



Using Student Writing to Teach Global Issues

This is the VOA Special English Education Report.

One World Education is a nonprofit group based in Washington. The group has a program in which teachers develop curriculum based on student writing. The students are in middle and high school and write essays about culture and global issues.

Students are invited to write about an issue they find important. Then professionally developed learning materials based on chosen essays are used in schools to teach other students.

Eric Goldstein is the executive director of One World Education.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: "Over the last four years, we have worked with over fifteen hundred student writers and we have worked with almost three hundred twenty-five teachers accessing the One World curriculum."

He says the essays can serve as a writing and learning guide for thousands of students.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: "It is truly the only online academic arena for young people to share and publish their writings in a way [that] it serves as a teaching tool for other students."

Mr. Goldstein is himself a former classroom teacher. He and another teacher, Emily Chiariello, began forming plans for One World Education in two thousand six.

The group publishes a study unit each month from August through May. Each unit of curriculum starts with a chosen essay, called a "One World Reflection." The subjects have ranged from single parenthood to protecting rainforests to exploring Arab cultures, says Mr. Goldstein.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: "We have had students writing One World Reflections on women in the Muslim world, on Islamic media, on Arab media, on Arab identity. One student [wrote] about being Muslim and how she is perceived in her neighborhood."

Laila Kunaish of Washington wrote about her feeling that the media in the United States are often unfair to Muslims. A learning activity based on her reflection called for students to collect examples of media stories and discuss whether or not that was true.

Laila was chosen as a One World Student Ambassador last year. Twelve are chosen each year. Their reflections are published on the group's website, along with learning activities linked to common reading and writing standards used for testing.

Isabel Nampakwa Kapotwe of Lusaka, Zambia, was also chosen as a student ambassador. She wrote about Zambia's cultural traditions, its languages, religions and tourist attractions. But she also wrote about poverty and disease, and how, after her parents died, her grandmother made a home for the remaining family. One activity based on her reflection called for research into the care given by grandparents as heads of households in today's society.

And that's the VOA Special English Education Report, written by Jerilyn Watson. Go to voaspecialenglish.com to find a link to the One World Education website, where you can read some of the student reflections. I'm Jim Tedder.