

**Davis 100 Projects for Peace
Final Report - Summer 2007**

Title: Global Learning Summer School Program

School: Wellesley College

Student(s) Information: Columbia, MD

(include each student's home country and whether or not each student attended a UWC)

1. **Project Summary:** Describe location, timeframe, participants, other funding involved, scope of work, and goals intended.

This summer I worked in Michoacán Mexico implementing a summer school program with the Education for Justice Program, Global Learning. In Global Learning, we strive to use innovative, student- entered teaching methods to encourage students to be life long learners. Our teaching style is an alternative to frontal education. Overwhelmingly, students in under funded and low resource schools receive frontal education; a style of teaching which enforces the idea of the teacher as an all knowing being, and the student as the only learner. Students sit in rows, and do not have any choice or vote within the classroom. This form of teaching is prevalent everywhere, but more so in lower level track courses where classrooms are overcrowded and resources are limited. The style of teaching we use as teachers is reflective of our view of student's societal roles. Do students in lower track or special education classes not deserve the right to learn higher level thinking skills? To have lesson choice? To arrive at conclusions on their own? I think not. As a teacher this summer my mission was to bring student centered learning techniques into poor, and underserved classrooms because I believe all students can and want to learn.

I enlisted a diverse team of 10 volunteers from universities across the U.S. and Mexico to help me in setting up the summer school. We planned lessons for all three program sites (including Costa Rica and Nicaragua) during the month of June with other volunteers from those respective sites. I trained them in student- centered techniques for the entire month and then we departed for Mexico. Once there, we rented a house, and worked with the school principals to set dates for us to visit their schools.

2. **Project Results:** Self-evaluate the project; your assessment should enumerate what goals were and were not accomplished.

To test my hypothesis (that all students are capable of high level critical thinking skills regardless of their socioeconomic status), this past summer I set up a summer school in rural Mexico through the education for justice program Global Learning. We taught using student centered, kinesthetic techniques; starting from what students already know. The result was amazing! My team worked with over 600 children as we traveled to six different schools throughout the state of Michoacán. We went to each school for 2-3 days and students worked in small groups to arrive at their own conclusions on human rights, environmental justice etc. Aside from the student's initial excitement of using crayons, markers and glitter, they were excited that they got the opportunity to be teachers and think on their own! Initially, it was hard to get them to give their opinions or share their feelings, because usually they are told what to do. For instance, when I would ask students, "What do you think about this painting? How

does it make you feel" I was often met with dead silence. However, as the days went on, they really delved into the subject material and made it their own. By the second day or third day they were working in groups, sharing ideas with one another, and teaching each other how to say different words in French, English and in Spanish. It was amazing!

3. **Implications:** What are the project's implications for peace? What are the future prospects for the project? What have you learned?

I realized this summer, that teachers can encourage students to be advocates for peace. The lessons we used, the techniques we used, all were designed to give students an active voice within the classroom. In allowing the students to have choice within the classroom- everything from which lessons they learn to which color crayon they use, is instilling in them basic values of democracy which they can use for life. This experience definitely helped me realize that as a teacher, I can help students become the learners they naturally are. By meeting them at their skill level and incorporating their culture into lessons, I can engage them in seemingly boring topics. It also helped me realize that the way in which I teach (not just what I teach), has a huge impact on the educational and social development of my students.

Using the money from the grant, my team and I were also able to implement a Parental Expansion Project in which we reached out to the families of the students, and gave them tools and resources to continue learning with their children even after we left.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the UWC and Mrs. Kathryn Wasserman Davis for awarding me this amazing opportunity. I was able to touch the lives of so many children and their families this summer. I hope to continue with this program next year, maybe in a new site, like Brazil or Honduras!! Nevertheless, I learned so much this summer from my students and none of this would have been possible without "Projects for Peace".

