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MAGAZINE

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Global Connections: Singapore to the Swannanoa Valley

By Brittany Krasutsky, Owen Middle School Science Teacher

The Summer of 2016 was busy for Owen Middle School (OMS) science teacher Brittany Krasutsky. She, along with 10 other middle and high school educators from around North Carolina, traveled to Singapore in mid-July. Their mission was to learn about the best practices of teaching science and mathematics from their counterparts in one of the world's most-acclaimed education systems. She tells us more about her trip and how she is applying this experience to her classroom lessons.

Singapore is a relatively young nation, having established its independence in 1965. Once a small fishing village, today it is a bustling multicultural and cosmopolitan city-state that commands a strong presence in the world with its free trade economy and highly efficient workforce.

Singapore's leaders very quickly recognized that *education* would be crucial to its cultural and economic success as a nation. Thus, Singapore's leaders implemented an innovative education system to bolster one of its greatest resources — its people. The system has further evolved as the needs of the nation have grown.

Today, only 50 years later, Singapore's students consistently rank near the top in international comparisons of performance in mathematics, science, and literacy.

Go Global NC (an educational nonprofit that funds

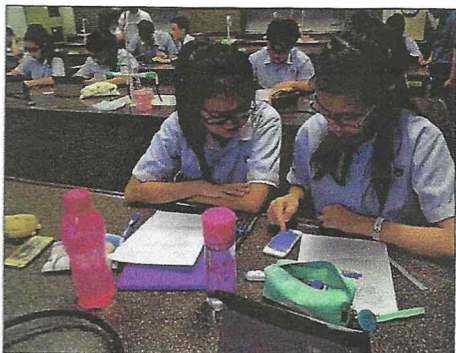


School of Science and Technology Singapore student shows Stefani Joyner how to use the robotic hand he built in class.

various global outreach programs) has found that increasing teacher knowledge about the world helps increase teacher confidence and competence in providing students with the skills to navigate successfully through a globalized and interconnected world.

NC educators who have participated in past professional development programs have collectively created over 400 lesson plans that help bring a global perspective into the classroom. In addition, teachers have gained the increased ability to view issues and problems from multiple perspectives, have increased their commitment to teaching, have gained exposure to best practices and new teaching methodologies, and have increased their comfort level in using cutting edge technology applications in the classroom.

I've been able to weave in many of the things I observed into class instruction for seventh-grade



Ngee Ann Secondary School using technology with worksheet and rulers.



Brittany Krasutsky at School of Science and Technology Singapore.



Krasutsky, Dustin Nichols, and Stephanie Evans.

science. During our composition of the atmosphere unit, I talked about power use as it relates to the greenhouse effect and global warming. We discussed water desalination, why this technology was important to Singapore (due to Malaysia controlling the water supply), and Singapore wanting water independence.

We've also discussed land reclamation and conservation of energy in Singapore. There, they dry clothes on bamboo sticks that hang from high rise buildings!

I've shared pictures of signs from the orchid gardens in Singapore with students to get ideas percolating about how to design signs for our pollinator garden, Monarch Butterfly waystation, American Chestnut Germplasm Conservation Orchard, and upcoming River Cane project.

In addition, I took several pictures of the murals in Singapore, and we've gotten approval to work with Warren Wilson College's art department to paint a large retaining wall on OMS property. This mural will represent our new three word mission statement- *Heritage, Growth, Promise*- and will help connect our community and students to the rich heritage we have here in the Swannanoa Valley and Black Mountain art communities.

The Singapore experience has become a part of my teaching and personal life. I draw from the knowledge I gained — sometimes daily! I'm so grateful for being sponsored for this trip. It was an invaluable and enriching experience that lives on and keeps giving back.

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