

**University of Wisconsin-Stout  
School of Education**

**Record Form for Student's Cross-Cultural Experience**

**Name:** John M. Berner

**Major:** Technology Education

**Address:** N5789 330<sup>th</sup> St. Menomonie, Wisc. 54751

**Date:** April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007

**I.D. #** 121913

**Dates of Experience:** 10/12/06 – 3/29/07 (58 hours)

**Please describe your cross-cultural involvement experience. Be specific in terms of who you worked with and what you did.**

I worked as a volunteer tutor under the direction of Tim Stanton at CVTC. Tim's class was English as a Secondary Language, and enrolled in his class were students from Norway, Taiwan, Scandinavia, Russia, Mexico, Egypt, and Mongolia.

In this class, I not only had the opportunity to help students learn English and vocabulary skills, but important knowledge useful to any foreigner who might be interested in jobs and being able function in society. We taught the vocabulary necessary to go shopping, cook, fill out applications, relate to the community, describe injuries, request information, tell the time and weather, write e-mails and find resources. Some of the English and vocabulary skills I helped teach were sentence structure, verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, plurals, possessives, conjunctions, synonyms, similes and metaphors.

I worked with software specialized in teaching foreign languages so that I could assist students in the learning of English skills. I helped students get started on workbook activities and checked answers with them to clear up any misunderstandings they might have had. I took part in class discussions, often helping students understand how I, as a U.S. American, view my own language. I assisted with games and puzzles used to make the learning more fun and enjoyable. Most importantly, I was there to answer individual questions from the students without interrupting the class as a whole, because each student was at his/her own level of experience.

I also had the opportunity to take my fiancé on a trip to Plum City to help Tim and his wife teach a Mexican family. This family worked on a farm and we taught them some of the English skills necessary to help themselves better communicate and function with society.

On my own and with Tim's knowledge, I helped an Egyptian student with her Driver's Education training and her husband on the use of AutoCad, a program in which I will be teaching as a Technology Education teacher.

**Please indicate what impact this may have had on you in terms of your personal growth in the area of understanding and appreciating diversity.**

When I think back on the foreign language classes I have had with French and Spanish, I realize that I had been given the luxury, as well as the disservice of instruction in my own language. Many of the students I have worked with over the course of this cross cultural field experience had to learn with total submersion of the English language. It is next to impossible to be able to help every student in their own language when these students come from places scattered all over the globe.

I can appreciate these students' courage moving to a country where very few people know their language, because I would fear being in the same position off in some other country; but, I also believe that it would be a better way to learn because it is easier to ignore the influence of one's own language.

The experience has taught me to rethink the way I teach. When the English language isn't always understood, I will have to resort to other methods that involve pictures, pointing, and acting as I speak. I think it is also beneficial to have a foreign language dictionary and be able to at least ask in every language how to say certain words. Access to a pictorial English dictionary had also been quite useful to me and would be a great tool to get my hands on for future use.

I learned that students need more than just English skills. They need to learn how to be able to interact and get involved in the community. Unless they do, they will not feel welcomed to participate.

I learned so much about the students' cultures and where they were from. I had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to try food that they had cooked. Many of the students were excited to share the differences between the lifestyles of their home country and my own. On occasion, I would stop in to eat at their places of business and talk to their families. Some of the students were excited to be able to point out to their families who had been helping them.

My fiancé and I had fun volunteering our time together to help out in Plum City by teaching English skills to a Mexican family that appreciated any help we could give them. It was a great way for us to spend time together knowing that we were doing something to help a family get on their feet. I am sure one day we will host a foreign exchange student.

The most important impact that I had experienced was that I could see that I had the ability to make a difference in the lives of these students both academically and socially. The students look up to the volunteers and teachers because they know that they care how they do and enjoy their success. The classroom was a very friendly environment, and I enjoyed being there for them; although at times, I had found it difficult to help other students because individual students had gotten so attached that they wanted so badly for me to continue working with only them.

I know this has had an impact on me, because I don't want to stop volunteering.

**Supervised by:**

**Address:**

**Title:**

**Telephone #**