

Stories from Russian children's hearts: Using the International Educational Initiatives K-12 Global Curriculum

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In 1992, a unique, modular, globally-visioned, content-based English immersion curriculum was developed for a new school in Russia that included and stressed the integration of knowledge, skills, moral training and the ethic of service.

As the students in this new program were all Russian students, with little or no knowledge of English, there were many challenges. And yet, as the children's own words and stories will show, after exposure to the curriculum for just a few months, the students demonstrated accelerated progress in the use of evocative language. Their evaluation results showed them to be at or above grade level in all subjects, whether taught in English or Russian, by the end of the school year. After seven years of study under this curriculum, every member of the first graduating class in 1999 was accepted into the university of their choice whether in America, Russia, Australia, the U.K., or Japan.

ロシアの子供達の心からの話し-国際教育推進K-12(幼稚園と高校までの12年)を用いて

概要: 1992年にユニークな、ユニットごとに分かれた、グローバル視点のカリキュラムがロシアの新しい学校で開発されました。知識、技能、道徳のトレーニング、そして社会貢献の統合に重点を置く事を含んだ英語漬けの科目のカリキュラムです。このプログラムの生徒は全てロシアの学生で英語の知識が少ししか無いか又は全く無く、沢山の挑戦がありました。それでも子供達は自分達自身の言葉を使い、話しをして、このカリキュラムを始めて数ヶ月後、生徒達は自分の考えや意見を上手に表わすことに目覚ましい上達をして見せました。年度末には評価の結果は全ての科目において、英語で教えられたかロシア語で教えられたかに関わらず、彼らの本来のレベルと同等かもしくはそれ以上のレベルである事を表わしました。このカリキュラムでの7年間の学習で1999年の最初の卒業生の生徒達はアメリカ、ロシア、イギリス、日本などの希望大学に全員が入学出来ました。

In 1992, the authors began developing a distinctive, integrated content-based immersion curriculum for a newly formed international school in Sakhalin, Russia. The curriculum we designed was modular in nature (Johnson, J. and Higgins, M., 1995). However, our modular concept is unique in that it goes beyond the study of just one topic, and is unified in all its essential aspects. Further, it includes and stresses the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes (spiritual development), moral training, and the ethic of service.

In this curriculum, subjects are not studied in exclusive environments but, rather, are taught so that students see the relationships among the disciplines. In this way, knowledge and skills are reinforced in all classes and students are able to construct a 'normal' view of the world where events, experiences, and knowledge are interrelated. Another unique aspect of our modular concept is that the modules are written in the format of student outcomes and instructional objectives, which are based on the academic and spiritual (affective) goals of the curriculum. These learner outcomes are broad enough in scope to allow teachers to write objectives that are more specific, that are appropriate for the learning levels and needs of their students, or, including objectives necessary for meeting any special school or ministry of education requirements.

As mentioned above, the students in this new program were all Russian students, with little or no knowledge of English. In addition, creating a stable educational environment in a politically and economically chaotic time in Russia's history provided us with many challenges, both educational and otherwise, and thus, many stories that

developed and unfolded over time. And yet, as the children's own words and stories will show, after exposure to the curriculum for just a few months, the students demonstrated accelerated progress in the development and use of evocative language. One technique used as part of the on-going process evaluations was the writing of short stories by the students in 1993 (third and fifth graders at that time) and, for the sixth graders, statements of what they had learned over the year in their moral education classes. These pop-assignments, done in-class without preparation, revealed both rich and evocative language development and deep emotions that had not been expressed even in their native language. This paper presents the background to the curriculum, the results of the testing, and the stories the students wrote.

YSIS and the IEI Global Immersion Curriculum

The first English language International School in Russia, the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk International School (YSIS), opened as a cooperative of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Gymnasium under the State Pedagogical Institute in September of 1992. The project had been approved by the regional education authorities one year earlier, and was funded through modest tuition payments by the students, with salaries and operational expenses paid from the city educational budget.

YSIS was established at the request of educators in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk who desired to give local children a bilingual (Russian/English) education that would enable them to realize their potential and prepare them to think and act locally, nationally and globally, contributing to the betterment of humanity. Recognizing the need for education that was more than intellectual, the Russian educators

specifically requested a curriculum that would enable students to comprehend the spiritual (non-material) aspect of their existence and their connection to the rest of the world and its peoples. At the same time, the Russian parents and educators wanted a curriculum that would employ high academic and moral standards within an English language medium.

YSIS began the first year (1992-1993) with two classes of 25 students each of fifth graders, the beginning of Russian secondary school. The second year saw an expansion of two classes each of third grade and sixth grade. Each year after saw the expansion of one grade level upward. Fourth grade is normally skipped in most Russian schools as K-3 forms the elementary school program and 5-11 forms the secondary programs.

Three foreign teachers were hired to assist the two bilingual Russian teachers for the 1992 school year. However, only one foreign teacher was able to stay for the entire year and the material circumstances were quite difficult. For 1993, we were able to hire five foreign teachers from America, Canada, Australia, and Ecuador to support the Russian staff of two bilingual Russian teachers, five monolingual Russian teachers, and three bilingual classroom aides. However, by 1995, there were no longer any foreign teachers and the entire staff was composed of Russians.

The I.E.I. Curriculum as employed at YSIS, covered (and exceeded) all the academic requirements of the Russian Ministry of Education. The principal medium of instruction and communication throughout the entire school day was English. The goals of the curriculum were to 1) establish and help students achieve high academic and moral standards,

2) help students comprehend the fact that all human beings are members of one family—the human family—so that they may actively work towards achieving world peace and unity, and 3) instill in students the conviction that service to humanity and protection of our environment are the responsibilities of every individual. The realization of these goals requires an education that focuses on individual student development, students' relationships with their immediate environments, and the role of students as world citizens, in addition to educating the intellect.

The academic foundation upon which the curriculum was developed was Social Studies. In other words, the history of human development is the general background for the developmental study of language arts, mathematics, sciences, fine arts, moral education and other subjects. All subjects are taught in harmony with each other and form a universal perspective—one organic unity. For example, history is not taught as a series of events, but rather as a sequence of human relationships in which the whole of civilization is reorganized to advance humanity's spiritual, mental, and physical capacities toward maturity. The social, economic, political and religious evolutionary processes that the human race has experienced in arriving at its current maturity are studied to learn how the past achievements have contributed to the present, to learn from past mistakes, and to acquire a consciousness of the unity and continuity of the human race.

Since service was one of the main foundational areas, it formed the basis of how the school and the curriculum were organized. First, teachers made the students responsible for cleaning their own classrooms. Soon, they found it normal

to want to have a clean school, inside and out, regardless of “whose classroom or space” it was. In addition, by forming peer-tutoring teams or small learning groups, they learned the importance of assisting each other in the learning processes.

In looking at the use of the curriculum’s ability to assist in the learning of English, at the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk International School (YSIS), except for Russian Language Arts, Labor Arts, Physics, Physical Education and other Foreign Language classes, all other classes were taught in English. This method enabled students to communicate and study in English all day, thereby, acquiring and using various “sets” of vocabulary in natural situations (e.g. the teacher and students, and student-to-student interaction, in the classroom, on the playground, in the cafeteria, and so on).

Studies by Cantoni-Harvey (1987), Brinton (1989), Widdowson (1983), and others have shown that: performance levels are higher when students believe that the information they are learning is relevant to their present and/or future needs. The YSIS Immersion Curriculum and its outgrowth, the I.E.I. K-12 Global Curriculum Guide (Johnson, J. et al, 1999), reflect these findings quite well.

Content-based learning activities were designed to give students opportunities to use newly acquired linguistic knowledge in concrete situations related to the content being studied. The integrated-modular design of the curriculum made it possible for teachers to help students transfer both their academic and linguistic knowledge to different content areas, thereby, simultaneously expanding and deepening their overall education. Figure one illustrates how knowledge and language are related through a concept. The arrows show

that language usage is reinforced across content areas. There is virtually no separation between subject matter acquisition and language learning in the curriculum.

In addition to specific moral education classes, which dealt with the historical roles and processes of religion and their cultural outcomes, and the planning and performance of school, home and community service projects, moral education and the development of universal human virtues, what some call the education of the heart, were woven into all aspects of the curriculum. Group consultation time was a part of the weekly schedule and was closely related to moral education. In consultation periods, students planned activities, made and discussed class rules and behavior, discussed and solved problems, and took care of other concerns of the “community” (class). Consultation helps children develop their communication skills, sensitivity to others, and leadership and “followership” skills. It gives them an opportunity to actively participate in and have some control over their learning process and environment. It helps them develop a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others and for their own actions.

Evaluations and the children's stories

In addition to the teacher generated weekly quizzes in vocabulary, language usage and academic content, there were evaluations of both student progress and the accountability of the materials presented to the students to teach to the objectives. Evaluations were both process (on-going) and terminal. A summary of the main student evaluations made during the 1993 school year at YSIS covering English vocabulary, grammar, composition

and writing ability showed that by the end of the year the students were reading and writing very nearly at or above U.S. grade level in spite of the fact that when they entered the program they had virtually no English. Russian Language Arts, Physical Education, and Manual Arts were evaluated separately, but all students were found to be at or above average for their grade level. In addition, math and art concepts, and academic content in Geography, Social Studies, History, Moral Education, Biology, Botany were evaluated and the results showed the students, again, at or above grade level in all subjects by the end of 1994, in spite of the fact that there were several 'behaviorally challenged' children in the program, all of the children still were nearly at or above grade level by the end of the year, and not only in English content areas. They were also evaluated by the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Pedagogical Institute and the local School Board in Russian on subject or content areas that they did not cover in either language with the same result: at or above grade level. This continued to be true up to and through the year 2000, with the students at YSIS receiving awards and honors throughout the Russian Far East for their academic and linguistic achievements (Johnson & Higgins, 2000).

The third grade received 15 hours per week of English subjects (Language Arts, Fine Arts, Science, Math and Moral Education) and 15 hours per week of subjects in Russian (Russian Language Arts, Math, Physical Education). They began the year (1993-1994) with only one child who had memorized the English alphabet out of the 62 students and none could identify the entire alphabet in written form. The year-end evaluation showed that they were reading and

writing at the 70% level of American second grade English; in other words, at the 2.7 grade level. The fifth grade received 22 hours of English subjects per week (English, Math, Social Studies, Moral Education, Music and Science) and 14 hours per week of Russian subjects (Math, Physical Education, Manual Arts and Russian Language Arts).

The entry level of the fifth grade was similar to but slightly higher than the third grade: only three students out of 61 could read the alphabet, seven could recite it by heart, and 23 knew at least two English phrases ("Hello, my name is...", "Good morning"). At the year-end evaluation, the averages showed that they were reading and writing at the American fourth grade English level (4.6).

The sixth grade students had all had one year of English conversation (eight hours per week), science in English (two hrs/week), and music in English (two hrs/week). Although the first year was somewhat disrupted by the loss of their native English teacher for several months and the fact that the curriculum was not followed very carefully, they were reading and writing at the American grade two level at the beginning of the second year, and their conversational ability was considered "lower intermediate." In 1993-1994 they had 26 hrs/week of English subjects (English, math, science, moral education, social studies, music) and 14 hours of Russian subjects (Russian, math, physical education, manual arts). The final year-end evaluation, given after 10 months of study at this pace, showed them reading and writing at the 5.7 American English grade level, and their math skills, which had been below grade level at the end of the 1992 school year, were now above grade level.

The stories

In addition to these kinds of evaluations, the children were given creative writing assignments to check their writing ability, cohesive thinking ability, the ability to express abstract concepts, syntax and grammar, and language development. The following examples were the result of unscheduled “pop” classroom assignments given the students of the third grade and the fifth grade during the fifth month of instruction.

The assignment: write a story using at least five sentences *without* using a dictionary.

Third grade stories

1. I am a girl by V.

My name is Vera. I am a girl. The girl come, go. I go sing. She go study. I study very good. The girl Vera is very nice. Bad Monday. Sorry.

2. I and Brut -- Story by K.

I have a dog. His name is Brut. He is one year old. He is very funny. His favorite business is eating and sleeping. The best food for this guy is raw meat. Brut is very brave. I very like my dog.

3. The House by N. I.

In my house I have room, sofa, bookshelf, telly, brother, and dog and cat. Mama loves sister, brother, father. In room I have dog. The girl loves Father, and Mama. The girl sing very good to Mama, Father, sister, brother. Mama love me?

(This girl's mother often told both the child and anyone who would listen that she was an unwanted and unexpected child.)

4. Boy and a dog by J. S.

A boy goes to school, and takes a dog. This dog was little. “What is your name, dog?” “Mikey.” and the boy goes to school. “No, do not go to school.” says the dog. “No, I must go to school.” “Chow” says the boy. “Chow” says the dog. Finish

Fifth grade stories

1. My Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk by K. A.

I live in yuzhno-sakhalinsk. The yuzhno-sakhalinsk is in sakhalin island. There is a Lenin square in centre of the town. There is a Victory square in yuhzno-sakhalinsk. The dramatic theatre is in Communist street. There is beautiful green park is in yuzhno-sakhalinsk. There are many hospitals in town.

2. Big Snow by K. S.

In clouds there are much drops of water. When it is cold they freeze and make sharp icy needles. Snowfall covers the earth. Then big snow make the big water.

3. White Snow by A. B.

Long time ago following case occur in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk. It was snow. IT WAS SNOW. Snow-

-it was in the morning, in the day-time, in the night. And next morning there were huge snow hills. Children said “May I go out?” They drive the sleds and skis. Long silvery moonbeams lay across the snow. It sparkled like fine diamond dust. It snows in winter.

4. Kill for Dog by I. K.

What was here a dog? Boy received two. Mother say you fool, and beat him with stick, and put in to the corner. Next day again get two and mother him kill. (Note: this boy often came to school with bruises and cuts from being beaten at home, but would never talk about it even to the Russian teachers, though we all tried to help him.)

Sixth grade stories

The following short essays were taken at random from the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk International School 1993 sixth grade final evaluations, as written by the students — without correcting errors — after two years of English, though it should be remembered that these students began this year reading and writing at the U.S. second grade level. The curriculum, as written, has values and virtues woven throughout all subject areas, but we also included a special Moral Education class.

The Moral Education classes consisted of three elements. The first element was the learning and studying of virtues that cut across all cultural barriers and encouraged as the essence of the ideals that characterize outstanding human beings. The second was a component centered on teaching

general religious history, and the substance of the spiritual teachings of all of the major world religions. The prayers from the various Holy Books and scriptures of each of the religions were shared with the students so that they could better see and understand how different people expressed their spiritual beliefs. This element was a means of understanding the important role religion has played in the development of civilizations and cultures throughout history. The last element was concerned with service to the school and community.

(Directions: Using your best English, write a paragraph describing the most important thing you learned in moral education and why this will help you in your life.)

1. I think that the most important things which we learned in moral are different teachings of Muhammed, Moses and others for example worship one God, respect women, be kind to every one an to animals, love your nabours and enemy and so on. These teachings can help all people If man respect women and all people love every one. There will be no wars at all and people will live in peace.

2. I like to learn about mesengers of God. I knew much interesting things about them. On the moral classes we learned prayers and every night before I go to bed I pray and God helps me. Moral class help me to understand my mistakes and learn how to live in right way. At home I teach my family about this and I think our thing became better.

3. I think that the most important things for me were the prayers. Because when I call God by these prayers, God helps me and I feel that the stone falls down on the ground from my back. And I like to listen lives of many mesengers of God and about their teachings. Because I want to be like these people who observed.

4. In moral we learned many interesting things. But when we began to learn about the people of the world and about different contries this lesson became a very important for me, because before this time I think that only people is clever and good who have white skine, but now I know that it's not true and that I was wrong and I'm shoer that this thing is very important in my life...

Results

As can be seen from these stories and essays, while there is still room for improvement in the area of grammar and spelling, the conceptual thinking, the imagery invoked, and the ability to generalize their thinking and explain their thoughts or experience in a logical and coherent manner is rather impressive. Remember that the short stories were written by students with only five months of exposure to English, and that when the sixth graders started the school year, they were reading and writing at the U.S. second grade level.

It is believed that it was the combination of our unique curriculum and the additional Moral Education classes that were the main contributing factors for this qualitative

development in thinking and feeling among the students.

In June 1999, YSIS graduated its first class. Of the 19 graduates, 18 were from the original 44 students. One student entered in the eighth grade. Members of this graduating class took the top 12 of 15 places in the English Olympics for all of Sakhalin, and the top four places out of five for the Far East English Olympics in 1998 and 1999. In addition, one student was selected by the U.S. Presidential commission for Educational Honors to receive a full four-year scholarship to Michigan State University to study International Relations. She also passed the Michigan Test For English with a near perfect score. . . one of the highest ever made. Every student was admitted to the university of her or his choice in Russia, the US, Canada, Australia, the U.K., or Japan. After a thorough investigation of the school project, the Federal Ministry of Education awarded the curriculum the First Prize for Educational Innovation for all of Russia in 1999.

Conclusion: The rest of the story

The expanded and improved I.E.I curriculum has been adapted and used at schools in Japan, Tonga, the U.S.A., and other countries. It has been translated into Chinese and indications are that one or more educational programs will be started using the curriculum. It is also being adapted for use in rural education projects in Malaysia. In each of these environments, the children will have stories to tell, stories that express their innermost feelings and hopes as well as their understanding of the world in which they live. We hope to be able to gather and share these stories with others, so that each child's heart can be known and their voices heard.

Michael Higgins, Ph.D., is a full professor at Yamaguchi University, Japan. He has lived in Japan for 28 years. As a founding member of International Educational Initiatives, Inc. (IEI) and the Director of Education and Training for this Not-for-Profit organization, he lived in Russia for nearly 1 year to assist the development of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk International School, and has traveled to many other countries to conduct teacher-training seminars in modularized, integrated spiritually-based global education, and content-based education.

Judith Johnson, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Yamaguchi University, Japan, develops and teaches courses in technical/scientific English, Global Issues, Ethics, Moral Leadership and Teacher Education. She is involved in designing morally based curricula and conducting teacher education programs in Asia, the Pacific Islands, the U.S.A., and Europe. Dr. Johnson is the Director of Curriculum of International Educational Initiatives, Inc. and the author and co-author of numerous articles and several books in the areas of language learning, curriculum development and teacher education.

The IEI website can be accessed at <http://www.iei-world.com>.

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Appendix

Evaluation 1: Results (12/93)

	Possible	High	Low	Average
3m1:	100	90	31	65
3m2:	100	70	14	50
5m1:	100	72	7	42
5m2:	100	69	7	38
6m1:	175	138	31	86 (49%)
6m2:	175	120	35	65 (37%)

Evaluation 2: Results (3/94)

	Possible	High	Low	Average
3m1:	100	87	34	65 (1884/29s)
3m2:	100	88	24	57 (1602/28s)
5m1:	100	81	31	43 (1154/27s)
5m2:	100	89	26	55 (1383/25s)
6m1:	200	174 (87%)	45 (22.5%)	123 (2838/23s: 62%)
6m2:	200	167 (83.5%)	57 (28.5%)	108 (2479/23s: 54%)

Evaluation 3: Results (5/94)

	Possible	High	Low	Average
3m1:	100	91	28	63 (1828/29)
3m2:	100	92	31	63 (1718/27)
5m1:	100	89	41	64 (1729/27)
5m2:	100	81	28	57 (1488/26)
6m1:	200	179 (90%)	54 (27%)	126 (2904/23) 63%
6m2:	200	167 (84%)	53 (27%)	116 (2426/21) 58%

Evaluation scores without the troubled students:

Evaluation 3: Results (5/94)

	Possible	High	Low	Average with	Average WITHOUT
3m1:	100	91	28	63 (1828/29)	75 (1658/22) -7 students
3m2:	100	92	31	63 (1718/27)	70.5 (1553/22) -5 students
5m1:	100	89	41	64 (1729/27)	67 (1602/24) -3 students
5m2:	100	81	28	57 (1488/26)	63 (1326/21) -5 students

Reading levels

Evaluation 1: @ 5 months	Evaluation 2: @ 7 months	Evaluation 3: @ 10 Months
3rd Grade: 2.6 reading level	3rd Grade: 2.7 reading level	3rd Grade: 2.7 reading level
5th Grade: 4.4 reading level	5th Grade: 4.5 reading level	5th Grade: 4.6 reading level
6th Grade: 5.5 reading level	6th Grade: 5.6 reading level	6th Grade: 5.7 reading level

Figures

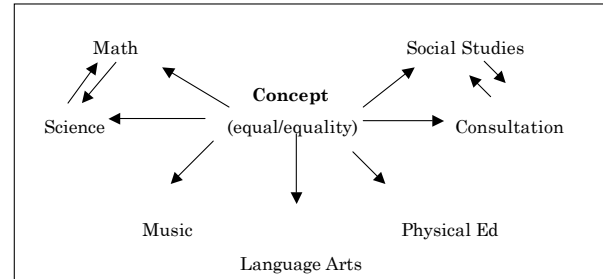


Figure 1. Integrated curricular elements