

The Giraffe Inquiry

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Over the course of three months, kindergarten teacher, Barb Gerst, and her student teacher, Danielle Rose, created an inquiry based project centering upon giraffes with two classes of kindergarten students in a rural school located near Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Valuing students' voices, they documented students' conversations which shaped this lengthy inquiry. Realizing the diversity of students in their classroom prompted Barb and Danielle to differentiate their instruction to accommodate the interests, needs, gender, culture, ages, and abilities of their young students.

Believing that genuine inquiry links classroom life to the outside world motivated the authors to invite a zoology professor, a naturalist working in Africa and other local community members to share their knowledge and experience about giraffes with their students. Barb and Danielle explored taking on a multiplicity of roles including provocateur, collaborator, nurturer, co-learner, co-researcher, facilitator, and children's memory during this nature based inquiry.