

G'day Mate and 🖐️😊📖!
**A look at how integrating different cultures in the
classroom effect student enthusiasm.**

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Abstract: A look at the effects of integrating Native American and Australian culture in a kindergarten classroom. Begin to discover how incorporating new cultural activities into daily curriculum allows for new excitement in everyday activities in a kindergarten classroom.

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Introduction and Rationale

As an intern in the PDS program, an important part of maturing into a practiced, experienced teacher comes about through classroom observing and teaching. However no amount of observing or teaching gives way to learning without reflection. I have spent the past year reflecting weekly on my lessons, my actions, and my beliefs as a teacher. As I began to grow I also began to wonder.

In February, when it became time to choose an inquiry topic, I had many wonderings that could have lead way into an inquiry project. Nevertheless, there was one wondering that continued coming to the forefront of my mind. Perhaps it was my own desire in life to learn about cultures around the world, but I began to strongly wonder how integrating different cultures into classroom curriculum would affect student learning and enthusiasm in school.

The kindergarten social studies curriculum in the State College Area School District is highly integrated focusing mainly on community building. Students' work in large groups, they are encouraged to interact with peers in an appropriate manner and begin to adjust to the rules and standards set forth by school culture. I am a firm believer that this form of curriculum is necessary, however, I could not help but wonder what social studies in kindergarten could look like beyond community building. With this in mind, I began to bring to life my wondering of what adding cultural elements to the social studies curriculum could look like, but more importantly, focused on how such a unit could affect student-learning enthusiasm. I became very interested in discovering how the students would react to the new cultural information, how their work might or

might not improve, and if struggling students would begin to thrive through the introduction of different material.

Moreover, throughout the past year I had seen my students grow and learn to write and read through Kidwriting and other amazing programs set forth by the State College School District. The students were always very aware that there were special times set aside for reading, writing, math, science and more. It was obvious when students became discouraged about a certain activity, not desiring to simply write yet another story or create with shapes they were now familiar with. I began to wonder if there was any way that students could take part in reading, writing math etc without acknowledging it as such. They, in its place, would see an interactive project and instead of seeing the subject embrace the activity. Perhaps, if this was made possible student enthusiasm would become greater and learning would be more integrated and less defined. This idea, in addition to my desire to expand social studies learning, inspired me to create an inquiry question that lead me in no one particular direction looking for no particular result. Instead, I waited to see if anything emerged from the integration of culture into my classroom daily routine.

From a more personal perspective, I am a firm believer that receiving an education integrated with cultural knowledge is key in becoming a democratic member of society. While growing up, I have lived in several different US states and have been privileged to be able to be surrounded by different cultures and taught about many cultures. Not every person is able to live such a life of travel and as Maggi Anicich writes even such travel is not enough, “Derman-Sparks (1989) informs us that [children’s] contact with children from various racial and ethnic groups is not enough to encourage

positive cultural attitudes. Rather, active intervention by the teacher is necessary. Positive cultural attitudes will not occur simply by proximity” (1999, p. 8). It is not that children must be taught tolerance, but rather children must be taught about cultures and as a result become tolerant. We do children a disservice not to teach about different cultures, leaving them unaware and unprepared to interact with cultures within the US around the world. It is not just factual knowledge we impart on the children by teaching culture but also social knowledge and understanding.

Background Information

My inquiry project was implemented in a self-contained kindergarten classroom at Gray’s Woods Elementary School. The classroom consists of twenty-one students, ten boys and eleven girls. Twenty of the students are Caucasian and one is Vietnamese, adopted into a Caucasian household. The socio economic status of the students’ presents to be middle class with a couple of students in the upper middle class and one student living at a low socio economic status. The school day is very structured, nearly never deviating from the schedule set by the teachers the first week of school. The students are aware of classroom rules and are very familiar with the daily routine.

The majority of the students are outgoing and willing to participate in class regularly, making new friends and act supportive of each other everyday. While at the beginning of the year there were two students timid about starting school, resulting in them keeping to themselves, these students have grown into active participants in the classroom. Two students have difficulty acting appropriately in class. Both students question the teachers’ wishes and speak out at will and as a result are currently using

behavior plans as a form of intervention. As a whole, the class listens to directions well and the students are responsible and considerate. Each student brings his or her strengths to the classroom and willingly helps other students. As a whole the students are at a developmentally appropriate level in regards to peer social relations and kindergarten academics.

All students have come into kindergarten with a clean slate and have yet to be labeled title one or learning disabled. Since the beginning of school, one student has been given a speech IEP and goes out to language learning support every day for half an hour. This same student only takes part in the half-day kindergarten program. One student is advanced for his age in math, but has yet to be put into enrichment. Five students read far above a kindergarten level, but most have yet to be tested to acknowledge what level. One student has been tested and is currently in the enriched reading program. Four students are having difficulty with letter sounds and letter recognition but have shown great progress over the past three months. The rest of the class is average and learns at a developmentally appropriate level. Open to new experiences all students are attentive in class and are open to learning.

Wondering and Sub-questions

After concluding that the basis of my inquiry project would stem from my desire to see how the integration of world cultures into everyday routine effects student learning, it became time to make a broad topic more specific. I first had to truly understand terms such as race, ethnicity and culture. This would allow me to make sure my wondering was stated correctly and my ideas of implementation were formed around

the proper thoughts. As I began my research I found an article written by Brian McVeigh titled *Towards True Multiculturalism: Ideas for Teachers*, speaking to the idea of multiculturalism and what is encompassed when teaching with such a mind set. His language of what it is to define race and ethnicity helped me gather and hone my thoughts. As described by McVeigh, “Simply defined, race is the categorization of humans into groups based on physical appearance traits” (1997, p. 4). Not wanting to hold race as a limit to what my inquiry wondering could become I continued onto McVeigh’s definition of ethnicity,

“Ethnicity, or knowledge about self-identity and group affiliation that one acquires via socialization. Ethnicity is often used interchangeably with “race” though these two concepts are fundamentally difference since race is genetically determined and ethnicity is learned. Belonging to an ethnic group is not necessarily the same as belonging to a political unit, since historically states and empires usually contain within their borders several – sometimes many – ethnic groups. Many scholars equate ethnicity with “nationality,” not with political affiliation or state membership. The group affiliation of ethnicity may be based on any number of sentiment rooted in a perceived common history, heritage, religion, language, geography.... (1997, p. 5).

This idea of ethnicity goes hand in hand with the many definitions of culture, defining a person not by race but rather by a socially learned way of living encompassing many traits outside of those physical. Understanding that it was culture and ethnicity I wanted to teach, I created my main inquiry wondering and sub-questions.

Main Wondering

- What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?

Sub-questions

- How excited are students about school currently?
- What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?
- What are the developmentally appropriate ways to address culture in the classroom? How much and information should be presented about each culture in relation to content and student ability?
- What areas of students work will be affected by the unit and what will the changes look like?
- How will the cultural information be best integrated?

With my main wondering stated and sub-questions created to help support my main wondering I began to implement two units focusing on Native American culture and Australia culture.

“A True Inquiry”

It can be easy to turn an inquiry prompt into an improvement plan, especially the inquiry plans I had set out before myself. My project could have simply become an effort to improve the kindergarten social studies curriculum. Had I lost sight of my desire to see how integrating cultures effects student enthusiasm, I could have focused more on

creating a unit that does no more than teach students about different cultures. This, however, was not my goal. I did not want my students to finish the unit able to regurgitate all the facts they had learned about the Lenape tribe and Australia. The ability of students to do so is no accomplishment in the eyes of inquiry and becomes nothing more than a teaching tool. I instead focused on the result of integrating cultures from a student enthusiasm standpoint. I had no idea if student enthusiasm would change positively, negatively or at all. While not knowing the result of my efforts and wonderings at first worried me, a person who always wants to see the finish line before starting, I became well adjusted to realizing that inquiry is about wondering not knowing. As a result my inquiry study remained inquiry based and not an improvement plan aimed at changing State College curriculum and teaching my students facts. There is no possible way to predict a student's reaction to the integration of culture, especially in kindergarten.

Inquiry Project Implementation

Once I had decided that my inquiry wondering focused on integrating culture into everyday activities, the first step was deciding what cultures were age appropriate to teach. Reflecting on my first sub-question "What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?" I decided to focus on Native American culture, particularly the Lenape tribe, and the cultures found throughout Australia. These two cultures were decided upon by drawing on past conversations with students, knowing that their knowledge of Native American culture was less than that of their Australian knowledge. I became interested to see if the students would be more enthusiastic when learning about

one culture over the other due to their ability to draw on prior knowledge. In addition, the Lenape tribe lives in Pennsylvania, while Australia is across the world, adding another variable to project.

After deciding what cultures would be focused, on the next step became creating units. I allotted one months time to implement two units: one focusing on the Lenape tribe the other on Australia. Two weeks were prearranged for each unit and broken down into day by day lessons (see Appendixes B and C).

I. The Lenape, Native American Unit

In the beginning I had decided that my first unit would solely focus on the Lenape tribe. However, as I began to plan I found that I wanted my students to understand that there are many Native American tribes found throughout America. As Guy Jones and Sally Moomaw state: “The educational community has yet to deal with the problems related to how Native American cultures and peoples are represented, or omitted, from the curriculum in our schools” (2002, p. 7). With this in mind, I began to search for cultural traits specific to Native American tribes throughout the United States, appropriate for my students learning abilities and school standards. As I chose activities I feared that certain projects such as creating a Totem pole and symbol writing would reinforce stereotypes and nothing more. With this in mind, I made sure that for every project was a lesson that solidified the fact that the tribes we learned about were still alive and certain traditions were specific to certain tribes, not just a general statement true to all tribes.

I began to research many Native American tribes and created a unit set over the course of two weeks. (see Appendix B) Using our classroom puppet friend, Charlotte the

owl (see Appendix A), I introduced the Lenape tribe during morning meetings. Charlotte, a woodland owl, took on the role of a friend of the Lenape, stating that she had lived with a Lenape family before coming to our classroom. She introduced facts, both past and present about the Lenape tribe, and with student help created a classroom bulletin board. Other activities, related to Native American tribes across American, were implemented during stations time, writers workshop, read aloud, science and math. Providing pictures and books and decorating the room, I tried my best to bring Native American culture to life.

II. The Australia Unit

Knowing that there was a vast amount of information available about Australia I contacted fellow colleagues who had previously taught about Australia for ideas. With their help, and my own planning, I designed an Australia unit focusing on Aborigines, life in the Outback, and how wildlife plays a large role in Australian culture. Allotting three days for each sub-section, I used morning meetings, station time and read alouds to teach about Australia. Bringing in Australia artifacts, books, pictures and more I tried to create an environment that brought Australia to the students (see Appendix C).

I created for each student an Australia folder so that all of his or her work could be kept in one location. This also gave students the opportunity to put their self-made creations relating to Australia in the folder at anytime. (see Appendix D). After the planning was complete my inquiry project was implemented.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Methods Used

I. Student Products

- a. Student work samples
- b. Student comments

II. Parent Surveys

- a. Weekly parent questionnaires

III. Teacher Journals

- a. Weekly teacher journals

IV. Student Interviews

- a. Student interviews conducted at the end of the units

I. Student Products

- a. Student work samples:

Subquestion #4- What areas of students work will be affected by the unit and what will the changes look like?

Data Collection Strategy

Student work samples were collected over the four weeks (see Appendixes Y). Student work samples collected during the units were compared to student work samples created prior to the units. The amount of time and detail a student put into creating a piece of work during the unit was compared to prior work samples. This information was used to conclude how much students valued their work and if students showed more, less, or the same interest in their work during the unit than in the past.

b. Student comments:

***Main Wondering-** What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?*

***Subquestion #1-** How excited are students about school currently?*

Data Collection Strategy

In addition to the collection to student work samples, student comments were documented. While student interviews were also used to gather student thoughts, nothing is more sincere than student comments while learning and participating in activities. By collecting student comments, I was able to collect data in regards to students' feelings, and in turn could quickly gauge student enthusiasm.

II. Parent Surveys

a. Weekly parent surveys

***Main Wondering-** What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?*

***Subquestion #1-**How excited are students about school currently?*

***Subquestion #2-** What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?*

***Subquestion #3-** What are the developmentally appropriate ways to address culture in the classroom? How much and information should be presented about each culture in relation to content and student ability?*

Data Collection Strategy

Once a week I sent home parent surveys (see Appendixes F, G, I and K). When analyzing my data, I realized that while I had received much feedback from my classroom parents very few actually filled out all four surveys. Due to the irregularity of parental response, I analyzed data from only ten families as they filled out every survey. My focus on these ten families helped me collect accurate data over the course of the month. After reading these particular parents' responses I created a charts indicating how the units were affecting student enthusiasm as well as other aspects of student learning (see Appendixes L-X). These charts helped me gather thoughts in a more concise matter and create percentages and numbers to help support claims.

III. Teacher Journals

a. Weekly teacher journals

Main Wondering-What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?

Subquestion #1-How excited are students about school currently?

Subquestion #2- What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?

Subquestion #3- What are the developmentally appropriate ways to address culture in the classroom? How much and information should be presented about each culture in relation to content and student ability?

Subquestion #4-What areas of students work will be affected by the unit and what will the changes look like?

Subquestion #5-How will the cultural information be best integrated?

Data Collection Strategy

Weekly, I used journaling to help collect my thoughts and reflect on the events of the past week. Journaling was also used throughout the day in the form of notes to help me remember key happenings. Information drawn from this data was used to help adjust my inquiry project and teaching throughout the month as well as reflect on student change (see Appendix Z).

IV. Student surveys

- a. Student interviews conducted at the end of the units

Main Wondering- *What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?*

Subquestion #1- *How excited are students about school currently?*

Subquestion #2- *What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?*

Data Collection Strategy

Throughout the unit, I surveyed students one on one. Due to time constraints during the school day, this form of data collection became difficult. While surveys conducted over the four weeks were considered in data analysis, one survey, conducted at the end of the month became the most consistent form of data between students. However, due to the timing of the survey, it was difficult to be sure that the survey captured the students' most sincere thoughts. The survey (see Appendix K) did, however, capture students' most current thoughts, and then was transformed into a graph for analysis (see Appendixes L, M, T V-X). The student surveys helped me draw conclusions

in regards to students feelings about new activities in relation to the units when compared to activities the students had taken part in all year long: such draw and tell read alouds compared to regular book read alouds.

Claims and Evidence from Inquiry

Main Wondering- *What is the value of adding cultural aspects, such as how different people live around the world, throughout the daily routine, and how will doing so effect student enthusiasm?*

Claim- Adding cultural elements in the classroom daily routine effects student enthusiasm, increasing student enthusiasm towards school positively both inside and outside of the classroom.

Evidence:

Parent Survey Response Evidence

Evidence gathered, from the ten families that consistently returned surveys, when analyzed, confirmed that the student excitement to attend school and student discussion about school at home increased due to the introduction of the cultural units (see Appendix R). Six parents also reported that the need to prompt their student with questions to create conversation about school decreased, and students more readily shared information about the school day on their own as a result of the units being taught (see Appendixes S). In addition, when asked if their student seems more excited about school since the units began five parents responded yes. While five parents responded no, the notes accompanying these answers always included a statement such as: “My student has always been excited about school and talks about all parts of his/her day.” This lead me

to believe that these students already readily spoke about school at home and their lack of excitement change did not mean they had not been excited about the units. All parents commented on the excitement their child showed for the units, and how the units were beneficial for the students' education.

Teacher Observation Evidence

Through my own observation and journaling, I am able to conclude that student enthusiasm increased due to the integration of cultural units. Student excitement, upon entering the room each day, was high as they investigated the posters, information sheets and special bulletins boards daily with one another. This excitement then transformed into constant questioning and curiosity on the students' part, as continually they approached me with the desire to learn more. Students would use Australian words I had taught them daily, and during morning meeting would share information they had learned at home about the Lenape and Australia. In addition, students would request to finish work relating to the Lenape and Australia at quiet time, and request for more related activities. All of these student actions, somewhat uncommon to the classroom before the integration of the units, shows an increase in student enthusiasm.

Student Survey Response Evidence

After analyzing the student surveys I began to relate student preference to student enthusiasm. As seen in Appendixes V, W and X, more than half of the students began to prefer cultural activities than those commonly practiced daily. Students' overwhelming response to this fact was supported by their claims that cultural lessons were new, different, and exciting.

Subquestion #1- How excited are students about school currently?

Claim- Kindergarten students generally enjoy school and are excited about school allowing room for a change in student excitement due to the cultural units but not as large as could be in higher grades.

Evidence:

Parent Survey Response Evidence Combined with Student Survey Response Evidence and Teacher Observation

By combining parent and student responses, Appendixes L and M show that the majority of students favor every part of the school day, and more often than not, dislike no part of the school day. In Kindergarten students are just starting school and find most of school interesting and dynamic. Teacher observation confirmed this fact. When talking to parents with older students, all parents agreed that cultural units would be very beneficial in the older grades as they spark some form of new excitement into learning. All agreed that if their older student had come home learning about these topics they would have seen a much bigger change in excitement, as natural excitement seems to become less as students grow older.

Subquestion #2- What cultures are most appropriate to teach to a kindergarten classroom?

Subquestion #3- What are the developmentally appropriate ways to address culture in the classroom? How much and information should be presented about each culture in relation to content and student ability?

***Claim-** Students became more excited about the Australia unit, allowing claim that there are developmentally appropriate ways to choosing, approaching and presenting cultural units.*

Evidence:

Teacher Observation Evidence

After teaching the Lenape unit I realized that one of the most fascinating parts of teaching about the Lenape, for the students, was our classroom owl puppet Charlotte. I began to wonder if the integration of animals as part of the cultural units would effect student enthusiasm. I then decided that I would add learning about animals to the Australia unit to see how students reacted. This seemed appropriate, as in most cultures animals play a large role in many households, daily life and at times religion. The last week of the Australia unit I spoke about Australian animals, and I realized that the students became even more engaged than they had been before. This evidence makes claim that in kindergarten it is more developmentally appropriate to integrate lessons about animals in relation to the culture being taught than not to, as it sparks a new level of interest. Students begin to make deeper connections between the people of a culture and how they live as they are able to envision the landscape and ecological environment more clearly through the animals of the area.

In addition, I find that the teaching of the Australia unit was more favored by students because it allowed students to draw on their own prior knowledge. The students' ability to share information, and link new information to what they already knew, made it more exciting for the students. Lessons seemed more concrete to students as they were more vividly able to picture and recreate Australia, something more difficult with the

Lenape. Our discussion about Australia when compared to those of the Lenape were much more dynamic, lasted longer, and prompted more comments and questions from students willingly.

Parent Survey Response Evidence

After analyzing the responses of the ten families it became evident that students preferred learning about Australia over the Lenape (see Appendixes Q and U). Students not only became more excited about the Australia unit but they also spoke more freely and unprompted at home about the unit. The parents agreed with my own teacher observations, stating that this most likely was because students could share their own prior knowledge and make connections.

Student Survey Response Evidence

Student survey responses produced the same results (see Appendix T)

***Subquestion #4-**What areas of students work will be affected by the unit and what will the changes look like?*

***Claim-** Student work was positively affected by the cultural units.*

Evidence:

Student Work Samples as Evidence

An unexpected outcome came about in the form of how much student work changed as a result of the unit. Students took more time on their work, added more detail to pictures, and even improved their writing skills (see Appendixes Y). Students used books as reference independently and created stories and pictures much unlike what they had created in the past. I am still not completely sure as to why student work improved as

much as it did. Perhaps it was because the activities were new and lacked the usual process of simple story writing or because they had so much information to draw on to add detail. Nonetheless, the units greatly affected student work and did so in a positive way.

Conclusion

Overall, my inquiry project shows that there is a positive affect on students when cultures are integrated into daily routine. I am now a firm believer that the teaching of cultures around the world is essential to student learning and worth implementing throughout the school year. The students enjoyed the units, and still today speak daily about what they know about Australia and the Lenape.

Through this inquiry it became evident that student enthusiasm for school not only increased in the classroom but outside of the classroom as well. Parents reported that their students were more excited about school and more willingly shared information about the school day unprompted. This fact alone proves that the integration of cultures into daily routine can make a difference and creates an environment very suitable for learning.

I had no idea how much my desire to perform such an inquiry would enlighten my teaching. In my future classroom there is no doubt that the integration of different cultures will be present in my teaching. Integrating cultures not only opens students minds and effects enthusiasm, it also offers new mediums through which to teach, allowing standard curriculum the chance to be exciting daily for students.

This inquiry project has affected my ability to teach in many ways and I have learned plenty. Due to there being no State College Areas School District curriculum around the Lenape or Australia I have learned how to create units to meet Pennsylvania standards. I created each unit and designed lesson plans and activities that was integrated throughout daily activity and all subjects. This process has helped me become a better teacher, educating me on how to find reliable resources as well as how to create developmentally appropriate lessons. In addition, when I needed help finding resources I was able to collaborate with fellow teachers. I value greatly working with colleges and this inquiry project helped solidify this belief.

Moreover, this inquiry project has helped me become more reflective on my teaching. Having to evaluate student enthusiasm makes you want to be the best teacher possible. I teach to make students excited about school, and I now more firmly than ever believe that teachers constantly need to be inquiring about how subjects are best taught to heighten student enthusiasm and desire to learn. I will always challenge myself to find and create lessons that effect positively student aspirations in learning.

I will continue on in my teaching inquiring about much. The inquiry process has made me realize that it is innate in all teachers to learn. The inquiry process offers an outlet by which teachers can research and discover, a process I hope to continue. Now that the project is finished I am left with new wonderings, and a new desire to learn.

New Wonderings

- Would students learn more easily about different cultures if there was an allotted time in the day for such instruction, or is culture best taught in an integrated fashion?
- How would the integration of different cultures affect student enthusiasm in intermediate grades?
- Was the introduction of the animals in the Australia unit the main cause of student excitement in the unit?
- Did the students show more excitement for school because of the cultures being integrated can it be attributed to:
 - I. any change of classroom surroundings?
 - II. any new form of writing medium?
 - III. any new form of reading medium?

References

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Appendix A

Pictures taken throughout the units.



Outdoor wigwam



Teaching about the Lenape with Charlotte



Creating totem poles



Finished totem poles



Growing corn



Rain dances



Student rain dances



Pottery poetry



Teaching Australia



Australia folders



Australia animals taught

Week Two:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>- Stations and W.W. 1. Totem pole writing</p> <p>*Check corn</p>	<p>- M.M. 1. Teach about clothing, assign students to bb</p> <p>- R.A. 1. Draw and Tell</p> <p>*Totem pole writing continued</p>	<p>- R.A. 1. Introduce the idea that there are many Native American Tribes in the US 2. Bag Story, <i>Arrow to the Sun</i></p> <p>*bb pieces</p>	<p>- W.W. 1. Introduce the idea of a rain dance, writing with dance. Teach rain dance.</p> <p>- Q.T. 1. Make instruments</p> <p>*Check corn</p>	<p>- Lunch 1. Lunch in the classroom serving Lenape food</p> <p>*Introduce classroom play idea</p>

Appendix C

Australia Unit Outline

Days 1-4	Days 5-9	Days 10-14
<p data-bbox="342 520 529 617">Morning Meeting</p> <p data-bbox="237 632 529 667">*Into Australia</p> <p data-bbox="321 684 548 720">At Stations</p> <p data-bbox="237 737 586 833">* Create Australia folders.</p> <p data-bbox="237 850 578 947">* Teach about Aborigine culture</p> <p data-bbox="237 963 618 1104">* Create Aboriginal art using pattern blocks</p> <p data-bbox="313 1121 557 1157">Read Aloud</p> <p data-bbox="237 1173 602 1375">* Books one through three: general facts about Australia</p>	<p data-bbox="740 520 971 556">At Stations</p> <p data-bbox="659 573 1008 669">* Teach about life in the Outback</p> <p data-bbox="659 686 1000 783">* Create Outback Books</p> <p data-bbox="735 846 979 882">Read Aloud</p> <p data-bbox="659 898 1036 1054">*Books four and five about the Australian Outback</p>	<p data-bbox="1162 520 1393 556">At Stations</p> <p data-bbox="1081 573 1333 669">* Animals of Australia</p> <p data-bbox="1157 737 1401 772">Read Aloud</p> <p data-bbox="1081 789 1471 991">* Books six through eight about animals throughout Australia</p> <p data-bbox="1219 1066 1341 1102">Video</p> <p data-bbox="1097 1173 1463 1209">Australian Lunch</p>

*Much more vague than the Lenape unit because of large changes made due to snow days etc.

Appendix D

Sample Australia Folder

Appendix E

Letter Home to Parents #1

Dear Room 22 Parents,

This is your classroom intern Kimberly and I hope this Friday letter finds you well and cleared out from the snow that has found us once again! I am writing the weekly newsletter because I am very excited to share with you a unit that I am now teaching in the classroom in connection with an assignment I must complete to graduate. In order to graduate I must design a unit and see how the dynamic lessons affect my students growth and enthusiasm in the classroom. I want to not only inform you of everything that your child will be learning and encountering over the next four weeks, but I also would like to ask you for your help. No one knows your child better than you, and as I will explain later, I am hoping to gain your feedback and insight throughout the next month if possible. I recognize that you are all quite busy so if time does not allow please do not feel as if you must respond to my request, I completely understand.

Let me begin by quickly describing the units your child has and will be taking part in. The first unit focuses on a Pennsylvanian Native American tribe, the Lenape. We began the unit this week and perhaps you have heard tid bits about what your child is starting to learn more about already! Your child is learning about the Lenape culture in regards to how they live, what they eat and what other children your child's age do for fun. The outside of our classroom has been turned into a wigwam and your child has been/will be participating in...

- making shape pottery
- growing corn
- writing stories with symbols they design
- making totem pole stories
- read alouds told by Charlotte (our classroom owl)

After spring break your child will be learning about Australia and life in the Outback. As I start this new unit, I will send another letter home with the specifics and what you can expect to hear from your hopefully very excited child!

I am thrilled to teach both units, but in order to find out if my lessons are affecting students in a positive way, I need your help if possible. To sound a bit more official, I need to collect data on your child and how, if in any way, the lessons are affecting his/her enthusiasm when talking about school. Attached are two pages. The first is a page that has simple questions about how your child has spoken about school in the past. This will give me a bit more insight into what I see in class and a true reflection of how your child feels. The second page is a sheet concerning how your child might change the way he/she speaks of school, or about the new activities he/she will be participating in over the next four weeks. Anything and everything you think is relevant or important I would love to hear about. All help is appreciated beyond words, as you will be helping me get one step closer to graduation! I will send home questionnaires in the Friday folders each week, questionnaires you can feel free to return anytime during the week. You may also email me if you would prefer at kry11@scasd.org.

I would like to thank you in advance for your help. I feel very lucky to be in a classroom with such supportive families that I feel comfortable asking for help! Have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Miss Kimberly Yurik

Appendix G

Parent Survey #2

The following questionnaire will be used over the next month. I am interested in learning if your child's conversation about school changes in any way or if he/she seems to really enjoy or dislike the unit. I will send a new questionnaire out each week, please be as specific as possible so I can make sure not to misquote anything. You are free to answer the questions daily, weekly or as you please. Thanks in advance for your help!

1. Has your child spoken a lot about certain activities in the past week, such as: Australia animals, the Aborigines, etc? What has he/she said?

2. Does your child talk about Australia often? If you ask your child about Australia does your child become excited to share?

3. Does your child desire to learn more about the units or any activity outside of school, in particular the Australia unit?

4. Does your child talk more about school, outside of recess and gym, since the Australia unit has begun?

Appendix H

Letter Home to Parents #2

Dear Parents.

I would like to begin by thanking everyone that has taken time over the past weeks to fill out the surveys I have sent home. Your efforts are helping me greatly and making my project much more successful than it ever would have been without your help! We have just finished learning about the Lenape and now it is on to Australia to learn about the “Land Down Under”. Over the next three weeks your child will be learning about...

- Aborigines
- The Outback
- The many animals of Australia and much more!

We began learning about Australia this week, and perhaps your student has spoken a few Australian phrases at home, or started to talk about what it is like to live in Australia. Once again I am collecting information about how much your child does or does not enjoy learning about different areas of the world, currently Australia. Much like before, I am asking for your help to enlighten me on what your student speaks about outside of school, in particular if they are truly excited when learning about Australia. If you are able to fill out the attached questionnaire it would be much appreciated! Enjoy your weekend and the warm weather!

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Miss Kimberly Yurik

Appendix I

Parent Survey #3

The following questionnaire will be used over the next month. I am interested in learning if your child's conversation about school changes in any way or if he/she seems to really enjoy or dislike the unit. I will send a new questionnaire out each week, please be as specific as possible so I can make sure not to misquote anything. You are free to answer the questions daily, weekly or as you please. Thanks in advance for your help!

1. Has your child spoken a lot about certain activities in the past week, such as: Australia animals, the Aborigines, etc? What has he/she said?

2. Does your child talk about Australia often? If you ask your child about Australia does your child become excited to share?

3. Does your child desire to learn more about the units or any activity outside of school, in particular the Australia unit?

4. Does your child talk more about school, outside of recess and gym, since the Australia unit has begun?

Appendix J

Final Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

Once again I would like to start by thanking everyone who has taken time to fill out the questionnaires I have sent home over the past four weeks. I cannot express how much your time and effort has helped my project become a success. I am now sending home a final questionnaire, which you see below, and it is a very important set of questions that helps conclude my project. If you could take a moment of your time and fill out the questionnaire I would be much appreciative. Most of the questions require only yes/no answers, but if you are willing to elaborate on any answer I would be very thankful. If you would return the filled out questionnaire to school by Tuesday, April 11th, that would be best, but I will willingly collect the questionnaires any day before or after that date. Thank you again for your time, and enjoy your weekend, and perhaps a bit of snow.

Sincerely,

Miss Kimberly Yurik

1. Does your child speak more about school at home since the Lenape and Australia units began? Yes / No
2. Does your child seem more excited about school since the units have begun? Yes/No
3. Does your child speak more about school since the units began without being prompted with questions? Yes / No
4. Does your child more willingly speak about school when asked, or provide more information about the day gone past since the units have begun?

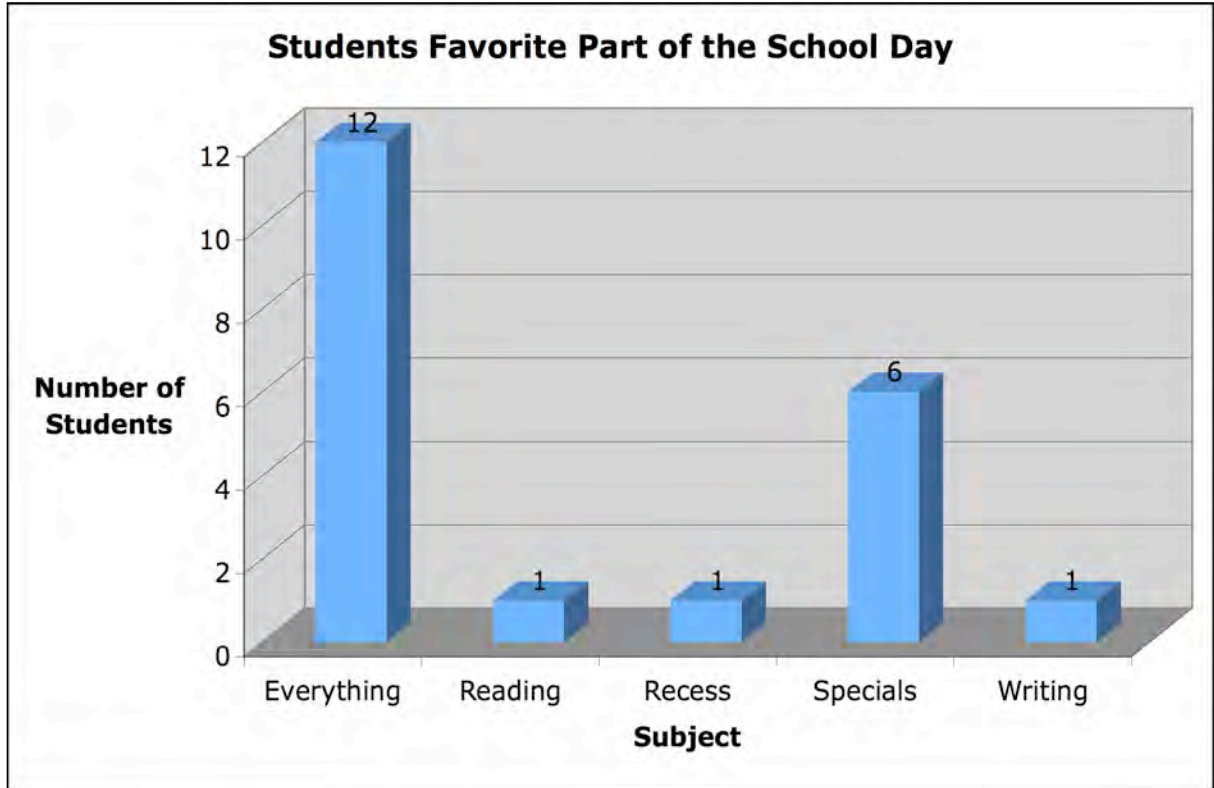
Numerical data is important in my project to help interpret the extent of the effects of the past units. Using a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest: meaning a little, 10 being the highest: meaning a lot, please give a number value to the following questions. The questions may seem repetitive, but these answers help me interpret the past weeks in a different form. Thank you!

1. How excited was your child about going to school before the units started?
2. How excited was/is your child about going to school as the units began and continued?
3. How often did your child talk about school at home before the units started?
4. How often did/does you child talk about school as the units began and continued?
5. How much did/does you child seem to enjoy learning about the Lenape Tribe?
6. How much did you child seem to enjoy learning about Australia?

Thank you again for your time. I feel more than lucky to have such an amazing parent support system in and outside of the classroom! Your willingness to help me over the past four weeks has been truly amazing and I cannot express the extent my gratitude.

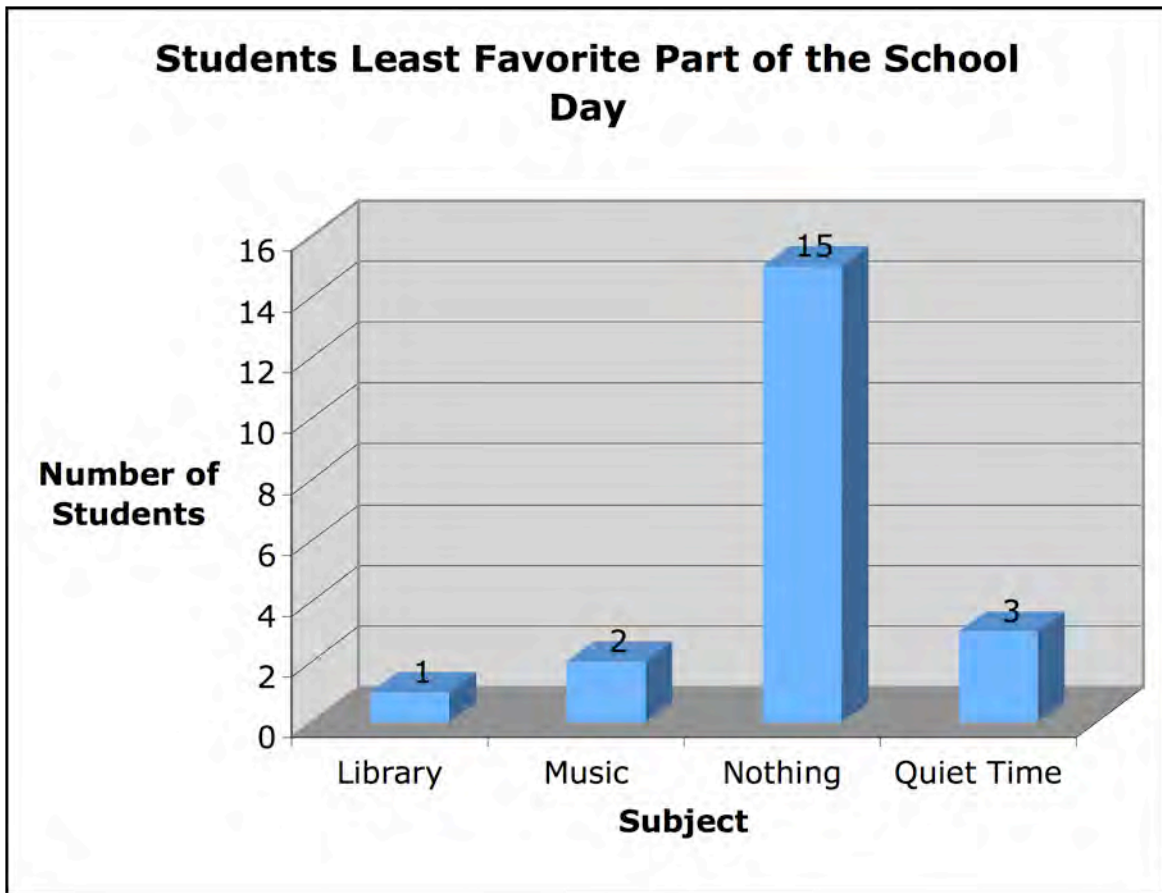
Appendix L

Students' responses to the prompt: What is your favorite part of the school day?



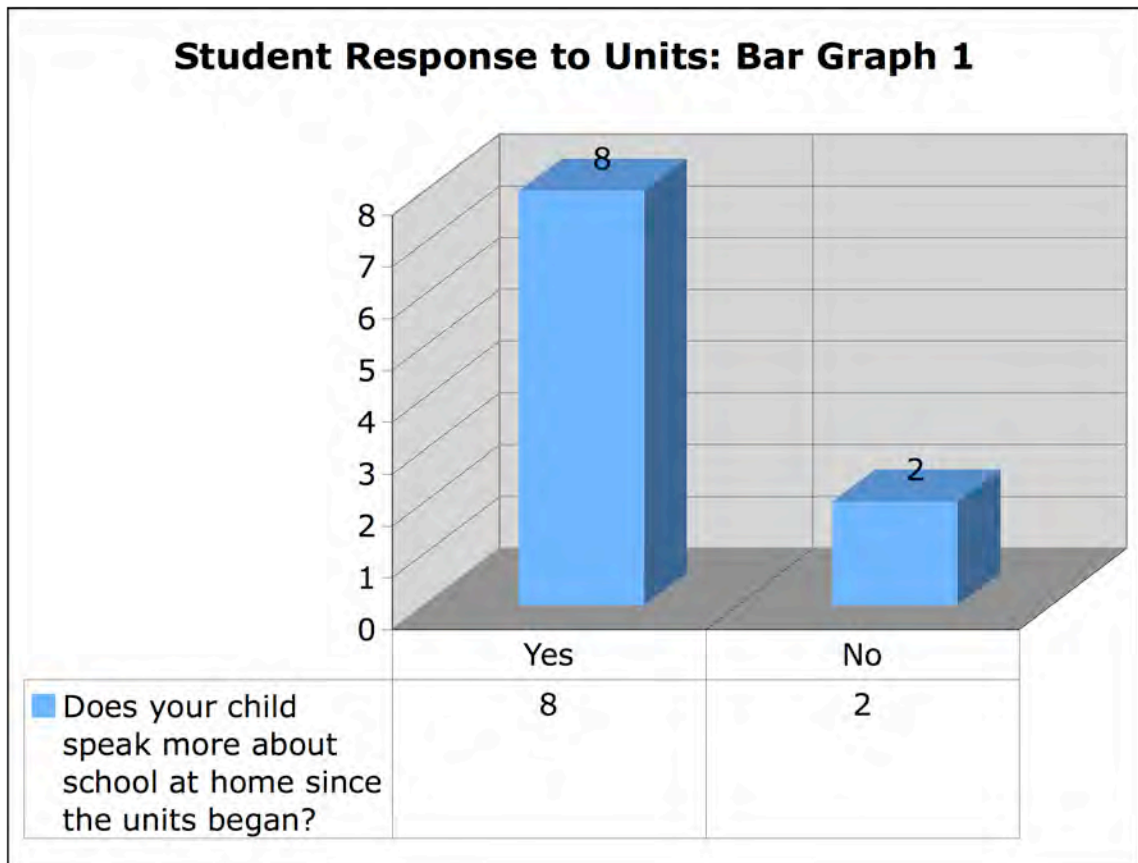
Appendix M

Students' responses to the prompt: What is your least favorite part of the school day?



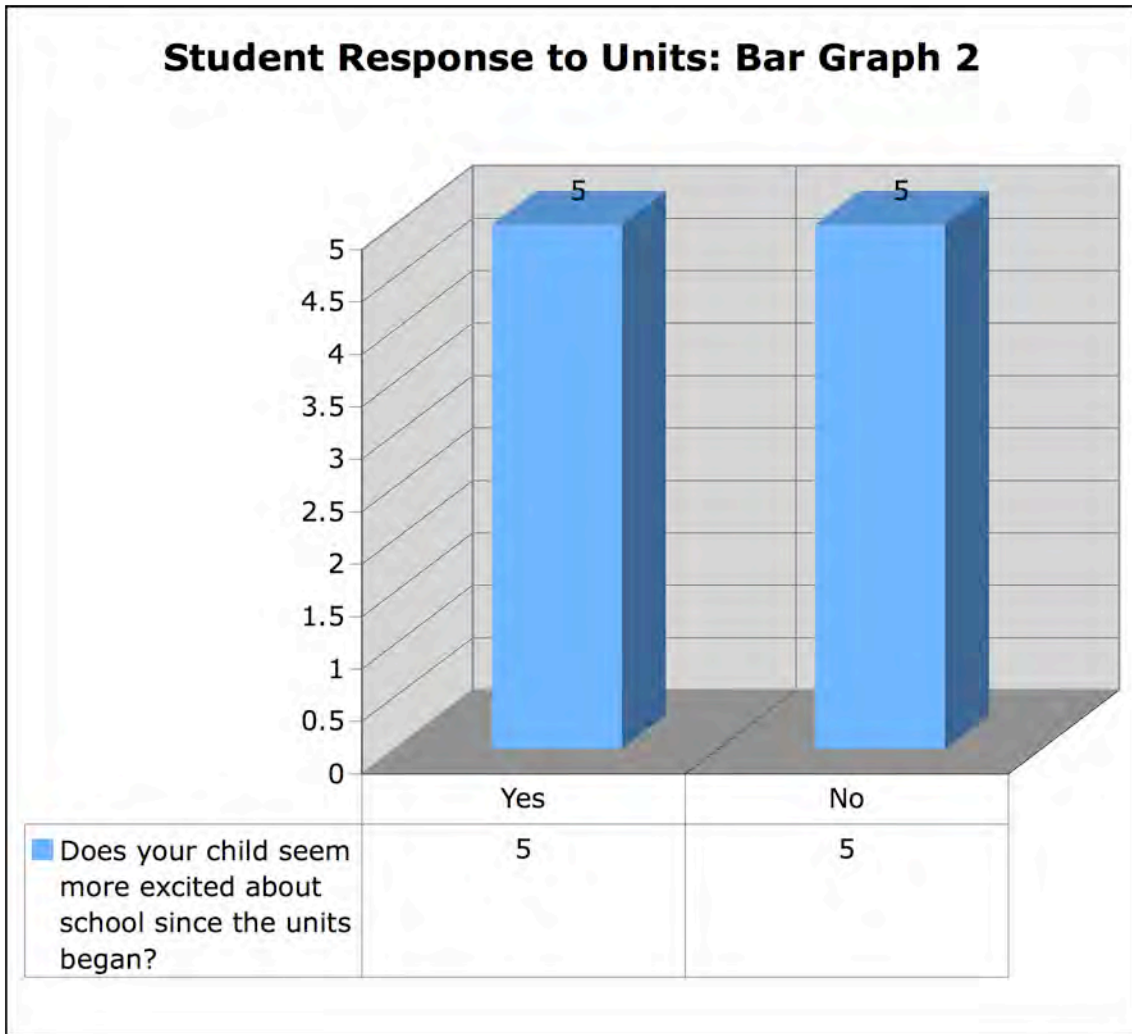
Appendix N

**Parents response on final survey when asked:
Does your child speak more about school at home
since the Lenape and Australia units began?**



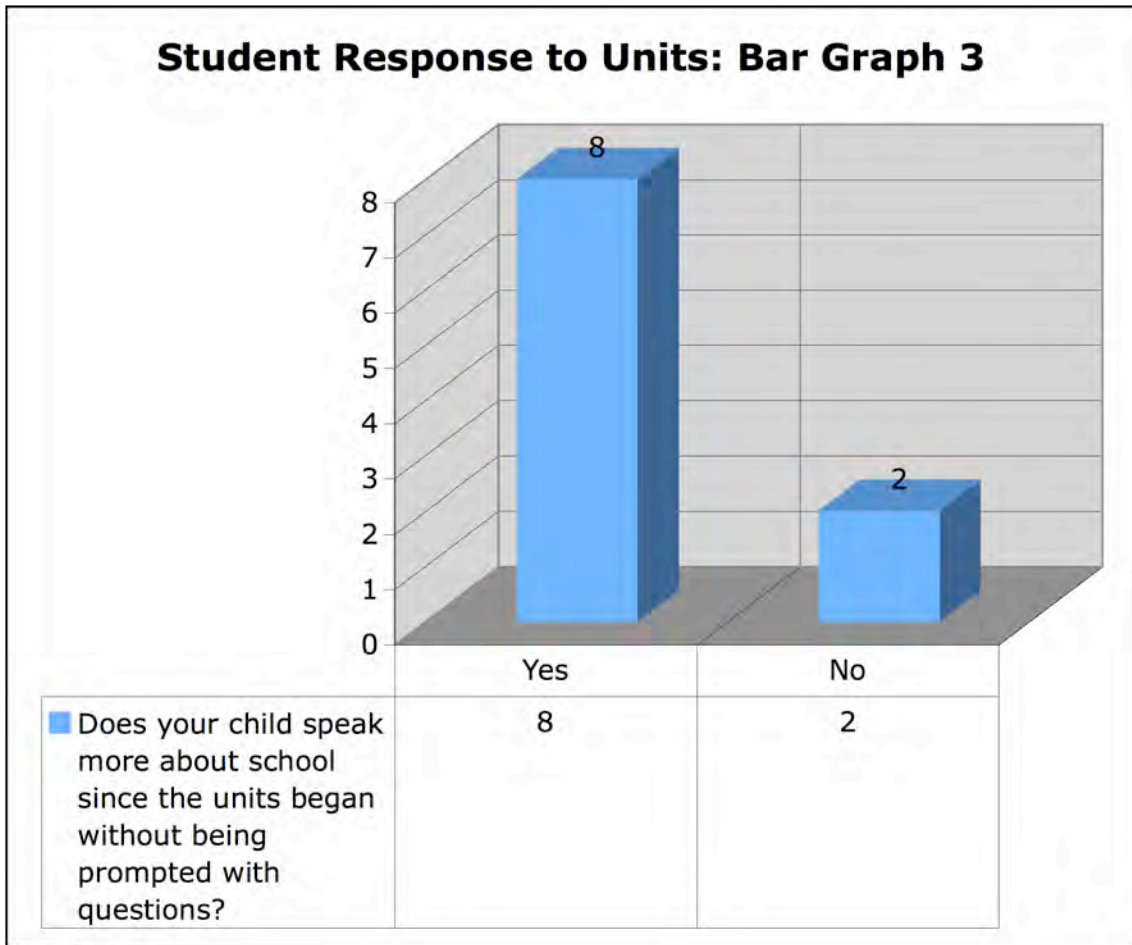
Appendix O

Parent Response when asked: Does your child seem more excited about school since the units have begun?



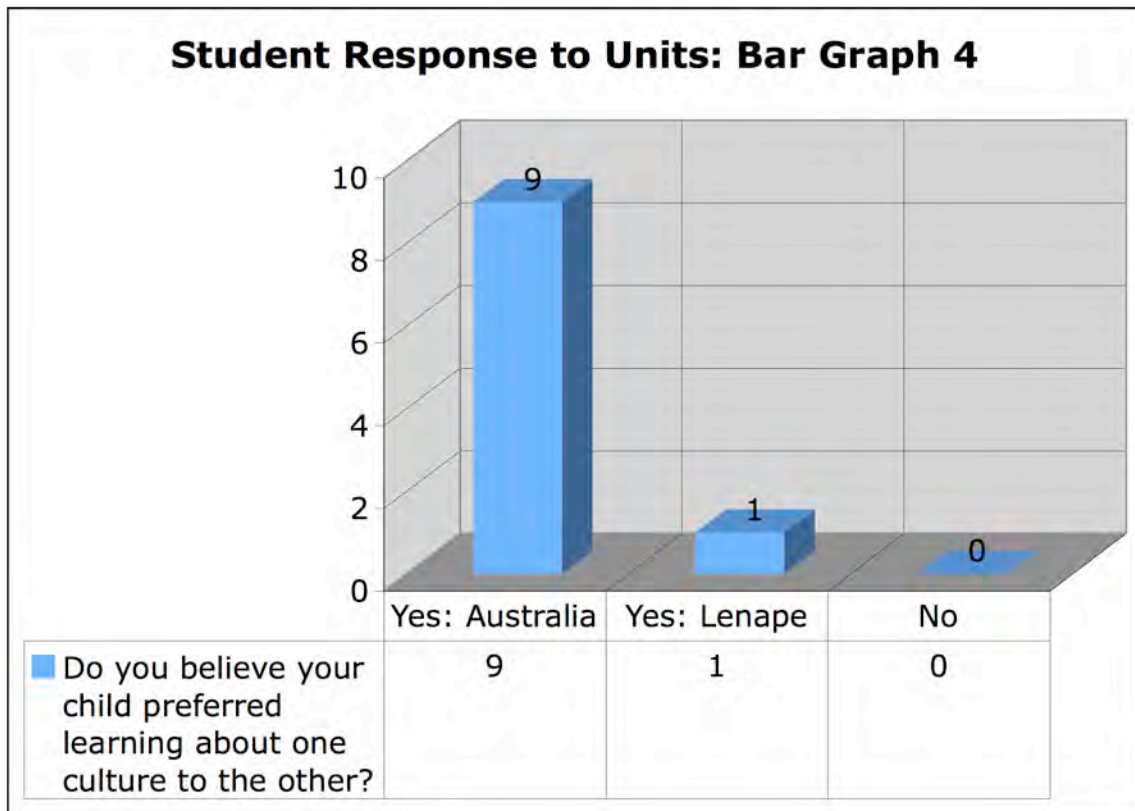
Appendix P

Parent response when asked: Does your child speak more about school since the units began without being prompted with questions?



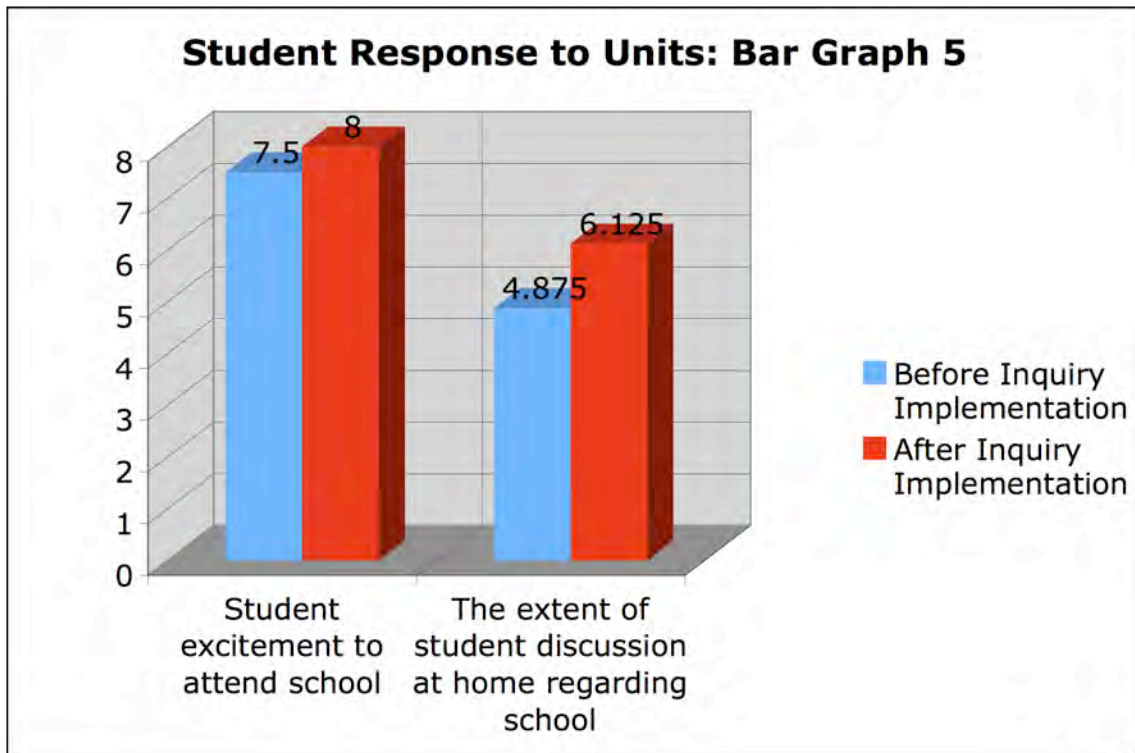
Appendix Q

**Parent response when asked: Do you believe your child preferred learning about one culture (Lenape vs. Australia) to the other? Yes/No
If yes, which culture.**



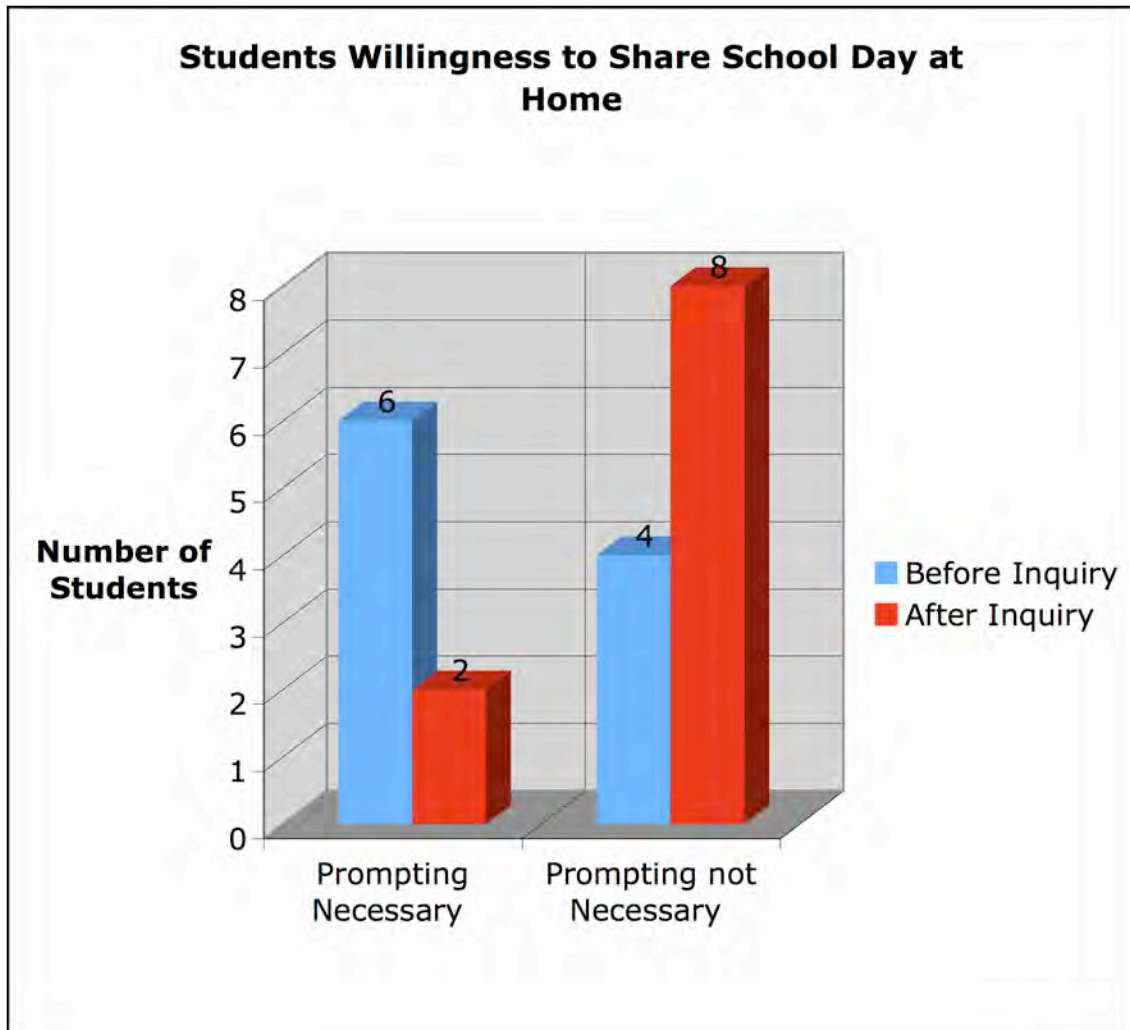
Appendix R

Average parent response when asked to comment on the change of their students excitement to attend school as well any change in students desire to discuss the school day at home.



Appendix S

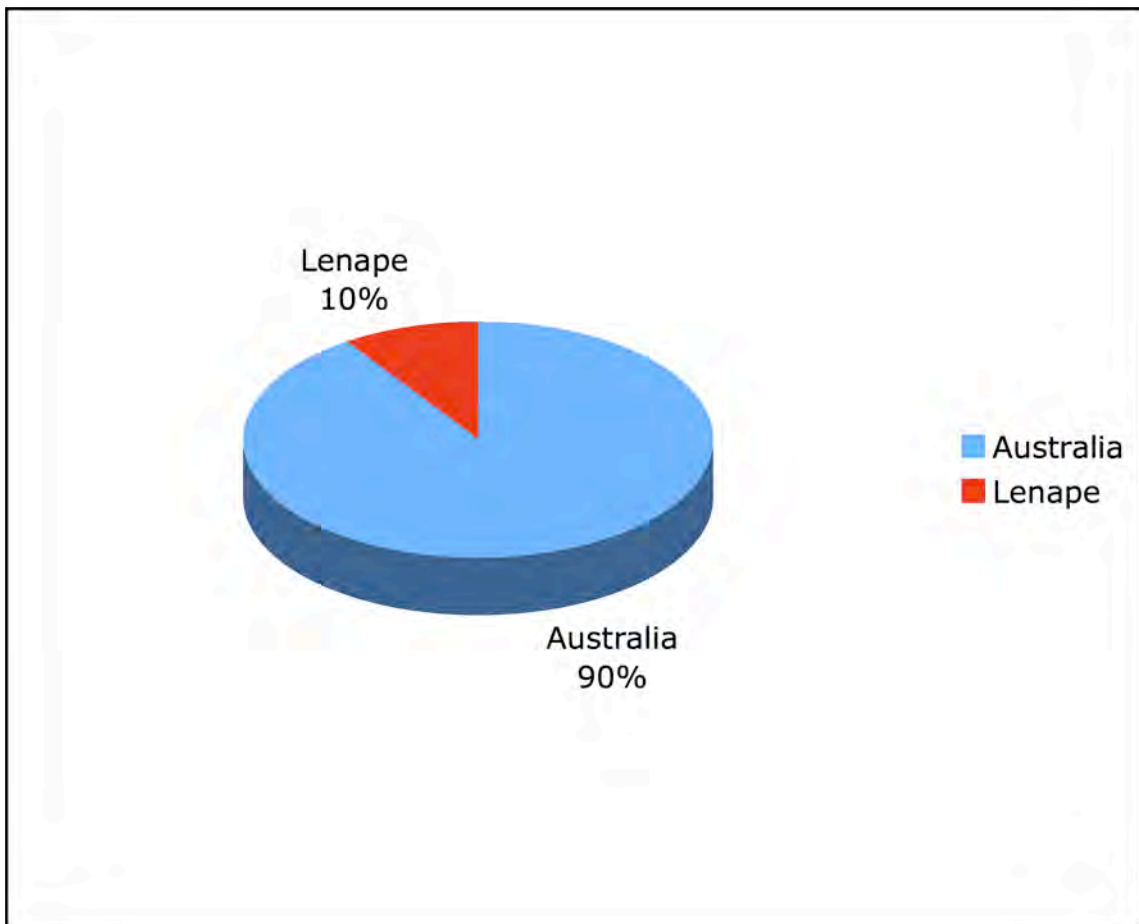
Parent response when asked if his or her student speaks about the school day at home often and if parent prompting is needed for student response.



Appendix T

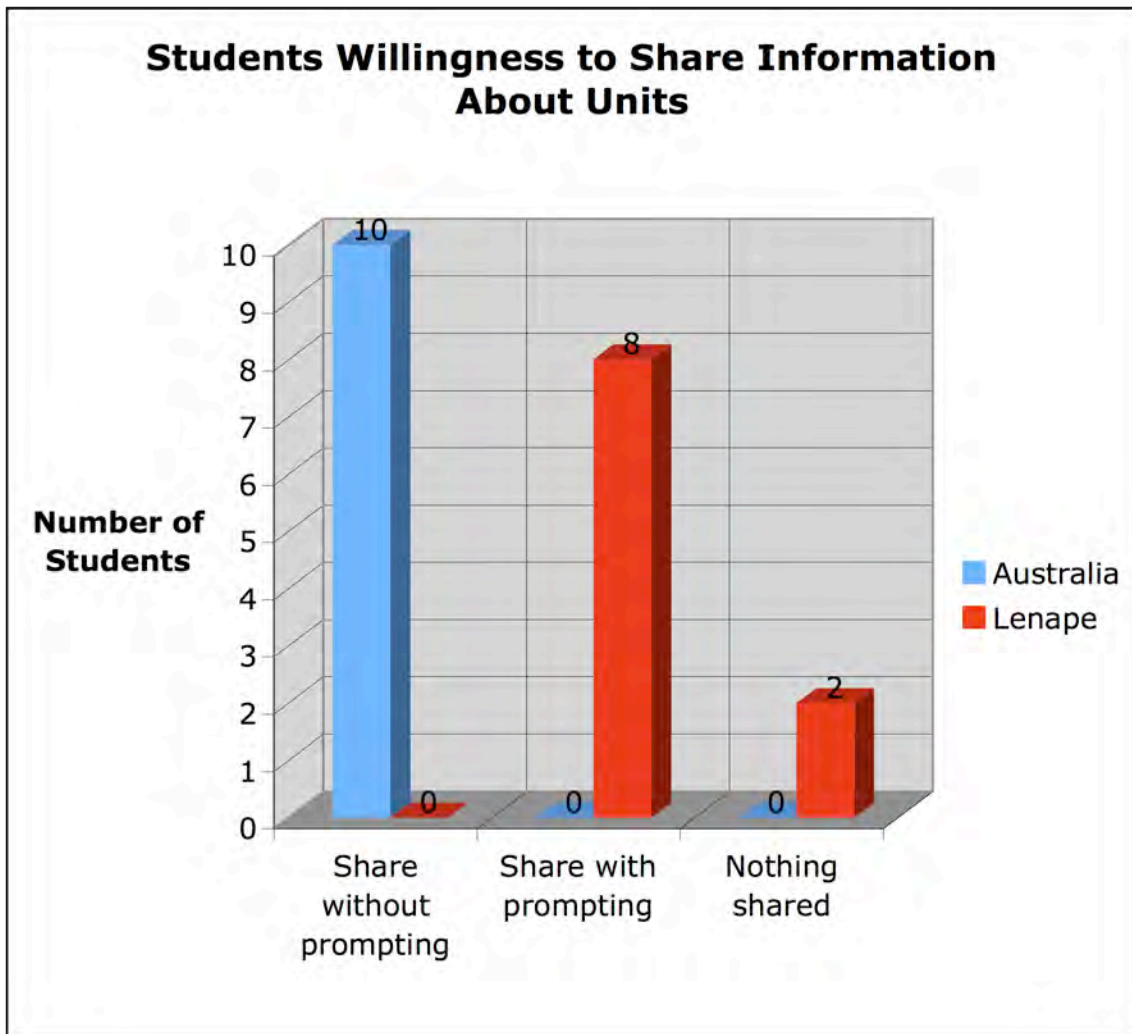
Student response when asked whether he or she preferred learning about Australia when compared to the Lenape, or if he or she enjoyed learning about both units equally.

Student Answer Option	Student Response in Number Form
Australia	19
The Lenape	2
Both	0



Appendix U

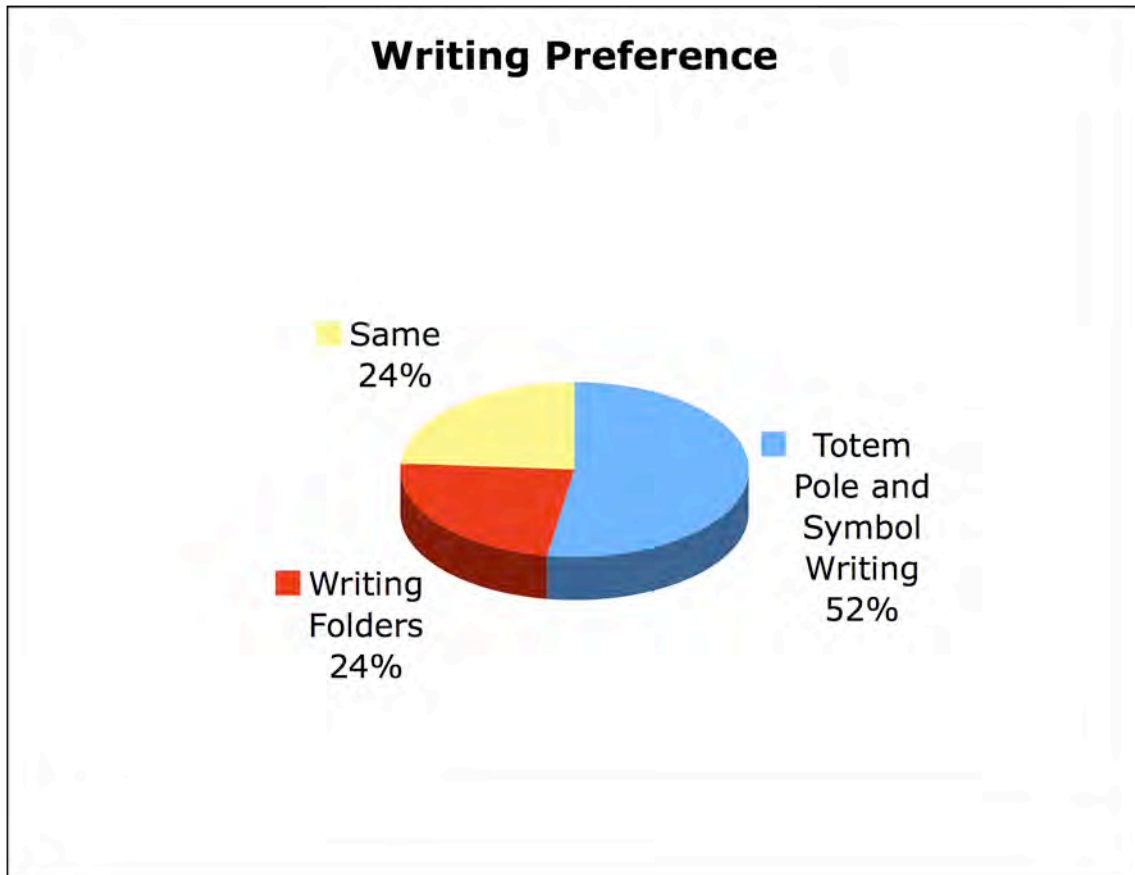
Parent response when asked how readily his or her student talked about each specific unit at home.



Appendix V

**Student response when asked:
What form of writing do you like better: Writing
through totem poles and symbols, writing in our
writer workshop folder or do you like both the
same?**

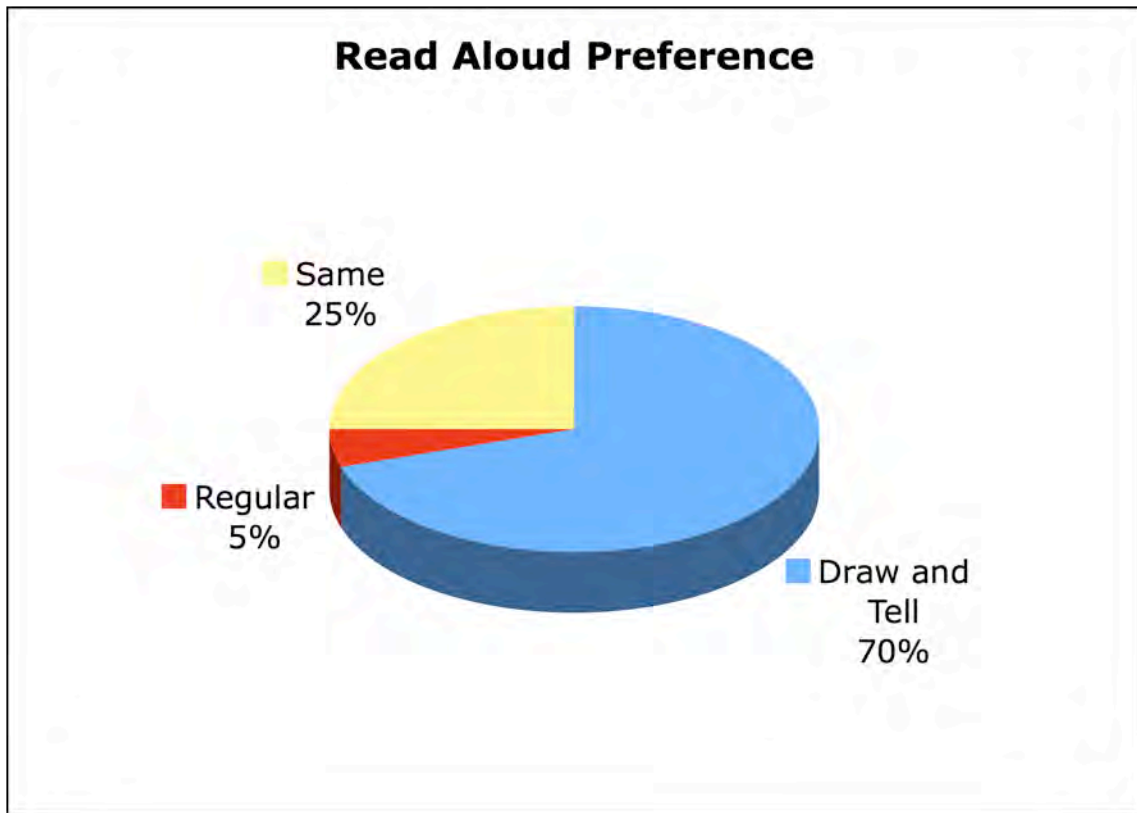
Totem Poles	Folder	Same
11	5	5



Appendix W

**Student response when asked:
What form of read aloud do you like better: Draw
and tell read alouds, regular read alouds or do
you like both types of read alouds the same?**

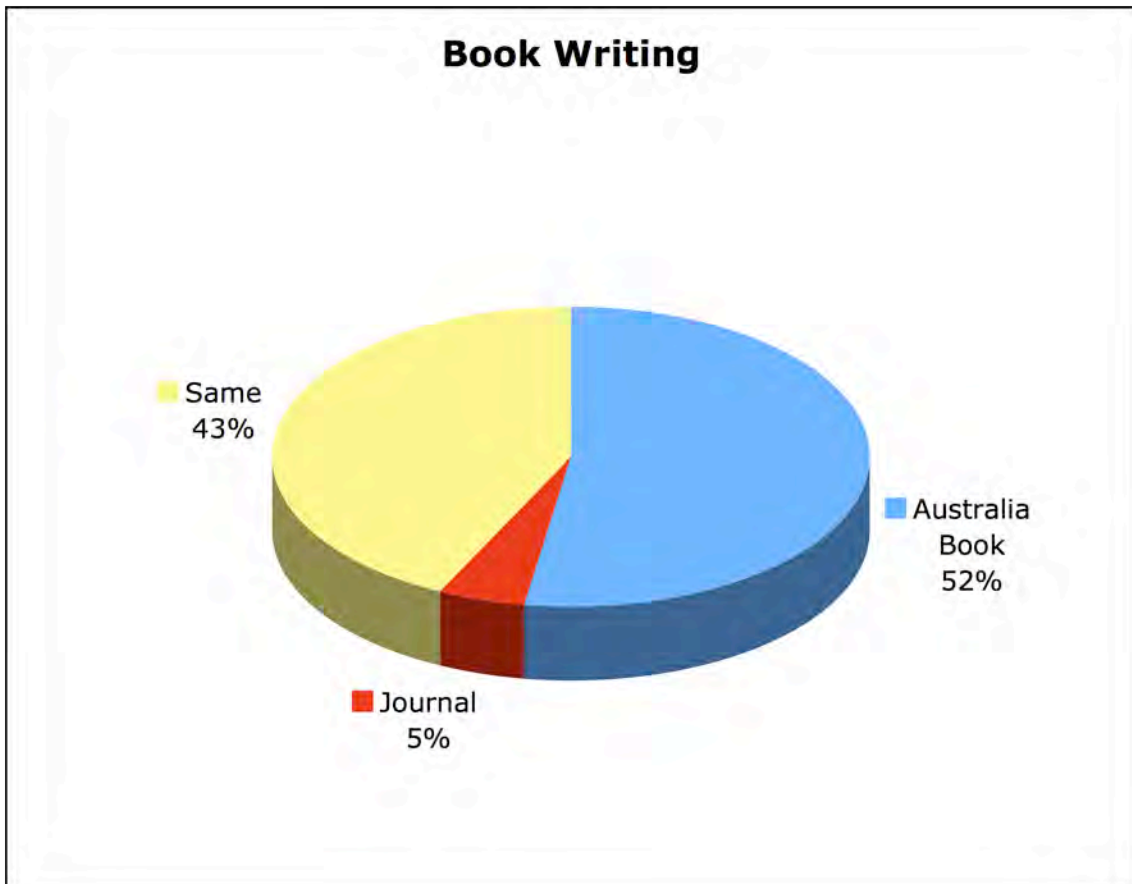
Draw and Tell	Regular Read Aloud	Same
15	1	4



Appendix X

**Student response when asked:
What form of writing do you like better: Writing
in your Australia book, writing in your journal, or
do you like both the same amount?**

Australia Book	Journal	Same
11	1	9



Appendix Y

Student Work Sample

Appendix Z

Teacher Journal Excerpts

Week 1 and 2 (Lenape Unit)

I have been amazed at how the students are reacting to the Lenape unit. Some students who commonly rush to finish work not only are taking their time but, moreover, are asking for extra work. The students are greatly intrigued by the Lenape especially when Charlotte teaches. Many students seem to be fascinated that the Lenape live near us and are still alive today.

A student came in today with a note written in symbols, much like the symbol writing we learned in class. He made it at home with his mom!

Student attention to detail in their work to make sure everything is much like the Lenape is neat to see. This is something I had not expected, especially so soon.

Students have been writing Charlotte letters asking questions about the Lenape and thanking her for sharing!

Weeks 3 and 4 (Australia Unit)

When coming into the classroom the students excitedly looked around the room and pointed out the new bulletin boards and surrounding information. They talked together for fifteen minutes intrigued by each others stories and prior knowledge. When it came time to introduce the new unit the students had hands raised the whole time asking questions and sharing their own experiences.

The students use Australian phrases often during the day. Phrases such as, “G’day mate” and “jumpbacks”. For the morning meeting greeting students chose to say “G’day mate” to each other!

Two students in particular are creating Outback books with illustrations and writing beyond the level they normally produce. Their attention to detail and desire to put forth their best effort is exciting to watch.

Three students checked out books about Australia in library. Another student brought in his Australia book from home in to share.

One student has come in everyday this week sharing about his father and how he works in Australia. The mom later commented to me that this unit has sparked such an interest in this student and it is amazing to see.