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# Effects of a Global Schools Initiative in a Rural School Setting: A Collective Case Study of How a Global Schools Initiative Impacts a Small, Rural Elementary School in Northwest North Carolina

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EFFECTS OF A GLOBAL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE IN A RURAL SCHOOL  
SETTING: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF HOW A GLOBAL SCHOOLS  
INITIATIVE IMPACTS A SMALL, RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN  
NORTHWEST NORTH CAROLINA

By  
Steven Hall

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University College of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2021

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Steven Hall under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife BriAnne and our children, Elliot and Kameron. BriAnne, you are my soulmate. You inspire me daily as a mother, wife, best friend, and fellow educator, constantly cheering me on to achieve my goals. Your love and passion for education inspire me daily. There have been many long nights, weekends, and sacrifices made while working on this study, and you have been with me every step of the way. You were always willing to listen to my ideas, and your encouragement has kept me going. Your love, support, and example for me throughout this process have been unwavering. Thank you for everything you do for our family and me. I am so proud to be your best friend and husband. Elliot, I cannot begin to tell you what it means to have your support as well. I am so proud of you son. Your love of learning is an inspiration to me. The dry wit you expound at times was much needed. I hope the model that your mother and I provide for you inspires you to be the best you can be and to continue to seek to be a lifelong learner as you pursue your dreams. Kameron, your true zest for life has always been an encouragement. I am proud of you too son. I hope you continue to love learning as you pursue your dreams. It is because of the love and support of all three of you that this project is completed. I love you all.

Throughout this process, I have kept the song lyrics from Michael W. Smith's "Sovereign Over Us" in my head: "You are working in our waiting, You're sanctifying us, When beyond our understanding, You're teaching us to trust, You're faithful forever, Perfect in love, You are sovereign over us."

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Abstract**

EFFECTS OF A GLOBAL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE IN A RURAL SCHOOL SETTING: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF HOW A GLOBAL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE IMPACTS A SMALL, RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN NORTHWEST NORTH CAROLINA. Hall, Steven, 2021: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

The purpose of this study was to identify ways a Global Schools Initiative in rural schools, especially in northwestern North Carolina, supported students, teachers, and the greater community. The study reviewed the factors that facilitated this initiative and looked at the impact the initiative had on students, teachers, and the community. I desire to give guidance to other rural school leaders who might be interested in implementing their own Global Schools Initiative. The results of the research I conducted, along with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, allowed me to hypothesize how students in a Global Schools Initiative compared to students not involved in a Global Schools Initiative. This research highlighted a need to continue to study this hypothesis in the environment of Global Schools Initiatives in a rural school district in the state of North Carolina. I found that the Global Schools Initiative that was implemented did have an effect on the academics, culture, and attendance in the school as well as on teacher job satisfaction and community relations.

*Keywords:* agriculture, arts, culture shock, empathy, global schools initiative, global competence, global competencies, interview, North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, North Carolina EOG tests, observation, Participate Learning, PowerSchool, rural, sustainable development goals, service-learning projects, survey

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

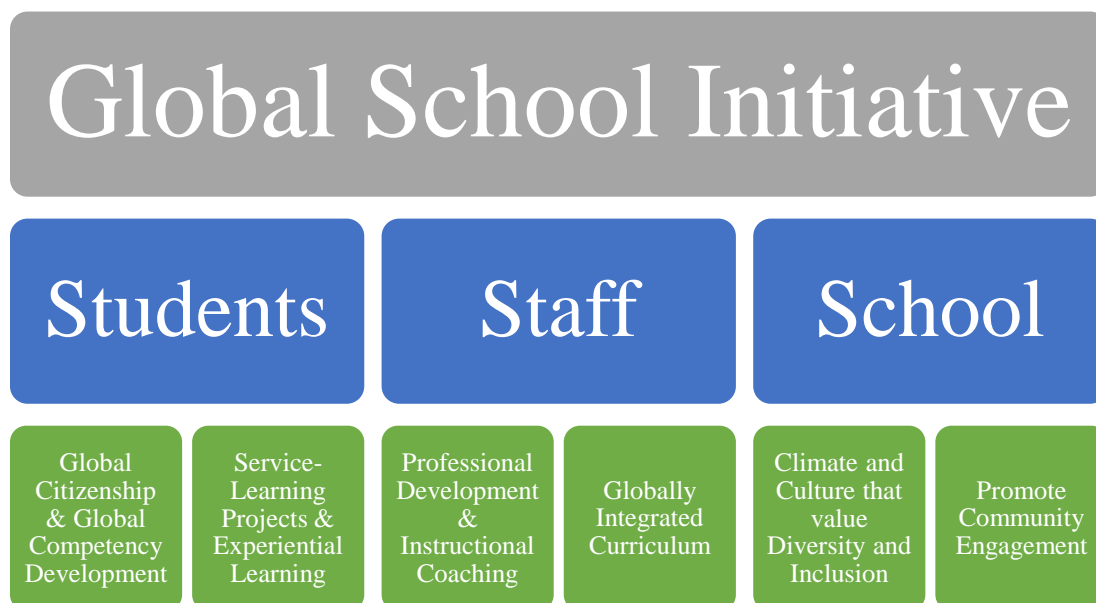
### **Background of the Study**

This study focused on a rural, school in northwestern North Carolina. As principal of this school, I realized there was a problem with many students experiencing culture shock when they left this small, rural county to pursue postsecondary education. Students went to college or university and returned to the county within a semester. Some students had rarely, if ever, left the county before moving away for college. Most of the school staff had always lived in the county and many attended this same school. There was a lack of exposure to different cultures, and students were not developing global competencies while enrolled in school. Students are not ready to be in the real world because they are lacking two essential skills: understanding of other cultures and service leadership. As educators, particularly in smaller, rural towns, it was imperative that we integrate global initiatives and build cultural competency in each student. Research reinforced the need for integrating global integration into our curriculum.

The public appreciates the need for global learning. So do students. In 2001, the American Council on Education (ACE) found that 93 percent of the public believes that knowledge of international issues will be important for the careers of their children and other young people. That same percentage said it would be important to understand other cultures and customs to compete successfully in a global economy. Approximately 90 percent of high school seniors think international skills and competencies will help them work with people from different cultures and provide a competitive edge in their careers. (Adams & Carfagna, 2006, p. 166; Hayward & Siaya, 2001)

I researched various options for educational programming to integrate global education that would support increasing student global competencies. One criterion for the curriculum would be to develop a student's global connectedness and global perspective by introducing them to different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. Another criterion would be to engage students in authentic learning experiences that would develop essential skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Additionally, the program would need to be an appropriate fit for our schools' culture and enhance current initiatives and programming that were already in place at the school site. The global education must align with and enhance the curriculum and instruction at all grade levels. The global education program would need to support best practices in the classroom, teacher engagement, and job satisfaction. Another criterion of the global education program would be that it would allow for community engagement. Last, the global education must demonstrate a positive impact on student educational outcomes.

The Global Schools Initiative was selected as the best fit for our school to integrate global education. The Global Schools Initiative incorporated several key components which are outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Key Components of Global Schools Initiative*

*Note.* Figure 1 outlines the key components of the Global Schools Initiative for students, staff, and the school.

**Purpose of the Study**

A mixed methods study was adopted to explore the implementation of a Global Schools Initiative and how it might impact student outcomes, teacher satisfaction, and community engagement. This relationship was studied through surveys, interviews, data collection, and needs assessments. This study was conducted in an elementary school in rural, northwest North Carolina. This study could be used to show the impact of a Global Schools Initiative on student performance, attendance, job satisfaction, and community relations. Other districts that were considering starting a similar Global Schools Initiative could use the findings of this study to assist with their implementation. Findings of this study could be used to give guidance to other rural school leaders who might be interested in implementing their own Global Schools Initiative.

## **Research Questions**

The driving questions for this research were

1. In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina?
2. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?
3. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Based on the need for global education design and evaluations of implementation efforts highlighted in the literature analysis, a mixed methods approach was adopted for this project. Methods mixing can occur inside a single study or across multiple studies in a research effort. In terms of the order of methods (concurrent, qualitative first, or quantitative first), the priority among methods (equal or either method prioritized), and the nature and timing of integration, the approach for blending methodologies must be defined and justified (full or partial, during data collection, analysis, or interpretation) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The methodologies were merged during data collection and analysis in this study, with the quantitative method coming first in the sequence and the qualitative method being prioritized in terms of the research's main goal. A clear and strategic link among the approaches was critical to the success of a mixed methods study, ensuring that the data converged or triangulated to provide more information than a single method could. Mixed methods research must take care to negotiate back and forth

between qualitative and quantitative approaches rather than dichotomizing their values and methodologies because qualitative and quantitative methods come from different traditions. Quantitative research favors a deductive-objective-generalizing method, while qualitative research favors an inductive-subjective-contextual approach. However, these broad tendencies were neither absolute nor mutually incompatible. Mixed methods research that is done well addresses these tendencies by explaining how and why criteria from both paradigms were combined (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Searching for commonalities and variations in what global educators had to say about global education, I found that global political, economic, and social influences have influenced the global education movement from its beginning to the present. Kirkwood-Tucker (2009) reviewed Hanvey's (1982) conceptual themes in their research. The conceptual themes encompassed a wide range of topics in comprehensive global education. The themes have been cited, endorsed, and supported by global educators (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009). These themes have continued to be described in the goals of global organizations such as the Asia Society, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, North Carolina's Center for International Understanding, and the Visiting International Faculty (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009).

Three major concepts were foundational to this study: global citizenship, global competencies, and global education. Global citizenship is defined as the “idea that people have rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of the entire world, rather than a particular nation or place” (Participate Learning, 2021, Global leadership framework section, para. 1). Global competencies are the knowledge, skills, and abilities a global citizen would encompass. Multiple models for global citizenship and global

competencies exist. Gerzon (2010) proposed six dimensions of connecting that promote global citizenship:

1. Asking questions that open up new possibilities
2. Witnessing the multiple identities that make ourselves and others fully human
3. Being willing to truly listen to others, even if we do not like what we hear
4. Using communications media to find common ground, not to judge
5. Having the discipline to meet with and listen to our enemies
6. Responding to injustice by seeking reconciliation rather than revenge.

Participate Learning (2021) has specified 10 global competencies that reflect global citizenship:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Respect for Difference
3. Sense of Global Connection
4. Curiosity
5. Flexibility
6. Effective and Appropriate Communication
7. Analytical and Critical-Thinking Skills.
8. Empathy
9. Understanding of Global Issues
10. Intercultural Knowledge.

Global education focuses on the fostering of global citizenship through the development of global competencies. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018) has established three domains for Global Citizenship

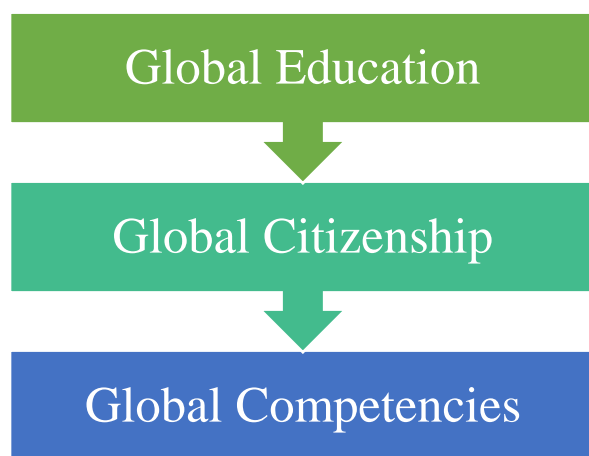
Education:

1. Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.
2. Socio-emotional: values, attitudes, and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.
3. Behavioral: conduct, performance, practical application, and engagement.

The connection between these foundational concepts for this study can be found in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Global Education, Global Citizenship, Global Competency Relationship*



### **Scope of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a Global Schools Initiative in a rural, elementary school in northwestern North Carolina. Both the factors that facilitated the implementation of this initiative and the impact of the Global Schools Initiative on students, teachers, and the community were highlighted throughout the study. Beginning in the 2016/2017 school year and concluding in the 2018/2019 school

year, this study was conducted over 3 years. For comparative purposes, data were used from the 2015/2016 school year. Within this study, the following topics pertinent to implementation of a Global Schools Initiative were examined and included in the literature review:

- Global Citizenship & Global Competencies
- Global Education
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Service-Learning Projects
- Rural Education

### **Limitations**

As with any study, there were limitations. I concluded that the main limitation involves sample size. The initiation of this study began to expose students in a small, rural school to different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. The school district had a total student population of less than 1,500, and this was the smallest elementary school within that district. It was clear that for this study, the overall sample size was limited. I believed that even though the sample size was small, the data collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups would be enlightening as the model was expanded elsewhere.

Another limitation of this study was the amount of time since the initial implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. My school was only in its second year of implementation following a year of investigation and exploration. This did not allow for the school to reach full implementation of the Global Schools Initiative before review of the data. This also limits the number of data points in the data set since end-of-grade



(EOG) data are only collected annually. However, parent survey data and teacher interview data were also collected to inform analysis on trends in student academic performance.

A limitation impacting this study was the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. Beginning in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the learning environment for students and staff. This also impacted the level of community involvement and methods available for service-learning projects. This pandemic has been affecting the way we live, the way we work, and the way we conduct school for over a year now. This was a major limitation to this study, as it affected implementation of the Global Schools Initiative.

A limitation that was considered was implementation dip. Implementation dip refers to a drop in performance and confidence. It is the phenomenon that occurs “as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings” (Fullan, 2009, p. 41). Experiencing this dip may be an inevitable part of any change effort. Whenever we introduce something new and different to others – whether you are spearheading the implementation of a new early alert system or starting a new mentoring program on campus – we should expect that it would take some time for all impacted stakeholders to become comfortable with the change. Therefore, we should not fear or get discouraged by the implementation dip; rather we should embrace it and identify ways to survive it (Fullan, 2009).

Last, my own bias was considered a limitation, as I started this program at this small, rural school. I looked at my own bias towards the school, students, staff, and community as the staff and I progressed through this Global Schools Initiative

implementation. To address bias, I conducted anonymous surveys to avoid influencing parent responses. The Global Needs Pre-Assessments and Post-Assessments were also conducted anonymously. Since the teacher and community focus group interviews could not be conducted anonymously, I utilized a trusted outside interviewer.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations were choices made by the researcher, which should be mentioned. They describe the boundaries that were set for the study. I narrowed delimitations to the factors that a reader might reasonably expect for a study such as teachers, parents, and community members to interview. This population was selected as they were directly impacted by the Global Schools Initiative and would have relevant feedback to provide. Teachers participated in an in-depth interview to provide their unique perspective on how the Global Schools Initiative had impacted their classroom practices, their engagement with families and community, and their students' performance. These questions informed Research Question 2 regarding teacher job satisfaction. Parents participated in surveys with a variety of questions covering their views on overall Global Schools Initiative implementation, classroom practices, and their students' academic engagement and performance. Community members participated in focus groups with a primary focus on the Global Schools Initiative's impact on relationships with the community. This is tightly aligned to Research Question 3. These methods of data collection were needed to ensure that data were collected to address all research questions of this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

While this study was conducted in a rural elementary school, there is the potential for broader applications across all educational settings. Successful implementation of a

Global Schools Initiative could be replicated and scaled for larger schools and at the district level. This study could be used to show the impact of a Global Schools Initiative on student performance, attendance, teacher job satisfaction, school culture, and community relations and engagement. As explained, research limitations include the need for further time to allow for full implementation of the Global Schools Initiative and to analyze data trends. This study could be used to guide other rural school leaders who might be interested in implementing their own Global Schools Initiative to address the culture shock that students from rural schools often experience. This study highlighted significant connections to the integrations of service-learning projects and SDGs within the curriculum.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

#### ***Agriculture***

The science or practice of farming, which includes soil cultivation for agricultural production and animal rearing for food, wool, and other goods.

#### ***Arts***

Wide spectrum of human activities including the creation of visual, aural, or performing objects that convey the author's imagination, intellectual ideas, or technical skills and are intended to be appreciated for their aesthetic value or emotional force.

#### ***Culture Shock***

Someone who is unexpectedly exposed to a different culture, way of life, or set of attitudes will experience disorientation.

#### ***Empathy***

The capacity to comprehend and share another's emotions.

### ***Global Schools Initiative***

An organized attempt to solve a global issue that involves the participation of organizations, individuals, and stakeholders from all around the world (Participate Learning, 2021).

### ***Global Citizenship***

The belief that individuals are citizens not only locally but globally and that with that come rights and responsibilities and that citizens as individuals are interconnected. It involves social, political, environmental, and economic aspects worldwide (UNESCO, 2014).

### ***Global Competencies***

Abilities, values, and behaviors that prepare young people to succeed in an increasingly varied and interconnected society. The ability to be involved citizens and collaborative problem solvers who are ready for the workforce is critical in today's fast-changing environment (Participate Learning, 2021).

### ***Interview***

Organized dialogue with a question and response format (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS)***

An anonymous school poll conducted online. NCTWCS is for all licensed educators and instructional personnel, including administrators, who work in schools. NCTWCS is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with any internet connection. The findings are part of a longer-term process of collaborative school improvement planning (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

### ***North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests***

North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests are standardized tests given to students in Grades 3-8 in North Carolina. EOG tests are required of all students in public, private, and charter schools in North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

### ***Observation***

Scientific or other special-purpose act or instance of viewing or noting a fact or occurrence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Participate Learning***

A corporation that assists schools and districts in implementing a Global Schools Initiative. They provide students with high-quality, equitable education programs. The mission of Participate Learning is to foster global citizenship in today's students and tomorrow's leaders (Participate Learning, 2021).

### ***PowerSchool***

Cloud-based, student information system. It is the official system used statewide for all public school units in North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

### ***Rural***

Outside of towns or cities, there exist geographical areas. Small villages and low population density characterize most rural areas.

### ***Sustainable Development Goals***

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals aimed at providing a “blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all” (United Nations,

n.d., para. 6). The United Nations General Assembly adopted the SDGs in 2015, with the goal of achieving them by 2030. They are part of UN Resolution 70/1, the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, n.d.).

### ***Service-Learning Projects***

Students or participants engage in organized service that meets the need of the community and is coordinated through their school of enrollment (U.S. Government, n.d.)

### ***Survey***

A set of questions designed to gather specific data from a group of people in human subject research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Summary***

Fostering global citizenship and developing global competencies is crucial for our ever-shrinking and interconnected world. Today's educators must be ready to meet this challenge of preparation for our future-ready learners. Understanding the importance of global citizenship, the factors of being globally competent, and how to design and support programs that build global competence is critical.

The remainder of this study includes Chapter 2 which presents a literature review of the importance of global citizenship, the definitions and dimensions of global competence, the role of global education, the SDGs, service learning, and rural education. In Chapter 3, I describe in detail the method of analysis of the study including the research design and sample description. Chapter 4 details the results and findings of the analysis of data. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary of the research question responses, limitations of the study, recommendations, and areas for further exploration

and study as presented.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Overview**

The goal of this research was to look into and explain a model global program at a globally themed elementary school as a way to include global education within the school. This literature review illustrated the aims and means associated with school-wide global education in independent schools so that school-wide global education programs can be described on a conceptual basis and existing efforts can then be studied in practice. In completing this review, the following areas of literature were reviewed: global education literature and independent school literature; global education literature and independent school literature that do not speak explicitly, or in any detail, about school-wide global education. Therefore, literature that deals separately with teachers, pedagogy, curriculum, programs, and students was integrated in this review to describe school-wide global education. In addition, because neither global education nor independent school literature speaks at any length to organizational practices associated with global education, a small sample of literature on organizational leadership was used to provide insight into organizational practices that might enhance global education efforts. Ultimately, this review combined the aims of global education with practices espoused by global education advocates and scholars, empirical data on global education, and the efforts of independent schools to illustrate school-wide global education in independent schools. The literature review analyzed literature pertinent to implementing a Global Schools Initiative in a rural elementary school. The first topic explored was the concept of global citizenship. Next, I analyzed global education literature and the related programs and practices that support student development of global citizenship. Included



in this review was a review of SDGs and benefits of integrating them into classroom instruction. The impact of service-learning projects was also included within the literature review as this was included within the Global Schools Initiative. Last, the literature review explores relevant research on rural education.

### **Global Citizenship and Global Competencies**

Geurin (2017) discussed the concept of global citizenship and varying perspectives of citizenship from an egocentric perspective, worldview based on oneself, to a geocentric perspective, worldview based on whole earth. Geurin acknowledged the many boundaries, or dividing lines, that impact individual worldviews. Geurin stated, “if we develop capacity to see the world as global citizens, as many of the astronauts did, we can become aware of these borders without identifying with them. But this requires something more than witnessing. It requires learning” (p. 35). Geurin further expounded on this concept, stating, “The truth is, any border that divides us geographical, economic, linguistic, religious, cultural, etc.--can also be a border that connect us. But first we have to change our point of view” (p. 91). Geurin advocated for the importance of global education by emphasizing the need to ensure student preparedness for this truly interconnected society building their global competence. According to Gerzon (2010), if we want to evolve toward becoming global citizens, cross-boundary learning is no longer optional. Global problem-solving requires building bridges between groups that are divided by cultural, economic, and ideological identities. Gerzon proposed six dimensions of connecting that promote global citizenship:

1. Asking questions that open up new possibilities
2. Witnessing the multiple identities that make ourselves and others fully human

3. Being willing to truly listen to others, even if we do not like what we hear
4. Using communications media to find common ground, not to judge
5. Having the discipline to meet with and listen to our enemies
6. Responding to injustice by seeking reconciliation rather than revenge.

Global citizenship was simply defined as the “idea that people have rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of the entire world, rather than a particular nation or place” (Participate Learning, 2021, Global leadership framework section, para. 1). The United Nations articulated that global citizenship is a “defining paradigm shift of the contemporary world” (UNESCO, 2018, What is Global Citizenship Education); it's a way of life that views our world as an increasingly intricate web of interconnections and interdependencies, in which our decisions and actions can have local, national, and international consequences for individuals and communities (UNESCO, 2018).

A global citizen is someone who identifies as a member of a growing global community and whose actions help to shape the values and practices of that community. Global Citizenship Education aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure world (Carlin & YuKang, n.d.).

Participate Learning (2021) has specified 10 global competencies that reflect global citizenship:

1. Self-Awareness: Global citizens reflect on their own actions and attitudes and how those have been shaped over time. They take responsibility for their perspectives and push themselves to learn more about the world.
2. Respect for Difference: Global citizens value diversity. They seek out

multiple perspectives, understanding that they have much to learn from people who have different experiences.

3. **Sense of Global Connection:** Global citizens feel a deep connection to the world. They celebrate the interconnectedness of all people and cultures and take responsibility for making the world a better place, working together for a better tomorrow.
4. **Curiosity:** Global citizens have a genuine desire to learn about and experience the world. They ask questions and seek answers. They want to know what is happening beyond their own backyard.
5. **Flexibility:** Global citizens adapt to new situations and change course based on new information. They are comfortable with the unknown.
6. **Effective and Appropriate Communication:** Global citizens can communicate with lots of different people and navigate cultural norms to make sure that everyone is understood.
7. **Analytical and Critical-Thinking Skills:** Global citizens look at the world with a critical eye, questioning assumptions and digging below the surface. They draw logical and fair conclusions based on evidence and can explain their thinking.
8. **Empathy:** Global citizens are able to see things from other people's perspectives. They withhold judgment and try to understand what leads people to act, feel, or think certain ways.
9. **Understanding of Global Issues:** Global citizens know what is going on in the world. They pursue accurate and objective information about issues that

influence people all over the world.

10. Intercultural Knowledge: Global citizens understand that people around the world are different and shaped by different circumstances and cultural influences.

These operational descriptions of the global competencies were depicted in the graphic Profile of a Global Citizen shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3***Profile of a Global Citizen*

*(Participate Learning, 2021, Global citizen section)*

*Note.* Figure 3 describes the 10 core competencies of a global citizen.

These 10 global competencies established through the work of Participate Learning are closely aligned to the four dimensions of global competence described by OECD (2018). These dimensions include

1. Understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others
2. Examine local, global, and intercultural issues

3. Take action for collective well-being and sustainable development
4. Engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures.

### **Global Education**

“If the purpose of education is to empower all students to become global citizens, we must elevate our aspirations of what it means to educate children well” (Reimers et al., 2016, p. xix). UNESCO (2018) has established three domains for Global Citizenship Education:

1. Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.
2. Socio-emotional: values, attitudes, and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.
3. Behavioral: conduct, performance, practical application, and engagement.

Political, economic, and social pressures in the world have influenced the global education movement from its birth to the present, according to research on the similarities and variances of what global educators say about global education. Hanvey (1982) said,

Education for a global perspective is that learning which enhances the individual's ability to understand his or her condition in the community and the world and improves the ability to make effective judgments. It includes the study of nations, cultures, and civilizations, including our own pluralistic society and the societies of other peoples, with a focus on understanding how these were all interconnected and how they change, and on the individual's responsibility in this process. It provides the individual with a realistic perspective on world issues,

problems and prospects, and an awareness of the relationships between an individual's enlightened self-interest and the concerns of people elsewhere in the world. (p. 1)

Hanvey's (1982) conceptual themes of a comprehensive global education have been cited, endorsed, and supported by global educators in all the early literature, and the themes have continued to be described in the goals of global organizations such as the Asia Society, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, North Carolina's Center for International Understanding, and the Visiting International Faculty (Baade, 2016). According to Hanvey, students were to be prepared to be internationally competitive by researching the world, understanding views, conveying ideas, and taking action, according to the ideals of these organizations.

Through research and education, the idea of teaching our children about diverse cultures, regions, traditions, and ways of life has gained popularity. In the world, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, creativity, and analysis skills, as well as an understanding of varied cultures and the interrelationships of global challenges, were all required (Whitaker, 2012). While there is no universal definition of global education, the term is used in this dissertation to describe the educational scope of the curriculum, global perspectives, character education, and effective communication in order to prepare students to be globally competent: to understand and act on issues of global significance (Whitaker, 2012).

During the 1980s and 1990s, global education grew more popular. Educators discovered that incorporating global perspectives, concepts, and aspects from various countries, regions, and cultures into their conventional curriculum made the transfer

simpler. Human rights should be at the center of all global education, according to many academics (Adams & Carfagna, 2006). Kirkwood-Tucker (2009) stated,

The key elements of the endeavor clearly relate to four of Hanvey's five dimensions of a global awareness: multiple perspectives, state of the planet awareness including global issues, comprehension and appreciation of other cultures, the world as an interrelated system, and the significance of human choices. (p. 10)

According to Tye (1999, as cited in Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009), when educational leaders considered the globalization of teacher education's curriculum and pedagogy, they had the opportunity to train students for competent, humanistic, caring, and engaged citizenship. Global education and citizenship have been regarded as moral imperatives by several academics. When asked what they wanted from a global education, young people stated that they wanted it to provide a diverse range of world languages with authentic opportunities for use, increase direct engagement through travel and exchange, connect with the world through technology, foster open-mindedness, and promote awareness and acceptance (Klein, 2017).

“Global citizenship education is essential for creating a world with sustainable peace--a world without poverty or hunger and where all have health and education” (Reimers et al., 2016, p. xix). Reimers et al. (2016) defined global education as a pedagogical model in which global competency is viewed as a disposition (Reimers et al., 2016). The text outlined the development of a world course to support student global competency development by including the following skills:

1. Interpersonal Skills



2. Intrapersonal Skills
3. Ethical Orientation
4. Knowledge and Skills
5. Work and Mind Habits (Reimers et al., 2016).

In the research and development of the world course, connections were made between global competencies and 21<sup>st</sup> century educational practices such as project-based learning, critical-thinking skills, and the use of technology as a tool (Reimers et al., 2016). Klein (2017) recommended that,

A global curricula should include the following: All students with effective opportunities to develop the dispositions, knowledge, and capabilities necessary to understand the world in which they live, to make sense of the way in which globalization shapes their lives, and to be good stewards of and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. (p. 4)

By applying a global lens to everyday instructional practices, teachers cultivate global competencies in their students and create global leaders. The driving purpose behind global learning is to support young people as they become globally competent leaders (Participate Learning, 2021).

Global education promotes student engagement. Authentic, real-world experiences or teachings are frequently used to accomplish this increased student engagement. Students who are exposed to a global education are better equipped for both college and careers (Wagner, 2018). Student intellectual progress is aided by learning from and with the rest of the world, as well as their social-emotional development. Global education fosters self-awareness of one's own identity, culture, and beliefs, as well as

social awareness, such as empathy, perspective-taking, appreciating diversity, and respecting others, as well as relationship-building skills with a variety of people and groups through effective communication and collaboration (Wagner, 2018). Students with a global education can have an impact on the world around them. Students become change agents through engaging in hands-on learning and collaborating with others (Participate Learning, 2021).

### **SDGs**

Global challenges such as cultural awareness, global poverty, water supply issues, educational equality, sustainable practices, affordable and clean energy, and excellent health and well-being were identified as the most pressing issues of our day (Gerzon, 2010). SDGs were established as a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" (Participate Learning, 2021, Sustainable development goal section). The SDGs, established in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, were intended to be achieved by the year 2030, and were part of UN Resolution 70/1, the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, n.d.). Sustainable development has been characterized as development that meets current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own. Sustainable development necessitated deliberate efforts to create a future for people and the earth that was inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. It was critical to unify three essential elements in order to achieve sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (United Nations, n.d.) Individual and societal well-being was dependent on these interrelated aspects. Poverty eradication in all of its forms and dimensions was a prerequisite for long-term development. To this end, sustainable,

inclusive, and equitable economic growth must be promoted, as well as the creation of more opportunities for all, the reduction of inequalities, the raising of basic living standards, the promotion of equitable social development and inclusion, and the promotion of integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems. Implementation and success relied on the ability of individual countries to sustain and develop policies, plans, and programs (United Nations, n.d.). SDGs are represented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

*SDGs*



(United Nations, n.d.)

*Note.* SDGs address universal concerns such as cultural awareness, global poverty, water supply issues, educational equality, sustainable practices, affordable and clean energy, and excellent health and well-being (Gerzon, 2010).

## **SDGs and Global Education**

The urgency to educate all students to become global citizens calls for innovative curricula that can support new ways of teaching and learning. These curricula must also provide all students with effective opportunities to develop the dispositions, knowledge, and capabilities necessary to understand the world in which they live, to make sense of the way in which globalization shapes their lives, and to be good stewards of and contributors to the Sustainable Development Goals. (Reimers et al., 2016, p. xx)

UNESCO has prioritized education on SDGs noting that solutions cannot be derived through political, economic, or technological avenues alone. Two priority action areas in particular directly related to education as it pertains to this study. Priority Action Area 3 of the UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) highlighted the need for building the capacity of educators and trainers to more effectively deliver ESD. The plan outlined strategies to integrate ESD into preservice and in-service education for primary and secondary teachers so they can infuse ESD within their content. Training guidance would include instructional methodology across all content areas. Priority Action 4 emphasized empowering and mobilizing youth by multiplying ESD actions among youth. The strategies detailed in this section of the handbook focused on learner-centered approaches that support youth as change agents in local, national, and global learning opportunities related to SDGs (UNESCO, 2014).

Hindin (2021) discussed the benefits of integrating SDGs, including

1. They're good for the planet

2. They're good for humanity
3. They teach empathy to students
4. They give lesson plans a new perspective
5. They are a valuable educational resource
6. They give focus to classroom discussion
7. They align with the curriculum.

Similar findings are reported by Weeks (2021), who argued the rationale for embedding the instruction of SDGs within the following rationales:

1. Students need to learn about the world.
2. Students must be active participants in the world in which they live.
3. Students grow empathy and compassion.
4. Students and teachers are inspired to action.

### **Service Learning**

The term “service-learning” was defined in Federal legislation for the first time in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (as amended through December 17, 1999, P.L. 106-170; Section 101 (23) and reauthorized through the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009). (U.S. Government, n.d., para. 2)

This policy specified two major components of service learning. One component is that students are actively engaged in organized service that meets the needs of the community. This service is coordinated through the educational organization of their enrollment and helps to develop civic responsibility. The second component of the policy detailed that the service learning be integrated into and enhance the curriculum and that the student would reflect, or participants would reflect, on the service experience (U.S. Government,

n.d.). The U.S. Department of Education (2012) promoted five educational practices for service learning:

1. Advancing civic learning and democratic engagement in both the U.S. and global contexts by encouraging efforts to make them core expectations for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students—including undergraduate and graduate students.
2. Developing more robust evidence of civic and other student achievement outcomes of civic learning, and of the impact of school and campus community partnerships.
3. Strengthening school and campus community connections to address significant community problems and advance a local or regional vision and narrative for civic engagement.
4. Expanding research and the range of public scholarship, with a special emphasis on promoting knowledge creation for the good of society.
5. Deepening civic identity by sharing stories of civic work in social media and organizing deliberative discussions about the roles of higher education in communities across the country, and by creating initiatives in science, arts, and other fields to catalyze civic agency.

Research on service learning indicates that the practice positively impacts student overall well-being as well as academic outcomes. These benefits were reported through the work of a multiagency U.S. Government (n.d.) workgroup that supports youth programming. The benefits stated include

1. Promote a sense of connectedness

- feeling valued by community members
  - feeling responsible for the welfare of the community
  - having pride in one's community
  - a high tendency to take action for the benefit of the community
2. Promote civic participation
    - promote students' civic knowledge and commitment to continue contributing to their community and society as a whole
  3. Promote social-emotional skills
    - improved social skills
    - lower levels of problem and delinquent behavior
    - better cooperation skills in the classroom
    - improved psychological well-being
    - a better ability to set goals and adjust behavior to reach these goals
  4. Service learning can improve academic outcomes for students
    - participating in high-quality service-learning experiences that are meaningful (including interaction with the community, valued service activities, and relevance to students), provide time for reflection, and last for an extended period of time have been shown to make academic gains, including gains on standardized tests
    - students have shown increased attachment to school, engagement, and motivation
  5. Service learning can improve character values and responsible behavior
    - students can learn how to be respectful toward others and toward public

property, and they develop an awareness of healthy life choices

- students can learn about cultural diversity and show more tolerance of ethnic diversity (U.S. Government, n.d.)

### **Rural Education**

In 2006, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), working with the U.S. Census Bureau, developed a new classification system that divided schools into one of four general categories: city, suburban, town, or rural. Under this system, a school was identified as “rural” based on the school’s physical proximity to an urbanized center. However, due to the various legal definitions of rural, proximity was never defined in the literature (Bartholomaeus, 2013).

According to NCES (2011), in the school year 2010-2011, over half (57%) of all operating regular school districts and about one third (32%) of all public schools were in rural areas, while one quarter (24%) of all public school students were enrolled in rural schools. For the same academic year, NCES reported that 71% of students attending rural schools were White, while 10% were Black, 13% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2% were Other (Bartholomaeus, 2013).

Due to low enrollment, rural schools often used a variety of grade configurations that many times differ from their urban or suburban counterparts. For example, Howley (2016) found the number of K-8 schools in rural areas (10%) was higher than in suburban areas (4%). However, the number of K-5 schools in rural areas (18%) was lower than in cities (43%). With decreasing enrollment in many rural schools, many districts, like those in Vermont, faced the possibility of consolidation with larger remote schools, thus resulting in longer bus rides, reduced parental involvement, declining extracurricular



participation, and less community ownership (Act 46, 2018; Howley, 2016).

Regardless of the school's category or configuration, there was evidence showing that a school could add life to the community and was often defined by the community (Lawrence, 1998; McCracken & Barcinas, 1991). McCracken and Barcinas (1991) also found that rural people were proud of their schools and typically described a feeling of family, individual attention, and a community commitment of resources and people. They also found that rural schools developed cultures and ways of doing things that become unique to each particular school. Rural schools were often seen as mechanisms for community cohesion and continuity and were important to the community in ways that can be categorized as educational, social, cultural, and economic (McCracken & Bracinas, 1991).

North Carolina is home to 568,000 rural students, the second-largest rural student population in the United States after Texas. Eighty of North Carolina's 100 counties are rural. Approximately 40% of the state's public school students reside in rural counties, and 87 of the 115 traditional K-12 public school districts are located in rural counties. Showalter et al. (2019) found that many rural districts "face nothing less than an emergency" (p. 17). It listed North Carolina as one of the top 10 highest priority states in rural education, based on educational outcomes, policies, demographics, and college readiness. North Carolina was listed as the second most high-priority state (Huston, 2019). The report further stated,

Economic conditions are grave in the state's rural areas, with more than one in five school-aged children living in poverty and per-pupil instructional spending more than \$1,000 below the national average. Unlike in most other states, North

Carolina's rural students have much lower achievement than non-rural students.

(Huston, 2019, para. 11)

Among the many difficulties rural schools face were poverty, lack of healthcare, lack of funding, low academic performance, a shortage of teachers and classified staff, and lack of broadband service just to name a few. Rural schools play an important role in their communities, serving many functions beyond education. Given their prevalence and importance in their communities, rural schools merit more attention than they have previously been given. They often act as the center of social, recreational, and cultural life in their communities. In addition, schools provide jobs in rural areas. Public schools are the top employer in 59 North Carolina counties (Participate Learning, 2021).

The research also revealed that rural schools confront numerous obstacles, including a lack of funds, teacher shortages, and shifting societal value, as well as concerns arising from the area's current demographic and economic status, a lack of technical infrastructure, and malnutrition (Gutierrez, 2016; Martin, 2016; McCracken & Barcinas, 1991). Despite the fact that many rural districts had high to moderate levels of parent and community involvement (Nagle et al., 2006), community members often felt they engaged in the school but did not always believe they realized the advantages of those investments. One explanation stated was that graduates left the neighborhood to pursue other opportunities (Lawrence, 1998). Lawrence (1998) cited a community member from Maine who said, "We pay three times for our children's education. We feed, house, and clothe them; we pay for their education; and we pay again when they move away and put their education to good use somewhere" (p. 3). Rural schools not only supplied academic information to their students, but they also played a critical role

in their health and safety, which posed a difficulty. Most rural school districts pooled school nurses, counselors, and psychologists because of their smaller enrollments. They relied on free or low-cost services from local health agencies, mobile dental units, and local doctors (Lawrence, 1998).

Culture shock is a barrier for students from rural areas who move out to pursue postsecondary education or professions. Living in a different culture can be exciting, fulfilling, and fascinating, but it can also be confusing, stressful, and depressing. This anxiety or culture shock was caused by the dual challenges of being in a new location with unknown customs, language, food, housing, and other factors, as well as being away from your comfortable home environment with all of the conveniences and support it offers (Cooper, 2020). Students have not engaged in the activities required to eliminate or mitigate the impacts of culture shock, such as educating themselves about the culture they will encounter and being open-minded to the various practices and situations they will encounter. The following suggestions for successful transitioning are typically mentioned in college program orientations: avoid or minimize the challenges associated with being away from their usual support network, conduct research, and be proactive rather than passive; plan ahead so you can communicate with friends, family, mental health professionals, and others back home as needed; and try to avoid spending so much time in contact with home that it interferes with the opportunity to engage in your new culture. Students discovered a number of alternative methods for reducing culture shock, including maintaining your sense of humor, looking after your health, treating yourself to your favorite meal or news source on occasion if they are accessible, and exploring new things (Cooper, 2020).

Many rural students face barriers to accessing healthcare services, according to the Rural Health Information Hub ("Rural Schools," 2018). These barriers include long distances to healthcare providers, lack of reliable transportation, work demands of students' parents, poverty, lack of health insurance, and rising health care costs. Many children arrived at school without sufficient nourishment, medical treatment, or physical activity as a result of these impediments ("Rural Schools," 2018). Many rural students did not get the recommended level of daily physical activity, according to the report *Overweight and Physical Inactivity Among Rural Children Aged 10-17: A National and State Portrait* ("Rural Schools" 2018). Rural children received slightly less daily activity than urban youngsters, according to the survey. According to the report, 25% of rural students failed to meet the daily physical activity recommendation, compared to 29% of urban students; nearly 41% of rural students did not participate in after-school sports activities; and 48% of rural children aged 10 to 17 spent at least 2 hours per day using electronic devices, such as video games, computers, or televisions ("Rural Schools" 2018).

However, there were also other issues that rural schools had to deal with. Rural schools may be geographically separated. They may be found in distant islands or mountainous areas. They could be surrounded by rough terrain with few passable roadways, as well as be subjected to extreme weather. Rural schools typically have tiny student populations and are experiencing declining enrollment, which could lead to staff reductions and school closures (Nagle et al., 2006). As previously stated, several towns in states such as Vermont were losing their local schools owing to state-mandated consolidation initiatives (Act 46, 2018; Mei et al., 2013; "Rural Schools," 2018). Rural

education faced numerous problems, but there were also potential solutions.

According to the literature, the majority of children who attended rural elementary schools were between the ages of 6 and 14, depending on the district's grade layout. The focus of this study was on schools with a K-6 structure, which comprised children ranging in age from 6 to 12. As a result, these children were at Piaget's concrete operational stage (Piaget & Cook, 1971). Background information, according to Piaget and Cook (1971), is vital for learning new information, especially when youngsters compare what they already know with the new and subsequently reformulate what they already know. This reformulation takes place in one of three ways: assimilation of new information into current knowledge, modification of existing knowledge to fit new information, or some other method of achieving a balance between existing knowledge and new information or perspectives (Torres & Ash, 2007). Many educators refer to this philosophy as constructivism, which is based on the principles of (a) past knowledge for new learning, (b) active participation in the learning process through problem-solving, and (c) information that is always changing. Those who believe in this learning theory also feel that it is this that leads to lifelong learning (Cooper, 2020).

Though rural children's developmental needs were similar to those of their urban and suburban peers, the educational approaches used did not always reflect their experience. Bartholomaeus (2013) discovered that most of the education rural kids got was based on what happened in urban schools in her research on educating for sustainable futures in rural schools in Australia. Students were encouraged to use textbooks and other commercially produced materials to prepare them for life in more metropolitan environments, rather than what was available outside the classroom or their

own experiences or expertise. Students, on the other hand, needed to know how to live in their own communities and be a part of their lives and futures (Bartholomaeus, 2013). She discovered that students who stayed in their rural community needed to contribute to its sustainability by communicating effectively, being creative and imaginative, and solving challenges that arise in the areas of the environment, economy, and social equity (Bartholomaeus, 2013).

Rural communities suffer a variety of distinct issues. They indicate that teachers choose to stay in rural locations because of the support they receive from administrators and the community, as well as the positive relationships they have with their coworkers. Rural towns risk losing skilled teachers and pupils if this support is not visible. Rural people's spirits aid them in adapting to and overcoming educational and economic hurdles. Teacher perspectives on teaching in rural schools have been studied. McCracken and Bracinas (1991) addressed the reality of geographic isolation and rural values in describing teacher interests in and preparation for teaching in rural settings and found these realities to be both positive and negative. They discovered that some educators had to overcome their preference for larger cities in order to persuade high-quality teachers to work in rural areas. Teachers in rural schools built a stronger bond with their kids than teachers in charter schools, according to a study of charter schools. While this is not an issue for instructors whose backgrounds and tastes bring them back to the country, it is a challenge when attracting educators from urban regions to rural areas where they do not have access to the resources they are used to. McCracken and Bracinas suggested addressing these obstacles by hiring new teachers who have had some level of education in a rural setting.

Teachers in remote communities face a difficult task in bringing new ideas to the classroom that would improve student performance while also overcoming community opposition. They must bridge the gap between parents and school officials while displaying their ability to communicate effectively with both. Even though they frequently face negative student and adult attitudes toward education and inadequate instructional resources, rural teachers must use their affinity for the rural setting to push pupils to reach their potential (Martin, 2016).

Teachers and school administrators are difficult to recruit and retain in rural areas. Many of the most gifted instructors are lured to urban regions with more resources and what they perceive to be a superior quality of life, according to researchers (Martin, 2016). Although it may be easier to recruit and retain teachers with a rural background, more focus should be given throughout teacher training on preparing instructors for teaching in rural regions. By recognizing and rewarding excellent performance and instituting a mentorship program, rural school administrators can give extra support for first-year teachers in remote settings. Rural education settings change from state to state, and the obstacles that different locations face are dependent on the resources available to them. Unfortunately, there are some concerns in places where parents are beginning to recognize that the picture at these rural schools is not as clear as it should be, and as a result, student enrollment has been declining in some areas each academic year. Of course, this has been a source of concern for individuals who want to progress in their education by ensuring that the playing field is more even (Martin, 2016).

Rural schools have been fighting an uphill battle due to declining enrollments, a shortage of teachers, classified staff, and administrators, and a reduction in state-

supported financing. Rural schools require both financial and human resources to ensure that their children receive the best possible education. The gap between urban and rural schools would begin to close with greater financing, suitable equipment and materials, and the recruitment of teachers and staff to these remote school districts (McCracken & Bracinas, 1991).

## **Conclusion**

Current literature emphasized the vitalness of preparing students to be global citizens in our ever-shrinking and interconnected world. Today's educators must be ready to meet this challenge of preparation for our future-ready learners. Multiple models exist that define what it means to be a "global citizen." OECD (2018) provided a clear, concise yet comprehensive explanation of the global competencies. However, the *Profile of a Global Citizen* from Participate Learning (2021) more clearly defined these attributes in action. Literature indicates the need for an understanding of the importance of global competence, the models of global competency, and how to design and support programs that build global competence in order to develop students' global competence and citizenship.

Global education fosters self-awareness of one's own identity, culture, and beliefs, as well as social awareness, which includes empathy, perspective-taking, appreciating diversity, and respecting others, as well as relationship-building skills with a variety of people and groups through effective communication and collaboration. Global education often includes integration of global perspectives within the curriculum, a focus on the SDGs, and an aspect of project-based or service learning.

SDGs are a set of 17 global goals aimed at creating a "blueprint for a brighter and



more sustainable future for all" (Participate Learning, 2021, para. 8). SDGs were established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and were part of UN Resolution 70/1, the 2030 Agenda, with the goal of achieving them by 2030. Sustainable development has been characterized as development that meets current needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own. Review of Global Education Literature pointed to the incorporation of SDGs through service-learning projects. A review of research on the benefits of SDGs and service-learning integration into the classroom exposed many overlapping benefits, including

1. increase student engagement
2. promote social-emotional skill development
3. promote empathy
4. increase student connectedness
5. promote community involvement

Given the environmental context of this study, a literature review was conducted on rural education. Literature demonstrated that rural communities face many unique challenges. However, the review also indicated that teachers choose to remain in rural areas because of the support they received from administrators and the community and the rapport they enjoyed with their colleagues. If this support is not apparent, rural communities stand to lose talented teachers and students. Another important finding from the review was that schools often serve as the community hub in rural communities and provide much more than educational services for their students and families. These findings were of particular importance from the review because they directly relate to the impact of community relationships on rural education.

The remainder of this study includes Chapter 3, where I described in detail the method of analysis of the study including the research design and sample description. Chapter 4 details the results and findings of the analysis of data. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary of the research question responses, limitations of the study, recommendations, and areas for further exploration and study as presented.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Global Schools Initiative Implementation**

The Global Schools Initiative was selected to integrate global education into the school. The school staff planned for a Global Schools Initiative in grades prekindergarten through eighth during the 2016-2017 school year. The entire staff at the school was trained for the initial implementation of the Global Schools Initiative and a kick-off was held during the summer of 2017. Staff participated in one online professional learning course per semester during the 2016/2017 school year. Micro-credential badges were earned around specific instructional practices in global education. The following year, the expectation was that they completed one course per 9 weeks, for a total of four courses completed for the school year. Staff continued to learn about bringing a global perspective into their classroom as well as creating authentic learning experiences and engaging students in critical thinking and problem-solving. Many involved their classrooms in service-learning projects focused on addressing SDGs. Guest speakers were brought to the school and virtual opportunities were created to allow the students to have real-world experiences to appreciate diversity. These experiences afforded many opportunities for community engagement. A timeline of implementation can be found in Figure 5.

**Figure 5***Timeline of Global Schools Initiative Implementation*

2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Used for Comparative Purposes</li> <li>• Principal Visited Global School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of Global Schools Initiative</li> <li>• Staff began taking microcredentialing courses for Global Education 1 per semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Kickoff Summer of 2017</li> <li>• Initial Implementation of Global Schools Initiative</li> <li>• Staff continuetaaking microcredentialing courses for Global Education 1 per 9 weeks/4 per year</li> <li>• Introduction of SDG and Community Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom selected region, country, or continent as area of focus</li> <li>• Continued SDG and Community Engagement Projects</li> <li>• Introduction of Global Citizenship Awards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Global Education Integration into Curriulcum</li> <li>• Continued SDG and Community Engagement Projects</li> <li>• Continued Microcredentialing</li> <li>• Contined Global Citizenship Award</li> <li>• Introduction of Staff Golden Global Award</li> <li>• Distrupction from Covid-19 Pandemic</li> <li>• Principal moved to Central Office</li> </ul>

*Note.* Figure 5 shows the implementation timeline of the Global Schools Initiative from 2015/2016 (before implementation) through 2019/2020.

A global team was selected to support our school's implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. This team included teachers from all grade spans. The team leader was chosen because of her versatility. She was K-6 certified as well as 6-9 social studies certified. This team leader was the media coordinator, art teacher, and maker space teacher at the school. With her versatile background, she brought a plethora of innovative ideas and experience to the global team.

The next team member was new to the school that year. She was K-6 certified and taught fifth- and sixth-grade math and science. She brought a positive attitude and was very willing to try new things to help our students. The next member was K-6 certified as well as pre-K certified and taught kindergarten. She had been at the school for 5 years.

She had some experience with global schools and working with a diverse population. The next team member was certified K-6 and taught third grade at the school. She had been teaching for 2 years and technology was a strength for her. The next team member was certified K-6 and taught second grade. She had been teaching for 4 years. She was our Student Support Team chairperson. She was already coordinating Christmas Around the World for our pre-K through third-grade students. The final team member was certified K-6, 6-9 ELA, and social studies. She was a member of our School Improvement Team and had been integrating global themes throughout her lessons. She taught seventh- and eighth-grade ELA and social studies.

This global team was charged with facilitating the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative at our school. The team along with myself met once per month to discuss implementation, lessons, strategies, SDGs, and how the online professional development was progressing. The global team communicates information back to their grade span PLC to disseminate and discuss. This distributive leadership model empowered our faculty and reinforced our collaborative climate.

The school staff hoped to bring the outside world into every classroom at the school in an effort to help students make connections and feel more comfortable with the world around them. Teachers integrated global aspects into their lessons. Classrooms and grade spans selected different countries, continents, and regions of the world for thematic focus. The staff used art and agriculture as areas for comparison as they studied people groups from all over the world. The staff collaborated with many local civic organizations, businesses, and other community members. They also utilized virtual field trips, guest speakers, virtual meetings with students in other countries, Christmas Around

the World, touring artists, and musicians to expose students to a variety of global experiences. They embraced this initiative and worked hard to integrate a global lens as much as possible into their daily lessons. The teachers and staff helped to communicate the vision to all the stakeholders.

Participate Learning partners with schools to give support through global contacts, face-to-face professional development opportunities, provision of an online micro-credentialing platform, and through a variety of other resources as well. Students were encouraged to be creative and work collaboratively. Staff shared different cultures through reading and social studies classes. Staff members taught equality and empathy through their lessons. The staff was not as familiar with SDGs. SDGs are a collection of 17 global goals set forth by the United Nations in hopes of a better and more sustainable future for all. The global team at the school made this one of the first goals of the initial implementation, to learn more about SDGs and how they could integrate the goals into their classroom lessons. The 17 goals focus on different areas such as clean water, hunger, good health, quality education, poverty, gender equality, affordable clean energy, work and economic growth, peace, and justice. The staff focused on manageable steps as they implemented this initiative. I encouraged the staff to learn about the Global Schools Initiative and to slowly implement it as they built their own capacity.

### **Research Methods**

The mixed methods research was adopted for this study based on a need for global education design and evaluations of implementation efforts as revealed in the review of the literature. By using the mixed methods, one gained a picture of the efficacy of the initiative, a tool for continuously reinventing and strengthening the program, a

method to determine what had been accomplished and how, and a way to correlate the inputs and outcomes by tracing a connection between them through intention, design, and action (Schön & McDonald, 1998). Mixed methods was the framework for the study of this model global program, and it illustrated the path from their starting point to systemic change.

### **Research Questions**

The driving questions for this research were

1. In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina?
2. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?
3. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

### **Research Design**

As previously stated, the research design for this study was mixed methods. The term mixed methods refers to an emergent methodology of research that advances the systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation or sustained program of inquiry. The basic premise of this methodology was that such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Mixed methods research has recently extended into the health and medical sciences, including nursing, family medicine, social work, mental health, pharmacy,

allied health, and other professions. Its methodologies have been developed and modified over the previous decade to fit a wide range of research questions. Advancing rigor, offering alternative mixed methods designs, specifying a shorthand notation system for describing the designs to increase communication across fields, visualizing procedures through diagrams, noting research questions that can benefit from integration in particular, and developing rationales for conducting mixed methods studies come in a variety of shapes and sizes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed methods study was the greatest fit for this study since it focused on how students, teachers, and community members make meaning of global education and tackle problems unique to the profession. By constraining participants to respond to set Likert statements or answer specified survey questions, a quantitative study would have limited data gathering rather than allowing students, instructors, and community members to establish their own ideas and notions about global education. Quantitative data collected included student attendance data and EOG data including performance and growth data. As a result, I wanted to acquire a better understanding of the data by combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) offered a variety of structured interview techniques to be selected based on the desired outcome. To answer questions regarding experience, meaning, and perspective, qualitative approaches should be utilized, most often from the participant's perspective. Counting or measuring these data is usually not an option. Semi-structured interviews were used to seek views on a focused topic for background information or an institutional perspective. In-depth interviews were used to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective; and analyses of texts and



documents, such as government reports, media articles, and weblog posts, were used to gain an understanding of scattered or private knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research methodologies used in this study included semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and text and document analysis. I determined that the semi-structured analysis was most appropriate for the community member and focus group interviews. These interviews were focused on a specific topic for a target audience. However, I decided that teachers would participate in in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of their personal perspectives. This method of qualitative data collection was best suited in order to align with Research Question 2, “What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?” Individual interviews were conducted via phone, video, or in person with the goal of following up on the topic and research questions by asking the subjects a series of questions. I conducted in-person interviews with teachers and community members. The focus groups were held in person. These groups provided a safe and welcoming atmosphere for participants to express their opinions and feelings regarding the research issue. The purpose of surveys was to clearly articulate the goal. These procedures adhered to Creswell and Creswell’s recommendations:

The obvious first step in constructing any survey is to specify the required information precisely, with the emphasis on the word “precisely.” “What would I wish to learn about my study with this survey, and how will that knowledge benefit me as I write?” (p. 12)

The purpose of the quantitative research methodologies utilized was to gather numerical data from a group of people and then generalize the results to a broader group

of people in order to explain a phenomenon. When researchers need objective, conclusive conclusions, they usually turn to quantitative research. Quantitative research methods can provide a rather conclusive solution to research issues. The results are usually reliable when data are collected and evaluated using a consistent, established approach. The results can be extrapolated to an entire target population with statistically meaningful sample sizes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Research Question 1**

“In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina?” I planned to use the 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 EOGs and North Carolina Report Cards for this measure. I planned to look at the test data and attendance data to make comparisons between the years before and after implementation of the Global Schools Initiative.

### **Research Question 2**

“What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?” My plan was to look at the 2015-2016 pre-Global Readiness Needs Assessment, compared to the 2018-2019 assessment. I would then conduct interviews with five teachers.

### **Research Question 3**

“What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?” My superintendent conducted a focus group interview with five community members. Utilizing the same, or similar, questions I interviewed the faculty. By utilizing similar questions, the responses could be compared and analyzed.

## **Research Tradition**

Mixed methods was the research method used in this study. This method allowed me to get a comprehensive picture of global education, as well as the interest, from a small number of people. The sampling assured that all of the study's participants were familiar with and experienced with global education. That does not imply that they all shared the same level of enthusiasm or a common understanding of global education. The project's scope would be matched by the modest number of participants typical of mixed methods studies.

## **Access and Participants**

The participants for this research were the staff of this small, rural school with 13 teachers and two teacher assistants. Parents, grandparents, community leaders, and community members participated in the research through this mixed methods study. Due to COVID-19, there were both in-person and video-recorded interviews with teachers, students, parents, and community members to capture their points of view on this Global Schools Initiative. They answered these research questions: In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect academics, attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina? What impact has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction? What impact has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

I reviewed their answers along with survey question results on the Global Schools Initiative and compared their responses with the professional development follow-up surveys the staff completed. I reviewed the data of the school during its implementation with interviews and focus group panel discussions with members of the community. This

video footage was utilized to provide much of the qualitative data for this research.

### **Data Collection**

I conducted a Global Readiness Needs Assessment, which aligns with Research Question 2: “What impact has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?” All staff and administration at the school participated in the assessment. This assessment tool was used to determine their readiness to implement a Global Schools Initiative. This tool evaluated current practices as related to global education.

I used the data shared with me by our partner Participate Learning as well as data collected related to the research questions with parents, students, teachers, staff, and community members. I facilitated surveys with questions related to the research through Google Forms, as well as the Global Needs Assessment provided by Participate Learning. These means were utilized for each of my research questions. These data were shared with all throughout the process through a variety of communications.

### **Setting**

The school was a prekindergarten through eighth-grade school in a rural, mountainous region. The district was in a rural, agricultural county. The population of the county was 10,848. With a total enrollment of approximately 1,325 students, the district was the eighth smallest district in the state. The system contains four schools. There were three elementary schools comprised of students enrolled in prekindergarten through eighth grade and one ninth through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade high school. There were no middle or alternative schools.

The student population was 197 students, making the school the smallest of the schools in the district. There was one class per grade level and a total of 14 teachers and

two teacher assistants. Specifically, there were nine classroom teachers, one media specialist, one health and physical education teacher, and a part-time exceptional children's/English language learner teacher. The school was led by the principal and had no assistant principal. The school did not have an ethnically diverse student population, with almost 89% of the students being White.

### **Data Storage**

The data collected during this study were stored on my computer, which is locked and password protected. All participants signed a release form to be a part of the study. I retained the data to publish my doctoral dissertation. My chair and I were the only people who had access to the data.

### **Reliability, Validity, and Trustworthiness**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested eight major tactics for maintaining a study's trustworthiness and validity, three of which were applied in this study: rich, thick description; clarifying researcher bias; and negative or discrepant information. According to Creswell and Creswell, using rich, thick descriptions in qualitative research gives the reader a sense of shared experiences, which "may add to the validity of the findings" (p. 97). Furthermore, addressing bias was an attempt to establish an open and honest narrative and allay reader concerns about how the bias influenced the study. Finally, offering negative or contradictory material that contradicts the study's themes "increases the credibility of an account" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 97). This was especially crucial in this study because even though some of the participants' comments were outliers, they were nevertheless valued and debated.

There were several threats to the internal validity of this study. Given that the

study took place over several months, intense efforts were made to ensure timely data were retrieved. To minimize this threat, interviews were scheduled soon after participants agree to be interviewed for the study. The more significant threats of researcher bias and familiarity were also addressed. As an advocate of global education, I bring considerable bias to this study. I hoped that with the mixed method research, I was able to address these possible biases. An outside interviewer was enlisted to conduct the focus group and teacher interviews to mitigate some of the bias. Multiple data sources were used to provide perspective and a more comprehensive analysis.

The entire staff participated in a Global Readiness Needs Assessment at the beginning of each school year. Our global partner Participate Learning provided this assessment to us. The assessment was broken down into the following categories: general support, vision and planning, professional development needs, instructional support, pedagogy, and global content. Our global partner, Participate Learning, assisted us by providing access to their vast online micro-credentialing site. All our staff participated in this online learning platform throughout the school year. The staff shared what they learned at our faculty-led professional development sessions each month.

### **Research Alignment**

My research was aligned with my three research questions. For Research Question 1, I used the North Carolina School Report Card performance and growth data as well as the attendance data. I also conducted a parent survey to gain insight from them on the effects of the Global Schools Initiative on their student's academics and attendance. Questions 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 all aligned with Research Question 1 on student academic performance and attendance.

**Table 1***Research Alignment*

Research question	Sources of data	Procedures	Presentation of data
Question 1: In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina?	North Carolina School Report Card Performance and Growth Data (Johnson, 2019)	Data collected from school years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 and then compared.	Data presented in Tables
	North Carolina School Report Card Attendance Data (Johnson, 2019)	Data collected from school years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 and then compared.	Data presented in Tables
	Global Schools Initiative Survey Questions: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8	Survey I created with 12 questions and had 16 parent responses	Data presented in a Table
Question 2: What impact has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?	Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment (Participate Learning, 2016)	Pre-Assessment was given to all teachers to assess initial global integration within their classrooms	Pre-Assessment Data presented in a Table
	Global Readiness Needs Post-Assessment (Participate Learning, 2019)	Post-Assessment was given to all teachers to assess global integration and implementation within their classrooms	Post-Assessment Data presented in a Table
	Interview sessions with five teachers	Interview questions that I created were given to five teachers for their response to the impact of the Global School Initiative on their job satisfaction	Data were presented in transcribed accounts from each interview
Question 3: What impact has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?	Focus Group Interviews with five community members	Interview questions that I created were presented to five community members for their response to how the Global Schools Initiative affected community relations	Data were presented in transcribed notes from the focus group interview

**Limitations**

As with any study, there were limitations. I concluded that the main limitation involves sample size. The initiation of this study began as a way to expose students in a small, rural school to different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. Since the school district was small in size and this study was only one of those small schools, the overall sample

size was small. I believed that even though the sample size was small, the data collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups would be enlightening as the model was expanded elsewhere.

Another limitation of this study was the amount of time since the initial implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. My school was only in its second year of implementation following a year of investigation and exploration.

A limitation influencing this study was the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. Beginning in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the learning environment for students and staff. This also impacted the level of community involvement and methods available for service-learning projects. This pandemic has been affecting the way we live, the way we work, and the way we conduct school for over a year now. This was a major limitation to this study as it was affecting implementation of the Global Schools Initiative.

A limitation that was considered was implementation dip. Implementation dip refers to a drop in performance and confidence. It is the phenomenon that occurs “as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings” (Fullan, 2009, p. 79). Experiencing this dip may be an inevitable part of any change effort. Whenever we introduce something new and different to others—whether you are spearheading the implementation of a new early alert system or starting a new mentoring program on campus—we should expect that it would take some time for all impacted stakeholders to become comfortable with the change. Therefore, we should not fear or get discouraged by the implementation dip; rather we should embrace it and identify ways to survive it (Fullan, 2009).



Last, my own bias would be a limitation, as I started this program at this small, rural school. I looked at my own bias towards the school, students, staff, and community as the staff and I progressed through this Global Schools Initiative implementation.

### **Summary**

A mixed methods approach was used for this study. Research Question 1 regarding the Global Schools Initiative's impact on student outcomes was primarily answered through quantitative data sources including North Carolina EOG data and attendance data. The impact on teacher satisfaction, Research Question 2, was answered through qualitative data sources including an in-depth interview. Research Question 3, focused on the impact of the Global Schools Initiative on community relations and this was answered through qualitative data collected in focus group interviews. Attempts were made to address bias by conducting anonymous surveys or using an outside interviewer.

The remainder of this study includes Chapter 4, which details the results and findings of the analysis of data. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a summary of the research question responses, limitations of the study, recommendations, and areas for further exploration and study as presented.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the results and findings from the mixed-methods study described in Chapter 3. The purpose of this study was to identify ways a Global Schools Initiative in a rural school in northwestern North Carolina supports students, teachers, and the greater community. I highlighted both the factors that facilitated this initiative and the impact it had on students, teachers, and the community. I desired to give guidance to other rural school leaders who might be interested in implementing their own Global Schools Initiative. The results of the interviews I conducted, along with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, allowed me to hypothesize how students in a Global Schools Initiative's academics and attendance are affected. This study could be used at the district level to show the impact of a Global Schools Initiative on student performance, attendance, job satisfaction, school culture, and community relations. Other districts that are looking at starting a similar Global Schools Initiative could use the findings of this study to assist with their implementation.

The research was designed to answer three research questions:

1. In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school in northwest North Carolina?
2. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?
3. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

## Results for Research Question 1

My first research question was, “In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the state testing proficiency, culture measured through interviews and surveys, and attendance of students in a small elementary school in northwest North Carolina?” I used data gathered from the North Carolina School Report Card from the 2015-2016 through the 2018-2019 school year, to see how the initiative affected the academics at the school. I also used the North Carolina School Report Card from the 2015-2016 through the 2018-2019 school year, to see in what ways, if any, the Global Schools Initiative affected school attendance.

### EOG Performance and Growth Data

I began by reviewing the North Carolina School Report Card Data for my school from the school year 2015-2016 through 2018-2019. These data served were used for comparative purposes as they were prior to our Global Schools Initiative implementation. These data are included in Table 2 and include EOG performance grade scores and the academic growth score history for this time frame.

**Table 2**

*2015-2016 North Carolina School Report Card Data*

Performance grade score	Letter grade/ performance grade	Academic growth/ growth score
Letter grade/not met/met/exceeded growth	B	Met
Percentage score	75	74.3

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

In the school year 2015-2016, the school had a performance grade of B with 75% of tested students being proficient by North Carolina standards. The academic growth

score was at the met status with 74.3% of students tested showing growth for the school year. These data show that of all students who were tested in Grades 3-8 on the state EOG tests, 75% of the students were proficient by state standards, and 74.3% of the students tested showed positive growth for that school year. These data reflected the elementary school's historical performance overall.

In 2016/2017, there was a significant decline in our overall academic outcomes. Several factors impacted this decline in student achievement which is reflected in Table 3. This year, we began exploration of the Global Schools Initiative in the 2016/2017 School Year, and staff began taking professional learning courses on global education for micro credentialing.

**Table 3**

*2016-2017 North Carolina School Report Card Data*

Performance grade score	Letter grade/ performance grade	Academic growth/ growth score
Letter grade/not met/met/exceeded growth	C	Not met
Percentage score	67	67.9

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

In the school year 2016-2017, the school had a performance grade of C with 67% of tested students being proficient by North Carolina standards. The academic growth score was at the not met status with 67.9% of students tested showing growth for the school year. This was a significant departure from not only the previous year but the historical performance of this school. This created a sense of urgency in the staff to improve student outcomes in the following school year.

In the 2017/2018 school year, the school launched its Global School Initiative

with a Global Schools Kickoff in the summer of 2017. Teachers increased the number of professional learning courses they completed through micro credentialing by completing one course every 9 weeks. They implemented their learning of global education into their instruction and curriculum. Each classroom selected a region, country, or continent to focus on within their studies. Many students engaged in service-learning projects that focused on SDGs. In 2017/2018, there was a significant increase in student performance over the previous year as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*2017-2018 North Carolina School Report Card Data*

Performance grade score	Letter grade/ performance grade	Academic growth/ growth score
Letter grade/not met/met/exceeded growth	B	Met
Percentage score	78	89.1

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

Improvements to student academic performance are apparent in Table 4. In the school year 2017-2018, the school had a performance grade of B with 78% of tested students being proficient by North Carolina standards. The academic growth score was at the exceeded growth status with 89.1% of students tested showing growth for the school year.

The school continued with its implementation in the 2018/2019 school year with extensive integration of global education into the curriculum, incorporation of SDG, service-learning projects, and many opportunities for community engagement. The school continued to see growth in student outcomes as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5***2018-2019 North Carolina School Report Card Data*

Performance grade score	Letter grade/ performance grade	Academic growth/ growth score
Letter grade/not met/met/exceeded growth	B	Exceeded growth
Percentage score	81	87

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

The trend toward improved academic outcomes is shown in Table 5. In the school year 2018-2019, the school had a performance grade of B with 81% of tested students being proficient by North Carolina standards. The academic growth score was at the exceeded growth status with 87% of students tested showing growth for the school year.

### **Findings**

To answer Research Question 1, quantitative data sources were used to find the impact of the Global Schools Initiative on academic outcomes. North Carolina EOG data were collected for this purpose. The analysis was completed by examining EOG data prior to implementing the Global School Initiative, during initial implementation, and after initial implementation. The data examination showed vast improvement from the school years 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 in both growth and proficiency.

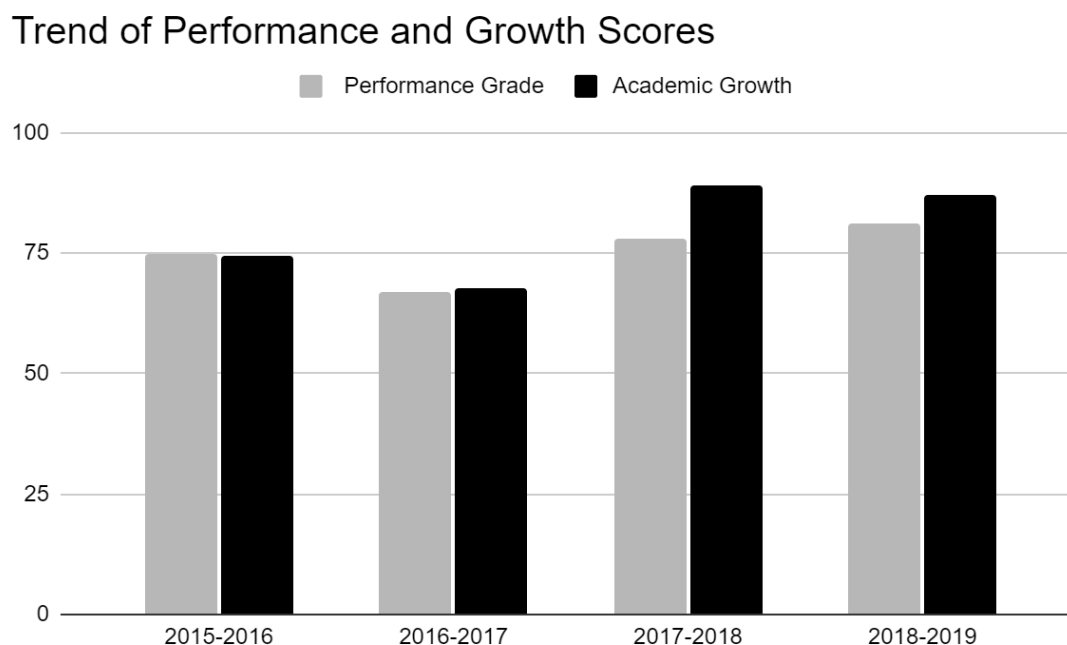
### **Themes That Emerged**

A theme that emerged from the quantitative data analysis was that student performance scores at the elementary school showed a positive trend from 75% of the students proficient in the 2015-2016 school year to 81% of the students proficient in the 2018-2019 school year. This positive trend also was evident with the student academic growth scores. The score in the 2015-2016 school year for overall growth was 74.3%,

and the score for the 2018-2019 school year was 87%. Figure 6 represents this upward trend in student academic performance.

**Figure 6**

*Trend Performance and Growth Scores*



By looking at the different school years' data sets as shown in Figure 6, I had a visual representation of the impact of implementation of the new Global School Initiative on academic achievement. One of the teachers interviewed articulated this when they said, "Our students are thinking more critically now. They are working collaboratively with hands-on projects that help them gain a better understanding of the world around them. Our students are more confident and they love coming to school each day." Table 6 provides another comparison in this data trend in a tabular format.

**Table 6***2016/2017-2018/2019 North Carolina School Report Card Data Comparison*

Performance grade score	Letter grade/ performance grade	Academic growth/growth score
	2016-2017	2016-2017
Letter grade/not met/met/exceeded growth	C	Not met
Percentage score	67	67.9
	2018/2019	2018/2019
Letter grade/not met/met exceeded growth	B	Exceeded growth
Percentage score	81	87

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

In Table 6, the comparison between the 2016/2017 year, the year in which the school began its exploration of the Global Schools Initiative, the school did not meet growth and had a letter grade of C. However just 2 years later, the school had exceeded growth and had an overall letter grade of B.

### **Attendance Data**

My next step was analyzing the attendance data from the North Carolina School Report Card. Again, I looked at the school years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019. The data provided include comparisons with my school to the district, as well as the state attendance data. These data are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7***2015-2016 North Carolina School Attendance Data*

	Average daily attendance
School	95.5%
District	94.7%
State	95.7%

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.



For the 2015-2016 school year, the school average daily attendance was 95.5%. This places the school's daily attendance average slightly higher than the district average and slightly lower than the state average.

The same data were compared for the 2016-2017 school year which includes comparisons with my school to the district, as well as the state attendance data. Data from this year are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*2016-2017 North Carolina School Attendance Data*

	Average daily attendance
School	96.7%
District	94.3%
State	95.3%

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

For the 2016-2017 school year, the school average daily attendance was 96.7%. In 2016/2017, the attendance of the school was slightly higher than both the district and state daily attendance averages.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the data provided again include comparisons with my school to the district as well as the state attendance data. These data are captured in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*2017-2018 North Carolina School Attendance Data*

	Average daily attendance
School	95.4%
District	94.8%
State	96.3%

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the school average daily attendance was 95.4%. The school's daily attendance average was slightly higher than the district attendance average and slightly lower than the state data. This was similar to the 2015/2016 school year.

Last, data were reviewed for the 2018-2019 school year which include comparisons with my school to the district, as well as the state attendance data. These data are displayed in Table 10.

**Table 10**

*2018-2019 North Carolina School Attendance Data*

	Average daily attendance
School	94.7%
District	94.8%
State	95.4%

Source: Johnson (2019). *North Carolina School Report Cards*.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the school average daily attendance was 94.7%, which was slightly lower than both the district and state daily attendance averages.

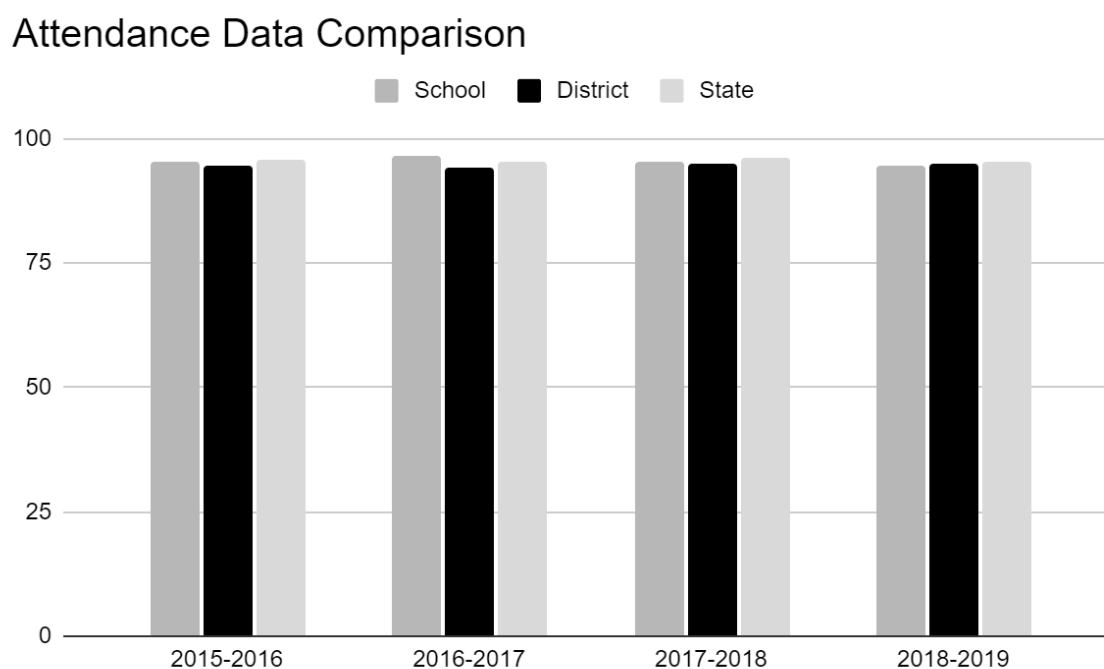
## **Findings**

To answer Research Question 1, quantitative data sources were used to find the impact of the Global Schools Initiative on attendance outcomes. Daily attendance average data were collected for this purpose. The analysis was completed by examining daily attendance average data prior to implementing the Global School Initiative, during initial implementation, and after initial implementation. Examination of the attendance data from the North Carolina School Report Card from the years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019 showed that the school attendance had a rate of 95% or higher each of those school

years. There was not a significant percent increase or percent decrease in the daily attendance rate during the duration of this study. There was also not a clear pattern in the daily attendance average rate of the school as compared to the district or state. However, some data regarding attendance were captured from the interview questions. One teacher interviewed did say, “My students love coming to school each day to see what new door to the world we will open.”

### **Themes That Emerged**

The theme that emerged while looking at the attendance data I collected from the North Carolina School Report Card was this elementary school has consistently high attendance each school year. It moved up and down from 94.7% to a high of 96.7% across the same school years of 2015-2016 through 2018-2019. From these data, it was difficult to confidently say that the Global Schools Initiative had any real impact on the overall attendance at the elementary school.

**Figure 7***Attendance Data Comparison***Parent Survey**

Qualitative data were also collected to inform findings related to Research Question 1. Parents were surveyed on questions related to the Global Schools Initiative's impact on student academics, engagement, and attendance. Responses from this survey are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11***2021 Global Schools Initiative Parent Survey*

Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral/disagree/strongly disagree
Vision for the initiative clearly communicated	44%	56%	
Student lessons addressed real-world problems	63%	37%	
Students practiced skills in the areas of creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and perspective taking.	56%	32%	12%
Students created authentic learning products that demonstrated their knowledge of the topics, service-learning projects, different cultures, and ways of life.	56%	32%	12%
Students can communicate their learning to other audiences.	44%	56%	
Students are more excited about and interested in their school.	68%	32%	
Students' attendance at their school has improved.	37.5%	37.5%	25%
Students' test scores have improved since the global school initiative was implemented.	46%	34%	20%
Students have a better understanding of different states, countries, and regions around them.	63%	37%	
Students are informed about global issues and current events.	75%	25%	
Students apply strategies to promote equality and break down stereotypes.	50%	38%	12%
Students are encouraged to ask compelling questions about global concepts or the cultural identities of others.	68%	20%	12%

Source: Hall (2021). *Global Schools Initiative Parent Survey*.

Although some questions were more directly related to the overall implementation of the Global Schools Initiative and global education, Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and

10, all speak to the impact of student academic performance, student engagement, and attendance.

## **Findings**

The use of a parent survey allowed me to gain insight into how our Global Schools Initiative implementation was perceived through a parent's perspective. Through the questions on the parent survey, it was evident they believed progress had been made towards our school goals with academics, attendance, and global education with our students. The second question from the survey really stood out to me, "Student lessons addressed real-world problems": 63% of the parents surveyed said they strongly agreed and 37% said that they somewhat agreed. From the results, it was easy to see that 100% of the parents surveyed believed that the Global Schools Initiative addressed real-world problems to some extent. This is significant because real-world connections build student engagement in the curriculum and support student learning. Results from Question 3 showed that 88% of parents that responded felt that students practiced skills in the areas of creative innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and perspective taking. On Question 4, again 88% of parents believed students were engaged in creating authentic learning products that demonstrated their knowledge of the topics service-learning projects, different cultures, and ways of life. Results from Questions 3 and 4 are significant because these reflect multiple content standards across the grade spans. Question 5 asked if students can communicate their learning to other audiences, and 100% of parents agreed to some extent. The ability to communicate is essential for academic success so this is a significant finding within this study. The sixth question on the survey also stood out to me. It was tied to Research Question 1 as it related to school

culture: “Students are more excited about and interested in their school.” Sixty-eight percent of the parents surveyed said they strongly agreed with this and 32% said they somewhat agreed with this question. Question 6 results showed that 100% of the parents believed that their child was more excited and interested in their school due to the Global Schools Initiative. This showed that the Global Schools Initiative was impacting student motivation and student engagement. Question 7 was directly related to Research Question 1: “Students’ attendance at their school has improved.” Thirty-seven point five percent of the parents surveyed said they strongly agreed, 37.5% said they somewhat agreed, and 25% answered they were neutral on the question. From these data, I can see that 75% of the parents surveyed agreed that student attendance at the school has improved to some extent; 25% of those parents surveyed neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that student attendance at their school had improved. This is reflective of the overall analysis of no significant patterns emerging in attendance data. Question 8 from the parent survey was tied to Research Question 1 as it related to state EOG test scores. Question 8 also directly related to Research Question 1. On Question 8, 80% of the parents surveyed agreed to some extent that student state EOG test scores had improved because of the Global Schools Initiative being implemented. This is aligned with the data analysis from the North Carolina State Report Card. In both Questions 9 and 10, 88% of parents agreed to some extent their child has a better understanding of different states, countries, and regions as well as being informed about global issues and current events. These questions reflect students who are building global knowledge and background knowledge to support their learning across all content areas.

## **Themes That Emerged**

Question 8 asked parents if they had noted improvement to their students' test scores since the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. Results showed that 80% of the participants either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed. This is directly supported by the analysis of the North Carolina School Report Card data analysis.

Question 7 asked parents if they observed their students' attendance improving since implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. Parents responded with 37.5% strongly agreeing, 37.5% somewhat agreeing, and 25% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Examination of North Carolina Report Card Data did not reveal any clear patterns, positive or negative, in daily attendance average as a result of the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. This seems to be aligned with the parent responses. Significant to this study are parent responses to Questions 2-6, 9, and 10 with all responses to these questions being 80% or higher either strongly agree or somewhat agree. Responses to these questions indicate that parents feel students are more excited and engaged in their learning. They reported students are experiencing real-world connections and participating in authentic learning experiences and are interested in school. Their responses demonstrate student obtainment of curriculum standards in addition to global competency. Parents indicated they perceived their child's increased background knowledge as it relates to global issues as well as skill development.

## **Results for Research Question 2**

My second research question was, "What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction and community relations?" For this question, I utilized a Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment to collect data from the teachers of the



school.

### **Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment**

The Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment was completed by all 13 teachers at the school following the Global Schools Initiative kickoff professional development presented by our partner Participate Learning in the 2016-2017 school year. This pre-assessment was given to all the teachers to gauge where they were in their own classrooms at the onset of implementation. Results are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*2016-2017 Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment*

	Yes	No	N/A
Teachers report that they keep informed on global issues and current events	80%	5%	15%
Teachers apply strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes	91%		9%
Teachers develop units or lessons that address real-world problems and challenges	85%		15%
Teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies	66%	19%	15%

Source: Participate Learning (2016). *2016-2017 Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment*.

Results from this survey showed that many teachers reported they were informed on global issues and current events; however, 20% responded the question was not applicable. When asked about applying strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes, 91% of teachers responded that they did this. On Question 3, 85% of teachers responded that they developed units or lessons that addressed real-world problems, but 15% did not think this question was applicable. On Question 4, only 66%

of teachers responded that they utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies; 19% said they did not use these strategies; and 15% responded the question was not applicable.

### **Global Readiness Needs Post-Assessment**

The Global Readiness Needs Post-Assessment was completed by all 13 teachers at the school following 2 years of the Global Schools Initiative implementation during the 2018-2019 school year. This post-assessment was given to all the teachers to gauge where they believed their students were as well as where they were in their own classrooms with the Global Schools Initiative. These results are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13**

#### *2018-2019 Global Readiness Needs Post-Assessment*

	Yes	No	N/A
Teachers report that they keep informed on global issues and current events	95%		5%
Teachers apply strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes	100%		
Teachers develop units or lessons that address real-world problems and challenges	95%		5%
Teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies	90%		10%

Source: Participate Learning (2019). *2018-2019 Global Readiness Needs Post-Assessment*.

On Question 1, 95% of teachers responded they were informed on global issues and current events. Only 5% responded they did not feel the question was applicable. Next, on Question 2, 100% of teachers responded they apply strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes. On Question 3, 95% of teachers answered that they developed units or lessons that addressed real-world problems. On the same

question, 5% responded the question was applicable. Last, on Question 4, 90% of teachers responded that they utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies. Only 10% responded that the question was not applicable.

## **Findings**

I compared the data from the Global Readiness Needs Pre-Assessment and the Global Readiness Post-Assessment. All 13 teachers at the school participated in these assessments. There were improvements in each category from the pre- to the post-assessment. One that stood out was, “Teachers report that they keep informed on global issues and current events.” On the pre-assessment, 80% answered yes. On the post-assessment, 95% of the teachers answered yes to the same question. Another question that stood out was, “Teachers utilize culturally responsive teaching strategies.” On the pre-assessment, 66% of the teachers answered yes. On the post-assessment, 90% answered yes to the same question.

## **Interviews With Teachers**

I created seven interview questions for teachers at the school. These questions focused on the impact the Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction and community relations. My superintendent conducted the interviews of five teachers across the different grade spans at the school. I decided to ask him to conduct the interviews since the school and community were so small. This would allow the teachers to be more forthcoming with their responses. Following the interviews, he shared with me the results.

## ***Interview Questions***

1. Was the initial implementation and vision for the Global Schools Initiative

- clearly communicated to all?” (Aligned with Research Question 2)
2. How has the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative impacted your day-to-day routines in your classroom? (Aligned with Research Question 2)
  3. Has the Global Schools Initiative affected the way you view your job? (Aligned with Research Question 2)
  4. What skills does this initiative enhance or affect in your students? (Aligned with Research Question 1)
  5. What impact has the Global Schools Initiative had on relationships with the community? (Aligned with Research Question 3)
  6. What changes, if any, have you noticed in your students since implementation? (Aligned with Research Question 1)
  7. What benefits do you see with this Global Schools Initiative? (Aligned with Research Questions 1, 2, 3)

The first interview question asked was, “Was the initial implementation and vision for the Global Schools Initiative clearly communicated to all?” Teacher 1 answered,

While I think the goal was clearly communicated, I think implementation expectations were a bit muddled in the beginning. I remember being so overwhelmed because I was not sure what was expected of me and how I was going to help achieve the goals. As time progressed, the expectations became clearer and eventually I had a better understanding of what it needed to look like in my classroom.

Teacher 2 answered, “Yes, we have great training from Participate Learning.” Teacher 3

answered this question with, “Yes, it was communicated clearly to our faculty, students, parents, and community members.” Teacher 4 answered, “Yes, we were all informed at a group level and continued PD and conversations throughout the year kept us focused and on track.” Finally, Teacher 5 answered, “Yes, the implementation was announced several times to all school staff and personnel.”

The second interview question was, “How has the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative impacted your day-to-day routines in your classroom?” Teacher 1 responded,

While my day-to-day routine has changed very little, the manner in which we discuss information has greatly changed. The lens through which we look at the curriculum has changed from a surface level understanding to, how can I use this information to make the world a better place?

Teacher 2 answered,

Global doesn’t change my schedule or what I teach, but it does impact and enhance everything I teach. Making small, conscious efforts to share the world with kids enables their curiosity and room for their growth. I did add a 10-minute Spanish lesson each day, but that was a needed component for global learning (and our enrichment program/Spanish class was cut due to lack of funding).

Teacher 3 answered with, “I am more cognizant of SDG goals and make them a focus in my lessons in little ways throughout the day.” Teacher 4 responded, “My routines have stayed the same, as I have specific routines that are developmentally appropriate for preschool-aged children, however, and I have been more intentional of bringing global issues into our routines on a regular basis.” Teacher 5 answered, “The Global School

Implementation has greatly impacted my day-to-day routines. Almost all of my reading and social studies lessons implement one or more global components.”

The third interview question was, “Has the Global Schools Initiative affected the way you view your job?” Teacher 1 responded, “Absolutely. I used to teach students. Now I teach world changers.” Teacher 2 answered, “The Global Initiative helped me fall back in love with teaching.” Teacher 3 answered, “I feel like I’m more of a connection maker for life-altering learning.” Teacher 4 responded with,

What I do on a daily basis in a tiny, rural elementary school might look insignificant to some. However, the Global Schools Initiative shows that what I do, teach, and model for my young students will truly have global impacts as they leave my classroom.

Finally, Teacher 5 answered, “It has not yet affected the way I view my job, but I anticipate with more time implementing global that it will do so.”

The fourth interview question asked was, “What skills does this initiative enhance or affect in your students?” Teacher 1 answered, “Critical thinking. When I present them with new information, I can see their brains working. They are asking important questions. What role does this information play on my impact in the world?” Teacher 2 responded,

My students have become global citizens. They now see the world outside of themselves and how they are a part of it. They are more caring and empathetic, have a greater sense of self, and are accepting and understanding of various cultures.

Teacher 3 answered, “I really think the Global Schools Initiative helps students develop

critical thinking skills.” Teacher 4 responded, “The most significant gains I have seen in my students are in communication and problem-solving skills.” Teacher 5 answered, “This initiative has affected my students by encouraging them to be more aware of the world around them. My students have a broader perspective of their location and are more aware of what other cultures are like.”

The fifth interview question was, “What impact has the Global Schools Initiative had on relationships with the community?” Teacher 1 responded with, “I think it has drawn our community closer to the school. They see the impact that these kids are making and they want to help.” Teacher 2 answered,

Our community has rallied around the Global Initiative and they are proud of the students we are educating. The community has contributed to all of our Sustainable Development Goal service projects; they are active participants in our learning, and work with us now that they know what we are working towards.

Teacher 3 answered, “Strengthening community relationships has been a major impact of this initiative. Our school community is wonderful and supportive anyway; all you have to do is ask. The Global Schools Initiative did some asking and the results were phenomenal.” Teacher 4 responded, “Parents and community members are very interested and intrigued about the Initiative. Some have had questions, so it opened up opportunities for communication.” Teacher 5 answered,

The Global School Implementation has had a great impact on our community. We have had tremendous positive feedback on how appreciative parents are that our teachers are implementing global lessons and teaching students about the world around them. We also have had new families express that they moved to our

community because of our school's global initiative.

The sixth interview question asked was, "What changes, if any, have you noticed in your students since implementation?" Teacher 1 responded, "More than anything, I see an increase in empathy. Understanding that not everyone in the world lives like we do in rural North Carolina, has given them a sense of acceptance and respect for other cultures." Teacher 2 answered,

Our students are better communicators, more confident, and love coming to school. They are less negative and more appreciative of the opportunities they have. They are also realizing the potential they have to create change and impact where they are -- with what they have.

Teacher 3 responded, "Students want to do good things in the world and are gaining positive recognition for their efforts." Teacher 4 answered, "My students are very aware of differences between people, but they are all quick to say, It's OK to be different."

Teacher 5 responded, "As stated before, my students are more aware of the world around them. They no longer believe this is the only location on the map. They are continuously taught and exposed to other countries and their cultures."

The last interview question was, "What benefits do you see with this Global Schools Initiative?" Teacher 1 answered, "It encourages our students to look at the world differently. I can see them beginning to make long-term goals based on their new knowledge of world issues. I cannot wait to see the positive impact these kids have." Teacher 2 responded,

As a human, I know that we are raising future leaders that will be just what we need. As a teacher, my students are much more engaged. As a global citizen, my



students are the type of people I want to meet out in the world. They are kind, appreciative of both similarities and differences, and curious about the world near and far.

Teacher 3 answered, “I think the Global Schools Initiative has opened our students to the world and given them the confidence to want to make a change for the better.” Teacher 4 responded with,

That students in our rural, somewhat isolated school see themselves as part of a much, much bigger unit. It is easy for them to see themselves connected to each other at the family, school, and community levels. Now, they are able to see themselves connected to others on a much larger scale.

Teacher 5 answered,

One of the largest benefits I have found since implementing this initiative is that it has strengthened students’ skills to be more engaged with their global peers.

Students not only have the skills necessary to live in our increasingly interconnected world but to also lead and thrive as global leaders.

### **Themes That Emerged**

I recognized several themes emerging while reading through all the data collected. First, I noticed that the teachers did not change how they were teaching; instead, they were more conscious about integrating global themes throughout their standard course of study, as Teacher 4 responded, “My routines have stayed the same, as I have specific routines that are developmentally appropriate for preschool-aged children, however, and I have been more intentional of bringing global issues into our routines on a regular basis.” Second, I noticed that they all mentioned how the Global Schools Initiative had allowed

the students to think more critically and then apply what they had learned through their SDG projects. Teacher 1 answered, “Critical thinking. When I present them with new information, I can see their brains working. They are asking the important questions. What role does this information play on my impact in the world?” Third, I realized that the teachers believed the Global Schools Initiative had given the students a worldview and that they could truly make a difference through their projects. Teacher 5 responded, “As stated before, my students are more aware of the world around them. They no longer believe this is the only location on the map. They are continuously taught and exposed to other countries and their cultures.”

### **Results for Research Question 3**

My third research question was, “What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?” I created a 7-question interview for the five community members who participated.

#### **Focus Group Interview With Community Members**

I created seven interview questions for community members from this school’s attendance zone. These questions were focused on the impact the Global Schools Initiative had on the students, the school, and community relations. My superintendent conducted the interviews of five community members from varying backgrounds and experiences. I decided to ask him to conduct the interviews since the school and community were so small. This would allow the teachers to be more forthcoming with their responses. Following the interviews, he shared with me the results.

#### ***Interview Questions***

1. Have you heard about the Global Schools Initiative at this school?” (Aligned

with Research Question 3)

2. Was the initial implementation and vision for the Global Schools Initiative clearly communicated to all in the community?” (Aligned with Research Question 3)
3. What Global Schools Initiative projects have you heard about that the students are participating in? (Aligned with Research Questions 1, 2, 3)
4. What skills does this initiative enhance or affect in the students? (Aligned with Research Question 2)
5. What impact has the Global Schools Initiative had on relationships with the community? (Aligned with Research Question 3)
6. What changes, if any, have you noticed in the school and the students since implementation? (Aligned with Research Questions 1, 2)
7. What benefits do you see with this Global Schools Initiative? (Aligned with Research Questions 1, 2, 3)

The first community member question was, “Have you heard about the Global Schools Initiative at the School?” Community Member 1 responded, “Yes. The Global Schools Initiative is what drew our family to the school.” Community Member 2 answered, “Yes.” Community Member 3 responded, “Yes. When the initiative was first discussed at a School Board meeting, I was very impressed. Since then, teachers at the school have devoted energies to making students aware of the world at large.” Community Member 4 answered with, “Yes.” Community Member 5 said, “My son’s teacher talked to us about what PCS was doing. There was also a school assembly for Heifer International where it was talked about. It was on Facebook and the website too.”

The second community member interview question was, “Was the initial implementation and vision for the Global Schools Initiative clearly communicated to all in the community?” Community Member 1 answered, “Yes.” Community Member 2 responded with,

I feel the Participate Learning video was a powerful way to make the community and county aware of this initiative. I also think that keeping the school Facebook page up to date with all the global education taking place in the school was an effective way of keeping the community up to date on this initiative.

Community Member 3 answered, “I believe so. The visit of the global group from UK certainly made the community aware of the importance of knowing the value of global knowledge.” Community Member 4 responded with, “We learned about the Global School Initiative in a school assembly. Information was also shared on the school’s Facebook and website. My son’s teacher also shared information with parents in communication that is sent home.” Community Member 5 answered, “Mr. Hall and the teachers shared the goals of the Global Schools Initiative with parents. They want to help students learn more about the world around them and how they can make a difference.”

The third interview question asked was, “What Global Schools Initiative projects have you heard about, and that the students are participating in?” Community Member 1 answered with,

Global Schools Initiative projects that we heard about or experienced through our children’s participation include the incorporation of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, where students learned of the purpose and importance of each SDG. Each student also chose an SDG to focus on in planning a school-wide

or community-wide project and presentation. Another project included the making of passports that allowed students to “travel” internationally from classroom to classroom to learn about different countries, cultures, languages, music, food, etc. The school also held a holiday program where each class learned and performed a song either in a different language or from a different country. Contacts from around the U.S. and internationally sent in postcards, packages, or even skyped with the students to talk with them about where they lived, what it was like, and how it was similar and/or different to where the students lived. The students learned so much through these interactive experiences and their eyes were open to the wider world around them.

Community Member 2 answered,

Communication with others all over the world, focused global literature, fundraisers/food drives for global and local initiatives, creation of community garden and blessing box, focused awareness and participation in various global and local initiatives, Operation Christmas Child, Special Olympics, recycling, etc.

Community Member 3 responded with,

I believe the students have learned the value of knowing the heritage of their ancestors. They have also learned the importance of clean water in countries where such is a premium. I am sure other aspects have been studied but these two stand out for me.

Community Member 4 answered,

The students are working on projects that help with the SDGs. The sustainable development goals. These are problems that are faced by people all over the

world. Some students worked on fundraisers to fight hunger, provide clean water, and provide medical care to sick children. Students visited a homeless shelter to deliver food that was collected. Different cultures were incorporated into what they read and learned about in their classes. The students learned songs from different cultures as part of their annual program. There were projects in all the grade levels, but I am most familiar with the middle grade levels where my son was a student at the time.

Community Member 5 said,

Students have done online video calls with other classes and people from around the world. Artists and musicians have visited the school. An author has visited the school and helped students learn about writing stories. Students have done service-learning projects.

The fourth community interview question was, “What skills does this initiative enhance or affect in the students?” Community Member 1’s response was,

The Global Schools Initiative increased understanding and appreciation of the world as well as brought deeper awareness of the students’ own community and local culture. An expanded worldview is also something that is further developed through these initiatives. The students’ sense of responsiveness, engagement, an increased desire to learn, communicate, and contribute in positive ways to their local and wider world is also enhanced.

Community Member 2 answered, “teamwork, community awareness, compassion for others, acceptance/tolerance.” Community Member 3 responded, “The basic knowledge of reading, composition, and math is enhanced through this initiative. Technology

becomes very important as data, world-wide understanding, and specific research becomes a part of this initiative.” Community Member 4 answered, “The SDG projects taught the students so many life skills like problem-solving, project management, organization, and communication. More importantly, I think it taught them to have empathy for others and take action to improve the world around them.” Community Member 5 said, “Problem-solving skills, critical thinking, reading and writing, art, caring about others, volunteering, learning other cultures just to name a few.”

The fifth question was, “What impact has the Global Schools Initiative had on relationships with the community?” Community Member 1 answered,

The Global Schools Initiative opened doors to conversation among students with their family members, friends, faith communities, and others. Travel experiences were shared around the dinner table and students were able to share what they were learning. (As returned Peace Corps volunteers, my husband and I especially enjoyed the opportunity to share and learn.) Our community is also home to a few missionaries and learning about the world gave greater context to these experiences. Our community benefited from the projects focused on SDG goals which included supporting our local food pantry, campaigns around environmental health, sustainability, recycling and litter-free campaigns, among others.

Community Member 2 answered,

It has given students the understanding of what it means to be a productive/ contributing member of a community – local and global. An example of this would be the PCS student who has raised funds for a book collection focused on

anti-racism placed at the local public library and for a global project that focused on providing needed medicine to keep children healthy in Africa.

Community Member 3 responded with,

Being a rural area in western North Carolina, the community can often be in a state of isolation from the world's needs. This initiative has opened vistas for the children to have a deeper understanding of and appreciation of students in other countries and the needs that exist for day-to-day living.

Community Member 4 answered,

The community has become involved in many of the projects alongside the students. As I mentioned, the school utilized Facebook. The School has a large following on Facebook and they would often use Facebook to involve the community in the projects.

Community Member 5 said, "Provided opportunities for families and the community to participate and contribute to what is happening in the learning that was happening at the school."

The sixth question asked was, "What changes, if any, have you noticed in the school and the students since implementation?" Community Member 1 responded with, "Students whose teachers play an active role in the Global Schools Initiative have greater social and cultural awareness, possess a deepened sense of social responsibility, and see themselves as global citizens." Community Member 2 answered, "As stated in the previous question, I feel PCS students are more conscientious of what is going on around them and understand they can make a positive impact on/for others, locally and globally."

Community Member 3 responded with,



When one visits the school, the atmosphere is very inviting and the classrooms exhibit displays of the students' work on various aspects of studying other countries. The need for clean water, sustainable food supplies, educational materials, etc. appears to resonate with the students and teachers. It is no longer just an interest in the area but an interest in the world's needs.

Community Member 4 answered,

They changed the look inside to include flags and clocks with different times. Information about different countries and cultures is often in the hall. There seems to be a touch of "global" in everything they do now. The students are more aware of others not just across the world but of valuing each individual's uniqueness.

Community Member 5 said, "My son seems more aware of what is happening outside of our county and state. He wants to be a farmer when he grows up and he has talked about agricultural practices from around the world."

The seventh community interview question was, "What benefits do you see with this Global Schools Initiative?" Community Member 1's response was,

The benefits of the Global Schools Initiative are tremendous and, in many ways, will influence the lives of these students (and those with whom they come in contact), their confidence to engage and navigate this ever-growing, ever-changing, ever-smaller wide world we live in.

Community Member 2 answered with, "This initiative will create adults who have the ability to work with others from various backgrounds; understanding of the importance of community involvement (local and global); understanding and acceptance of individual differences; ability to create change when necessary." Community Member 3 responded

with,

The benefits can be innumerable because the teachers and administration believe in this project. Whenever one opens a worldwide vision to students, they are never the same in their thinking. Having this Global project at The School provides an avenue for learning that might never have existed before. One of the major benefits for students and teachers has been the desire to appreciate the written word. The presence of John Claude Bemis, a children's writer of renown, has provided a deeper awareness of the art of writing for both staff and students.

Community Member 4 answered with,

The benefits I see are the skills that students have learned. Skills like problem-solving and critical thinking will benefit them in their education and beyond. The increased awareness of cultures outside of where they live will help prepare them for their future. The students are excited about school and I am sure that affects their learning. The greatest benefit might be the development of empathy, compassion, and a desire to influence change for others.

Community Member 5 said,

No matter what a student's goal for the future, they need to be globally competitive. I hope that this Global Schools Initiative will help with this. Young people often leave our county for better jobs and opportunities. Instead, I would love for them to come back here and help give back to our own community.

### **Themes That Emerged**

As I read the data from the focus group interview questions with community members, I noticed several themes. First, I realized that the implementation of the Global

Schools Initiative was communicated well. All the community members agreed that they knew about the initiative and what the school's vision was for the Global Schools Initiative. Second, I noticed that the community members heard about the SDG projects students were working on. They also mentioned that some community members had worked alongside some students to help them achieve their goals. Last, I noticed that the community members said that the benefits for the students from the Global Schools Initiative were increased awareness of the world around them, the ability to work and learn with others from around the world, and increased confidence for all the students.

### **Findings**

The group was asked the same seven questions during the focus group interview. I found that all seven community members had heard about the Global Schools Initiative through either social media, their own student or grandchild, teachers at the school, or myself as the elementary school principal. They all felt that the communication surrounding the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative was clear and that the vision for the new initiative was focused. The community members interviewed had also heard of the many projects the students at the elementary school were doing through the SDGs set forth by the United Nations. The community members also said that the students had learned teamwork, empathy, and service to others and enhanced their own understanding of the world around them through this Global Schools Initiative. As far as how the Global School Initiative affected relationships within the community, they felt students were discussing global issues more at home and asking more questions. They also touched on how the community has become more involved at the school and working alongside the students with their projects. The community members noticed how

the inside of the school has changed with flags from around the world in the hallways, every classroom with a culture corner, and all the global student work posted throughout the school. The community members felt that the Global Schools Initiative would affect and influence the students' lives for a lifetime following their time at the rural elementary school. They also felt this initiative would prepare the students for a life in a globally competitive market.

### **Themes That Emerged**

Looking at the data that I collected for this study, it was easy for me to see several more themes emerging. From the interviews, I determined that the students were developing their soft skills as they worked with community members on their SDG projects. These soft skills have allowed the students to further build relationships within the school and community in which they live. Another recurring theme was the community pride that has been instilled in the students. Through their projects, the students have learned business skills, occupational skills, things about different art genres, and many different types of agriculture from the community members. One community member said, "The benefits I see are the skills that the students have learned. The students are excited about school and I am sure that affects their learning."

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to identify ways a Global Schools Initiative in a rural school in northwestern North Carolina support students, teachers, and the greater community. This research method was designed to answer two research questions:

1. In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school in northwest North

Carolina?

2. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?
3. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

Throughout this research, I have seen and heard about all the positives that this Global Schools Initiative has brought to this rural elementary school. I have learned that even in small communities, big changes can take place. The research showed improvements in academics and attendance. The research showed that the teachers enjoy their job even more so now and have built even stronger relationships with their community. The research also showed that the community is more aware of the global issues we all face due to the implementation of this Global Schools Initiative. The community feels more involved and informed as they work alongside this rural elementary school to face these issues head on. The research was set with two guiding questions along the way but in the end, showed me and everyone an even greater impact on this entire community through the Global Schools Initiative.

Again, I recognized several themes emerging while reading through all the data collected. First, I noticed that the teachers did not change how they were teaching; instead, they were more conscious about integrating global themes throughout their standard course of study. Second, I noticed that they all mentioned how the Global Schools Initiative had allowed the students to think more critically and then apply what they had learned through their SDG projects. Third, I realized that the teachers believed the Global Schools Initiative had given the students a worldview and that they could truly

make a difference through their projects. As I read the data from the focus group interview questions with community members, I noticed several themes. First, I realized that the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative was communicated well. All the community members agreed that they knew about the initiative and what the school's vision was for the Global Schools Initiative. Second, I noticed that the community members had heard about the SDG projects students were working on. They also mentioned that some community members had worked alongside some students to help them achieve their goals. Last, I noticed that the community members said that the benefits for the students from the Global Schools Initiative were increased awareness of the world around them, the ability to work and learn with others from around the world, and increased confidence for all the students.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Study Relevance**

As a former principal of the school, I realized there was a problem with many students experiencing culture shock when leaving this small, rural county. Many students were going to college or university and returning to the county within a semester. I began to research different ways to increase exposure to different places and cultures across the United States as well as the world. I explored the potential of implementing a Global Schools Initiative at our school. This would give students access to different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life from around the world.

I hypothesized students were returning home because they were not able to navigate the different “ways of the world” and were more comfortable in their small-town bubble. I found a Global Schools Initiative that could be implemented to address these issues. With input from the school leadership team, I decided this Global Schools Initiative would benefit all students and help them see the world. The Global Schools Initiative focused on developing global competencies, integrating a global perspective into the curriculum, and providing service-learning opportunities through SDG projects.

The goal of the Global Schools Initiative was to help students prepare to be global citizens who are aware of their ability to impact change at the local and global levels. Through the Global Schools Initiative, there were opportunities to not only focus on the global competencies but also incorporate service-learning projects that focused on the SDGs. These projects involved students, teachers, and community members collaborating for a greater cause. By participating in these service-learning projects, students have engaged in authentic learning experiences in which they demonstrated their ability to

empathize with and work to meet the needs of others. These projects incorporated critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and social and emotional skills. Student SDG service-learning projects included addressing issues such as poverty, hunger, health and well-being, and access to clean water and sanitation. Students demonstrated student leadership, community awareness, valuing diversity, tolerance, communication, and organization skills, all of which had previously been suggested as topics to be included in service-learning projects (Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to identify ways a Global Schools Initiative in rural schools, especially in northwestern North Carolina, supports students, teachers, and the greater community. I highlighted both the factors that facilitate this initiative and looked at the impact it has on students, teachers, and the community. My intention was to give guidance to other rural school leaders who might be interested in implementing their own Global Schools Initiative. The results of the interviews I conducted along with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 allowed me to hypothesize how implementation of the Global Schools Initiative would impact student academics and attendance, teacher job satisfaction, and community relations.

The theory of action, which included a logical chain of reasoning that shows how change will lead to improved practices, was proven true with this research. Theory of action is a set of actions that could involve change, causing willful human action. The implementation of the Global Schools Initiative was communicated to all, and the vision was made clear for the initiative. The data showed that through the initiative, the performance and growth scores improved over the 4 years. A challenge was proving any true improvement on attendance. As the data showed, the attendance at the school was



consistently high.

## **Results**

Research Question 1 was, “In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school in northwest North Carolina?” Review of data from the North Carolina School Report Card showed that 75% of the tested students were proficient and had an academic growth score of 74.3% in school year 2015-2016, which was the year prior to implementation. By the school year 2018-2019, the proficiency score was 81%, and the academic growth score was 87%. These comparisons from before implementation of the Global Schools Initiative to the third year of implementation showed increases in both academic areas of proficiency and growth for the school.

The attendance data taken from the North Carolina School Report Card showed an average daily attendance in the 2015-2016 school year of 95.5%. By the 2018-2019 school year, the average daily attendance at the elementary school was 94.7%. The research I conducted showed that during the years before and following implementation, the attendance rate did not fluctuate more than one percentage point up or down. Attendance data showed that the elementary school had consistent attendance rates year after year.

A parent survey covering initial implementation and student attendance and academics was also given. The data from this parent survey showed that 100% of the parents surveyed agreed that the Global Schools Initiative addressed real-world problems to some extent. From the data, I could see that 75% of the parents surveyed agreed that student attendance at the school has improved to some extent, which tied directly to

Research Question 1. One hundred percent of the parents believed that their child was more excited and interested in their school due to the Global Schools Initiative. This question was tied to Research Question 1 as well as related to school culture. Question 8 from the parent survey was tied to Research Question 1 as it related to state EOG test scores. From these data, I saw that 80% of the parents surveyed agreed to some extent that student state EOG test scores had improved as a result of the Global Schools Initiative being implemented.

Research Question 2 was, “What impact has the Global School Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction?” My results were made up of a Pre-Global Readiness Needs Assessment, a Post-Global Readiness Needs Assessment, Teacher Interviews, and a Community Member Focus Group Interview.

For the Pre-Global Readiness Needs Assessment, 80% of the 13 teachers said they keep informed on global issues and current events; 91% of the teachers assessed said they apply strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes; and 85% of the teachers assessed said they develop units or lessons that address real-world problems and challenges. Finally, 66% of the teachers assessed said they utilized culturally responsive teaching strategies. This pre-assessment was given at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year.

For the Post-Global Readiness Needs Assessment, 95% of the teachers assessed said they keep informed on the global issues and current events; 100% of the teachers assessed said they apply strategies to promote equality and break down student stereotypes; 95% of the teachers assessed said they developed units or lessons that address real-world problems and challenges; and 90% of the teachers assessed said they

utilized culturally responsive teaching strategies. This post-assessment was given near the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

The teacher interviews consisted of seven questions and were conducted with five teachers of the 13 total at the elementary school. From the interviews, the overall consensus was that the Global Schools Initiative was clearly communicated and presented from the start. The Global Schools Initiative has enhanced each teacher's daily lessons and has garnered more interest throughout their curriculums with their students. The teachers all have seen an increase in global awareness and empathy with their students. A benefit of the Global Schools Initiative that all the teachers saw was the preparation of their students as global citizens.

Finally, Research Question 3 asked, "What impact, if any, has the Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?" A community member focus group interview was given to five members of the elementary school community. There were seven questions for these community members. The overall consensus with the community members was that they all knew about the Global Schools Initiative implementation. The parents also agreed that the initiative had enhanced the following student skills: teamwork, community awareness, compassion and empathy for others, acceptance, and critical thinking. They also agreed that the Global Schools Initiative had created an even stronger bond with the entire community through student SDG projects. They all had also noticed the physical changes within the school with flags from around the world in every hallway, a global-themed wall with clocks that focused on different time zones across the world, and every classroom now had a culture corner within the room focused on a country or region from around the world.

## **Implications of Findings**

The driving questions for this research were

1. In what ways does a Global Schools Initiative affect the academics and attendance of students in a small elementary school found in northwest North Carolina?
2. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on teacher job satisfaction and community relations?
3. What impact, if any, has this Global Schools Initiative had on community relations?

This study supports the Global Schools Initiative. The study shows a positive correlation between the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative and student performance and growth on state EOG tests. The study shows that since the initial implementation, student proficiency grew over 3 years from 67% proficiency to 81% proficiency. The study also shows that academic growth grew from 67.9% to 87% within those 3 years. The attendance data were inconclusive as the elementary school has consistently high attendance percentages.

The study supports greater community involvement as well. The data show that the community is more involved with the school by working alongside the students and assisting them with their SDG projects. The community has been more involved as students are questioning them more about their own experiences. One community member responded to an interview question with,

Being in a rural area in western North Carolina, the community can often be in a state of isolation from the world's needs. This initiative has opened vistas for the

children to have a deeper understanding of and appreciation of students in other countries and the needs that exist for day-to-day living.

Another community member said, “This Global Schools Initiative has provided opportunities for families and the community to participate and contribute to what is happening in the learning that was happening at the school.”

This school traditionally had stellar attendance percentages year after year. I still believe looking closely at attendance is important. This new Global Schools Initiative will only be more effective with students being present at school and engaged in their classrooms as their teachers are implementing this new initiative. With the great attendance record here at my school, this increases the likelihood of successful implementation, as well as the sustainability of the initiative. By looking at the attendance data from the North Carolina School Report Card, I could see that from the years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019, the school attendance was 95% or higher each of those school years. There were no major increases in the attendance data. One teacher interviewed did say, “My students love coming to school each day to see what new door to the world we will open.” After reviewing all the attendance data from the school years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019, I could see that attendance is very high at this elementary school year after year. With the implementation of the Global Schools Initiative, can this trend continue? Will the attendance percentage grow even higher? Only time will tell and hopefully, future research will show sustained high numbers or even growth.

The use of a parent survey allowed me to gain insight into how our Global Schools Initiative implementation was going. Through the 12 questions on the parent survey, I could see that our communication and vision for the Global Schools Initiative

was positive. We were making progress towards our school goals with academics, attendance, and culture with our students. With the data from the parent survey, it was easy to see the parents felt overall the Global Schools Initiative was making an impact on both attendance and academics at the elementary school. As the Global Schools Initiative continues to grow and change, I can only hope this sentiment will continue.

### **Limitations of Findings**

As with any study, there were limitations. I concluded that the main limitation involves sample size. The initiation of this study began to expose students in a small, rural school to different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. Since the school district was small and this study was only on one of those small schools, the overall sample size was small. I believed that even though the sample size was small, the data collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups would be enlightening as the model was expanded elsewhere. Another limitation of this study was the amount of time since the initial implementation of the Global Schools Initiative. The school was only in its second year of implementation following a year of investigation and exploration.

A limitation impacting this study was a question in my teacher and community member interview that read, “What benefits do you see with this Global Schools Initiative?” I only asked those participants about the benefits they saw. I did not allow for anything they may have seen as not beneficial to the school, students, teachers, or community.

A limitation impacting this study was the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. Beginning in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the learning environment for students and staff. This also impacted the level of community involvement and

methods available for service-learning projects. This pandemic has been affecting the way we live, the way we work, and the way we conduct school for over a year now. This was a major limitation to this study as it was affecting implementation of the Global Schools Initiative.

A limitation that was considered was implementation dip. Implementation dip refers to a drop in performance and confidence. It is the phenomenon that occurs “as one encounters an innovation that requires new skills and new understandings” (Fullan, 2009, p. 79). Experiencing this dip may be an inevitable part of any change effort. Whenever we introduce something new and different to others—whether you're spearheading the implementation of a new early alert system or starting a new mentoring program on campus—we should expect that it would take some time for all impacted stakeholders to become comfortable with the change. Therefore, we should not fear or get discouraged by the implementation dip, rather we should embrace it and identify ways to survive it (Fullan, 2009).

Another limitation was the low amount of parent responses to the survey I sent out. There were only sixteen surveys answered and returned total. This was around 8% of the total parents at my school represented. Also a limitation, I conducted a convenience sampling with my teacher and community member interviews. I sent notifications out to all and the first five responses I received were chosen for the interview process.

Last, my own bias was considered a limitation, as I started this program at this small, rural school. I looked at my own bias towards the school, students, staff, and community as the staff and I progressed through this Global Schools Initiative implementation.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of education in K-12 schools in the United States is to graduate internationally competent students, develop them as critical and creative thinkers, and teach them to comprehend and communicate with people from all over the world (Asia Society, 2010.; Wallis, 2006). Students feel engaged and motivated about their learning when the curriculum is integrated with global perspectives, as evidenced in the global initiative in the internationally oriented primary school in this study.

Infusing global education into student learning is widely suggested to overcome student indifference and to educate students to be internationally competitive. For relevant and meaningful learning, it is critical to incorporate global viewpoints into the curriculum. It is also suggested that international instructors be infused into the school personnel, symbolizing an interconnected globe and serving as a direct resource for global viewpoints and appropriate global learning.

Another suggestion is that school systems provide outside assistance and professional development to school administrators and instructors. When school leaders and teachers are informed and supported in their efforts, they may incorporate global viewpoints into their daily routines. There are a few more questions I believe may be added to this study's future investigation:

1. Could this Global Schools Initiative be successful in a larger school district?
2. Would this Global Schools Initiative be successful in an urban school district?
3. What areas (agriculture and arts) might be best suited for different types of school systems?
4. By seeing this continued improvement in student proficiency and academic



growth, I have to wonder, “What will these data look like 5 years down the road? Ten years?”

A recommendation to add to future research would be to include the use of more quantitative data in a study of the Global Schools Initiative. I used a mixed methods study approach but included more qualitative data sources. In future studies looking at more quantitative data sources with the effects of a Global Schools Initiative might be useful.

On a national and international basis, more study is needed on the subject of global education, whether to address global education's identity problem or to expand on best practices. For many years, there has been a steady dialogue regarding global education in our state and school district, but more is needed. How global education manifests itself in a range of situations, from urban to rural, diverse to essentially homogeneous, poor to affluent, was barely touched upon in this study and deserves more investigation. Regardless of the demographics of their own student population, educators should consider how they might use the diversity of the state to further their goals.

Global education can also include studies of local cultures. Future research should look into how rural communities regard their diverse student populations as a result of globalization and therefore as an asset when considering 21st-century skills, global citizenship, global consciousness, or any other interpretation of global education. It is not always necessary for proponents of global education to send teachers and pupils far away. Instead, they should consider how to build bridges between North Carolina's various communities, which include a substantial number of immigrants. Further research into this phenomenon might start with administrators, as many are recognizing that global can also be local. Dr. Susanne Irwin (personal communication, April 28, 2021) summed this

point up well, saying, “I think that we all have our own culture, we have events that might be of different cultures, so it doesn’t necessarily mean students travel. With technology today, we can bring it to them.”

If we want a compassionate, caring world, let us be compassionate and caring for those around us. If we want a just world, let us live justly. If we want a sustainable world, let us create lives that are sustainable. If we want a peaceful world, let us be peace. He also said that in this spirit, I must admit that the biggest obstacle to my achieving change in the world has been me. Although I have been fortunate to have many opportunities to contribute to the world during my life, I have missed some of them because I was not then aware of the parts of myself that were part of the problem. (Gerzon, 2010, p 168)

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