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## Differences Aside

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*Boise State University*

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### Abstract

The capstone project concerns cultural diversity at an elementary school, specifically at a 2nd-grade level. I interviewed my daughter and her teacher for my research. I involved my daughter in the book because she comes from a different culture and is being raised in another. She is the perfect example for my project because she has a cultural background, and she is not aware that people around her don't recognize that culture. I interviewed her teacher because she is emotionally intelligent and recognizes that cultural awareness is needed in classroom settings. Part of my research involved reading extensive literature about cultural diversity from the perspective of children's books. The result of my project is a positive one. The book I wrote allowed my daughter to be comfortable with her cultural background and speak to her friends about it. The purpose of this project was to spread awareness that there are other cultures in our community that have similarities and differences. Be aware that people in our communities have different ways of doing things and that our children need to learn about it early.

*Keywords:* Innovative Cultural diversity, Integrative thinking, Service Learning

### **Introduction to your Capstone Project**

My Capstone project is about spreading cultural awareness to a younger audience at a 2nd-grade level. I focused the project on "Either I write a children's book about cultural awareness for my daughter's 2nd-grade class, or I will create a presentation and talk about the importance of cultural awareness at a young age at a local library." I wrote a children's book about two Llamas in a school setting who were trying to become friends but had a hard time approaching each other. One of the Llamas comes from a different country and has a hard time accepting the new culture and speaking about her own culture. The two llamas become friends bonding over food, which they love so much. The food brings them closer together and allows them to share their cultural backgrounds without feeling scared to be accepted.

I researched the subject by reading a lot of children's books about diversity to my own children and found a few books that work on bonding children over their love for food. I read articles about how important it is to have diversity in schools at a young age. I interviewed my daughter's 2nd-grade teacher and daughter to find out their thoughts about having such books available. After completing my book, I chose to talk about it in front of the 2nd-grade class where my daughter goes to school so that I could get feedback from the students in person. The students showed interest in writing their books about their friends and the things they enjoy. This showed me that my capstone project was positive and successful.

### **Section 1: Innovative Approach**

One of the main reasons I chose to work on this project is that I saw firsthand how important it is to know the people and the population around you at a young age. Being aware of our cultural backgrounds improves communication and avoids conflict between us. It teaches us

to recognize specific cultural cues and helps us understand each other without even saying much to one another. They don't even know they can be their best friend in the classroom from a diverse cultural background. It will teach them to be more open-minded to other people by recognizing and accepting other cultures.

My example of cultural diversity is my daughter, who comes from a different culture but was born and raised in the United States. This example shows the students that we are not so different from one another. We can be more accepting and willing to learn about one another's backgrounds. I have included the surroundings they are familiar with and made them feel included in the book, which allowed them to connect to the book, and they showed more interest in the final product. Bringing something spoken of in the book for them to try gives them a different perspective on the book and the culture. It allowed them to connect with the specific culture in the book by tasting it, and they connected with the characters. My approach with the book will be stimulating for the children because I include their age, surroundings, and friends, which whom they can connect with.

## **Section 2: Emotional Intelligence**

My research indicates an awareness of self and others because I read other children's books about cultural awareness. I volunteered at a 2nd-grade classroom. I interviewed my daughter's teacher and a faculty member at the school. Being around the children in their classroom allowed me to observe the classroom and pick up a few ideas for my book. This approach allowed me to take little pieces of their classroom and add them to the book, which they will be able to see and recognize, and hopefully, it will allow them to connect with the writer on a personal level.

My approach to my project was created based on the emotional intelligence of my

audience. While reading a few key pages of my book out loud in class, I will be able to watch my audience and pay attention to the body language. Once they see my book and hear me talk about the cultural background of my book in their classroom, they will be able to see and recognize emotional intelligence. Providing them with my story should allow the children to be more aware of others around them.

We tend to confuse specific actions from people around us with disrespect, but if we were more aware of other people's cultural differences, we would not take offense to certain things. This miscommunication can be eliminated at an early age. Cultural diversity continues to grow in our country, and being aware of each other and where we come from would eliminate a lot of social cues in our society. My research in this field benefits others because it will allow others to become more aware of these issues in our community.

### **Section 3: Creative Thinking**

My approach to this has been to take small steps, and if I hit a wall and start feeling overwhelmed or having a creative block, I take a few days and let it sink in. My creative side comes out while not working under pressure. Using the Incubation approach is how I have been able to take one step at a time with my project and not feel overwhelmed. Putting our differences aside is how I focused on a specific culture and wrote a book about what I noticed our community could benefit from. I need help finding books about bringing kids to talk about the food they eat in school.

My focus is bringing people together through traditional food in the culture. It is focused on an actual experience that is experienced in schools. We have a significant Bosnian population in the US, and there are few books that our children can relate to. They eat and live in a different culture, go to school, and learn about another culture. My research has left me observing people

in public and taking notes on how many other small minorities there are.

#### **Section 4: Your Innovative Solution**

Writing a children's book on cultural diversity and inclusion, my work is innovative because it focuses more on spreading cultural diversity through food. My focus is the 7 to 8-year-olds who love to read and are becoming more independent readers. My daughter was my most prominent critic; she helped me develop ideas by discussing what she enjoyed reading. What characters are silly and funny to children? Cultural diversity is a complex topic. My innovative solution to the problem is to talk about something that connects us all in a way, and that is food.

There are other ways I could have presented the project to the students. I could have done a fun activity together or printed each of the 24 students a copy and allowed them to color the book to their liking. This would allow the children to read it on their own again and make it their own by coloring the way they want. Coloring it their way would enable them to connect more to the book and the story.

#### **Section 5: Results**

Cultural diversity is everywhere, and it is hard to teach it to children. I focused on my daughter's 2nd-grade class as my audience, with 24 students in the class, which allowed me to include my children in my project. I wrote a children's book about cultural diversity and how two friends bonded over food. Due to strict school district regulations, I could not read my book to the class. Not being able to read my book out loud led me to a different path. I brought my book to the class and talked about what it takes to write a book. I shared food from the book with the class so they could connect with the book, the author, and the culture of the book. The feedback I

received was positive and enthusiastic. The children were excited to see my book; they wanted to learn and hear all about my culture. They asked me how long it took to write the book, who drew the characters, will I write more books about the two friends, and what this book meant to me.

I came to the class, had an open discussion with the children, and bonded with them over a treat I wrote in my book. I gained skills and knowledge on what it takes to become a published author, allowing me to pursue my book further. I learned that I wanted to write more books, and I enjoyed the creative process of writing a book. Knowing that there is an audience for my type of book made my children proud to talk about the book I created.

### **Section 6: Different Approaches**

My main stakeholder is my daughter. She has helped me come up with some great ideas for my book. Once I completed my book and read it to her. She was so excited about it and thought it was super funny. She wanted to read it over and over again. She wanted to share it with everyone; one thing she loved was that she had some input in the book, but the most important thing she loved was that she could relate to the story. She could connect to the character in the book, which made her feel special and not so different. It was highly beneficial to see my daughter's reaction to the book because it made me realize that a more extensive community doesn't have books they can relate with. My other stakeholder is my daughter's teacher and the students in the class. The teacher is excited for me to read the book to the children because she knows that my daughter is friends with all the students, and this will provide awareness to other kids that there are children in the classroom that come from different cultures.



### **Section 7: Conclusion**

Cultural diversity is everywhere, and it is hard to teach it to children. I wrote a children's book about cultural diversity and how two friends bonded over food. I focused on my daughter's 2nd-grade class as my audience, which allowed me to include my children in my project. The book was a way I could connect with her class because they are at the curious and fun stage of learning. Due to strict school district regulations, I could not read my book to the class. Not being able to read my book out loud led me to a different path, which was very rewarding. I brought my book to the class and talked about what it takes to write a book. My book bonded two friends from different cultures through food. So I brought the food from my book to the class and shared it with them. They learned about a cultural delicacy called Burek. I came to the class, had an open discussion with the children, and bonded with them over a treat that I wrote in my book.

My daughter was thrilled that there was a book about where her family comes from and that her friends and classmates could hold it, see it, and being able to have a treat to connect with the book made a positive outlook on my project. The teacher asked me if I could make another trip back to the class because they didn't get to ask all the questions they wanted to. There are 24 children ages 7 and 8 in the classroom; they wanted more time with the author, and they had more questions about the food from my culture. I read a few of my favorite pages out loud to the class, and they were curious about the story because they could relate to it by trying a piece of my culture.

Half of the class laughed while I read a few pages, and they said the book was funny and the characters were adorable and funny. The students showed interest in my book and wanted me to return and read the book to them. They asked if I would be writing more books and if the

characters from my book stay friends in the next book. My project was a success because the students and the teacher showed interest in my book. They asked when I could come back and talk more about my book and if they could read it in class. Another aspect of my project that was a huge success is that my daughter can connect with her friends and classmates on a different level, and I will work on editing my book and publishing it.

My approach to the capstone project is to be involved with the community and positively present my culture. I created a book I talked about to 2nd graders at my daughter's school. I explained it to them, and we had an open discussion about how the book is different and what the book was about. I selected the service learning approach because I wanted to face people while explaining to them cultural diversity. I observed their body language and emotions while discussing it. I connected with this approach because being able to see the emotion that the group was present with meant that I was making an impact, positive or negative.

## References

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## Appendix

Capstone project link to my book

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NbaEo8xKJayZGMziNs7Rsec9MraPYfMY/edit?usp=sharing&oid=104150673090513455206&rtpof=true&sd=true>