(Chagall, 1964)*

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### Projects on Peace

Working on projects with the theme of peace will allow students to develop their own ideas about peace and communicate thoughts and ideas through their artworks. There are multitudes of ways to involve students in different art projects while they explore the topic of peace.

The *Pinwheels for Peace Project*<sup>3</sup> is an excellent project for students of all ages. Students illustrate their message of peace to the world (what peace means to them or simply what makes them feel peaceful) on square sheets of paper with their written messages of peace (written in prose or a poem or as a prayer). Students cut and fold their square into a pinwheel<sup>4</sup>.

The pinwheel is included in a group public art installation at their school or other public place.

The messages are symbolically sent out on the wind to the world as the pinwheels twirl. The class may register at [Pinwheelsforpeace.com](http://Pinwheelsforpeace.com) and become an official part of the international Pinwheels for Peace Project. A “pin” will be placed showing the location of the school on a world map on the website; pictures may also be submitted of students working and of the pinwheel art installation.



Figure 8. *Pinwheels for Peace* (photo by author). Figure 9. *Pinwheels for Peace* (photo by author).

The thematic approach in teaching art should address fundamental global issues where students exam real problems of significance (Anderson, 2009, p. 232). Using a thematic approach to learning also poses many opportunities to integrate other disciplines into the art curriculum.

After reading literature with the theme of peace<sup>5</sup>, students can use technology tools to write and



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illustrate peace poems or prayers then create books to share with lower grade levels or publish (Moreillon, 2016). The book, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*<sup>6</sup>, can inspire students to fold traditional origami cranes<sup>7</sup>. These cranes symbolize the wish of peace and students can share them in a class public installation—possibly at the public library.

The investigation of different symbols of peace and different cultural symbols for peace affords students opportunities to develop research skills and to explore other cultures. Students can integrate the word “peace” (or phrases expressing peace) from different languages and symbols of peace into their art works.

After studying Picasso’s many artworks involving doves and other symbols of peace<sup>8</sup>, students create their own work inspired by these works highlighting doves as a symbol of peace.



Figure 10 (left). Picasso, “With Women with a Dove” (Picasso, With Women with a Dove, 1955)



Figure 11(above). Picasso, “Dove of Peace” (Picasso, Dove of Peace, 1949).

Students can create peace mandalas inspired by mandalas from Tibet or India. While learning about a different culture’s art, students brainstorm their ideas on peace and create colorful “peace” mandala drawings<sup>9</sup> using a compass, protractor, and straight edge. Another activity is making “peace candles” using cool colors and emboss symbols of peace onto the surface of the candles. Students may take a single candle home and light it on International

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Peace Day.

The class can join the Peace Pole Project<sup>10</sup>, an international project where individuals or groups create (or purchase) peace poles with the inscription: “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in different languages on the faces of the pole. Students may make individual miniature Peace Poles or large Peace Poles for the school or community. The pole and site may be registered at the project’s website. My school chose to create a peace pole, but customized the writing to say: “Lord, Grant Us Peace.”



Figure 12. Table top peace pole (photo by author).



Figure 13. “Peace Pole” by Jodi Tombouliau, Nolan Tombouliau, Federico Arvizu, and Henry McEwin—a gift to The Epiphany School of Global Studies (photo by author).

While designing and creating peace flags, inspired by Tibetan prayer flags, students learn about the significance of the color and order of the Tibetan prayer flags—which they use when they display their peace flags. Students may create peaceful images of things or places that symbolize

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peace to them. They may also use different symbols of peace on the flags (colors, symbols, peace or other words in different languages). These flags can be created using various mediums. A beautiful flag can be made using wax resist dyed silk. Another wax resist dye project is making silk peace hoops. Below are examples made by middle and upper school students at The Epiphany School of Global Studies.



Figure 14. Silk “Peace Flags” by Middle and Upper School Students at The Epiphany School of Global Studies. (Photos by author).



Figure 15. Silk “Peace Hoops” by Middle and Upper School Students at The Epiphany School of Global Studies (Photos by author).

Using stained glass or tissue paper<sup>11</sup>, Students may make peace windows inspired by Marc Chagall’s “Peace Window” created for the United Nations. Below are examples by 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at The Epiphany School of Global Studies:

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Figure 16.. The Epiphany School of Global Studies 6<sup>th</sup> grade students' "Peace Windows" inspired by Marc Chagall's "Peace Window" (Photos by author).

In the National Geographic Education Blog, Jeremy Forgione (educator), describes a classroom activity titled *War and Peace*. Each student draws their vision of peace on a large sheet of paper, which is later torn up by another student to demonstrate war. The torn pieces are returned to the owner who looks for a 'glimmer of hope' (part of the picture that remains recognizable) then the art work is put back together and recreated around this 'glimmer of hope.' After the work has been restored, students discuss how the recreation of the picture took a lot of effort and how the finished piece is valuable because of the work that was put into it. Next, students reflect and discuss how this activity parallels peace—how peace is fragile, takes a lot of work to achieve, but is valuable. The author remarks that September 11<sup>th</sup> often comes up in the student led discussions and how our nation found "glimmers of hope" among the violence and became stronger as a nation (Forgione, 2015). The nationwide mural project, '*America 4 Boston Prayer Canvas*,' that occurred in response to the Boston Bombings is also an example of how art can be part of the healing process in a tragedy and can inspire encouragement and healing (Annear, 2014).



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Figure 17. Parts of The Epiphany School of Global Studies mural titled, “UNITY”, that was included in the ‘America 4 Boston Prayer Canvas,’ project (Photos by author).

Young students (K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade) can make beautiful watercolor flowers inspired by Dale Chihuly’s blown glass flowers. The student’s flowers are made by squirting liquid watercolors onto coffee filters (or color with Crayola markers then spritz with water). One way to include a lesson on cool and warm colors is to place warm colors near the middle and cool colors around the perimeter or vice versa. Let the filters dry, then spray with liquid starch. Form the flower and allow to dry upside down over a plastic cup. The flowers can be arranged to form a Chihuly inspired “peace garden.”



Figure 18. The Epiphany School of Global Studies Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade Chihuly inspired “Peace Flowers” (Photo by author).

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The following is a list of additional student projects and activities that help promote the ideal of peace:

1. School peace dance: decorate, educate and promote peace, activities
2. Sponsor art workshops for the community on the theme of peace
3. Create peace banners or peace towers for display in school or public venues
4. Create collages or montages
5. Posters and banners
6. Posters in Photoshop
7. Hold an peace art auction
8. Sponsor a peace poster contest
9. Exhibit and compete in International Peace Art Contests<sup>12</sup>
10. Attend Peace Conferences<sup>13</sup>.
11. Join Peace Pal International<sup>14</sup>, an international organization for children to help promote peace throughout the world
12. Host and exhibit artwork from around the world: Exhibit the Peace Pals Youth “*The Ambassador of Peace Collection*”<sup>15</sup> from around the world travelling exhibit
13. Design and create stained glass stepping stones
14. Design and create peace tiles
15. Design and create peace gardens<sup>16</sup>
16. Design and create peace mosaics
17. Peace stationary: Students design a logo for their personal stationary while learning how to use Photoshop or a printing process
18. Create posters/artwork/banners using peace or a phrase written in different languages
19. Students design and paint school or community murals on the topic of peace

## Conclusion

Including important global issues and themes in the art curriculum is critical. Providing a platform for students from different cultures to work together and express their views is important in the formation of the global leaders of tomorrow. Teachers need to consider the art classroom as a place that students feel free to explore and develop their ideas and as a place that affords opportunities to share their ideas with others through their artworks and reflections—locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

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In “The Kids’ Guernica Peace Mural Project: A Paradigm for Global Art Education” (a chapter in the book: *Globalization & Art Education*), Tom Anderson discusses the concept that art is not only about the aesthetic, but a function of art is to help define the people who “make, use, and view artworks” (Anderson, 2009, p. 231). He points out that art is both a process and a product—where art not only communicates ideas, but the artist explores and develops new understandings while creating the artwork. Both the viewer and artist gain new insights through the artwork. Using the topic of peace in a thematic approach to the teaching of art, elevates the art curriculum to more than merely learning art techniques—it allows students to develop their ideas and to formulate a personal voice. They learn that art is a powerful platform that can be used to express their ideas and allow them to have an impact upon the world.

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## **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup>“Prism Concert: An interactive concert in which the different participating groups rotate sets throughout the night, allowing the audience to encounter each group on several different occasions/moods throughout the evening. The music is continuous and the performers are set up in different positions throughout the space. Each position rotates sets according to the number of groups/positions and length of concert. Individual set lengths generally never extend longer than 20 minutes and the programming and presentation of the rotation should create a space and atmosphere that is welcoming and interactive. The performers’ collaboration and interaction

within this space and atmosphere creates the setting for each concert.”

<http://www.nicksays.com/prism.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://waae.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/>

<sup>3</sup> [Pinwheelsforpeace.com](http://Pinwheelsforpeace.com)

<sup>4</sup> Blank pinwheels of various sizes (the smallest ones work the best) may be purchased from

[Orientaltradingpost.com](http://Orientaltradingpost.com)

<sup>5</sup> *Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace* by Shelly Moore Thomas

*Peace Begins with You* by Katherine Sholes

*The Big Book for Peace* edited by Ann Durrel and Marilyn Sachs

*An Angel for Solomon Singer* by Cynthia Rylant

*Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting

<sup>6</sup>“Thousand Origami Cranes (千羽鶴 Senbazuru ?) is a group of one thousand origami paper cranes (折鶴 orizuru ?) held together by strings. An ancient Japanese legend promises that

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anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the Gods”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One\\_thousand\\_origami\\_cranes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_thousand_origami_cranes)

<sup>7</sup>Youtube on making origami cranes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqeI94Jri1M>

<sup>8</sup> Website of Picasso’s peace artworks: [http://peace.maripo.com/m\\_picasso.htm](http://peace.maripo.com/m_picasso.htm)

Lesson plan: *Peace Poems and Picasso Doves: Literature, Art, Technology and Poetry* found at

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/peace-poems-picasso-doves-93.html?tab=4#tabs>

<sup>9</sup> Integrate mathematics skills or using a protractor, compass, and straight edge to draw the circle and divide the circle into sectors

<sup>10</sup> Peace pole project website: <http://www.peacepoleproject.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Dick Blick Lesson Plan: Peace Windows: in the style of Marc Chagall’s stained glass:

<http://www.dickblick.com/lesson-plans/peace-windows-in-the-style-of-marc-chagalls-stainedglass/>

<sup>12</sup> Annual Peace Pals International Arts Exhibition and Awards.<sup>12</sup>

Lion’s club international peace poster contest

<http://lionsclubs.org.au/activities/youth/peaceposter/#rules>

<sup>13</sup> World Peace Youth: <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/World-Peace-Youth---Webinar-April-30th-.html?soid=1101780022756&aid=CXFFPLpmoY8>

<sup>14</sup> Peace Pal International: <http://wppspeacepals.org/>

<sup>15</sup> [Wppspeacepals.org/ambassador of- peace- tour](http://wppspeacepals.org/ambassador-of-peace-tour)

<sup>16</sup> Websites on how to create peace gardens websites:

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2013/05/Create-a-Peace-Garden.pdf>



**Peace Initiative: Art as a Vehicle to Build Peace**

**Appendix A**

Examples of art work with the theme of peace created by students at The Epiphany

School of Global Studies, New Bern, North Carolina, USA.:



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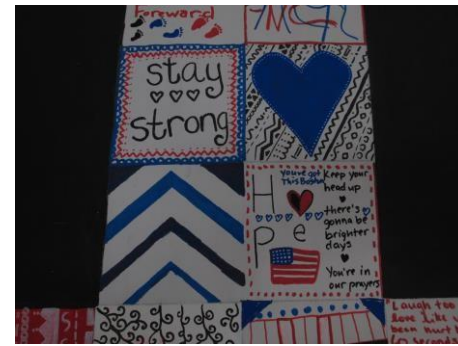


Peace Initiative: Art as a Vehicle to Build Peace





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## **Appendix B**

The following is list of various international programs that can be used to help connect students globally. I wrote this list included in a Literary Review on that I wrote in December 2015 titled

“Technology: The Driving Force of Globalizing Art Education.”

1. Examples of past art related learning experiences through IEARN

(<https://iearn.org/>) have been:

- Talking Kites All Over the World: A tradition of flying kites with personal and group images of our dreams for a better world, in the footsteps of J. Korczak
  - Beauty of the Beasts: An international wildlife art and poetry exchange
  - Holiday Card Exchange: Classrooms explain their holiday traditions by sending cards to their partners around the world
  - Calligraphy: The art of producing decorative handwriting or lettering with a pen or brush
  - Electronic school magazine project: Cultural and educational e-school magazine
  - Get to Know Others; An educational endeavor to give students the chance to learn about their own culture as well as other cultures
  - Global Art a Sense of Caring: an exchange of digital photos/artwork and writing on the theme of caring
  - International Intercultural Mural Exchange (IIME): two schools of distant countries learn interactively and create one big mural by drawing halves of a canvas to express their collaborative learning in a visual way
-

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- Local History Project: Sharing the history of our home places which can also include the history of our families, descriptions of traditions, country cuisine and folklore
  - My Identity Your Identity: Sharing of traditional celebrations, the famous monuments, and landmarks in their countries
  - My Name Around the World: Research, find and send information about own name answering different questions connecting with own name, students create different visualizations of name: posters, handicraft, drawing, etc., creation of blogs and the sharing information about name and photos
  - One Day in the Life: Sharing of photographs with caption of daily life and discuss it with partner students in another country
  - Origami: Art therapy and how ORIGAMI works
  - Wall of Names: Support of student self-expression using various artistic devices helping to convey the origin and meaning of names of different countries and teaches students to cherish intercultural exchanges
  - Youth Can: Sharing of interests and projects about protecting the environment in their communities and collaborating with students in other areas doing the same
2. Internet resources for globalizing the curriculum
- *Pinwheels for Peace* project ([www.pinwheelsforpeace.com](http://www.pinwheelsforpeace.com))
  - *Peace Pole Project* (<http://www.peacepoleproject.org/>)
  - *Peace One Day* activities (<http://www.peaceday.org/>)
  - *The Students Rebuild Water Challenge* (<http://studentsrebuild.org/findchallenge/water-challenge>),
3. Additional resources for other student intercultural projects or experiences:

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- 100 People: A World Portrait <http://100people.org/> ○ Global Kids <http://www.globalkids.org/#/about-global-kids>

### 4. Additional resources for teacher intercultural travel experiences or in-service opportunities:

- Asia for Educators <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/> ○ Heifer International for Educators <http://www.heifereducation.org/> ○ Asian Society <http://asiasociety.org/education> ○ Oracle ThinkQuest <http://www.thinkquest.org/en/> ○ TeachGlobalEd.net <http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/globaled/home.cfm> ○ Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning <http://www.asiasociety.org/education/pgl/> ○ Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program <http://www.fulbrightexchanges.org/> ○ NAFSA: Association of International Educators <http://www.nafsa.org> ○ Partnership for 21st Century Skills <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/> ○ The Edge English Institute (also known as The Edge Institute) <http://www.TEEI.org>