

## Example 1: "Growing Food for Our Community," a digital story

Bridges to Understanding afterschool program, Aki Kurose Middle School, Seattle, WA  
Grade 8

Eighth-grade students at the Aki Kurose Middle School in Seattle have been studying the impact of global food crises on communities around the world—including their own. Through the Bridges to Understanding (BU) afterschool program, students analyzed digital stories by children in India and South Africa, exchanging ideas about rising food prices and community work. Determined to address this global problem by contributing locally, students created two edible gardens at their school. Vegetables were donated to the local food bank, and students produced their own digital story to share.

The digital story and accompanying discussion forum had two purposes. First, it sought to show how school fields could be used to mitigate the global food crisis in local communities. And second, it sought to gather insights from more experienced gardeners online. Understanding that images help diverse audiences see stages in soil preparation and seeding, students used both photographs and text to describe the garden design and document its development. Likewise, student postings were written in both English and Spanish to accommodate speakers of both languages. Below is an excerpt from the story:



We started by planting a cover crop into the beds. A cover crop is a crop that improves and protects the soil on which it is grown. We planted clover and rye in October. These helped improve the quality of the soil during the winter.



We can use the Native American technique of planting the "three sisters," which are beans, corn, and squash, to benefit the food bank in our community.

## How do these students demonstrate their capacity to communicate ideas?

*Recognizing how diverse audiences may perceive different meanings from the same information.*

Students explored the complexity of communicating with diverse audiences by examining first the diversity in their own classrooms. In a school where multiple languages are spoken at home, students created cultural self-portraits that revealed their unique perspectives and values. The portraits included issues that mattered to students both personally and culturally, including their views on food and the food crisis. For these students, appreciating difference within the classroom set the foundation to embrace it globally online. How might others interpret the background image of our school building or the humorous note at the end of that online posting? How might others feel about our story and our (relatively protected) world? Recognizing cultural differences prompted students to communicate with sensitivity.

Once in the forum, a teacher in rural India expressed his appreciation in learning about food banks for the first time. Describing himself as a farmer, he inquired whether there were many farmers in their school. Students seized the opportunity to explain how food banks work and clarify their role as “gardeners”:

A food bank is a community resource for people that don't have enough money or food to support their family. We think we will feel accomplishment when we harvest the food.

We have two raised garden beds behind our school. We don't consider ourselves farmers . . . we are gardeners that do this for fun and for the community.

Students' postings show understanding of online etiquette and communicative norms. They show, in the terms of the definition of global competence, a growing capacity to listen to and communicate effectively with diverse people, using appropriate visual and verbal language. Their writing is informal, agile, and engaging, and each entry closes with a question inviting readers to participate. The following is an example of one student posting:

### **Bridges afterschool digital storytelling program, USA Seattle, WA 2-09-2010**

We have made a digital story for all of you to see! It's about us growing crops at our school for the food bank. We hope everyone will see our digital story on our class page.

Do any of you have gardens at your schools?

If so, what are you growing? What happens to the food you grow?

If you don't have a school garden, do you grow food at home? Where do you get your food?

Do you have any special kind of techniques for planting or gardening? We learned about “the Three Sisters” - squash, corn and beans - which we might plant this spring.

:)

Talk to you soon!

Being aware of their international audience, students agreed not to use common American text messaging norms, understanding that “English may be [the] third or fourth language” of their readers. Extensive use of symbols and shorthand would make their communication ineffective.

*Select and use appropriate technology and media to communicate with diverse audiences.*

Digital storytelling requires that students simultaneously manage visual, auditory, and textual material—as well as the project’s online presence. Each form of communication requires careful attention and responds to particular genres. Photographs are informed by concepts like composition, lighting, and ways to capture emotion and movement. And the final choice of images is selected to convey the message as powerfully as possible to many viewers. The accompanying text, offered at once in English and Spanish, follows a similar selection process. In the end, students’ close attention to communicative choices enabled them to participate proficiently in an international conversation—and learn with and about others in the process.

### **Example 2: Happening: “Put your culture in the box and follow me”**

International School of Amsterdam  
Grade 10

For the final project of their contemporary music, art, and theater class, students had to create a *happening*—a fleeting artistic event or installation in the school. Their task was to explore the concept of exile in aesthetically interesting and novel ways. Helen, Kyoko, Noah, and Yei Jin’s happening examined colonization as a metaphor for forced exile. The group chose to include the audience (teachers, researchers, and special invitees) in their piece, as they “wanted the audience to really get a sense of what colonization might feel like.” They dressed in black, faces half covered by masks, and yelled commands at their audience, simultaneously in their four different native languages. Participants were unable to understand what was being said, but strong gestures indicated they were to follow the students through various stations in the happening.

