

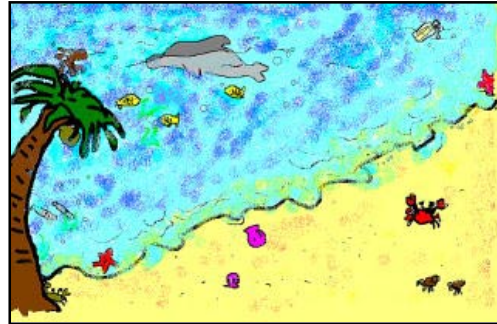
## P.1.17 BRIDGING THE PACIFIC OCEAN: USING OCEANOGRAPHY TO MAKE CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Beth A. Jewell\*  
Fairfax County Public Schools

Through participation in the Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program (FMF) I have learned first hand about a culture that was fairly foreign to me, expanded my horizons and teaching repertoire, and better understand my students. I have been steadily converting my oceanography course from a traditional chapter-by-chapter course to a computer-based course, which takes my students on a year long "virtual cruise." We study topics as we come across them on our journey. When "cruising" past the Great Barrier Reef, we discuss coral ecosystems and the influence of the ocean on the aboriginal dreamtime. Going past Peru, we look at El Niño and how it affects the fishing practices of the local of people. When my classes "cruise" past Japan, we discuss the Ring of Fire and tsunamis. A first-hand experience in this country enabled me to include fishing practices, stress the value of seafood in the Japanese diet, examine coastal features, and explore the influence of the ocean in Japanese art. With each unit I integrate culture with the hard science connected to our lessons. Participating in this program facilitated this endeavor to add another dimension to my course and enriched my curriculum.

The goal of this project was to illustrate "the ocean's effect on culture" through maps, graphics, and text in a web page format to be shared with those with web access. Students were first asked to draw

the word ocean and to write a few sentences.



As expected the Japanese and American students had different ideas of what an ocean is. Working together, students produced a list of modes in which the ocean influenced their lives. From this list students conducted significant research and exploration in order to create a web site about the ocean's effect on their culture.



Later the web pages were shared between the schools. A videoconference was conducted so that the students to meet one another and ask questions about the other's relationship with the ocean. This sharing of web pages not only increased the

understanding of another society but will increase the understanding of a student's own place on this earth.

This "Bridging the Ocean" project will involve teachers and students from around the world to define the nature of the "ocean's effect on their culture" and post descriptions, graphics, and maps about their cultures. Efforts have been made to work with a school from Omani and the foreign exchange students in my class have been developing a web site from their home country perspective (Germany and Chili). These presentations are combined on a web server and can be searched by characteristic and explored for similarities and differences.

In my classification unit, I include seafood dishes that highlight the particular organisms that we are study in class. We often rely on those dishes that are part of the American diet and culture. Kelp, sea cucumbers, jellyfish, and fish are an integral part of the Japanese diet that I would like to learn more about preparing them. I want to teach my students how to roll sushi and prepare some of the ocean critters we study, that the Japanese eat. I want my students to try something new and taste some of the foods eaten by the Japanese culture.



Distance learning and multi-media technologies played a central role in this joint project with a Japanese High School from Onomichi Japan. However, these technologies are only mechanisms

through which the actual processes of collaboration and shared learning will take place. The focus of the project is on its content theme - How does the ocean affect our culture? "Bridging the Ocean" provided a great deal of room for the development of on-line partnership project between the two schools. It permitted both schools to develop a unique project. Yet the project went beyond this to avoid limiting its impact relations between a pair of schools. It built a collaborative network of indirect as well as direct participants. This should enable students at various levels of education to contribute to it in a collaborative fashion in a unified project.

My students have been the beneficiaries of this enhanced instruction, which is continuously evolving into a more cross-curricular effort. It provided them with a better understanding of "why we need to know this," and better definition of their role in their world. The benefits for me were an increased understanding of my school's growing Asian population and furthered my development as a more rounded steward of the world's ocean by understanding the role it plays in the Japanese culture.

Beth A. Jewell, Fairfax County Public Schools, 6100 Rolling Rd, Springfield VA, 22152,  
beth.jewell@fcps.edu