The Carroll Academy Library for International Studies runs a series of humanities lessons each year that integrates the school’s magnet lessons on International Studies with the curriculum in order to provide meaningful experiences for our students while helping the students grow in their cultural experiences. The library strives to educate the students about other cultures in order for the students to better understand themselves, others, and their place in the world. Some of the programs were developed to help provide a culminating activity to the unit of study for the magnet program at Carroll while enriching the student’s visual and artistic experiences. In addition many of the programs were developed to emphasize right brain thinking skills and to reinforce skills taught in the classroom. These “Learning about the World with a Global Perspective” activities were the backbone of library programming for the 2007-2008 school year.

Prior to the 2007-2008 school year, the International Studies Committee, which is made up of teachers and administrators from our school, meet to plan activities for the year that expand the student’s knowledge of world cultures. The goal of the library is to integrate the library’s activities with these ideas in mind. In addition prior to the beginning of each project, I met with grade level teachers to discuss the project and provide any needed materials and assistance.

We start off in August with a unit on Regions of the World. During this unit, the library supplied books, both fiction and nonfiction, and websites from the regions being studied for use in the classroom. In addition, many of our fourth grade students worked on research about their region using the Big 6 method of problem solving. The goal of this unit was to help the students become familiar with a new region of the world. The Carroll kindergarten focuses on the Americas and Johnny Appleseed is in their TEKS. I dressed up as Johnny Appleseed and told his real story and the folktales surrounding Johnny Appleseed to these students.

In the month of October, we hosted Storybook Opera in the Carroll library. This is a great program offered by the Houston Grand Opera. The performer exposes our students to opera while discussing the languages and cultural influences found in opera. Another October guest performer was Joe Hayes, a bilingual storyteller and author, of Hispanic folktales. He told his tales to every student through grade level assemblies. His tales were told in both Spanish and English while introducing the students to the wealth of Hispanic folktales.

In November, the library was the site of the World Council Meeting for our school. During the second magnet unit the students studied various world organizations who work together to solve problems in the world. For the World Council Meeting each class selects a country from the region they studied in the first unit. The class then studies a particular country in depth. Next, they decorate a chair to represent their country. The students also researched ecology and environmental concerns from the perspective of their chosen country. The chairs are set up in the library as seats for their country on the council. The report on the world problem is attached to the chair also. Students tour the world council and learn how the problem not only affects America but also other countries. The goal is for the students to recognize that we are all connected in the world.

Later in November, during the Leaders of the World unit the library hosted a lesson for second grade on leaders surrounding Thanksgiving. We read the story, Thank You Sarah and learned how one woman can make a difference with persistence and
diligence. We also read a book called Milly and The Thanksgiving Parade that is a fictionalized story based on the immigrant’s story of helping with the first Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade. We then talked about how immigrants have contributed to America. For Kindergarten students we studied the old poem: “Over the River and Through the Woods.” We discussed how you see the past in the poem and then look at the poem with the modern illustrations by David Catrow. We talked about how traditional activities can be brought into the modern world. Our third and fourth grade students participated in a lesson centered on the cranberry. We discussed how the pilgrims would not have survived if they had not learned new ideas from another culture the Native Americans. We read two books with cranberry themes, and then we made and tasted cranberry sauce in a multisensory experience.

In honor of Children’s book week the library sponsored a book parade with the theme “Discovering the World through Books.” The goal of the book parade was to celebrate children’s literature in a nontraditional manner. Each class selected a book, and then they decorated their AV cart in a manner to depict the book. Many classes also made costumes to go with their cart. We then held a parade throughout the school to show off the carts.

Our December holiday stories focused on cultural celebrations around the world and how many of our American holiday traditions have evolved from celebrations in other cultures.

In January, biographies of world leaders were read as part of the leader’s unit. Learning about leaders from around the world makes the students aware of the qualities needed in a good leader as well as how different leaders reflect the culture of the country. This activity was done to assist the teachers with making a timeline of their chosen leader that was displayed in the hallway.

In March, the Carroll Library was turned into a Custom’s House. The students were studying the movement of goods and people. Each class was asked to select a country that they then researched to understand the people of that country. They were then asked to pack a suitcase of what they would want to bring from their country with them to the USA, if they immigrated here. The library was turned into a custom’s house by first making a luggage carousel where the suitcases were placed. Next signs and other decorations were used to create the custom’s house. The signs included information about what was allowed to pass through customs. Each student filled out a passport prior to coming to the library for their tour. During this time in the center, the magnet coordinator and I acted as custom’s agents. As part of the tour the students’ suitcases were examined to see what would pass inspection. They also explained to us why they brought particular items from their home country. After this activity the students presented their passport and the class then toured the center looking at the remaining suitcases and comparing what they had brought with what others had brought from their country.

In May, the Carroll Library concluded the school year with a school wide post office. Since communication is essential to understanding others the ability to write a letter is important. Every student participated, and fourth grade students were the postal workers.

At the conclusion of the school year Carroll students were more aware of the world around them and their role in the world.
The humanities program in the library involves the whole school. The parents are invited to attend all of the activities. The book parade had parent volunteers who helped with the floats in each class, while over 100 parents attended the parade. During the world council and immigration center activity parents often toured the projects. The administrators support the library activities and enthusiastically participate in the activities. In addition the administrators recognize the worth of our library programming by allowing the librarian to remain on a flexible schedule and by providing a full time assistant. We ended our book parade with a float about “The Night before Christmas.” Our school custodian was Santa; our principal was Mrs. Claus and the support and office staffs were the elves and reindeer.

Our school had approximately 848 students this past school year. Carroll Academy is an attendance zone magnet school with over 80% economically disadvantaged students. Every student participates in the magnet program whether they are official magnet students or attendance zone students. Our Title 1 School is located in a community that is majority Hispanic and bilingual. Every student participated in 4 or more of these activities. Success was measured by participation, quality of products, student enthusiasm, and student dialogue. The students, staff, and community benefited last year from their exposure to cultures and activities that were new to them. The students were allowed to express themselves artistically and creatively through their products.

The Carroll library is the center of learning for our school. The library expands the students’ knowledge of the world. One of the primary focuses is for students to understand that many different people live in the world and that each person and culture has value. The library goes beyond normal library activities by providing many school wide events that involve the participation of the whole school. In addition the library is an open and inviting learning center where students are encouraged to expand their universe through books and projects while achieving to the very best of their abilities.
Relationship of the program to the curriculum

The Carroll library program developed special projects to meet the curricular goals of the magnet curriculum at our school. The first magnet unit involves each grade level becoming familiar with a particular region of the world. During this unit the library focuses on research and reading books, both fiction and nonfiction, about the various regions. In addition, if a book lends itself to a particular TEK (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skill) for their grade the teachers are encouraged to use the book while teaching the appropriate skill.

The magnet curriculum is an integral part of the school. In addition, we constantly focus on the TEKS being taught in the classroom. Stories and projects are chosen with TEKS constantly in mind. For example, in the leaders of the world project timelines were utilized to share information about the chosen leaders. During that six week grading period timelines were taught in the TEKS. In addition, during lessons like the cranberry lesson science, TEKs such as the properties of matter, solutions and mixtures, and conductors of energy are reinforced. For math, the lesson reinforces measurement and fraction TEKS.

The mission statement for Carroll Academy says, “Our mission is to help young people explore how international events affect their lives, their communities, and their country. We seek to empower students to become thoughtful, active citizens, and leaders of the global community.” The library, through the lessons and projects described, constantly worked to help students achieve the mission statement of our school. The mission statement is realized through integrating the magnet theme into the state mandated curriculum.
Replicability

The Carroll library program could be replicated in other schools by adapting the projects to the skills and learning environment of the school. The World Council Chairs provide a great springboard for our International Organizations unit. However, other schools could take the idea of a chair and make chairs representing folk tales from other regions. The immigration center, with its focus on student created work and packing suitcases, could also be used for other topics. For example, select a character in a book and pack a suitcase with student made items for that character. The key components of the Carroll program involved integrating the programs with the curriculum, providing the students with alternate learning styles to help master the curriculum objectives, and to broadening the students' knowledge and views of others in the world. The schools could replicate these programs by adapting the projects to their curriculum.

Our guest speakers were chosen with our resources in mind. Other schools could make similar choices based on their resources.

In addition, the ideas of openness to other cultures may be replicated on a daily basis with the use of literature and other projects. Openness to the students, faculty and community helped make the Carroll library program a success. This openness to the students, staff, and community should be a goal for all libraries.

Another goal of Carroll’s program that could be used by other libraries is integrating the library’s programming with the mandated curriculum. Once the library is viewed as an essential part of the curriculum its importance is not questioned and the student’s are able to benefit from a diverse curriculum that emphasizes the humanities.