

# Cultivating Engagement and Improving Reading Scores Through the Cosmic Curriculum

An Action Research Report

**By Kacee Weaver**

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Through the Cosmic Curriculum

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## Abstract

The intent of this research was to determine the effect of focusing on cultural lessons as a way to increase student engagement and reading scores. The research study took place in a Montessori charter school in an E1 class, focusing on ten specific students ages six through nine. The four sources of data collection used in this research included pre and post reading scores, student writing samples, an observational checklist and student conferencing. While students' reading scores did not improve writing scores did. Data also showed an increase in interest in cultural subjects as well as an increased interest in attending formal lessons. Students were more engaged throughout the day but most asked that cultural lessons be taught at the end of the day in order for them to focus on their math and language works.

Every four weeks for the last three years, I have spent two to three hours setting up the cultural shelves for the next month. I make extensions, follow-up work and plan enticing lessons in the hopes of drawing the students further into the subjects of geography, history, zoology, physical science and botany. I have rearranged the location of the shelves numerous times to make them more visible, accessible and inviting. Unfortunately the shelves continue to be untouched by the children.

My training program and school director have expressed the need to reserve the morning work period for language and math presentations and the afternoon cycle for cultural lessons. I have spent the last three years feeling rushed to squeeze in cultural lessons at the end of an already packed day. I observe the students unable to finish the research or extensions they begin in the afternoon and feeling upset when they are asked to stop working and clean up for the day.

In addition, the children are not making connections between their math and language work and the world in which they live. The second plane of development as described by Maria Montessori is one in which the six to twelve year-old child has a special sensitivity for the acquisition of culture. Montessori believed that if we failed to provide children with the opportunities their minds desired they would become bored and less likely to find answers to life's questions (Montessori, 2007a). Montessori's belief (as cited in Duffy and Duffy, 2002) was that the child's power of imagination could, "expand their circle of consciousness to the world" (p. 7-8). Reflecting upon the levels of engagement observed in the classroom during math and language time and cultural time, led me to seek a way to expand the engagement throughout the entire day.

Montessori's term Cosmic Education, is commonly referred to by Montessorians as; "the cultural subjects", but more simply described as a curriculum rich in history, geography, botany, biology, physics, astronomy, chemistry, art, music and peace studies. Duffy and Duffy (2002) describe an integrated curriculum as the core of a Montessori elementary classroom. A common term used in the traditional education setting is, "social studies." This term encompasses many of the Montessori "cultural" subjects and its purpose is to expand a child's world in order for them to become competent citizens in an evolving and interdependent world. Brewer (2006) explains the importance of history and historical comprehension, including chronological thinking, geography and understanding location, economics, citizenship and the roles and responsibilities of individuals as fundamental in any elementary curriculum. His claim that children as young as kindergarten should be exposed to these concepts, echoes Montessori's ideas of educating children in the second plane of development through cosmic education. Whatever name we use; cultural subjects, social studies, sciences, cosmic education, integrated studies, or otherwise, Montessori (2007a) believed that if we could present these subjects to the child in the right way, we could do more than just stimulate an interest in dinosaurs, rocks or plants. We could create "admiration and wonder" (p. 6) that would follow a child throughout his or her life.

Rasanova (2003) and Murray (2011) both discuss the natural motivation Montessori students have because of their ability to choose work based on their interests. They believe that what interests children, motivates children. If children are motivated to learn, they will learn.

As I reviewed the literature for this project I began to wonder if our school's struggle with low emergent reading scores were linked to the same problem of interest, motivation and lack of connections being formed. Our focus had always been on teaching the students the skills to read and write instead of teaching them the purpose of reading and writing. Wolf (2006) describes the importance of cosmic education in developing a child's life-long-love of reading and writing. Once a child has discovered something they want to learn more about, their desire to read and write will lead to an increase in the practice of reading and writing which will create a natural progression towards the mastery of these subjects.

Reviewing the research of traditional educators as well as Montessori educators uncovered similar findings; an integrated curriculum is fundamental in any elementary program. Both Brewer (2006) and Duffy and Duffy (2002) echo Montessori's idea of educating children in the second plane of development through cosmic education (2007a). Wolf (2006) and Johnson and Blair (2003) believe that there is an overemphasis on direct phonemic instruction and that reading, writing and language lessons should supplement the children's individual interests, not be the foundation of the curriculum.

Wolf (2006) and Johnson and Blair (2003) advocate for the importance of independent reading time over structured, teacher-directed reading lessons. They also agree that creating a schedule in which children are free to follow their reading and writing interests is time well spent. Montessori (2007a) believed a child should, "have absolute freedom of choice, and then he requires nothing but repeated experiences which will become increasingly marked by interest and serious attention, during his acquisition of some desired knowledge" (p. 5). Providing children with appropriate choices for

reading based on the cosmic curriculum along with the time to explore their interests will lead children to become disciplined and attached to subjects that hold meaning for them. In turn, this will create enhanced reading and writing skills in each child.

The question-What effect will giving cultural lessons at the beginning of the day have on Montessori lower elementary student, engagement and emergent reading scores? - guided this research. My theory is that by presenting the universe to the children first thing every morning, would get their excitement for learning started, creating a context to link math and language lessons to, thereby improving reading scores.

Research was conducted in my own lower elementary classroom at a charter Montessori school in a midsize-town in the western United States during the fall of 2013. Although the entire class participated in these lessons I chose to focus on ten specific students' perceptions, work samples and results. There were three third-grade students; one girl and two boys, one boy and the girl were new to Montessori. There were three second-graders, one girl and two boys, all previous Montessori students. There were four first-grade students, two girls and two boys, each with a year of half-day-Montessori kindergarten experience. Of these ten focus children two were reading significantly above grade level, two were reading at grade level, and the other eight were reading below grade level: one was three-years below, one two-years below and another one-year below, three other children were between three and six months below grade level as measured by the University of Utah reading assessment.

#### Description of Research Process

This action research project took place in fall 2013. Prioritizing cultural studies within my classroom started at parent orientation night, August 15, 2013. I began by

providing parents with a brief overview of Dr. Montessori's planes of development and the role the acquisition of culture plays in 6-9 year-olds' development. I explained and provided parents with general information about the cosmic curriculum and great stories.

I planned one full week of experience with each of the five *Montessori Great Stories*: The Birth of the Universe, Coming of Life, Coming of Man, Story of Numbers and Story of Language. The story presentations were followed up with creative writing prompts, art projects, discussions and additional extension activities. Storytelling began the first week of school and continued through the fifth week. Official cultural studies were begun August 26<sup>th</sup> and followed the Institute for Guided Studies (IGS) training program outlines (see Appendix A). The cultural schedule went as follows:

Monday-History  
 Tuesday-Botany  
 Wednesday-Geography  
 Thursday-Zoology  
 Friday- Physical science and Continent study of Africa

Each day I spent approximately 15-20 minutes giving a lesson from my training manuals by grade level, except on Friday, when instruction was delivered to the whole class. Students were then given individual follow-up assignments to demonstrate understanding through writing or other extension activities. However, I allowed for the individuals' interests to guide them. Recognizing the fact that not all students would be drawn to, or be engaged in, all lessons or subjects the exact same way.

Students arrived to school each day between 8am and 8:35am. This allowed them to begin work immediately. Students had the freedom to choose math, language, cultural studies or practical-life work. On days that I observed the class having a difficult time settling in, or we had important information regarding the daily schedule or other



activities, I would call them to a whole group meeting early. Most days I began giving individual lessons as students requested or that I had planned, based on my observations. The first small group lessons that I presented were by grade level, following the cultural schedule above. Specific topics for cultural lessons can be found in Appendix A.

Informal observations of children's behaviors, perceptions and reading capabilities began the day school started, August 19, 2013. From these informal observations I chose ten focus students who represented the general capabilities and make-up of the class. Data from four sources was then used to measure the effects of giving cultural presentations in the morning. These data collection sources included: (1) an observational checklist, (2) pre and post reading assessments, (3) student work samples, and (4) student conferencing.

The observational checklist was used to measure student engagement in cultural activities. Including; how often children were working on expanding a cultural lesson throughout the day, trips to the cultural shelves and the use of non-fiction books (see Appendix A). I divided the day into five, one-hour chunks of time in order to determine if there were specific times that students were more engaged. Data was coded using colored pencils and abbreviations. This data collection source was completed during seven consecutive weeks, beginning on September 16<sup>th</sup> and ending November 1<sup>st</sup>. To make data collection manageable both my assistant and I participated in observing and recording student engagement.

Our school reading specialists performed a DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) reading pretest on all students in the first weeks of September. "DIBELS are comprised of seven measures to function as indicators of phonemic

awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary” (Dynamic Measurement Group). Students who did not reach benchmark scores were given a progress monitoring assessment at the end of October to determine growth. Because DIBELS does not provide a grade level correlation of reading ability, our school also uses the University of Utah (U of U) reading assessment. I used the U of U assessment to show growth for the students who met benchmark on the DIBELS assessment.

Writing and other work samples were taken from students periodically throughout the project. Topics were both teacher and student initiated. Follow up to daily cultural lessons required that students included some type of writing or other demonstration of understanding. Samples taken from student-initiated projects ranged from charts, 3D projects, experiments or other individually motivated experiences. Writing samples were collected at the beginning and the end of the study in order to show growth in handwriting as well as writing expression. I asked for individual permission to copy student journals or took pictures of student work.

Conferencing with students was used to explore student perceptions of engagement in cultural lessons as well as their perceived interests in reading and writing. Interviews conducted at the beginning of the project, September 9<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>, gave insights into students’ favorite and least favorite cultural subjects. I included questions about reading and writing interests both in school and at home. I asked students about what they hoped to learn about as well as a question about how I could improve cultural lessons. Conferencing at the end of the study, October 28<sup>th</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup>, covered the same questions while also including questions about perceptions of growth in

reading and writing skills. Conferences were conducted with each of the ten focus students, privately and video recorded.

### Analysis of Data

This data analysis includes data from observational checklists, pre and post reading assessments, student writing samples and evaluation of student conferencing.

Exploring student perceptions through initial conferencing showed that nearly a third of the children did not know which was their most or least favorite cultural subject. These were all but one of the first grade students. Figure 1 shows that of the 10 students, two liked zoology, 2 liked history and 2 liked all subjects equally. Least favorite subjects were botany and geography. In addition, two students claimed that they did not have a least favorite subject because they liked them all. During post conferences it was clear that students solidified their opinions. Those who had claimed they did not have a favorite or did not know what their favorite was now held the firm belief that zoology was the most interesting for them and that their least favorite was history.

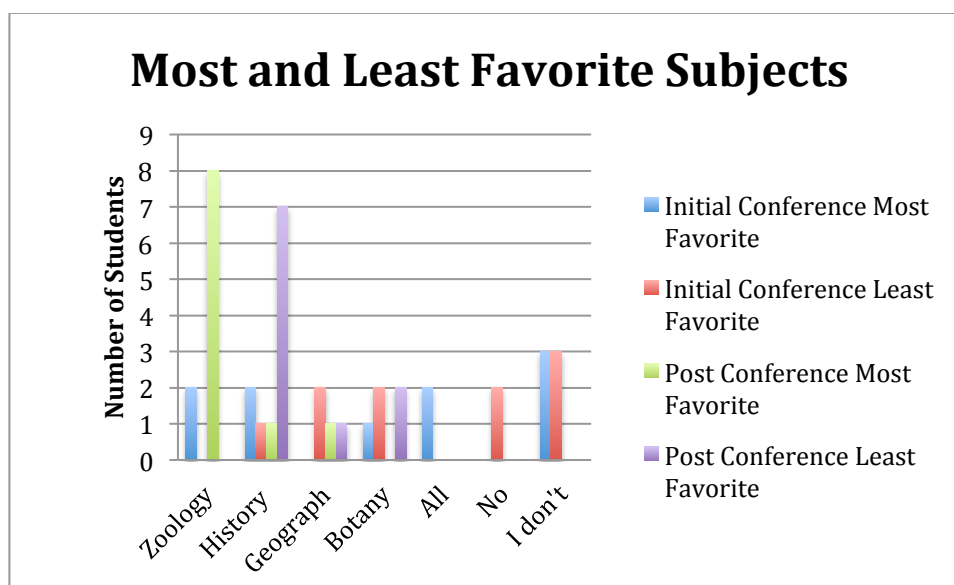


Figure 1. Most and least favorite cultural subjects according to student conferencing.

Figure 2 indicates that only 20% of the focus students claimed they did any reading or writing at home at the beginning of the study. These same two students also said they wrote at home. By the end of the seven-week study, all but one child said that they enjoyed reading at home and 50% said that they wrote at home for pleasure.

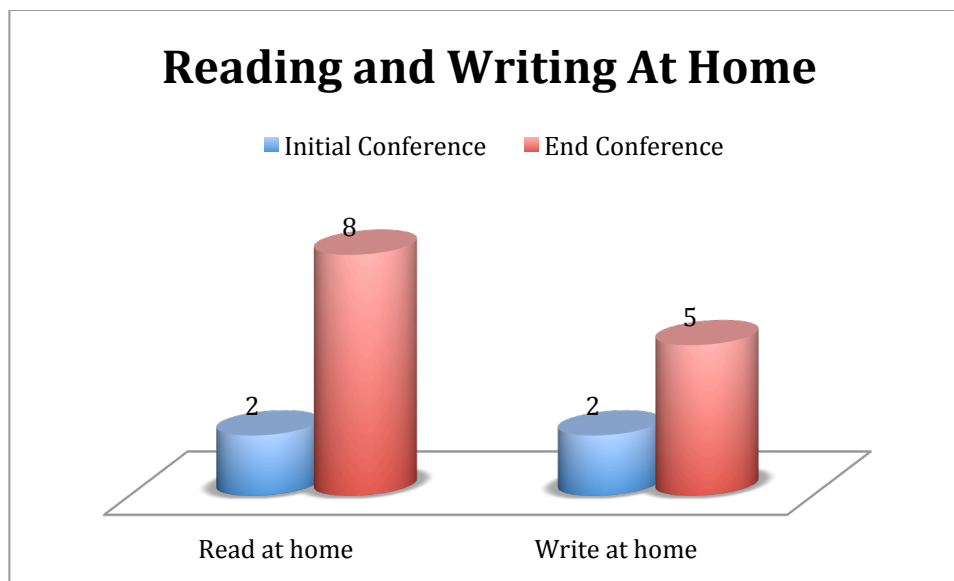


Figure 2. Number of students who read and write at home

During initial conferencing I asked students what they would like to learn about most. Figure 3 shows their responses. Fifty percent said they wanted to learn more about zoology.

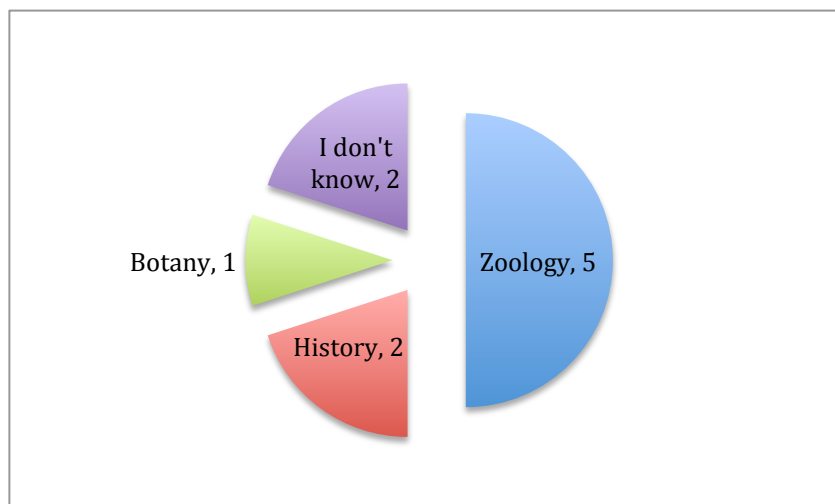


Figure 3. Desired learning

When I asked how I could improve cultural lessons, most children said, “I don’t know,” two said, “I like them just like they are” (student A & F), one said, “more art projects!” (student H), and another said “let’s eat more food!” (student E). When this same question was asked during post conferencing, student H said she would prefer doing cultural in the afternoon because then she could get her other works done. In fact, seven out of ten of the focus students said they would actually prefer cultural studies in the afternoon. Student A, B and C were the only ones who said they preferred morning lessons. An impromptu survey of the entire class showed that 14 of them wanted to return to afternoon lessons while only 9 said they wanted to continue doing them in the morning. Those who requested afternoon lessons stated that they did not like being interrupted during their math and language lessons to go to cultural lessons.

Data collected through the DIBELS reading assessment and University of Utah Reading assessment was analyzed. Figure 4 shows pretest scores regarding reading levels. Students A and E were significantly above grade level, while H and J were reading at benchmark levels. Students I, G and F were between two and six months below grade level. Student B was one-year below, Student D was two-years below and student C was three-years below. It is important to note that student C is on an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for both math and reading; is new to the school and will begin receiving special services in mid-October.

Post-tests showed that there was no significant measurable gain in reading ability for any of the students at the end of the seven weeks. The first grade students (G, H, I and J) were able to read approximately 15 more sight words but not enough to move them to the next reading level. Student F, a second-grader, still struggled with fluency. Student B,

a third-grader still had difficulty with accuracy. Student A and E maintained their significantly above grade-level standing.

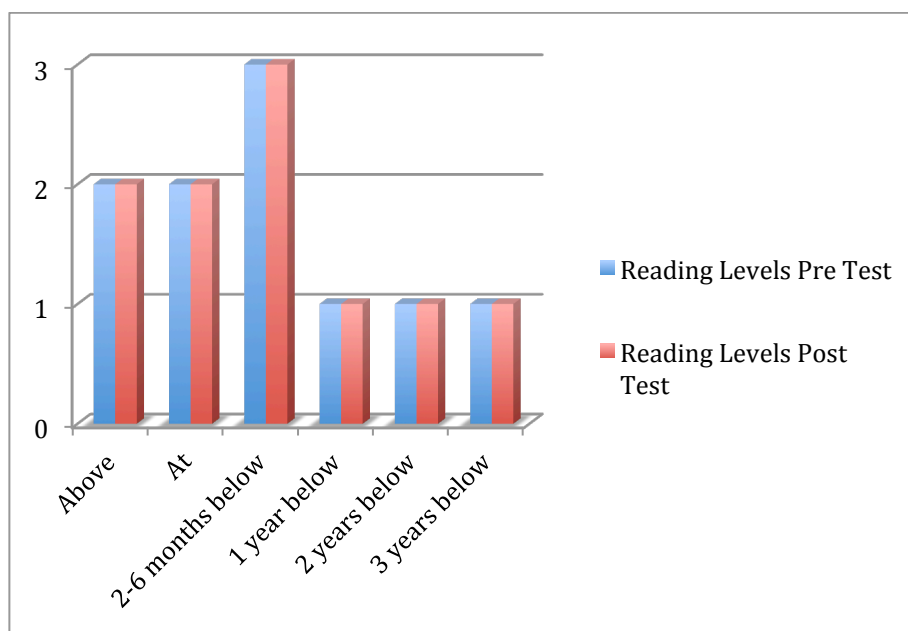


Figure 4. Number of students by reading level.

The prompt for the baseline writing sample was: “What is your favorite cultural subject and why?” Students were asked to write as much as they wanted to in regard of their interests and to use all the skills they had as far as punctuation, capitalization, etc. They were then given 20 minutes of silent writing time to complete the task. Student A, a third grader, wrote seven complete sentences using proper punctuation, with only one word (zoology) spelled incorrectly. Student F, a second grader, created a three-page booklet listing 14 animals she liked but spelled most basic words incorrectly using little or no correct capitalization or punctuation. Student G, a first grader simply copied the question from the board, word for word. Student I, a first grader, drew a picture of the roots of a plant but used no words. I used a writing rubric (found in Appendix C) to

evaluate writing samples. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of writing concepts by student before and after the project completion. The post-test writing prompt was “What have you enjoyed learning about most since school began?” Scores showed that writing skills had increased in all students except G and I (both first-graders). Student G, again copied the prompt from the board and student I drew a picture with no words. Neither had improved handwriting or drawing skills. The students scored a zero on the writing rubric. Student B’s handwriting had improved as well as her sentence structure. Student F wrote two complete sentences with only a three spelling errors.

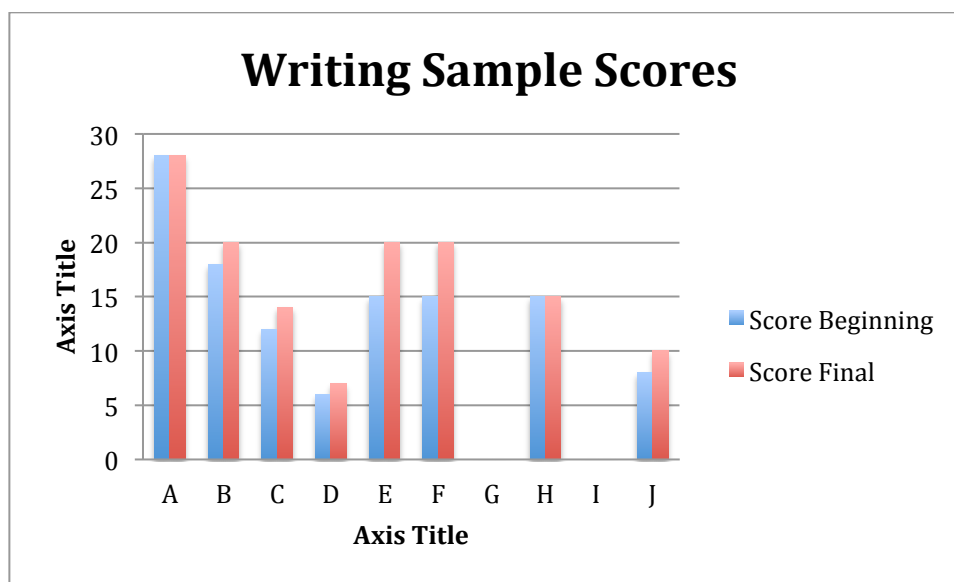


Figure 5. Scores from writing rubric pre and post implementation.

The observational checklists found in Appendix B, were used to see which work students were most drawn to. Figures 6, 7 and 8 present the data through extension type, content type, and day of the week. Figure 6 shows students preferred the shelf work to reading and writing during the initial weeks. The most popular shelf works were the geography maps; which were used daily by many of the same children. Other favorite works were a food chain nesting box and a magnetic calendar. During the third week, the

use of geography maps and other shelf work diminished. Reading and writing were more prevalent.

Due to the nature of the Montessori philosophy there were some days in which I was unable to stick to the planned schedule of presenting cultural lessons. If the majority of the class was engaged in individual work or a group project I did not interrupt their learning to give the cultural lesson. On these days student A, would ask specifically when the cultural lesson would be taught or plead that it be taught immediately. Some days I was able to oblige his requests, other days I told him that it would have to wait until later. Student H routinely asked not to be included in the cultural lesson, despite the time of day. She insisted that she get her “real works” done. Even after multiple attempts of explaining that cultural *was* a *real* work, she still resisted. Some days I required she join, other days I allowed her to continue her other work.

Through these evaluations I decided to implement a visible schedule for the cultural lessons beginning in week four. Each day I would display the approximate time each level would receive their cultural lesson. I also displayed the time in which I would be available for individual lessons or checking work. This helped to keep us all accountable and on track.

Week five ran smoother with the continued implementation of a visible schedule, although I did not see an increase in cultural extensions in any subject area or type. Students B, C, G, H, I and J never chose to extend their cultural lessons through reading, writing or shelf-work.

Parent teacher conferences took place during week six. This was a three-day week with three early-release days. Due to the needed prep time for these student-led



conferences we did not have official cultural lessons. Wednesday, after observing that cultural extensions had decreased dramatically the previous two days, I suggested that the students choose at least two cultural works for their morning work. I did this in order to see what work children would be drawn to. Only students B, I and J took advantage of the opportunity. They all chose to read or write about zoology.

Although I posted the daily schedule and stuck to the planned group lessons, there was a further decline in the amount of extensions during week seven. The only shelfwork used were the geography puzzle maps and they were used only by student D. Student A and E chose to read and write about animals, but did not extend the specific topics (platyhelminthes and the human eye) our lessons had covered.

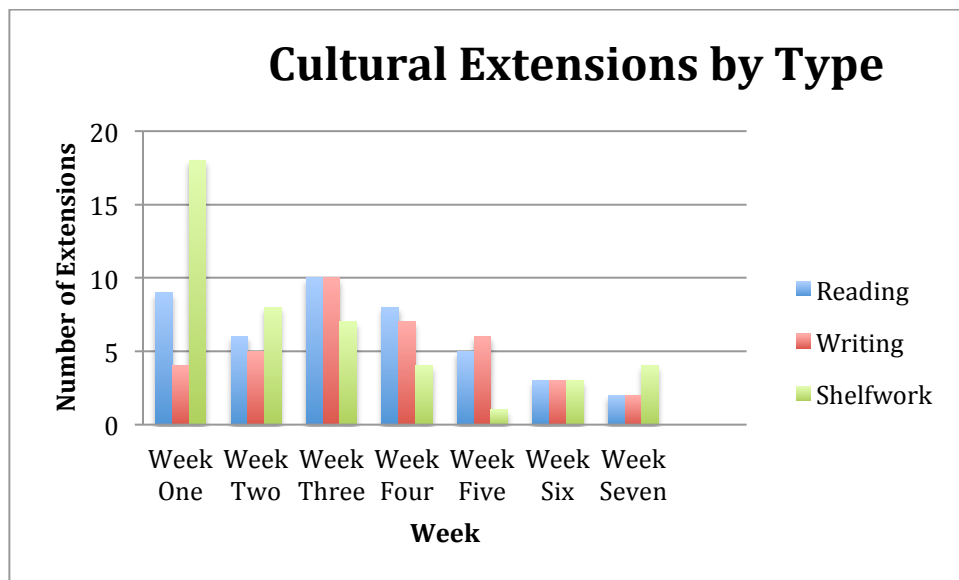


Figure 6. Cultural extensions by type throughout the seven-week period.

Analysis of the observational data also showed that geography was a favorite subject during the initial weeks, as seen in Figure 7. While the frequency of student-selected extensions, were less in the second week, zoology was still the second most extended subject. Week three shows that geography was the most selected subject. Week

four was balanced with equal amounts of extensions in history, geography and zoology.

Week five and week six were both dominated by zoology expansion. Week three through seven show that none of the focus students chose to extend their interests in botany.

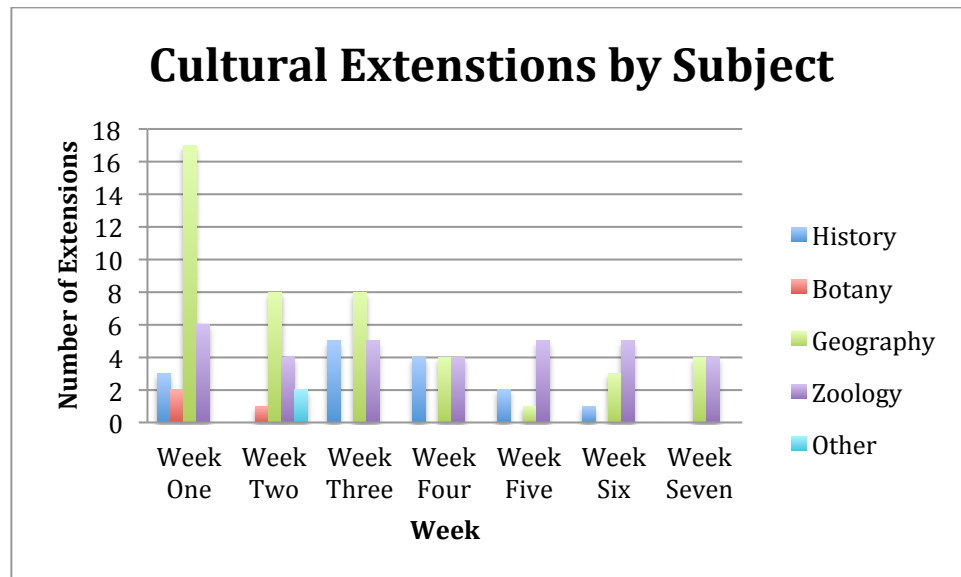


Figure 7. Cultural extensions by subject throughout the seven-week period.

Figure 8 shows the specific days of the week the students participated in extension lessons. Monday was the most active day during the first week and Tuesday was the most active day of the second week of the project. During the third week Monday was the most active day, however there was a significant decrease in activity from the first two weeks. Activity continued to decrease through week four and five, with a slight increase in activity on Wednesday of the sixth week due to the suggestion of two cultural works being done as a morning work. There was no activity on Thursday or Friday because of the schools' Fall break. During the seventh week of the study Tuesday was the most active day with four extensions. The other days included only one extension, all by student D and the use of geography maps.

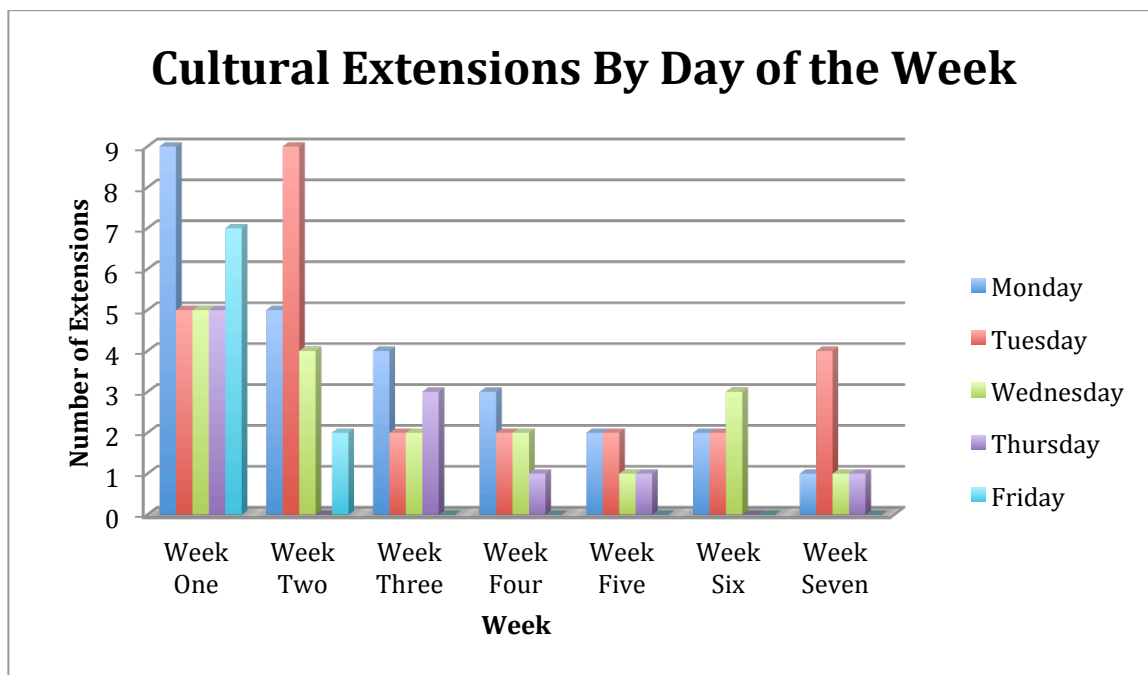


Figure 8. Average number of extensions each day of the week throughout the seven-week period.

During the initial weeks, students I and J regularly chose to extend their cultural learning through writing. In fact these students would often write about the subject covered that morning. For example, Monday they wrote about history, Tuesday they wrote about Botany and so on. Student D regularly did geography shelf work, specifically the puzzle maps. Student A chose to read and write about geography and history but seldom zoology and never botany. Student F extended her learning only in the area of zoology. Student E became engaged through reading and writing about zoology but his research methods were limited to the computer and he rarely chose a non-fiction book. Student B, C, G and H participated in group cultural lessons but seldom extended their learning during the first two weeks and chose instead, to focus on math and language works throughout the day. Throughout the project student D did at least one geography

puzzle map each day. Occasionally he did three or four. Student E's focus was Zoology and student A continued to prefer history and zoology. At no point during the seven-week study did a student choose to use three-part-cards or other card-like laminated material to extend his or her learning.

Although there was a severe decline in student-chosen extension activities throughout the seven-week study, I did notice an increase in the number of students attending the cultural lessons. Many students would choose to leave their other work to join one of the other grade level's cultural lessons. Student F, C, A and E regularly attended each grade levels' cultural lesson, daily. There was more questioning and more excitement during the seventh week's lessons than any of the previous weeks. During this week I used my iPad to show videos about the earth's atmospheric temperatures, platyhelminthes, and the pre-Cambrian time period. Also, I did not stick to the suggested outline in botany due to my observations of the children and their excitement regarding the fall season. All children were thoroughly engaged in measuring and exploring the pumpkin that I brought into the classroom.

In conclusion, from the data gathered and presented here I have determined that giving cultural lessons at the beginning of the day did not affect students' engagement or choices to expand their cultural experiences throughout the day. They did however become more involved during the teacher-directed lessons. They went from being passive learners to active learners. Although there was no measureable increase in student reading scores by my attempts at integrating the curriculum, the majority of the focus students' writing skills did increase. More children said they enjoyed reading and writing at home at the end of the study compared to the beginning of the study although most

claimed to still do more reading of fiction than non-fiction. They also perceived themselves to be better readers and writers, with more knowledge of the content than prior to the study. More connections were made across subjects than before and students enjoyed being a part of my learning.

### Action Plan

Montessori describes the sensitive period for the six to nine year-old child as the need for the acquisition of culture. Children this age are curious about the world around them and want to know about their place in it. This seven-week study done in my classroom shows that although students' reading scores did not significantly improve, their perceived engagement and learning did. The number of students attending cultural lessons, showing a high level of engagement through questioning and discussions did increase.

As the lower elementary child moves from the concrete to abstract it is our job to provide them with the experiences their minds desire. This transition from concrete to abstract may explain why there was very little use of manipulatives and more use of books and writing. The improved writing scores verify Montessorians observations that writing comes before reading. If we treat each cultural lesson as a key lesson, full of excitement and imagination, then we can spark an interest for children to find their own understanding of the world around them guided by their interests. Moving forward it is important to understand that some children will prefer to do cultural lessons and extensions in the morning and others in the afternoon. Some will extend their learning in

only one subject-area, some will be engaged only for the lesson. Our job is to provide the information and allow the children to use it as they need.

While having a curriculum outline is essential in the early years of teaching it is also important to understand that the ultimate goal for an experienced guide is to be able to observe the children's present interests and use the sequence and materials to facilitate their contextual interests in the present. For example, this year at Halloween, skeletons fascinated the children. Covering the skeletal system was not scheduled until February. However, I jumped at the chance to engage students in their interests and presented the skeletal work during this time.

Another example of integrating interests through the cosmic curriculum is when a child brought in a self-initiated project on teeth. The children were immediately engaged in his work and wanted to learn more. I obliged and changed the topic from the skeletal system to the teeth. Although official data collection for this project had ended prior to these observations I saw student engagement and their desire to write and read increase. I believe that by implementing these lessons at a time when I saw the need I was able to capitalize on their intrinsic interests rather than their expected interests. Thus, following the child through the cosmic curriculum and giving them further knowledge about the world immediately around them.

If a teacher is organized and prepared for future lessons then it is easier to access the materials for students' immediate needs. Locating the skeletal and tooth lessons took a little time. However, the excitement that occurred because of these observed interests, more than made up for the five or ten minutes of lost instructional time.

Providing a visible daily schedule helps children know what to expect and allows them time to plan their work cycle accordingly. It also keeps the teacher accountable and on track. Allowing children to attend or not to attend the cultural lessons provides children ownership of their learning. If as teachers we treat each cultural lesson as a special event rather than mere content to be covered we will gain their attention, appreciation and interest. This will ultimately lead to self-confidence, which will lead to better academic skills.

As I continue my quest to integrate the cultural curriculum I realize that it is less about the time of day the lesson is presented, but more about *how* the lesson is presented. I will continue to focus more on the specific lesson rather than the follow-up work or the extensions. I will follow my observations regarding the children's scheduling and individual interests. I will not attempt to dictate when a child chooses to do math, language or cultural studies. I will continue to seek every opportunity to incorporate math, language, grammar, reading and writing skills into cultural lessons.

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## Appendix A Curriculum Map

| Week Of   | Week 1-                                     | Week2-                                  | Week 3-   | Week 4-                         | Week 5-                         | Week 6 | Week 7-                  |
|-----------|---|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| History   | Daily Time Line                             | Building a Timeline for a Year          | Body Measurement/Calendar<br>The Year and its Parts | Birthday Beads                  | Story of a Lifetime             |        | Timeline of My Life      |
|           | Cohesion/ Forces of Attraction Exp. 3 and 4 | Centrifugal, Centripetal Force Exp./5-8 | Friction Exp. 9                                     | Equilibrium Exp. 10             | Gravity/ Inertia Exp. 11 and 12 |        | Galaxies                 |
|           | Rope Timeline                               | Labeling the Eras                       | Introduction to the Timeline of Life                | Timeline of Life Presentation 2 | Pre-Cambrian                    |        | Cambrian Period          |
| Geography | Longitude lines                             | Hemispheres (N & S)                     | Hemispheres (E & W)                                 | Zones                           | Globe Booklet                   |        | Earth Extensions         |
|           | Earth's crust: creative drawing             | tectonic plates: map                    | Tectonic plates model                               | tectonic plates: booklet        | Earth Movements: folding        |        | Earth movement : folding |
|           | Sun: Seasons and create a sundial           | Earth's atmosphere: layers              | Earth 's atmosphere: density                        | Earth's atmosphere : usefulness | Weather layers                  |        | weather define           |
| Botany    | Importance of plants C                      | Importance of plants D&E                | Plants through the seasons                          | Uses of plants                  | Uses of Plants/ Water           |        | Food Chains              |
|           | venation of a leaf                          | blade simple/compound                   | Forms set A   | Forms Set A cont'd w/art        | Forms Set B                     |        | Forms Set B              |
|           | Kinds of Flowers                            | (cont.) Solitary                        | (cont.) Inflorescence                               | Calyx/Sepal                     | Types of Calyx                  |        | (cont.) Gamosepalous     |
| Zoology   | essential characteristics of vert.          | my vertebrate booklet                   | comparisons between classes of vert.                | Fish-Intro                      | Fish-                           |        | Fish                     |
|           | nutrition                                   | exercise                                | grooming  | eye - external/internal         | Experiments sense of sight      |        | Parts of the ear         |
|           | Intro to Cnidarian                          | cnidarian - jellyfish                   | cnidarian jellyfish                                 | Cnidarian - hydra               | Intro Platyhelminthes           |        | Intro flatworms          |

## Appendix B Expanding Cultural Experiences Checklist

STUDENTS EXPANDING CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Week Of September 9

|   | 8:15-9:00 | 9:00-10:00 | 10:00-11:00 | 12:30-1:30 | 1:30-2:30 |
|---|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| A | GS GS     | HR         | RH RH       |            | RZ        |
| B |           |            |             |            | WG        |
| C |           |            | GS          |            |           |
| D | GS GS GS  | GS GS GS   | GS          | GS GS      |           |
| E | RZ RH     |            |             | RZ         | RZ        |
| F | WZ RZ     |            |             |            |           |
| G |           | BS         |             |            |           |
| H |           |            |             |            | BS        |
| I | WB        | WZ         |             | RH         |           |
| J | GS GS     | GS GS      |             |            |           |

R-Reading  
W-Writing  
S-Shelf Work

H-History  
B-Botany

Z-Zoology  
G-Geography  
O-Other

Blue-Monday Red-Tuesday  
Orange-Wednesday Green-Thursday  
Purple-Friday

### Appendix C Writing Rubric

|                         | <b>4<br/>Secure</b>   | <b>3<br/>Developing</b>   | <b>2<br/>Needs<br/>Improvement<br/>Plus</b>  | <b>1<br/>Needs<br/>Improvement</b>   |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Capitalization</b>   | Each sentence starts with a capital letter.   | Capitalization was present in most sentences.   | There were many capitalization errors.   | Capitalization is not present.   |
| <b>Punctuation</b>      | Each sentence ends with a punctuation mark.   | Punctuation was present in most sentences.  | There were many punctuation errors.  | Punctuation was not present.   |
| <b>Topic</b>            | The entire writing piece stays on topic and paints a clear picture.   | The writing piece wanders off topic, but the reader can still understand the topic.                     | Some of the writing piece is on topic.   | The writing piece is not on topic.   |
| <b>Details</b>          | The writing piece contains many (6+) details and/or descriptions that show the writer used their imagination. | The writing piece contains some (4-5) creative details that show the writer has used their imagination. | The writing piece contains few (2-3) creative details that show the writer used their imagination. | The writing piece contains 1 or fewer details or repeats the same idea multiple times. |
| <b>Sentence Fluency</b> | The writer uses complete sentence that are logically organized.   | Most of the sentences are complete and logically organized.   | Some of the sentences are complete, most lack organization.  | Sentences are incomplete and/or unorganized.   |
| <b>Spelling</b>         | The student spells all age appropriate words correctly. (word wall, word book, word families)                 | The student spells most age appropriate words correctly. (word wall, word book, word families)          | The student spells very few words correctly. (word wall, word book, word families)                 | Most words are misspelled.   |
| <b>Neatness</b>         | The writing piece is readable, clean, and has appropriate spacing.  | Most of the writing piece is neat, clean and has appropriate spacing.                                   | The writing piece is difficult to read and the student doesn't use appropriate spacing.            |  |

