

Multicultural Lesson Plans Celebrate Language and Cultural Diversity

Unique curriculum units and activities available on-line

by Heather Leaman and Anneke Forzani

As students bring a rich diversity of language experience into schools, teachers and children can benefit from an awareness of languages and cultures that may be new to them. Yet language diversity can result in an initial fear for new teachers who are unfamiliar with languages beyond their primary language. Teachers may also find it challenging to secure quality resources and develop lessons that encourage children to learn about and appreciate the diverse nature of our communities.

In order to help teachers celebrate and incorporate language and cultural awareness in the classroom, Language Lizard, LLC joined students and faculty from West Chester University of Pennsylvania in a project to bridge language diversity, cultural appreciation and classroom learning.

During the project, student teachers in the Elementary Education Teacher Preparation program at West Chester University designed creative units of instruction for use in grades K-5. Each unit includes a set of integrated lessons that can be implemented in classrooms.

The units are titled:

- Cultures and Customs
- Cultures and Folklore
- Understanding and Appreciating Cultural Differences
- Building Community in the Classroom
- Appreciating Diverse Cultures and Religions
- Language, Culture and Customs in India, Japan, Korea and Romania (multiple units)
- Islam, Ramadan and Comparing/Contrasting Holidays

Each unit uses Language Lizard's bilingual children's books and CDs to teach about diversity of culture and language. The lessons highlight languages including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Czech, English, French, Gujarati, Japanese, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Yoruba, giving both students and teachers experience with a variety of languages spoken in the United States and world wide.

The units can be implemented as designed or adapted to meet the needs of a particular student body or grade level. Teachers may choose to adjust the languages introduced in the lessons to better reflect their own diverse communities. Families can also use the activities presented in the lessons to help their children learn more about the world around them.

Language Lizard titles used include popular world folk tales ([*Dragon's Tears*](#), [*Giant Turnip*](#), [*Buri and the Marrow*](#)), faith stories ([*Samira's Eid*](#), [*The Swirling Hijaab*](#), [*All Kinds of Beliefs*](#)), and other stories that introduce different cultural traditions and promote an acceptance of diversity ([*That's My Mum*](#), [*Floppy*](#), [*Floppy's Friends*](#), [*The Wibbly Wobbly Tooth*](#), [*Mei Ling's Hiccups*](#), [*Welcome to the World Baby*](#)).

Curriculum units can be accessed through the Language Lizard Website at <http://www.languagelizard.com/lessonplans.htm>.

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Anneke Forzani is President and Founder of Language Lizard, LLC. Language Lizard offers bilingual children's books in over 40 languages and a complimentary e-newsletter to help parents and teachers expose children to other languages and cultures at <http://www.LanguageLizard.com>.

