

GLAGcreates: Poetry as a Medium for Food Security Education.

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Introduction

Food security and related wicked problems can be a challenging area for learners at any level. (Coyne, 2005). The difficulty with learner engagement lies not only with comprehension, but also with confidence in discussing. As the world continues to become more globalized, the complexity of challenges like food security grows as well (Stimping & Ricketts, 2016). Mitigation of complex problems as it pertains to education of the next generation requires many areas of expertise (Komives & Wagner, 2012) and in addition to diversified mitigation, learning contexts outside of traditional spaces will be paramount for building skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and leadership (Bastler, 2015; Sterling, & Huckle, 2014).

Recognizing the need for building critical thinking and leadership skills, the Global Teach Ag Network (primary funder) at Penn State University in partnership with the non-profit group Poetry X Hunger (additional funder) launched GLAGcreates as a program to systematically integrate the arts and humanities into collaboration with applied STEM areas to tackle the wicked challenge of global food security.

Significance

GLAGcreates delivers an instructional resource to assist secondary educators with integrating literacy into their classroom through written expression. (Weems, 2005)

GLAGcreates fosters creativity outlets in the classroom (Ajithgaman & Noverre-Reynolds, 2005; Lee & Park, 2021) and opens opportunities for research on student confidence in expressing feelings on critical issues.

GLAGcreates provides a platform for students from diverse backgrounds. (EdSource, 2015) to express their thoughts on hunger in a non-traditional medium such as poetry.

GLAGcreates encourages critical collaboration between students, educators, and stakeholders in discussing 21st century global issues and opens opportunities for research on the catalyzing effect of the arts in applied STEM settings.

Objectives

1. Form 1 sustainable partnership with a stakeholder that emphasized global competency and food security literacy.
2. Evidence potential collaboration between educators around the world by recruiting a school-based teacher, FFA advisor, or 4H leader from at least 2 different countries.
3. Increase the relevance of the programs of participating educators to their local institutions by providing a free, practical online curriculum tied to at least 4 nationally recognized standards.
4. Conduct a contest to collect original literary works from at least 50 learners of participating educators for the 2021 Poetry Event.

Project Details & Resources

- Four educators representing the disciplines of English/Fine Arts and Agriscience were recruited to form an action team with two members of the Global Teach Ag Network and the founder of Poetry X Hunger.
- The modules were designed by the Global Teach Ag Network and reviewed by the educators on the action team before distribution at the start of the second week of September.
- The GLAGcreates event began in the second week of September with an email campaign and posting of the materials to the Global Teach Ag Network website.

- The materials included: branded marketing items, the link to the modules, the call for poetry submissions for the 2021 Poetry Event, and a link of poetry samples on the Poetry X Hunger website.
- Poetry submissions from participating learners were submitted via Qualtrics with the submission window closing on December 4th.
- Poems were compiled and sent in an anonymous, digital package to the three judges representing both poetry background and food channel experience.
- Announcement of the finalists were done via email to the coordinating educators of the students.

Figure 1. Resources needed included support for the modules of submission judging.

Item	Name/Description	Unit	Qty	Total
Making Honors	Honors for each of the three judges Q posts and a food distribution specialist for evaluating poetry event entries.	\$250	3	\$750
Course Content	Virtual-online market software that can connect to multiple course management systems.	\$100	1	\$100
				Total
				\$250

Modules

Utilizing the platform Articulate360, GLAGcreates developed a collection of 5 modules that combined standards from the English Language Arts & Literacy Common Core as well as content tied directly to UN Sustainable Development Goal #2, Zero Hunger (Dessa, 2016). To date, 103 students have engaged in modules from 3 countries. (United States, Honduras, Malawi)

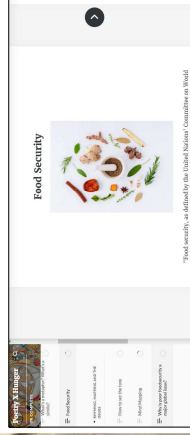


Figure 2. The platform Articulate360 provide interactive modules for content delivery that were free and accessible from anywhere in the world.

The Event

The GLAGcreates program culminated in a poetry submission event where secondary students (N=25) from three different countries (Honduras, Malawi, and the US) submitted original works for review by the appointed judges from Poetry X Hunger. Objective 1-3 were met through this process, and objective 4 was not met.

Below is a selection from the winning poem, "Hunger Pains" written by a student from New York named Tyler. Educators who assisted in the submission of each of the poems of the finalist completed a release form with the parents of the students to allow for Penn State and the Global Teach Ag Network to showcase their work.

Hunger Pains

As we eat to gorge ourselves
Who don't have stocked shelves
Who can't afford the bills
Because we, as a society
Have gotten too used to
Drinking, wine and sipping tea
All while ignoring those who are ravenous
The pain of hunger hits harder than all
For when it becomes too great
Good people will gaw and crawl
All for a chance, to feed again
If we would realize
This happens to one in six
Who suffer from such famine
Maybe then, it really clicks
Because in these people, hunger pains
-Tyler, NY

GLAG Workshop

Three students were showcased during a workshop on Zoom (N=79) during which time they explained their creative process and the role poetry will play in their lives as they continue to develop critical thinking skills.



Future Work

- With the pilot success, the poetry event will continue in 2022. In addition, other opportunities to connect the humanities and arts to applied STEM challenges will use mediums such as podcasts, documentaries, and artwork backed with content support in online modules.
- The framework for content delivery through modules coupled with artistic expression will continue and focus will be placed on the involvement of an action team comprised of teachers in the field.
- Future research opportunities will seek to describe student engagement in food security education through the arts as well as the correlation between student confidence and non-traditional mediums for expression.

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