***Teaching Locally, Thinking Globally  
Helping Non-International School Educators Understand the Third Culture Kid Experience*   
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**Defining our terms:**

*Who are Third Culture Kids (TCKs)?*

“Children who accompany their parents into another culture [usually for a parent’s career choice].”

—Dr. Ruth Hill Useem, Sociologist,   
 “A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture(s)…

--David C. Pollock

*Who are “non-international school educators”?*

* Educator—ed·u·ca·tor  (j-ktr) *n.*
  + **1.** One trained in teaching; a teacher.
  + **2. a.** A specialist in the theory and practice of education.
  + **b.** An administrator of a school or an educational institution.
    - School/guidance counselors included
* *“Non-international schools” = “local school”*
  + Educational institutions using local government’s curriculum and language
  + Majority of student population/educators come from surrounding communities/host culture

*What’s the problem…*

* Many teachers in local schools have not knowingly lived among different cultural worlds
* If acknowledged, TCKs may be seen as “elite few”
* Often cultural diversity of TCKs is invisible
* Old diversity models not adequate for today’s changing world

*The result…*

* The impact of the global experience and how it relates to them as educators in today’s world is missed

**What happens if parents and/or educators don’t recognize these often hidden cross-cultural experiences among students?**

* Difficulties with language may be overlooked
* Lack of availability for help with homework may be overlooked
  + Parents may not share assumed knowledge
* Parental interactions or support may be misunderstood
  + Difference in expectations of how teachers and parents relate
  + Academic learning may suffer if student doesn’t understand expectations of new school
  + What happens if hidden diversities aren’t recognized?
* Social interactions may be misinterpreted
  + Different behavior has different meaning in different cultures
  + Parents or teacher may not understand reactions towards a child
* Students can be shamed in many ways
  + Stories may not be trusted
  + May be accused of bragging
  + Even teacher’s teasing can shame (story of DW)
* The wealth of what the students know through life itself is lost to the class
* Child can be placed in wrong grade
* May be misdiagnosed with learning disabilities
* Learning disabilities may be overlooked
* Typical responses of cross-cultural experience may be misinterpreted

**What happens when hidden cross-cultural experiences are recognized?**

* Students are affirmed
* Teachers can tap previously unrecognized resources

**Small group discussion…**

* *What are specific ways we can address the lack of awareness among educators for why a TCK experience matters if potential obstacles are:*
  + Lack of global/cross-cultural experience
  + Presumption that “TCK” only relates to a privileged few
  + Hidden diversity
  + Adherence to traditional models of diversity
* *Consider*
  + Personal approaches
  + Organizational approaches
  + Societal/systemic approaches

**Working space:**

* Lack of global/cross-cultural experience
  + Personal approaches
  + Organizational approaches
  + Societal/systemic approaches
* Presumption that “TCK”only relates to a privileged few
  + Personal approaches
  + Organizational approaches
  + Societal/systemic approaches
* Hidden diversity
  + Personal approaches
  + Organizational approaches
  + Societal/systemic approaches
* Adherence to traditional models of diversity
  + Personal approaches
  + Organizational approaches
  + Societal/systemic approaches

# **Beginning steps educators can take in trying to understand/help T/CCKs of all sorts in their schools…**

## Start with basic assumptions

### Every child/parent/family is unique

#### Their experiences, personalities, and family dynamics are replicated nowhere else in the world

### Every child/parent/family is “the same”

#### They share basic human needs and emotions with all others of the human race

# How these assumptions help educators

## “Uniqueness” means they can’t presume to know their students until they learn the student’s story

## “Likeness” means they can better understand the *impact* of the student’s story no matter how different the details are from their own lives

* “Normalize” the process

# How educators can help normalize the experience of an international/cross-cultural childhood

## Teach the teachers and staff

### Inservice training

## Help parents understand

### Orientation meetings

#### Explain the “school culture” i.e. values, etc

### Ongoing seminars

### Parent “support groups”

# *If educators need to know their students’ stories…*

## How are they going to hear the stories?

## How are they going to understand the stories?

# *How educators can help discover the student’s story*

## From the parents….

### Entrance forms

### Parent/teacher meetings

## From students

### Writing assignments

### “Show and tell”

### Multicultural fair

# *How educators can better understand the stories*

## When listening to or reading facts about this student’s life…

### Mentally or literally fill in the blanks for cultural spheres of influence

### Consider the implications of this formerly invisible to them world

#### Does it help them understand certain behaviors or educational issues for student?

#### How will this child repatriate, especially if from non-English speaking country?

# *How educators can help normalize the experience of an international childhood*

## For students

### Group discussions/common projects

### Affirmation of how “sameness” is expressed in “difference”

### Reentry programs

# If needed…

## A mentor in new culture

## Extra tutoring

## Language lessons

### For their school

### For repatriation

# *Dealing with identity issues*

## Help TCKs/CCKs realize they can be both/and, not either/or

### “My life is like Window Each part is open and accessible, but I have to operate in the one that’s on the screen.”

## Help them proactively develop the cross-cultural gifts inherent in their lifestyle

## Help them celebrate the richness of their gifts

## Encourage long-term connection to the school through alumni association, homecoming events, etc.