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ABSTRACT

This report describes a practicum designed to integrate limited-English-speaking students into the mainstream school community. The setting was a private secondary school enrolling 18 students from Japan, Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan. The project had four components intended to guide students of English as a Second Language (ESL) toward fuller participation in the school community: a conversation partner program, in which ESL students were paired with native English-speaking students for a 20-minute conversation on a specific topic each week, with summarization of the conversation in a journal entry; a biweekly film discussion group that was half native English speaking and half ESL students; a required overnight stay at a native English-speaking student's home; and monthly special activities off campus. Important outcomes of the program included establishment of close friendships between active English-speaking students and ESL students, increased ESL students involved in extracurricular activities, and participation in American family life several times a year, providing a broader understanding of American culture. Contains 30 references. (MSE)

Involving ESL Students in American Culture Through Participation in Private School Activities

by

Thomas C. Unger

Cluster 65

A Practicum II Report
Presented to the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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ABSTRACT

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This practicum was designed to assist ESL students in a private independent school setting integrate into the mainstream of the school community. Through a four pronged approach, ESL students were guided toward fuller participation in private independent school life. The ESL students were first entered into a conversation partner program in which they were paired with American students, required to converse with their partner for 30 minutes per week on a specified topic, and to summarize their conversation in a journal entry. The second prong was a biweekly film discussion group with half of the group American students and half ESL students. The third part of the practicum required the ESL students to stay overnight at the home of an American student three times yearly. Finally, the ESL students participated in monthly special activities off campus.

Key outcomes achieved included the ESL students making close friends with Americans, increased ESL involvement in extracurricular activities, and participation in the family life of an American family several times per year to gain a broader understanding of American culture.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The background for this Practicum was an independent, co-educational, college-preparatory, boarding and day school located in the Northeast section of the United States. The school was comprised of 175 students, of which 18 were enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. All ESL students were enrolled in grades 9 through 12 and boarded at the school, and the majority of the ESL students originated from the Asian countries of Japan, Taiwan, or Korea. In the school year of 1996-1997, there were 10 students from Korea, 6 from Japan, and 1 each from Taiwan and Thailand.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

This writer served as the Director of another special program in the school, the Learning Skills Program. The Learning Skills Program strived to remediate American students afflicted with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, but this program had no direct bearing on the ESL Program. Therefore, this writer served as a change agent from a position outside the very program receiving benefit from the change.

Involved in this Practicum, then, was the Director of the ESL Program (who was also a full time teacher in the ESL Program), one other ESL teacher, several other teachers at the school, particularly those who taught math, science, or art courses in which the ESL students were able to participate before their English proficiency had been developed. In addition, American students at the school as well as the parents of at least 18 American students

enrolled at the school, and the parents and/or the guardians of the ESL students were called upon to participate in this Practicum.

It should be noted that this writer was beginning his 16th year at the school and therefore had the distinct advantage of historical perspective regarding the growth and development of the ESL Program, an established rapport with the parents of students who had previously been enrolled at the school (particularly the parents of students who were or had been enrolled in the Learning Skills Program), and a close working association with the ESL professional staff as well as many of the seasoned subject matter teachers. To insure a firm understanding of the issues and concerns common to the ESL Program, this writer taught full time in the ESL Summer Program immediately preceding the implementation of this Practicum. Through this involvement, this writer was able to secure the commitment and cooperation of the ESL staff, and, at the same time, deepen his understanding of the difficulties the ESL students encountered as they pursued an American education.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

A problem existed at the school in that foreign students enrolled in the ESL Program at the school were isolated in the school community, had few, if any American friends, and were not learning about American culture. This was a problem that had plagued this school and many other schools, both private and public, for years. ESL students engaged in very little social or personal communication with their American peers. Foreign students tended to cluster together and did not mix with American students. Because these international students were residents at the school, they were on campus for the weekends as well. Despite the variety of activities offered to boarding students on the weekends, it was commonly observed by teachers and administrators that 50% of the students who remained on campus were ESL students even though the ESL students comprised only 10% of the student population. ESL students were not experiencing the American culture available to them, nor were the American students at the school learning of the home cultures of the ESL students.

Problem Documentation

Three pieces of evidence supported the existence of this problem at this school. Results of a questionnaire administered by this writer to the 16 ESL students enrolled at the school during the 1995-1996 school year indicated a low number of friendships with American students. The question was designed to incorporate the definition of a close friend to be "someone you feel you could

talk to if you were upset about something" (Unger, 1996, p.3). Half of the 16 students questioned reported having had 2 or fewer close American friends, and 3 of the 16 ESL students responded that they had no American close friends at all.

The second piece of evidence emerged through responses on this same questionnaire administered to the ESL students in the 1995-1996 school year and was corroborated through teacher attendance records and interviews with teachers. The ESL students at the school did not participate in group clubs or activities beyond those required of all students. All students at the school were required to participate in an after school activity during each of the 3 trimesters in the school year. Two of these activities were expected to be active, and the choices students had available in the active category were varied. These included aerobics, bicycling, horseback riding, rock climbing, fitness, weight training, recreational tennis, volleyball, and yoga as well as the traditional interscholastic sports of cross country, soccer, basketball, softball, baseball, and tennis. The non-active choices for activities were just as varied, including community service, yearbook, judiciary committee (a disciplinary committee comprised of 2 students and 2 faculty members), multi-cultural alliance (a club established to promote cultural exchange among the various cultures represented on campus), amnesty international (a club dedicated to raising community awareness of the plight of political prisoners around the world and seeking help from the school community to intervene on behalf of these political prisoners through letter writing campaigns and fund raising), proctorship in the boy's or girl's dormitory, coffee house (an organization which sponsored 3 evenings of entertainment for the school community each year), computer club,

theater, academic committee (a committee of students and faculty who met with students struggling with their academic courses to offer advice, arrange for peer tutoring, or brainstorm other strategies to improve the academic success of these students), community council (this school's equivalent of student government), Solebury Community Awareness Group (SCAG) (a group of students and faculty whose purpose was to intervene, before any disciplinary action was required, in racially motivated incidents or disagreements which occurred in the community), prom committee, cafe (student and faculty operation of a community cafe selling food and incidentals), music ensemble, and independent activity (this activity was classified as active or non-active depending on the design, student initiated, of the activity itself). Clearly, for a school with an enrollment under 200, this array of activities represented an enticing menu to a school population with wide ranging interests. Yet, the ESL students had traditionally abstained from joining these activities beyond those minimally required. In the 1995-1996 school year, it was not until the 3rd trimester, and only after special invitation and adult persuasion that 7 of the 16 ESL students agreed to become involved as participants in extra activities.

The third piece of evidence which supported the existence of this problem at the school came in the observation that ESL students did not stay overnight or even visit the homes of American students. Such lack of visitation at the homes of American students was reported through interviews with the staff in the ESL program, the Dean of Students, the Headmaster, and the dormitory counselors. The ESL students themselves reported in the questionnaire administered to them in the 1995-1996 school year that a clear majority of them had rarely, if ever, visited the home of any American students or

faculty. Eight ESL students of the 16 enrolled during the 1995-1996 school year never stayed overnight at the home of any American student and an astounding 13 of 16 had never stayed overnight at the home of any faculty at the school (Unger, 1996). Considering the fact that 120 students were day students and lived within a 5 to 15 mile radius of the school, and 17 faculty members lived on the school property itself, this was surprising.

Causative Analysis

The causes of this problem were embedded in both the American and international peoples. That the ESL students were isolated in the school community, had few, if any American friends, and were not learning about American culture was partially due to the predicament in which the ESL students found themselves, considering the inherent difficulty of being strangers in a strange land, the enormous ramifications of a language barrier, and the very different set of values and cultural training they brought with them as an integral part of their own identity. However, the Americans, as hosts had certain responsibilities as well, and, in the case of this school community, both the American students and the American adults had been remiss.

To begin with, the ESL students came to the school with low English proficiency skills in talking and listening comprehension. While it was true that many of the ESL students had had instruction in English in their native countries, and many of these students had a relatively solid foundation in English grammar, and the SLEP (Secondary Level English Proficiency) Test administered to the ESL students at the very beginning of their educational program here identified students as being advanced, intermediate, or beginner with respect to their command of the English language, many of the ESL

students, if not most of them, and this would include those students classified as advanced, had difficulty maintaining a prolonged conversation with Americans. Some of this difficulty could be attributed to a minimal vocabulary and some of the difficulty could be traced to the astounding number of idioms in the English language. Because we were comfortable with the richness of our language, relatively speaking, by the time we reached high school, we took for granted such expressions as 'red faced' and 'red neck' and 'red herring' and 'in the red,' but to foreign students such idiomatic constructions could be very confusing. Add to this the speed with which dialogue was exchanged, particularly at the adolescent level, and the impediments to rewarding conversation were overwhelming.

Another cause for this problem stemmed from the home cultures of the ESL students. Since the vast majority of the ESL students came from an Asian country in which assertiveness was discouraged, the students were reluctant to engage American students in conversation. Because American students at this school tended to be self-absorbed and the international students appeared shy and introverted, the former chatted on with their friends and new acquaintances while the latter resorted to the familiarity of their ESL compatriots. Stalemate ensued and walls of exclusion were being built higher and thicker.

When the first weekend arrived and friends and potential friends were making plans to get together and engage in some activity, the ESL students were not invited because no common experiences, no exhilarating conversation existed on which to build a friendship. American students and their families did not invite ESL students to their homes with any regularity. Historically, this school community had attempted to integrate the ESL students

via specific programs. A call for volunteers among the students was tried in an attempt to create a buddy system. The students did not respond in sufficient numbers to make the effort work, and the few students who did volunteer lost interest after several weeks and soon claimed insufficient time to befriend an ESL student. Similarly, parent volunteers were requested in a general plea from the Admissions Department at the school, but American parents were being asked to house international students for the duration of long weekends and vacation periods. American parents found this to be an imposition and the program, loosely organized as it was, fell apart.

The professional educators and administrators at the school, too, neglected to provide structured opportunities for ESL and American students to participate in one-on-one or small group conversations. Beyond the day long orientation program traditionally scheduled for the beginning of a new school year, there were very few, if any, planned or required activities which might encourage such conversations. As a result, the two groups, the ESL students and the American students, chose the comfort of their own kind. Within the ESL group, and coming as no surprise to the astute observer of human behavior, the Koreans preferred the company of fellow Koreans, and the Japanese made friends with other Japanese. Attempts to break the pattern by using faculty members as buddies for the ESL students failed, reportedly, for lack of time on the part of the overworked, private school teachers.

One final cause for this problem seemed to originate in the general reluctance of ESL students to discuss personal feelings. Much of this apparent disinclination to reveal personal feelings likely came from the high value placed on the harmony of the group that Asian students, in particular, brought

as a part of their cultural heritage. Americans, on the other hand, were much more attuned to the feelings of the individual, and a large portion of the conversation of American adolescents, based on the observations of this writer's 30 years of experience teaching American high school students, revolved around 'I statements' and 'what do you think' or 'how do you feel' questions. The most dominant pronoun in the vocabularies of the ESL students, on the other hand, seemed to be 'we.'

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Other professionals had written widely about this problem, although the clear majority of the literature addressed with a wide lens the problems immigrants faced. Topical areas examined in the literature search included the following: acculturation, adolescence, Asian culture, assimilation, business, cultural education, curriculum development, diversity, English as a second language, film, immigrants, learning styles, limited-English-proficient students, multicultural education, racism, sociology, tolerance, values (American and Asian), and videocassettes in the education of ESL students. Perhaps the widest lens with regard to this problem concerned the attitudes of Americans towards foreigners being in this country in the first place. America was considered by many to be a melting pot in its composition, now and from the very beginning, notwithstanding the very particular difficulties the country had experienced and continued to experience with regard to race relations, especially between African-Americans and Caucasians. More recently, with the influx of Latinos and Asians, larger and larger sections of land changed ownership and 'Little Cuba' and 'Little Saigon and Seoul and Tokyo and Osaka' had become as commonplace as the German, Italian, Polish and

German neighborhoods of the past. Even though multiculturalism was one of the common buzz words in American education during the nineties, there existed in this country a fear that multicultural education could not only prove to be counter-productive, but, as Sowell (1993) suggested, "seriously disintegrative." (p. 104)

Sowell (1993) argued that there were solid and logical reasons why multicultural education was misguided and Western, English language based studies should be the meat and potatoes of American schools. For the sake of depth, Sowell (1993) claimed that schools that tried to stretch the curriculum to include other civilizations came perilously close to teaching students to accept superficiality. For the sake of practicality, Sowell (1993) preferred English to be the language of choice simply because it was the language of most of the people in the society where we lived. In response to the claim that multiculturalism helped people to understand each other and get along with each other, Sowell (1993) sought empirical evidence that such was the case. He pointed out that schools, particularly colleges, where multiculturalism had taken hold were the very campuses where separatism and hostility were the greatest. Advocates of multiculturalism inadvertently heightened nationalistic 'identity' issues, Sowell (1993) claimed. To those who espoused that a multicultural mind set was important to America's involvement in a global economy, Sowell (1993) countered that Japan did very well indeed in areas of science, technology, finance, and marketing with a highly insular and self-complacent dogma. He was not alone in his isolationist, semi-elitist philosophy.

As Fine (1995) pointed out, there were those in America, usually situated on the conservative, far right end of the political spectrum,who

contended that the business of American schools was strictly to promote basic intellectual skills and mastery of traditional subjects. These members of the New Right considered differences in race, gender, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation as unimportant and inconsequential, and they further suggested that time devoted to these deviations was wasted time pandering to the agenda of liberals. They viewed tolerance for difference and respect for diversity as potential threats to the very fabric of American culture, and time devoted to fostering cultural understanding was merely time squandered from the values they claimed were "authentic, unchanging, and truly 'American.'" (Fine, 1995, p.9) Those educators who articulated a position such as this, and there were some teachers of this persuasion at the school of this writer, undermined efforts to assimilate foreign students into the school community through benign neglect. They complained of the difficulty of teaching ESL students with varying degrees of English proficiency, and they decried the fairness of grading these foreigners on the same scale as their American counterparts. Still, for every creaky cog in American schools, there were many who favored a culturally pluralistic America and worked hard to sensitize students and teachers alike to the benefits of a diverse school community in the belief that training in understanding and respect in this educational microcosm would help American society find its place in the world.

Dasenbrock (1991) claimed that the revered Western culture that many educators wanted preserved was, in fact, a compilation of other cultures and that the urgings of multiculturalists were well founded. We needed to be able to learn from other cultures as we learned about them. In so doing we would become, ourselves, more multicultural rather than merely more informed about

other cultures, and we would be able to continue to choose the best from our own culture as well as the best from others. Dasenbrock (1991) contended that the construction of a world culture was well on its way, that the English language was becoming the world language, and that America needed to lead the inevitable assimilation. What better way was there to encourage immigrant assimilation than through the educational institutions of America. Levine and Adelman (1982) and Brown (1986) outlined the stages international students must traverse before they reached comfort with the new language and the new culture.

Given the fact that immigrants would continue to enter the United States, and that a portion of these would board at private schools, one needed to access the literature for insight into the general problems cultural adjustment entailed. Levine and Adelman (1982) suggested that people who had been suddenly transplanted abroad, and students at a boarding school, among others, would qualify under this category, often experienced a culture shock. It was not uncommon that foreigners totally immersed in a new culture vacillated from periods of enthusiasm and excitement to feelings of bewilderment and disorientation. Levine and Adelman (1982) outlined a general pattern of five stages that foreigners experienced as they adjusted to a second culture. The first stage, termed the "honeymoon period" (p.198) was characterized by elation and enthusiasm. The newcomer was typically smiling, wide-eyed, agreeable, and interested in all the novel sights, sounds, smells, and opportunities. This period usually lasted as long as life was being handled by others, in other words as long as there were service personnel such as waiters and desk clerks, maids and tour guides to ease the rough edges of the second culture.

However, once the individual became buried in new problems such as housing, roommates, schedules, classes, transportation, and shopping where language requirements became crucial, foreign students often experienced mental fatigue. This exhaustion resulted from constantly laboring to comprehend the foreign language and make the right decisions. The head often shook vertically indicating affirmative to the literally hundreds of queries about do you understand, but the mind and the heart were in panic. This constituted the stage Levine and Adelman (1982) called "culture shock." (p.198) This was a low point and could be accompanied by depressed emotions, withdrawal, and extreme homesickness. However, once the everyday activities had been sorted out and there were no longer major new problems to solve every day, the foreigner settled into a period of "initial adjustment." (p.198) Here, the ESL student could express basic ideas in the second language and a certain amount of comfort accompanied the progress that had been made, even though fluency had not been reached as yet. Still, the international student had established some routine and could begin to consider reaching goals which may have been set in his or her native country. However, just as things were looking better, another downward spiral often emerged. Levine and Adelman (1982) referred to the next stage as "mental isolation" (p. 198) and described this as the period when foreigners began to feel the full impact of being away from family and close friends. It was here that ESL students began to feel the effects of not being able to establish close American friends perhaps in their own mind because they felt unable to express themselves fully enough to communicate inner feelings. Feelings of frustration, extreme loneliness, and even a drop in self-confidence often resulted, and individuals often remained in

this stage for prolonged periods of time. The final stage, according to Levine and Adelman (1982), was "acceptance and integration." (p.199) At this point, the ESL student had grown comfortable with the daily routine and was able to predict what future events would be like. The customs, habits, expectations, and characteristics of people in the new culture had been internalized enough to allow the re-emergence of the individual's own personality. The newcomer had made friends out of acquaintances and felt comfortable with associates; he or she could now use the new language to convey thoughts and feelings rather than simply use words to make responses. What seemed implicit in these stages outlined by Levine and Adelman (1982) was the need for intervention on the part of American hosts. Without the purposeful assistance of American students and adults, ESL students could well reach stage 4 but often remained there.

Brown (1986) consolidated the stages suggested by Levine and Adelman (1982) but generally offered a similar evolution toward adjustment in the new culture. Emphasizing the social context of language acquisition, particularly when the second language learners were living within the culture of that second language as the ESL students were doing, Brown (1986) referred to the stages as "euphoria, culture shock, culture stress, and acculturation or assimilation." (p. 37) He omitted the stage of initial adjustment that Levine and Adelman (1982) noted, and, frankly, was supported in conversations with the previous and current Directors of the ESL Program at this school. However, Brown's elaboration of the "cultural stress" stage (p. 37) was quite similar to the characteristics described in Levine and Adelman's "mental isolation" stage. (p.198). Interestingly, Levine and Adelman (1982) suggested that individuals

were helped to move into the final stage by comparing and contrasting the values, beliefs, behaviors, and language of the new culture to their own culture, and Brown (1996) made no such conjecture. In the eyes of this writer, such comparisons would help most individuals to accomplish what Dasenbrock (1991) felt was the ultimate goal of cultural exchanges, that is the choosing of the best aspects from the various cultures considered.

In addition to the aforementioned literature which addressed the problem in a general way, other professional's writings documented this particular problem. Taylor (1992), in discussing ethnic conflicts in America, noted that the Hispanic and Asian populations in this country had increased at a phenomenal rate in the past 2 decades. He further notes that the rise in minority populations had mirrored a rise in hate crimes and racially motivated acts of violence. Taylor (1992) pointed out that African-Americans were being displaced as the dominant minority, but their general social and economic status had not improved commensurately. Pacific Rim minorities, on the other hand, had made impressive economic strides, and the tension between these 2 groups had grown in recent years. Creating friendships in such a distrustful and competitive climate was very difficult, and, as Taylor (1992) asserted, "culturally, Americans have always been very arrogant and have never been very tolerant." (p.11)

Kato and Kato (1992) cited the susceptibility to racism in Japanese society based on two characteristics of that society, "homogeneity and vertical structure." (p.42) This Japanese ethnocentrism, which could almost equally be applied to Koreans, contributed to their lack of contact with outsiders, particularly Caucasians and African-Americans. As Kato and Kato (1992)

claimed, the Japanese harbored as much of an arrogance and as great an intolerance as many Americans. Furthermore, their negative view of other Asians was nearly as intense. Intermarriage between the Japanese and members of other races was uncommon and heavily frowned upon, just as intermarriage between fellow Japanese of different stations was considered improper. Because the Japanese were quick to calculate who was superior and who was inferior among their own culture, stressing the vertical structure within their own society, they were compelled to make similar judgments when comparing themselves to members of other cultures. Invariably, they were situated on the top of the vertical structure by virtue of their hereditary "frame." (Kato and Kato, 1992, p. 47) This "frame" (p.47) referred to a "locality, an institution, or a particular relationship that bound a set of individuals into a single group, " (p.47) and, in the case of nationalistic identity, they assumed that their frame was superior.

McAdams (1993) documented the strong reflection of the Japanese culture in the educational experiences of Japanese students, stressing particularly the characteristics of persistence, de-emphasis of the individual in favor of a strong identity with a group, and intense respect for the traditional way of life. Students were treated more as a group, typically 4-6 students in a mixed-ability group, and this created a model for the work groups the Japanese would experience throughout their lives. Friendships, then, were established not so much by the personal characteristics of the individual, but rather on the basis of group identity.

From the cultures where friendships developed very slowly and often involved mutual obligations and lifelong duration, Lanier (1988) described the

exceptional paradoxes that existed among the American constructs of friendship. American friendships could be intense yet fleeting, and this was due in large part to the mobility of Americans in general. Americans could be warm and hospitable, even willing to include newcomers into their everyday lives, yet they tended to be reluctant to devote substantial amounts of time to outsiders, especially if such entailed commitments which impacted routine social, family, or school demands. International students from Asian countries were quite perplexed with the sincerity and intimacy Americans could demonstrate on the one hand and the discourtesy and independence displayed on the other, and these contrasting characteristics could surface within a single encounter.

Condon (1984) further substantiated the intrinsic differences between the Asian and American cultures when he described "the way" (the suffix '-do') as it applied to the Japanese culture and noted the conflict this belief presented when contrasted to the American belief of "your way" or "my way" as represented in the individualism so valued in American culture. (p.17) For the Japanese, and to a great extent the Koreans as well, there was a correct way to greet one's superior or inferior, to accept a gift, to give or decline a compliment, and a whole host of other behaviors common to everyday life. According to Condon (1984) these right ways were passed on from generation to generation and in part explained the respect accorded to one's elders. In America, there are a number of "acceptable ways" (Condon, 1984, p. 18) of doing things, and when an unorthodox behavior was observed, one could often overhear an explanation in the form of 'that's just his way' or 'she didn't mean anything by that.' Attempts to mimic the cultural customs or courtesies of people from other countries often resulted in the accusation that the Americans were being false

and would be better off 'being themselves.'

Althen (1988) further documented the reality that Americans often had difficulty becoming close friends with each other, not just with people from other countries. Although many Americans had close friends, Althen (1988) contended , these were usually few in number, and most Americans tended to see each other as temporary role players, roommates, teammates, classmates, or neighbor, and whenever the role was changed, so too was the relationship.

Americans did not want to be dependent on other people, and they seemed to shun individuals who wanted to get too closely involved with them. In addition, the American penchant for speaking up, saying what was on your mind, while consistent with the values of this country, could be unnerving for the Asian adolescent. Althen (1988) characterized Americans' view of themselves as "frank, open, and fairly friendly, " (p. ix) yet most foreigners had trouble understanding Americans. Furthermore, hypothesized Althen (1988), Americans generally saw foreigners as "undeveloped Americans," detained by the primitive, though quaint customs of their inferior countries from achieving their full potentials. With attitudes like these, it was no wonder that friendships between Americans and foreigners, particularly Asians, were difficult to establish. That there was tension and misunderstanding between these culturally diverse groups was undeniable, but the causes of the problem of separatism in American schools went beyond those reasons implied in this documentation.

Brown (1986), Levine and Adelman (1982), McGee (1995), Hong (1996), Wappel (1996), Kinnier (1996), and Bardusco (1996) contended that language barriers were responsible for much of the isolation foreign students

encountered in their school experiences in America. Even it they had a good command of the English language, international students had a difficult time understanding what American students were thinking and feeling. They may have had preparation in English in their native countries and entered this country with what they thought was a firm grounding in proper English grammar, but clearly there were many private and public school students who tested as low beginners. Such deficiencies in speaking and listening comprehension, especially considering the liberties American students take with the English language,caused international students to experience fear and intimidation. Naturally, they sought the solace of fellow countrymen and women with whom they could commiserate.

Bardusco (1996), Bushell (1996),Condon (1984), Hong (1996), and Wappel (1996) suggested that the importance of harmony in interpersonal relationships along with the lack of assertiveness among members of Asian cultures acted as additional impediments to creating American friends. As Condon (1984) pointed out, Americans believed it was important to stand up and be counted, speak or get spoken for, whereas the Japanese believed that the nail that stood up would be pounded down. Hong (1996), in his survey among ESL students in the school of this writer during the 1995-1996 school year, reported that ESL students were too reserved to initiate conversations, too reluctant to establish eye contact, and too rehearsed in concord to engage in gossip. Bardusco (1996) and Bushell (1996) concurred from their respective vantage points of an American public high school and an American community college. They added that whenever ESL students did not live with their American counterparts, as was the case with virtually all of the high school

many of the community college students, friendships were even more scarce between Americans and members of other cultures.

Althen (1988), Kato and Kato (1992), and Unger (1996) reported that Asian students were hesitant to discuss personal feelings in any depth, especially when such disclosures had the potential to bring shame on their group or disrupt the interpersonal harmony so important in their native cultures. Kato and Kato (1992) claimed that the Japanese would rather suffer in silence the consequences of undeserved accusations rather than risk the disgrace of their compatriots.

Lanier (1988), McAdams (1993), Bardusco (1996), McGee (1995), Hong (1996), and Wappel (1996) suggested that opportunities for ESL students to engage in small group or one-on-one conversations were left to chance, and that too often when the groups were unbalanced in favor of the Asians, native language conversation resulted; however, when the groups were primarily Americans, the Asian students reported being unable to understand the idiomatic conversation and resorted to a quiet, passive posture. These professionals felt that the language barriers between ESL students and American students, along with their inexperience in group dynamics, contributed to their prolonged isolation.

When friendships were slow to form, cultural exchange was hampered. McAdams (1993) noted the important role family held in the educational process of Asian students in their home cultures, explaining the important role the mother played in assisting with homework, visiting the school often, and indoctrinating students with their duty to study hard in order to repay their debt to Heaven and their parents for being born. Such adult intervention on the part

of ESL parents or guardians and American parents would likely facilitate the understanding between cultures. Yet, Unger (1996), Wappel (1996), and Welsh (1996) confirmed the underutilization of both the parents of ESL students and the parents of American students to assist in a cultural exchange in the school setting of this writer.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this Practicum was to integrate students enrolled in the English as a Second Language Program (ESL) into the school community, encourage these students to make American friends, and expand their knowledge of American culture.

Expected Outcomes

The writer proposed the following outcomes for this Practicum:

1. 13 of 16 ESL students would claim at least one close friend (defined as one whom the ESL student felt s/he could talk to if s/he were upset about something).
2. 13 of 16 ESL students would be involved members of a group club or activity beyond those required of all students, i.e. 1 after-class activity per trimester, 2 of which must be active.
3. 16 of the 16 ESL students would have had the opportunity to participate in the family life of an American family and gain an understanding of American culture at least 1 time per trimester in the 1st and 2nd trimesters of the 1996-1997 school year.

Measurement of Outcomes

The following measurement tools were designed for this project. The first outcome was measured by an essay in the form of a letter assigned in the ESL writing class. This letter that 13 of the 16 ESL students wrote to their family in their native country described his or her new American friend(s) and

what they enjoyed doing together (see Appendix A). The students who were not able to write such a letter for the reason that they had not formed any American friends were requested to write a letter to their respective families anyhow in order to avoid stigmatizing them for not having made any friends with American students. This was at the discretion of the ESL teachers involved. As a standard of success for this outcome, this writer expected that 13 of the 16 ESL student letters would describe at least two activities that he or she had done with his or her American friend.

The second outcome, that of becoming an involved member of a club or activity beyond what is required of all students, was measured through the administration of a questionnaire to each of the adult leaders of the clubs or activities in which the ESL students participated (see Appendix B). This questionnaire sought an assessment from each adult leader regarding the level of engagement the ESL students demonstrated in the activity, including the student's attendance, willingness to voice opinions, make suggestions, help with the business of the activity, and whether the adult would seek this student's continued involvement in this or another activity led by this adult. The adult leaders had a four point scale with choices of "always," "usually," "sometimes," and "never" by which to evaluate the ESL student's involvement. This writer accepted no fewer than 3 of 5 of the questions answered with a "usually" or "always" response as a standard of success for this outcome.

The third outcome centered around the ESL students' opportunity to spend the night at the home of an American family at least once per trimester in order to gain an enhanced understanding of American culture. Measurement of this outcome was accomplished through a letter from the hosting American

families to the parents of the respective ESL students in addition to an interview conducted by this writer with each ESL student and the host American families (see Appendix C). The purpose of the interview was to assess the positive and negative aspects of the visits. This writer accepted no fewer than 17 of the 17 ESL students accepting invitations from American students and their families. Furthermore, in order for this outcome to be considered achieved, a comparison of the interviews had to reflect more positive aspects than negative ones on the side of both parties (3 of 5 positive aspects by both the hosting family and the ESL student hosted) by the end of the trimester in which the implementation concluded.

These measurement tools were specifically chosen for several reasons. First, they were designed to maintain a close personal connection with all of the participants in the project. Secondly, the data gathered through these tools lent itself to analysis and comparison in non-technical terms, thus making the results more accessible and understandable to the professionals who by their choice of specialty, namely working with the international students, tended to be more relational than scientific. Finally, these measurement tools enabled this writer to enlist the commitment of parents and students for the following school year when this project would be re-implemented.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem confronting this writer in this setting was that the foreign students enrolled in the ESL Program at this school were isolated in the school community, had few, if any, American friends, and were not learning about American culture. A literature search provided a wide array of possible solutions to this problem.

Virtually all of the literature surveyed suggested implicitly or explicitly that foreign students learning a second language as well as a second culture would need the direct assistance of adults. Pfleger (1985) and Careaga (1988) advocated communicating with and involving the parents and /or guardians of the ESL students as much as possible, keeping them apprised of goals, problems, and successes of the program. Pfleger's research (1985) came from involvement in a government sponsored program training refugees for entrance to American secondary schools, and while this program worked with foreign students who were still residing in their native countries, thus making contact with the parents of these prospective American students much more feasible simply because of the proximity of the parents, the important idea from this source, namely, maintaining close and frequent contact with parents, was supported in the findings of Kato and Kato (1992), McAdams (1993), and Condon (1984) among others. However, many of the ESL students at this school did not have guardians who lived close by and contacting their parents in their native countries presented challenges of language (faxes and letters needed to be carefully yet simply worded to avoid errors in translation) as well

as time difference (phone calls convenient to them needed to be made in the middle of the night from the United States). Still, it was thought that in lieu of the parents or guardians of the ESL students, American parents could make a significant contribution.

Brown (1986) and Boyer (1996) suggested that the integration of ESL students into the American school community would have to revolve around increased and enhanced communication. Such was the belief when this school attempted in prior years to integrate the ESL students into the school community, but, perhaps because the prior efforts were loosely planned and relied upon the honorable motivation of teachers who volunteered in one case and students who volunteered in another attempt, the efforts floundered for the expressed reason that a lack of time did not permit follow through. Still, communicating often and consistently with teachers and students who interacted regularly with the ESL students, and particularly, as the work of McKeon (1994) alluded to, increasing and improving the amount of collaboration between the ESL teachers, especially the Director of the ESL Program, and content-based teachers in the disciplines of mathematics, science, computers, and art, was a crucial ingredient to any serious and prolonged attempt to create a truly multicultural community. If the ESL students could be included in the communication, it seemed logical to assume that not only would they receive additional practice in their use of English, but they might also feel an integral part of the very program designed for their inclusion.

Ligutom-Kimura (1995), Copeland (1995), and Brosnan (1996) found that efforts toward the integration of ESL students were best advanced through one-on-one or small group sessions, a philosophy entirely possible in this

school setting where the numbers were small. This corresponded with the findings of Hong (1996) who reported that Asians in this particular school setting liked to 'hang out' with an American rather than with Americans. Ladson-Billings (1994) and McCall (1995) concurred with the findings of Hong (1996) regarding the racist, stereotypical attitudes and preconceptions that members of both student groups as well as American teachers brought to the acculturation process, and all agreed that individual and small group attention was key, despite the predisposition toward larger group identity that Asian students brought with them from their educational experiences in their own countries. Ligutom-Kimura (1995) further recommended employing culturally sensitive guidelines when involving foreign students in physical education activities. These guidelines included avoiding public reprimands or corrections in language and tone that could prove to be embarrassing to international students and not totally comprehended by them.

Guild (1994) expanded on this idea by proposing to educate teachers, and this writer added other American adults such as coaches, dormitory counselors, and food service personnel, in addition to American students and American parents who might be involved in a specific program of acculturation, about the connection(s) between specific cultures and specific learning style patterns and interaction patterns. Such in-service education had been done at this school in the past, but the targets were primarily teachers.

Finally, MacDonald and MacDonald (1991) and Griffin and Sherriffs (1994) suggested using the medium of film to teach American values, and, at the same time, provide excellent opportunity for practice in listening, speaking (discussing the films), reading (transcripts of selected dialogue), and writing.

Such a vehicle as film viewings would provide a focus for mixed groups of Americans and ESL students.

This writer had generated other ideas through his exposure to the literature, through consultations and interviews with the Directors of this and other ESL programs, and through his own experience in teaching ESL students in the summer program immediately preceding the implementation of this Practicum. These ideas included a heavy use of journal writing and a redesign of the previously tried buddy system into a conversational partner program which was more focused with respect to time guidelines, durations, and topics.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The proposed solution drew upon the opinions of experts in the field, incorporated original thinking on the part of this writer, utilizing his 29 years of teaching and administrative experience in education, and met the goals and objectives established in this Practicum. The solution selected was comprised of 4 main parts with a 5th part secondary, yet necessary, to the process.

Using the work of Brosnan (1996), Copeland (1995), Ligutom-Kimura (1995), and Hong (1996), this writer established a conversational partner program. For each ESL student, an American conversation partner was selected in the first month of the new school year. This was done in consultation with the Director of the ESL Program and the Director of Admissions, two individuals who knew both the ESL students and the prospective American partners well. The conversation partners met every week for at least 20 minutes, potentially during lunch period, and discussed a topic set by this writer. Each partner then summarized the contents of the conversation in a journal entry and added any personal observations. This

writer read and responded to these journals on a weekly basis. This program met the needs of the ESL students to improve their speaking and listening skills in a one-on-one setting and maximized the opportunity for them to make an American friend. In addition, it provided this writer an opportunity to teach the ESL students American protocols for initiating conversations with American students.

The 2nd part of the selected solution, incorporating the work of Careaga (1988), Condon (1984), Kato and Kato (1992), McAdams (1993), and Pfleger (1985), was the establishment of a program whereby the parents of American students at the school invited ESL students to their homes for an overnight stay with the purpose of sharing American culture. The overnight stays minimally occurred once per trimester, but ideally, once per month. The ESL students as well as the host American parents were requested to keep a journal and make an entry after each visit (the ESL students could use their conversation partner journals), and this writer read and responded to each entry. This incorporated the parents, albeit American parents, in the process of cultural exchange.

Utilizing the writings of Boyer (1996) and Brown (1986), who advocated increased and enhanced communication on the part of all concerned with the education of ESL students, and especially incorporating the work of Griffin and Sherriffs (1994) and MacDonald and MacDonald (1991), this writer initiated a film discussion group for teams of ESL and American students which met every two weeks at the home of this writer and near the end of the Practicum at the homes of other faculty members. This 3rd part of the solution promoted small group discussions and served as a vehicle for teaching American culture.

The 4th part of the selected solution drew on the experience of this writer

who spent 27 of his 29 years in education working at private boarding schools. The object of this part was to plan and implement special weekend outings to be conducted by this writer and other faculty every month. These outings were meant to be required for ESL students as a part of their program at the school, and the students were meant to be required to invite an American partner (preferably their conversation partner when possible). The outings were designed to expose the ESL students to yet another aspect of American culture.

In addition to the aforementioned key elements of the solution strategy, this writer encouraged ESL students to join additional clubs or activities beyond those required of all students, assisted the Director of the ESL Program in finding time for consultation with subject matter teachers in the school who taught ESL students, in accordance with the suggestions of Hong (1996), Ladson-Billings (1994), Ligutom-Kimura (1995), and McCall (1995), was willing to assist in a special in-service meeting , as Guild (1994) proposed, with all of the adults at the school who interacted with the ESL students, and was willing to help with preparations and the implementation of the International Day activities.

Report of Action Taken

The Practicum began at the beginning of October, 1996 and continued through May, 1997. During the first week of implementation this writer renewed permission to conduct this Practicum from the Head of School, the Director of the ESL Program, the Dean of Students, the Athletic Director, and the Dean of Academic Affairs (whose support and cooperation would be necessary to exempt students from a night of study hall in order to attend the film discussion groups every other week). This writer also met with the President of the Home

and School Association (the Parent-Teacher Association would be the equivalent in some other school settings) to begin the selection process for American host families. The plan to conduct orientation work with the ESL students and their parents or guardians was not put into action since the Practicum did not officially begin until 5 weeks after the beginning of the school year. Plans were made at this time for the special activities for the ESL students and their American partners, but these monthly activities had to be shortened, and finally, eliminated as the Practicum evolved. Neither group of students could afford the time to participate in these activities. A meeting was then held with the ESL students to explain the project to them. Next, this writer began to select American conversation partners.

In order to avoid the possibility of cultural impropriety and to avoid the complications a romance might bring, it was decided to solicit partners who were of the same gender. A public announcement at a regularly scheduled all-school assembly invited any American student interested in participating in the conversational partner program to sign up with this writer. Drawing from this list of interested American students, which numbered 22, and cross referencing the list and sometimes actually supplementing it with a hand selected list chosen jointly by this writer and the Head of the ESL Program and the Dean of Admissions, this writer personally invited 16 American students who seemed to meet one or more of the following criteria:

-demonstrated academic responsibility at school in the previous year

-demonstrated social skills

-had shown some previous interest in international students

-had a warm and loving personality.

Once the American students were decided upon, and their final agreement procured to talk with their partner each week for 20 minutes, for the entire 8 months, they were then assigned to a specific international student as their conversation partner. Those students who were not chosen were placed on a waiting list and given an explanation that they would be called upon to participate should vacancies arise. The first topic was then typed, copied, and distributed to each student involved, and this prong of the Practicum was underway.

The topics varied from week to week; they were designed to enable and promote an exchange of culturally pertinent information as well as stimulate thoughtfulness about value laden issues (see Appendix D for a complete listing of the topics used). Because it became too difficult to see all 34 people involved in this part of the project every week, a common drop-off location, the home base of the international students aptly named the international suite, was quickly announced after the first 3 weeks. Here, students picked up the new topic sheet, and at the same time, submitted or retrieved their journals. This was a well chosen spot because the American students rarely if ever ventured into this space prior to this project. Interestingly, the students, both American and international alike, requested open topics rather than always relying on topics chosen by this writer. Such a request was granted, and the self-guided conversations were, for the most part, interesting and perceptive. Students commented to this writer that the conversations based on open topics lasted longer because the students felt comfortable to shift from one topic to another as the flow of conversation so led them. Some students avoided noting in their journal entries every topic covered in a particular conversation or every nuance

of their conversation. One such omission was memorable to this male writer in a conversation 2 female students journaled about their dream men; they both rather discreetly wrote that the conversation continued to investigate other requisite areas.

Not all of the partners proved to be compatible. One American student, female, was struggling to meet commitments in a number of areas of school and was unable to manage her time in such a way that her requirements for her core courses were met, let alone that the conversations with her international partner were completed. After four incomplete assignments in a row, this writer met with these two conversational partners, separately, and agreed to replace the American partner for reason of time constraints. The new partner for the international girl, chosen from the wait list, worked out very well. One other student was unable to fulfill the weekly conversations, and this was threatening a second phase of this Practicum, the overnight stays at at the homes of American students. Each of the partners in this untenable situation claimed irreconcilable differences of opinion and personality conflict in addition to an inability to find a mutually convenient time in which to hold their conversation. In a subsequent meeting with each girl, again separately, this writer discovered that they truly disliked each other, were growing more apart rather than closer together, and that, in a manner of speaking, they sought a divorce. The American student simply wanted out of the program completely, and the international student requested being paired with another American student who had been placed on the wait list. This replacement also worked extremely well, the American student was very eager to befriend the international student, and these two remained active partners until the end of the program.

Interestingly, midway through the Practicum, 1 other foreign student who was enrolled at the school during the 1996-1997 school year, an 11th grade female from Germany, though she was not enrolled in the ESL Program because she spoke excellent English, requested to be a part of this conversational partner program. She was assigned an American partner and that pairing lasted until the end with outstanding journal entries.

The chief check on whether the conversations were actually being conducted was the journal entries that the students were required to write and submit to this writer on a weekly basis. It was clear from the number of journals that did not come in from week to week that the conversation partners were not always able to hold their weekly conversations or at least they were not always able to complete and submit the written summaries of their conversations. The actual numbers of journals completed will be reported and discussed in Chapter V of this report, but there several courses of action taken to encourage the students to converse. Because this resistance seemed more problematic with the beginning and intermediate speakers of English, a level of proficiency determined at the beginning of the school year through testing administered by the ESL Department, and because these students in particular seemed extremely motivated to achieve high grades academically, claiming the need to study and complete homework as a common reason why they could not spare the time to converse with their American partners, this writer convinced the ESL teachers to award credit for a test score in their writing course for completed journal entries. This writer and the ESL teachers felt that by awarding a test grade based on the percent of journals completed, for example 10 journals completed on 10 topics assigned would result in an easy 100% test grade,

the incentive for the international students to be proactive would be raised. In fact, this strategy was effective for awhile, but only for the ESL students. The English teachers for the American students would not agree to such a plan as it would put other students in their classes who were not involved in this Practicum at a disadvantage. Consequently, the American halves of the partnerships were not receiving positive reinforcement of a tangible nature, and they took the initiative to arrange for a meeting time to converse either from a sense of honor about fulfilling their commitment to this writer or from the pleasure of a growing friendship with their international partner. This burgeoning friendship was the case primarily with ESL students who were advanced in their English speaking and listening skills or who were seen as "cool" for their athletic or artistic talent. Other courses of action to increase the involvement in this phase included encouragement from this writer, both privately with individuals and publicly through announcements at school assemblies, urgings from the advisors of all the participants, and a pep talk from the Headmaster worked for a week or two, but, ultimately, 'talking detentions,' as they were called, had to be threatened. With the prospect of losing free time, many of the partners began to regularly meet at lunch or dinner to conduct their conversations. Despite the fact that the journals were not written and submitted regularly, a great deal of conversation occurred.

The second phase of this Practicum required each of the ESL students to stay overnight at the home of an American student 3 times during the 1996-1997 school year, once each trimester. The selection process to choose American parents who would agree to host these overnight stays began in the first week of implementation with a meeting with the President of the Home and

School Association, an organization equivalent to the Parent-Teachers's Associations common in other schools, especially public schools. After hearing an explanation of the Practicum and its purpose, the President suggested 5 parents likely to be eager to host international students for overnight stays, and it was agreed that this writer should attend the first Home and School meeting in mid-October to address those parents in attendance. This writer was able to confirm a commitment from the 5 sets of parents suggested by the President of the Home and School Association and recruit an additional 5 sets of parents at this meeting. In subsequent phone calls, the other 7 sets of parents agreed to host 3 overnight stays for their son's or daughter's conversational partner. Six of the original 10 sets of parents also had a son or daughter who had agreed to be a conversation [partner. Only 4 of the American parents' children were not already involved in the Practicum through the conversation partner phase, and these were necessary because some of the conversation partners lived in different states far from the school and they went home infrequently themselves.

The arrangement of the date and time for the overnight stays was left to the American students to finalize. They needed to coordinate a time that was convenient for themselves, their international guest, and their American parents. This proved a difficult logistical problem for many of the American students involved. Finding a time when 3 or 4 people would be free and willing to host an event required an expertise in planning most of these adolescents did not possess. In fact, many of the American partners who were chosen to participate were diagnosed as learning different, and it was this difference (which some refer to as a learning disability) that made them personable and friendly, verbal and social enough to have been selected as good candidates for integrating the

international students into the mainstream of the school in the first place. However, this learning difference is often accompanied by a distinct difficulty in planning and prioritizing time, Furthermore, since learning different students have learning different parents, the parents too were less than efficient about inviting or urging the invitation of their international guests. The ESL students, on the other hand, cited a variety of reasons why they could not stay overnight at their American host's house. These included but were not limited to having too much homework, having a new project due, or a new paper assigned, sickness, a scheduled TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language, a standardized language proficiency test), being too tired, and having a scheduled sports event or a make-up sports event. On some occasions, the ESL students canceled their overnight arrangements at the last moment, leaving their American hosts frustrated and subsequent plans more difficult to arrange. When this happened, this writer intervened immediately upon learning of the cancellation to assess the reason for the cancellation, instruct the ESL student about the importance of keeping appointments, and offering explanation to the hosting American family. In all but one case of this last minute balking, the stay could be arranged for a later time during the same day or the next day. In that one case, alienation and time constraints on the part of the American parents, the American student, or the international student did not allow an overnight stay at all.

The parents all had a verbal and written explanation of what was expected of them in terms of providing a cultural experience for their overnight guests. A simple family dinner, a trip to a relative's house, a shopping expedition to a local store, a quick tour of their place of employment, a viewing

of a family photograph album, or anything they could think of that would be simple to do but educational for their guest would suffice as a culturally enhancing experience. This writer called the hosting parents after a known overnight stay to thank them and see how the stay went. Other parents were contacted by phone several times throughout the Practicum, particularly when the overnight stays were overdue, to re-explain the nature of the culturally enriching experience and offer suggestions on how that could be accomplished. For some parents it seemed helpful to suggest to them that the event could center around having their guest help with a chore around the house or even help make the dinner and then stay the night and be brought back to school the next morning. This writer was able to gain permission from the Director of the ESL Program and the Dean of students to permit these overnight stays to occur on Sunday nights in order to allow the ESL student to be picked up late Sunday afternoon, have dinner with their American hosts, and then study with their American hosting student, sleep overnight and be brought back to school on Monday morning in time for classes. With all of these concessions, some of the ESL students were not able to experience even one overnight stay.

The next phase of the action taken by this writer was the institution of a film discussion group. This occurred regularly every two weeks at the home of this writer. It provided the ESL students in particular with an opportunity to get off campus and experience the layout and decor of yet another American home, in itself a culturally broadening experience, and especially so since this writer's home is a passive solar house with an Americanized Japanese flavor, and thereby ripe with educational opportunity.

The students were chosen on the basis of the film to be viewed whenever possible, but all of the conversation partners were invited for one discussion group at least. Other students in the school were then invited at subsequent discussion groups, thus widening the circle of acquaintances for the ESL students. At each meeting, the students, originally numbering 10, but for the sake of comfortable seating and viewing on the rather small 14 inch screen of the television set, the number was reduced to 8, the students were engaged in conversation before the movie was begun. A house tour was always offered and the ESL students almost always chose to look again even though they had taken the tour before. This time walking around the house enabled this writer to make sure everybody knew each other's name and allowed everybody to tell of something that had recently happened to them for better or worse in the past several days. When the group sat down for the film, and after the first snacks were offered, this writer was able to pose introductory questions for discussion. The film was stopped at various times throughout the evening for further discussion of at least for the main snack, often pizza or shrimp or hors d'oeuvres that could be prepared ahead of time and simply heated in the oven. The students received time at the end of the film to talk among themselves without this writer leading them. The students were then asked to help clean up before being driven back to school.

The films themselves were chosen with 2 criteria in mind, something that would sustain the interest of adolescents and something that would imbue some element of American culture, but they also had a time restriction (100 minutes or less was best) and the students generally did not like black and white films. With action, horror, special effects, sex,humor, surprise, and a

strong relational story line(especially when the discussion group was a woman's night) comprising the elements that seemed to sustain interest among the viewers, and courage, individualism, honesty, persistence, and love of the unknown as the chief American values expressed, the most successful films included the following titles: Quest for Fire, The Gods Must be Crazy, Ethan Frome, Dead Poet Society, Marty, K2 ,Thunderheart, Enchanted April (used for the all women's night), and White Squall (used for the all men's night).

The fourth phase of the action taken involved organizing and offering a special outing for the ESL students and potentially their American conversation partners once per month. This was done with the intention of providing yet another opportunity for the ESL students to taste American culture in a fun way. Because the ESL students had complained of a loss of study time from the other parts of this Practicum, it was decided to make attendance at these special monthly activities optional. Activities offered included a dinner trip to a sushi restaurant, canoeing, ice skating, bowling, a trip to a local flea market, a trip to a huge indoor shopping mart, several day trips to different parts of New York City and to Philadelphia, and a culminating all day trip during the school week, for which attendance was required and to which the American conversation partners who had the most conversations complete were invited, to explore Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. This last activity and the activities which provided an opportunity to shop seemed to be the most popular. Interestingly, the ESL students, like their American counterparts used a great portion of the weekend time available to catch up on sleep. They, like the American students, preferred not to attend a function that required an early departure on a Saturday or a Sunday. In general, they seemed to prefer activities lasting only a couple

of hours. It was also interesting to note that among the ESL students, the girls tended to stay together in groups and the boys did the same. This seemed to hold true in their choice of seats on the school vans as well as their groupings when we arrived at the destination. It was very infrequent that the Americans invited on these excursions would attend. It became clear that both the Americans and the ESL students preferred autonomy on their weekends.

This writer became quite close to the ESL students, some more so than others, over the course of the Practicum and he was able to advise them to take a risk and join other clubs or activities as the year progressed. One ESL student, who enrolled in January, chose this writer as his advisor. Because this advisor-advisee relationship existed, and this ESL student experienced grave difficulty in his mainstream Biology course, this writer was able to arrange a consultation between the Biology teacher, the ESL student, the Director of the ESL Program and himself in order to design a program of one-on-one instruction to review vocabulary crucial to the course. Subject matter teachers needed to have this kind of direct and regular communication in order to problem solve and maximize their effectiveness with the ESL students in their courses. It was unfortunate that no school wide in-service meeting could be scheduled. Such an orientation meeting could prove to have clear benefits to the adults at the school who work with the ESL students. This writer did make special efforts to talk to the kitchen staff and the maintenance staff to alert them to customs of culture that they may not have been aware of, and the results of this effort was clear . The kitchen staff was able to provide more of the preferred foods of the ESL students and the maintenance staff was able to be more patient and pictorial in their communications with the ESL students.

The international day that the school had scheduled in years past was replaced this year with an international meal during an all day, all school conference on multiculturalism. The organization of this day had been previously planned and there was no role for this writer. However, because the speakers and session leaders who came to the school this day knew of the school's commitment to multiculturalism and they were informed about the Practicum being implemented, the school was invited to participate in the first annual International Day Celebration sponsored by the county and scheduled for a date in September of 1997. This writer along with three other adults at the school formed a task force to recruit both American and international students from the school to help organize and carry out the International Day Celebration event to which some 5,000 to 10,000 visitors were expected in the Fall of 1997.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

A problem existed in this private, co-educational, college preparatory school in the northeast section of the United States in that the foreign students enrolled in the ESL Program at this school were isolated in the school community, had few, if any, American friends, and were not learning about American culture. Sixteen international students were enrolled in the ESL Program and a 17th student enrolled midway through the Practicum implementation.

The solution took the form of a four pronged approach. In the first part a conversation partner program was instituted in which all of the ESL students were paired with an American partner and expected to conduct a weekly conversation of 20 to 30 minutes duration on a topic assigned by this writer. Then each participant was required to write a journal entry summarizing their conversation and adding any personal commentary, submit the journal to this writer who would then comment and return the journal for the next weeks conversation. The second part required the ESL students to stay overnight at the home of an American student three times during the school year. During these overnight stays the international students would participate in some culturally enriching experience led by the American parents. The third part of the solution involved the ESL students participating in a film discussion group held at the home of this writer every other week. Four ESL students at a

time were invited to view a film, partake of a special snack, and participate in a discussion with four Americans who were also invited. This afforded these international students the opportunity to practice their listening and talking skills in a small group setting. The group mix was carefully chosen each session to ensure a match of interests to the subject matter of the films whenever possible , and to provide a student from the ESL Program who was competent enough with English to serve as a translator to those less competent. The final part of the formal solution was to plan and offer special activities for the ESL students on a monthly basis. This special activity was designed to supplement their exposure to American culture and custom.

In addition, this writer encouraged all of the ESL students to join clubs or activities beyond what was required of them and all students at the school. Finally, this writer also advocated for the ESL students, assisted in establishing and maintaining communications between these students and subject matter teachers throughout the school, served as advisor to one ESL student, and helped to educate adults on the kitchen and maintenance staffs understand the customs and needs of the ESL students. Through this solution strategy, three specific outcomes were expected.

The first outcome originally stated that 13 of 16 ESL students would claim at least one close friend (defined as one whom the ESL student felt s/he could talk to if s/he were upset about something). With the enrollment of a 17th student in the ESL Program, the numbers in this outcome were changed to 13 of 17. This outcome was measured by an essay in the form of a letter assigned in the ESL writing class. The students were instructed to write a letter to their parents describing the American friend or friends they had made during this

past school year, and to talk about at least two activities they have enjoyed doing with their new friends. They were further instructed to include any things they had learned about American culture. A copy of each letter was given to this writer for study and then returned to the writers in order to preserve their privacy.

All 17 students were able to write such a letter although 5 of the 17 named this writer as their only American friend, and another 3 of the ESL students named one or the other of the ESL teachers as one of their American friends in addition to other American students. Interestingly, 12 of the 17 ESL students named their conversation partner as their close American friend. When naming two activities that he or she had done with their new American friends, 13 of 17 ESL students were able to name two activities that they thought were fun and/or rewarding. The top five activities in terms of frequency of appearance in the letters were as follows: having conversations with their American partners (mentioned 13 times), going on trips together (the trip to see the Statue of Liberty was the most often mentioned, followed by shopping trips, restaurant trips, and trips to the city, both New York City and Philadelphia) (10 times), cooking (6 times), watching school sports events together (3 times) , and staying overnight (2 times). This first outcome was met.

For the second outcome, 13 of 16, and by the end of the Practicum, 13 of 17 ESL students were expected to be involved members of a group club or activity beyond those required of all students. This outcome was measured through the administration of a questionnaire (see Appendix B) to each adult leader of an activity in which an ESL student was enrolled, but only the activities that were beyond the required activities. There were only 9 ESL students who

participated in activities beyond what was required of them. These students were involved in the dormitory proctor program, the animal rights group, the arts festival, the International Day in the planning stages for next school year, ESL fund raising, and the talent assemblies. Questionnaires administered to the six faculty members who led these activities responded favorably about the ESL students who participated. Table 1 shows the questions posed on the questionnaires. The numbers adjacent to the choices of "always," "usually," " sometimes," and "never" indicate how many of the teachers evaluated the ESL student's involvement with each of these aforementioned descriptors. It was clear from these evaluations that the ESL students who did participate in activities beyond those required of all students did so with dedication and a high level of involvement. Still, the number of ESL students participating in this way was not high enough to warrant considering this outcome met. Despite the high marks for participation once the ESL students were engaged in these additional activities, this outcome was not met.

For the third outcome, 16 of the 16 ESL students, and with the additional enrollment of one ESL student at the midpoint of the Practicum, 17 of the 17 ESL students would have had the opportunity to participate in the family life of an American family and gain an understanding of American culture at least one time per trimester in the first and second trimesters of the 1996-1997 school year. While all 17 of the ESL students had the opportunity to participate in the family life of an American family from the viewpoint that a commitment was given to this writer by the American parent (or, in one case, an aunt), not all invitations were extended to the ESL students themselves. Table 2 shows statistics for the overnight visits and results of the two sets of interviews.

Table 1

Results from Questionnaires for Faculty Leading Activities Involving ESL Students[a]

1. Attendance at the activity:	Always(8)[b]	Usually(1)	Sometimes	Never
2. He/she voiced opinions:	Always(7)	Usually(2)	Sometimes	Never
3. He/she made suggestions:	Always(7)	Usually(2)	Sometimes	Never
4. He/she expended time (took minutes, wrote letters, made posters, helped fund raise, or made announcements about meetings or the business of this activity)	Always(6)	Usually(3)	Sometimes	Never
5 Would you like to have this person in the same or another activity?	Always(9)	Usually	Sometimes	Never

Note. a. Six different teachers were administered this questionnaire , but some of the teachers had more than one ESL student in their activity.

b. A total of nine ESL students participated in an extra activity. The totals for each question should be nine.

Table 2

Statistics on Overnight Stays and Interviews of the Hosts and the Hosted

Target number of overnight stays...34

Actual number of overnight stays.....7

American parent interviews (hosts) Questions (summarized)	Responses Positive	Negative	No Response
1. Feel comfortable with the student?	9	0	8
2. Taught any American culture?	8	9	0
3. Learn any international culture?	8	9	0
4. Change any part of hosting stays?	17	0	0
5. Willing to serve as host again?	10	7	0
ESL student interviews (hosted) Questions (summarized)			
1. Feel comfortable with hosting family?	7	1	9
2. Learn any American culture?	9	8	0
3. Teach any of your native culture?	6	11	0
4. Change any part of staying overnight?	7	10	0
5. Continue visiting same family?	5	10	2

It was clear from the gross difference between the targeted number of overnight stays and the actual overnight stays that this outcome was not met. However, this writer conducted the interviews and compiled the responses into categories as indicated in Table 2. The "positive" responses generally referred to a yes answer, the "negative" responses translated to a no answer, and the "no response" was an indication that the visit never occurred and consequently no response was possible. For the first question regarding comfort level, the listed answers were self explanatory. In the second questions which asked for the respondent to name three elements of culture that they learned or taught, a yes response was registered if only one or two items were described, reasoning that if any one example could be listed as an element of culture learned or taught, then there were probably other perhaps more minor pieces of cultural information exchanged as well. Because the third question did not require a specific number of cultural elements learned or taught, the positive or negative applied neatly. The fourth question in both interviews asked if there were any changes that needed to be made with this overnight stay phase of the Practicum. The fact that all of the parents recommended some change and only seven of the students responded positively was interesting, and the variety in the responses was equally fascinating. These will be discussed in the next subheading of this report. Finally, the fifth question resulted in three more positive responses than there were actual visits. It would seem that three American parents who hosted no actual overnight stay by an ESL student would be willing to try to do so next year. While this third outcome must be registered as unmet, there was much reason to take heart with the responses to the interview questions.

Discussion

The fact that two out of three outcomes were unmet did not mean that the Practicum was unsuccessful. A closer look behind some of the numbers pointed to an opposite conclusion. First, all 17 of the ESL students were able to name an American friend. The use of the conversational partner program and the film discussion enabled the ESL students to practice both their listening and speaking skills enough extra time to break down some of the barriers which discourage friendship, impatience, miscommunication, and insensitivity. While the statistics of the conversation program could be noted with sadness, only 57% of the possible conversations were journaled, that statistic could also be observed from a more optimistic perspective, 628 half hours of conversation occurred during this Practicum, an impressive 314 hours of Americans and international students sitting down together exchanging viewpoints about a wide variety of topics. There were 42 hours of international students watching and discussing films with their American counterparts. There were an additional untold number of hours of common experiences orchestrated by the other two prongs of this Practicum that resulted in all of the ESL students naming Americans as close friends. Common experiences and regular communication did seem to enable students from different cultures to become close.

The second outcome, striving to involve 13 of 17 ESL students in additional extracurricular activities, was ambitious. This went against the deeply ingrained cultural heritage these students brought with them, namely an intense focus on the important goal of achievement in education. To fritter away valuable study time on leadership or a display of artistic talent or fighting for animal rights was to toy with family, even national honor. Yet 9 of the 17

ESL students risked very important principles to gain respect in a distinctly American way, beyond the classroom. Furthermore, these ESL students devoted themselves to causes beyond the classroom while maintaining high levels of achievement in the classroom. In any given trimester, over 80 % of the ESL students earned honors or high honors accolades. The more the ESL students engaged or involved themselves in activities above the requisites, the more they broadened their sphere of acquaintance and increased their circle of influence. The success these students experienced in these additional activities sparked self-confidence, which in turn generated creativity. These students could now be heard to talk of plans they have for next year when their activity could now do this much more or go that much further. Their enthusiasm and footholds will likely attract more participation. The school community could well profit from the full participation of this faction of the population.

Perhaps the most interesting material for discussion came from the interviews of both the hosting American parents and the hosted ESL students. In response to the first question regarding the comfort level with the parents or with the student assigned, several of both sets of interviewees suggested that not enough was done to acquaint the hosts with the hosted. Several parents recommended, and, of course this qualified as a suggestion for change in the overnight stay phase of the program as requested in question number four, that there should be an introductory dinner or some such function to kick off the program, introduce American parents to their international house guests, and explain the program thoroughly to all concerned all at once. This writer would even go so far as to invite the parents and/or the guardians of the ESL students to this opening dinner. Another suggestion common among the American

parents and the ESL students was setting a specific weekend, even a Sunday night, as the designated overnight stay date in each trimester. This would simplify the sometimes arduous task of deciding a mutually convenient time for three or four people. One other suggestion from an ESL student to invite two ESL students to the same house would half the number of American parents needed to run the program and, perhaps more importantly, provide the students with a support system to ease the frightening prospect of having to speak English and only English for an extended period of time. While this was not specifically mentioned as a reason why so few of the overnight stays were actually accomplished, this might in fact be at the crux of the matter. That several ESL students would cancel plans on late notice was indicative of serious unease at the prospect of staying overnight at an American home. Every effort should be made to enhance familiarity and and dispel the fears of the unknown.

Another area needing discussion was the parent responses to the question about whether they would be willing to serve as hosts again next year. It was not surprising that those parents who actually hosted an ESL student would be willing to repeat the experience, and it was not even surprising to hear from parents who suffered a twinge of guilt at their lack of follow-through with their prospective international guest this year, but one parent whose son or daughter was graduating this year felt strongly enough about the program as to open her house again. This was exactly the kind of reward that this kind of program should offer to those who are broad minded and generous enough of spirit to be lifetime learners along with their children. To learn of this type of dedication was part of the reason the interviews were conducted at all in the

face of such overwhelming non-compliance. Of course, to have canceled the interviews would have been unprofessional and shortsighted.

One other area of interest that emerged from the two sets of interviews was the list of cultural revelations the ESL students noted. These included in no special order the following quotations:

* Americans keep their houses so cold.

* The room I stayed in had hundreds of bugs (lady bugs).

* They were very kind.

* They had several cats and big dogs which drank out of the toilet. This made me very uncomfortable.

* The house was very dirty.

* When the husband's friends came over, the wife was sleeping, not serving and cooking as in my country.

* I do not understand American life. Sometimes you can do something and sometimes you cannot do something you expect you would be able to do.

* Parents limit the time when kids return at night.

* American houses have two living rooms.

* Americans do not care if all of the family is not there for dinner.

* The room is much colder than my room at home.

* I never see Americans living with grandfather or grandmother.

* Americans commonly have two or three pets.

* Americans like to talk a lot.

* They like to have parties.

* They like opera and they love plants.

* The father shops for groceries with the mom.

* Americans don't waste anything.When these observations of the ESL students were displayed in a group, they struck a chord of familiarity, at least to this writer. Yes, we Americans are like this to a large degree, curious.

Recommendations

Several recommendations stemmed from the implementation of this Practicum. They were as follows:

1. Educators who wish to replicate this solution should begin at the very beginning of the school year. Opportunities for orientation were missed simply because the timing was delayed.

2. Provide an opening ceremony, perhaps a dinner, to introduce all the American and international participants, explain the program and its goals, and answer questions.

3. Establish a specific time for the conversations to take place with journal writing immediately afterward. This would ease the burden students had to match schedules and find a regular and mutually convenient time to converse.

4. Change conversation partners every trimester. This would increase dramatically the number of American students the ESL students are exposed to.

5. Reduce the film discussion meetings to once per month. This would ease the loss of study time the international students hated to give up, especially the students who had English proficiency at the beginner level.

6. Eliminate the special activities on the weekends. Adolescent ESL students need time to catch up on their sleep and they need down time as well.

Dissemination

This writer plans to disseminate the results of this Practicum to the professional staff at this school, to the Directors of ESL Programs at other private independent schools in this tri-state area, and to ESL professionals in the local public schools. In addition, the essence of this report should be summarized in an article of 10 to 15 pages and submitted to the journal entitled TESOL (Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages) Quarterly . Publication information is readily available in each issue of TESOL Quarterly.

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Appendix A

ESL Student Essay

The ESL teachers will instruct their ESL students to compose an essay in the form of a letter to their parents in their native country. The assignment will be issued as follows:

> Write a letter home in which you describe the American friend or friends you have made this year (you may include adults as well as students if you think of them as close friends, a close friend would be someone you feel you could talk to if you were upset about something). Include in your letter at least 2 activities you have felt happy about doing with your new friend or friends. Also mention any things you learned about American culture.

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Activity Leaders

Questionnaire for Faculty Leading Activities Involving ESL Students

Name of Activity_____

Your Name_____

Name of ESL Student_____

Directions:

Please circle the most apt description. Feel free to add a comment, if appropriate.

1. Attendance at the activity:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
2. He/she voiced opinions:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
3. He/she made suggestions:	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
4. He/she expended time (took minutes, wrote letters, made posters, helped fund raise, or made announcements about meetings or the business of this activity)	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
5 Would you like to have this person in the same or another activity?	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never

Appendix C

Interview Questions

for

Host American Families

and

Hosted ESL Students

Interview Questions for Host American Families

1. Did you feel comfortable with the student who was assigned to you?
2. Name 3 elements of American culture you feel your student learned from you.
3. Did you learn any culture from your student's native country? Explain.
4. Would you change any aspects of this program to host ESL students for overnight stays?
5. Would you be willing to serve as an American host family again? Explain.

Interview Questions for Hosted ESL Students

1. Did you feel comfortable with the hosting American family assigned to you?
2. Name 3 elements of American culture you learned from your hosting family.
3. Did you teach your hosting family any culture from your native country? Explain.
4. Would you change any aspects of this program to stay overnight at an American family's home?
5. Would you like to continue visiting this family next year or would you rather visit another family?

Appendix D

Conversational Partner Topics

The following are summations of the conversation topics used. Usually, the topic took a side of one page and was accompanied with examples and a reminder of the due date for the journal entries on the current topic.

1. Choose five to ten descriptor words to introduce yourself to your partner. To describe myself, I might use artist, kayaker, specialist, solar home owner, dancer, adventurer, graduate student.
2. Something you are passionate about...something you like very very much or something you really really hate.
3. Your taste and preference in music.
4. A member of your family that you feel very close to.
5. A place that gave or continues to give your spirit a lift.
6. What does it mean to be a friend, a close friend, an acquaintance.
7. Your predictions on how you will do on the upcoming examinations.
8. Three things you are thankful for during this holiday time.
9. What is the best gift you have ever given and the best you have received.
10. Describe in detail where you think you will be in the year 2000.
11. New York City...your experience with it ...actual or dreamed about.
12. What happened to you over the long Christmas holiday.
13. What do you think about ecology and are you ecologically responsible?
14. React to a newspaper article about a Japanese beautician boot camp.
15. What are the effects of money in a society on opportunity and expectations?
16. What do you think about the new laws regarding cigarette smoking.
17. The worst weather related experience of your life.
18. How could this conversational partner program work better?

19. Pets. You decide the direction to go with this topic.
20. Grandparents.
21. Open topic...your choice.
22. What do you know about what is supposed to happen before, during, and after the prom.
23. What are your feelings about same sex dating, relationships, and marriage?
24. The animal you would most like to be.
25. Is there life after death or do we die and that's it?

Note: There were seven weeks during which there was no new topic given because the school was not in session or because the students were consumed with examinations.

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