

Global Learning: What Do You Mean?

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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Chantelle Anderson
St. John Community School



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Our first learning event, presented by Sylvia Rosenthal Tolisano, gave the participants a comprehensive look at the many different aspects of global learning. From almost 10 000 km away in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Sylvia explained that we were already engaged in global learning by participating in this event. A globally connected person from early on in her life being born in Germany, growing up in Argentina, moving to the United States, and now working in Brazil, she brings that experience, love of learning, and connectedness to her teaching. Starting on her blog langwitches.org/blog and taking her knowledge and experience all over the world, she not only presents “globally connected learning” but is a virtual model of what that looks like.

How we connect today is so different for our students than it was for us. Even definitions of words like “friends” and “strangers” are different. Friends are no longer simply people we know well, they are people we are connected to online that we may have never met face to face. This connectedness has brought about a new meaning to what it is like to be literate. It has gone so far beyond being able to read and write that we have new ‘literacies’ created all the time. “How literate are you?” was one of the questions she posed. And further went on to ask “Are you able to find, filter, organize, analyze, tag and curate information? And if you can’t are you still considered literate?” When we look at where we go to for our information today for the most part it is online. So our teaching becomes less about basic literacy as in how to read and write from a textbook, and more about information literacy, global literacy, media literacy...etc. We’ve changed how we read and where we can access that material to how we write, collaborate and communicate. The world is not changing back – this global connectedness is not going away. If anything it is getting broader and we need to change with it to be able to prepare our students for this shift in culture.

“Globally connected students need connected teachers” was a title of one of her slides that seems so obvious and yet for some, so difficult. We need to change the way we are learning as teachers to connect and collaborate globally. It could be something as simple as creating a Twitter account or a blog, to creating and maintaining our PLN (Personal Learning Network) as a “Confidant” – the seventh degree of connectedness in [Rodd Lucier’s infographic](#). Sylvia referred (via the first of several QR codes) to Will Richardson’s article [Three Starting Points to Thinking Differently About Learning](#) where he elaborates about how we should: “1. Thin the walls

of our classrooms, 2. talk to strangers and 3. Be transparent” (Richardson, 2012). We do not have to re-invent the wheel, we can simply start by joining projects that have already been created. Participating in [Mystery Skypes](#), or [Student Blogging Challenge](#) are easy ways to start connecting your students to the global community. Sylvia talked about several other ideas to begin connecting such as having a librarian in another school read a book you don’t have, bring in experts around various subjects or simply listen to a fairytale from another country read in an authentic accent. It’s all as simple as using an internet connection and a webcam. Once we feel comfortable taking our connectedness a little further then we can start creating our own projects online.

Global learning is another way that we can create those authentic learning experiences that make our curriculum engaging and worthwhile. Our students are so connected in their private lives that in order to make our curriculum applicable to them now and in the future, we need to be connected ourselves and bring that into the classroom. Sylvia’s presentation was an excellent introduction to the importance of global learning, and her [blog](#) and website <http://langwitches.org> are chalk full of ideas on how to bring your classroom and school into the global community.