

# Making Global Connections

*Teaching and learning about interconnectedness through highly participatory activities*

by **Graham Pike and David Selby**

**Subject areas:** social studies

**Key concepts:** interdependence

**Skills:** lateral and creative thinking, relational thinking, cooperation, using atlas

**Location:** indoors

**I**nterconnectedness is the conceptual glue that binds together the ideas, fields, focuses, themes, and topics that fall within the orbit of global education. In economic, environmental, social, and political terms, global educators are concerned with the nature and effects of connections, propelled by movements of goods, people, and information that link all humanity together — albeit not always within relationships that are just and equitable. They are likewise at pains to show that any global issue is linked, to a greater or lesser degree, to all other global issues; that issues of development, environment, peace, and social justice are, in the final analysis, interwoven. Phases of time are also seen as interconnected: past, present, and future are not discrete periods but are deeply embedded, one within another. At a personal level, global education is concerned with the synergies that can arise from helping students mindfully connect their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual potentials and their inner well-being to the well-being of the planet. A challenge for the global educator is how to help students think in a relational mode. The activities offered here suggest some practical ways forward.

## Only connect

This enjoyable and lively activity encourages the development of lateral and creative thinking skills, and heightens students' sensitivity to potential connections between disparate phenomena. Such skills and awareness are important if students are to understand fully

the mechanics of the global system and the ways in which seemingly unconnected events and decisions can affect their lives. The development of relational thinking — seeing patterns and making connections — also helps students to perceive connections between different curriculum areas, and between the curriculum and the real world, thereby fostering a more holistic and relevant learning experience.

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** (per student) 5 slips of paper, pencils

### Procedure:

1. Distribute five slips of paper to each student. Ask students to write the following category names, one on each slip of paper: a natural object, a human-made object, an animal, an emotion, a hope for the future.
2. On the reverse side of each slip, have students write one word that represents the category written on the front. (An animal, for example, could be “deer”; an emotion could be “gratitude.”) Any word can be chosen for a category; the selections do not have to follow a theme or pattern.
3. Have students place the slips of paper on the table in front of them with the category names facing up.
4. Choose two students at random and ask them to turn over their “natural object” slips and state what they have written down. The two students then have ten seconds to think of at least one way in which the two natural objects are connected. Should they fail to do



so in the time allotted, other class members can contribute.

5. The two students then choose two classmates, whose challenge is to find connections between the two new objects that they reveal by turning over their “natural objects” slips.
6. Continue the activity, switching to another category at any time. The students’ task is always to find connections between the two items written on the slips.
7. When the activity is progressing well, you can start to mix the categories randomly: connections can be sought between, for example, a human-made object and an emotion. As well as choosing a classmate, a student might also select a category. At this point, creative thinking will be required in abundance and any type of connection should be allowed: the goal is to develop and enhance creativity rather than to discover the optimum connection.

## Globetrotting

This lively activity assesses and reinforces students’ knowledge of North America’s global connections and the geographical location of various countries. The whole group’s success depends on the degree of cooperation shown, not only in matching countries with connections but also in helping each other to form appropriate groups. The activity refines the skills of non-verbal communication and develops a sense of group cohesiveness.

**Location:** an open indoor space in which students can move about freely

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** set of self-adhesive labels, index cards, atlases

**Preparation:** Write the names of the countries listed in the Country Connections chart (see page 216) on adhesive labels, one country per label. Write (or photocopy and glue) the “connections” from the second column of the chart on index cards.

### Procedure:

1. Ask students to form a circle, close their eyes, and remain silent.
2. Stick an adhesive “country” label on the backs of half of the students. Give the other half of the students “connections” cards. Ask students to open their eyes but not to speak.
3. Instruct students with “connections” cards to read their cards and, without speaking, find the student who has the matching country label on his/her back. Atlases can be used at any time.
4. Have students use the country names to form groups, *still without speaking*,

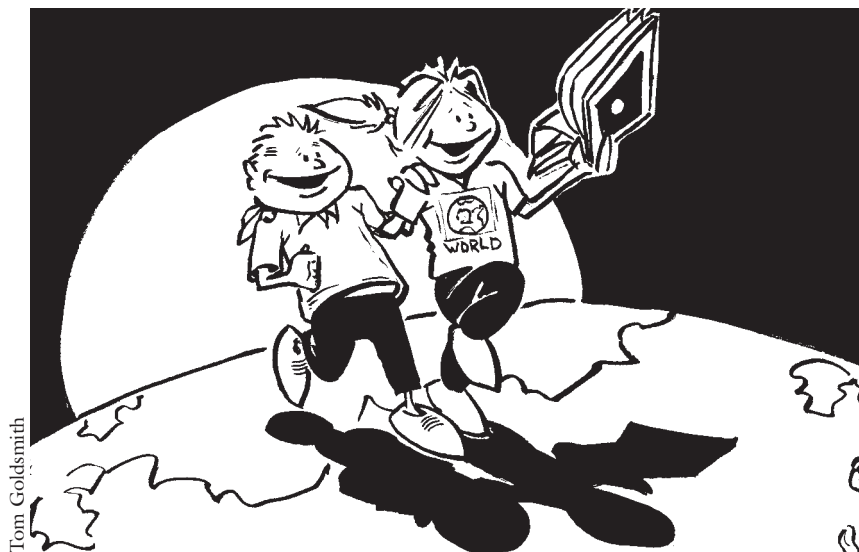
according to each of the following criteria:

- northern and southern hemispheres
  - rich and poor countries (by GDP, per capita income, or degree of industrialization)
  - continents
  - coastal, island, and land-locked countries
  - population (e.g., less than 100 million, 100 to 999 million, over 1 billion)
  - population density
5. Have students refer to the “connections” to form groups according to connections that have a direct impact on students’ lives, and those that do not.
  6. Finally, ask the students who have country labels on their backs to inform their partner which country they think they represent.

### Extensions:

- As a final challenge to their global sense of place, ask each pair of students to organize themselves, by country, into a human world map. You can take the position that represents Canada and the United States and invite student pairs to adopt relative positions around you.
- As a research task, student pairs can be given a country name and asked to find out some relevant connections to Canada or the United States, or perhaps the country of origin of one of the students. Once these connections are written on blank labels or index cards, the activity can proceed, as described above.

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