



## THE BRIDGE: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

# Discovering Burkina Faso

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## Into and Out of Africa

**M**ango, banana, and baobab trees. Geckos, lizards, and low-flying bats. The city's Grand Marché and the savanna's wide open spaces. And everywhere, the rust-colored dust of the African landscape....

This unit, Discovering Burkina Faso, is the result of a two-week visit to this tiny French-speaking country in West Africa. The trip, sponsored in full by the U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Schools, was the second half of a sister-school exchange with the International School of Ouagadougou (ISO). It began last February when two teachers from ISO spent a week in Edina, Minnesota, bringing an authentic touch of African culture to our French immersion school. When the two left, they took with them many wonderful memories and a commitment to maintain the sister-school relationship.

## Immersion Education—International Style

Thanks to the efforts of Todd Chowan, a Normandale teacher currently teaching at ISO, and the enthusiastic support of Normandale principal, Terry Factor, that opportunity came in November when my colleague, Isabelle Punchard, and I packed our bags and headed for Burkina Faso. Our task was threefold: to provide staff development opportunities for the ISO staff, to get to know the school itself and its community service projects, and to further our own understanding of this African French-speaking country. We met our goals with an itinerary packed from morning till night!

During our two-week visit to ISO, we visited every classroom, from pre-K to tenth grade. We shared information about Minnesota and Normandale, talked about our impressions of ISO and Africa, and enjoyed presentations by ISO students. We even taught a couple of classes and enjoyed the chance to teach in English for a change! We were very impressed by the ISO students' competency in English. In fact, we were awestruck by the multilingual background of those kids. Most speak a European or African language at home with their parents, English with their teachers and classmates at ISO, and French with the Burkinabe locals. The only children who do not fit that description, of course, are the Americans. The ISO students were understandably surprised to learn that students living in Minnesota were learning everything in French!

## The Global Village

The fact that our students do speak French plays an important role in the sister-school partnership. Though the language of instruction at ISO is English, all students learn French as well, and when they visit local sites, the language spoken is always French. Last year, when our Kids' Council joined ISO's community service project to help outfit a nearby African school with desks and benches, it was all the more special because that, too, was a French immersion school! As we sat in the classroom of the Yimdi school, we looked around at the diverse cultures represented—two teachers from Minnesota, one American and one French, the students and staff of ISO from six different countries and the African children of the village—and marveled that we were all able

to communicate through a second language. It was a very moving and reaffirming experience.

We have all heard and read about the global society awaiting our children. Well, the two of us witnessed that global society, not in a multinational boardroom, but in a tiny African village classroom. And while English may be becoming the universal language of business and commerce, it is not—and never will be—the universal culture. It was very obvious to these two observers that the children who can step outside their own language and culture today will be the world leaders of tomorrow. We are proud that immersion students all over the United States are preparing themselves for that future.

The trip to Ouagadougou was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us. We will never forget the warmth and generosity of the people we met. The ISO staff was very appreciative of our help and support, and we, in turn, profited from working with another immersion school, one that is both similar to and different from Normandale. Our goal, now, is to keep the sister-school partnership alive. There are a number of ways to do this. First, we have invited two staff members (and maybe even a few students) to visit our school next year. Second, we would like to continue our involvement in ISO's community service projects, perhaps inviting other schools to participate as well. Third, we want to take advantage of the Internet and develop collaborative curricular projects with ISO. And finally, we are offering this WebQuest to other French immersion schools both as a model for interactive, authentic learning using the World Wide Web and as a way to cultivate interest in U.S.-Africa sister-school projects.

# DISCOVERING BURKINA FASO

## A WebQuest

by Maureen Curran-Dorsano & Isabelle Punchard

### Introduction

In this unit, students use the World Wide Web (a WebQuest activity) to examine various aspects of Burkina Faso. (WebQuests are described in more detail in the Techno Tips and Trips feature of this issue of the *ACIE Newsletter*.) Once they have gathered information, they will create a multimedia presentation to share their findings. When all of the presentations have been completed, the class will identify possible community projects that would respond to the needs of the people of Burkina Faso.

### Content Area and Grade Level

This is a thematic unit integrating social studies, French language arts, inquiry and research, and technological literacy. Because of the reading level of the web sites, it is appropriate for students in the intermediate grades and above.

### Implementation Overview

- Time required: 3-4 weeks
- As an anticipatory set to this unit, students should visit some sites related to the culture of Burkina Faso, e.g., music, arts, crafts, etc. (See the actual WebQuest site for these sites.)
- Students will be divided into four teams. Each team will be responsible for one area of study: geography, ecology, urban and rural life, and history and culture. Once students have researched their topic, they will prepare a multimedia presentation to share with the other groups.
- After the presentations, students will brainstorm/discuss/debate these questions:
  1. How are the people of Burkina Faso like us and how are they different from us?
  2. What are the greatest challenges facing the people of Burkina Faso?
  3. What kinds of community projects can respond to these challenges in a culturally appropriate manner? These can be school-based community service projects as well as projects carried out by NGOs (non-governmental organizations such as the World Health Organization, various missionary organizations, Save the Children, etc.)

### National Standards

**National Social Studies standards related to this unit:**

**Culture:**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

**People, places and environments:**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

For a complete listing and description of these standards, visit the National Council for the Social Studies web site at <http://www.ncss.org/standards/2.1.html>.

## National Foreign Language Standards related to this unit:

### ***Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English***

1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

### ***Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures***

2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

### ***Comparisons: Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture***

4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

### ***Communities: Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World***

5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

For a complete description of these standards, visit the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning web site at: <http://www.actfl.org/htdocs/standards/standards.htm>.

## Learner outcomes

### **1. Content**

Students will:

- Identify the geographic features of Burkina Faso.
- Identify and describe the three major ecozones of Burkina Faso: desert, savanna, and the Sahel.
- Compare and contrast urban and rural life in Burkina Faso.
- Identify each of the following and their role in the history and culture of Burkina Faso: the Mossi Empire, French colonialism, independence, the current president of Burkina Faso, the legendary heroine Yennega.
- Examine community service projects and determine which ones are culturally appropriate.



*Classrooms of the International School of Ouagadougou (ISO), left, and the Yimdi village school, right.*

## 2. Language objectives

*Content obligatory:* Students will use the following terms:

Geography	Ecology	Daily life	History & culture
la capitale le Burkina le sahel un fleuve un lac une rivière une carte	la terre le désert la savane le Sahel un habitant une herbe la désertification la sécheresse	le chef du village la brousse un baobab une case une concession un puits un feu de bois une calebasse la farine le mil, le millet un taxi-brousse une charrette tirée par... une mobylette un boubou (robe africaine portée par des hommes et des femmes)	burkinabé(e) (adj.) un(e) Burkinabé(e) francophone la colonisation la langue officielle la révolution les Mossi

*Content compatible:* Students will review and use the following:

Prepositions	Verbs	Conjunctions
à l'est à l'ouest au nord au sud en Afrique au Burkina à Ouagadougou en 1974 à pied à mobylette à vélo jouer <i>du</i> tambour	il ressemble à... ils se ressemblent ils habitent'ils vivent ils ont le (la) même il se trouve à/au le désert avance ils ont colonisé ils ont gagné leur independence on pile le mil	alors que... par contre... tandis que... parce que... plus...que moins...que aussi...que

## Materials and resources needed

- 4-12 computers with Internet access
- atlases, maps, globes
- print materials related to Africa and, if possible, Burkina Faso
- multimedia software such as HyperStudio (allows you to record narration) or PowerPoint, scanner (optional)
- a variety of lexical aids pertaining to Africa: posters, charts, bulletin boards, “word walls,” etc.
- dictionaries, verb conjugation tables, etc., for editing purposes
- African realia, if possible

## Entry Level Skills and Knowledge

Before beginning this unit, students should be familiar with the Internet: how to access the WebQuest page by typing in the URL address and how to navigate within the site (using the Back and Forward buttons, clicking on hypertext links).

If students are not familiar with cooperative learning roles, some pre-teaching is necessary. An excellent resource on cooperative learning is "Active Learning Center: Principles of Cooperative Learning" at <http://www.excel.net/~ssmith/coprinc.html>. (See also Selected Resources on p. 6 of this June 2000 ACIE Newsletter.)

## Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on their ability to:

- gather data from the web sites;
- work cooperatively to complete each task;
- demonstrate knowledge through multimedia project;
- participate in small and large-group discussion;
- demonstrate effective oral presentation skills;
- use appropriate vocabulary and language structures.

## Possible Variations

This model could easily be adapted for any language and any country. Younger students can also learn with WebQuests, but tasks and sites have to be carefully selected for reading level and content appropriateness. Older students can study the culture in more depth, examining the political, social, economic, and health issues that are part of contemporary Africa.

*The complete WebQuest, including all Internet links, is currently being revised and should be available in July 2000 at <http://www.edina.k12.mn.us/normandale/webquest/burkina/teacher.htm>. The student pages of the actual WebQuest are all in French. For the benefit of our non-French readers, we have written this unit in English.*



### *Student Page*

## BURKINA FASO

### A WebQuest for intermediate and middle-school students

**Introduction | Task | Process | Resources | Evaluation | Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

Where in the world is Burkina Faso? Who are the people that live there? What are the challenges facing this Third World country? These are some of the questions you will answer as you and your team of experts travel to Africa on this fact-finding mission.

#### **Task**

- You will work in teams to learn all you can about Burkina Faso.
- When you have completed your research, you will create a multimedia presentation to share your information with the rest of the class.
- When all of the presentations have been shared, you will brainstorm/discuss/debate these questions:
  1. How are the people of Burkina Faso like us and how are they different from us?

2. What are the greatest challenges facing the people of Burkina Faso?
3. What kinds of community projects (school-based community service projects as well as projects carried out by non-governmental organizations such as the World Health Organization, various missionary organizations, Save the Children, etc.) can respond to these challenges in a culturally appropriate manner?

### **Process**

The class is divided into four teams: geographers, ecologists, historians, and sociologists, with a series of tasks for each team. When you have completed your research, you will create a multimedia project to present your information to the other teams.

Here are your tasks:

#### **Geographers:**

(See actual WebQuest for geography-related Internet sites.)

- Locate Burkina Faso on the globe or on a map of Africa.
- Label Burkina Faso and neighboring countries on your blank map of Africa.
- Show the prevalence of French in Africa by highlighting on your map the countries where French is an official language.
- Label the capital city of Ouagadougou, the other major cities, and the three rivers: Volta Noire, Volta Blanche, et Volta Rouge.
- Compare the geographical and demographic statistics of Burkina Faso and Minnesota and identify some of the challenges faced by the people of Burkina Faso.

#### **Ecologists:**

(See actual WebQuest for ecology-related Internet sites.)

- Define the terms la savane, le désert, le Sahel. Explain how they are different from each other.
- Find pictures of these three environments and describe the vegetation found in each region.
- Explain how humans have contributed to desertification (la sahelisation).
- Compare the ecological statistics of Burkina Faso and Minnesota, including weather and climate, and identify some of the challenges faced by the people of Burkina Faso.

#### **Historians:**

(See actual WebQuest for history-related Internet sites.)

- Examine a timeline of Burkina Faso's history and the duration of the three major historical periods: the Mossi Empire, the French colonial period, and post-colonial independence.
- Read and retell the legend of Yennega. Illustrate your story with pictures of arts and crafts (sculptures, jewelry, batiks, etc.) depicting Yennega.
- Explain why Yennega is such a popular and important cultural figure.

#### **Sociologists:**

(See actual WebQuest for sociology-related Internet sites.)

- Find pictures of city and village life that show housing, transportation, and daily living.
- Compare and contrast the life of a Burkinabe child growing up in a village and the life of a Burkinabe child growing up in a city.
- Make a drawing of an African village. Label the things you'd find in the village.
- Identify some challenges faced by the people of Burkina Faso in their daily life.

#### **Resources:**

- Atlases, globe, wall maps
- Blackline masters of blank maps of Africa and Burkina Faso
- Reference books about Africa and Burkina Faso
- Realia from Burkina Faso: fabrics, bronze sculptures, jewelry, baskets, dresses, hats

# Evaluation

This is an example of an assessment rubric that might be used for this project. It was developed by Caroline McCullen, Instructional Technologist, SAS inSchool ([http://www.ncsu.edu:80/midlink/rub\\_mmproj.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu:80/midlink/rub_mmproj.htm)).

## Multimedia Project Rubric

**Assignment:** Communicate complete information on \_\_\_\_\_ topic with \_\_\_\_ cards, \_\_\_\_ imported graphics, \_\_\_\_ original graphics, \_\_\_\_ animations, \_\_\_\_ video clips or advanced features.

	Beginner 1	Novice 2	Intermediate 3	Expert 4	Self Evaluation	Teacher Evaluation
Topic/ Content	Includes little essential information and one or two facts.	Includes some essential information with few citations and few facts.	Includes essential information with most sources properly cited. Includes enough elaboration to give readers an understanding of	Covers topic completely and in depth. Includes properly cited sources and complete information. Encourages readers to know		
Technical requirements	Includes ____ cards or less, few graphics from outside sources, few animations and advanced	Includes ____ cards or less, fewer than 3 graphics from outside sources, fewer than 3 animations, and few advanced features such as video,	Includes at least ____ cards, at least 3 graphics from outside sources, at least 3 animations, and some advanced features, such as video.	Includes at least ____ cards, 5 or more graphics from outside sources, 5 or more animations, and several advanced features such as		
Language use	Includes more than 5 grammatical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, etc.	Includes 3-4 grammatical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, etc.	Includes 2-3 grammatical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, etc.	Grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization are correct. No errors in the text.		
Cooperative group work	Cannot work with others in most situations. Cannot share decisions or responsibilities.	Works with others, but has difficulty sharing decisions and responsibilities.	Works well with others. Takes part in most decisions and contributes fair share to group.	Works well with others. Assumes a clear role and related responsibilities. Motivates others to do their best.		
Oral presentation skills	Great difficulty communicating ideas. Poor voice projection. Little preparation or incomplete	Some difficulty communicating ideas, due to voice projection, lack of preparation, or incomplete work.	Communicates ideas with proper voice projection. Adequate preparation and delivery.	Communicates ideas with enthusiasm, proper voice projection, appropriate language, and clear delivery.		

Scale: 6- 9 = Beginner / 10 - 14 = Novice / 15 - 17 Intermediate / 18 - 20 = Expert

# Conclusion

When all of the presentations have been shared, the teacher can facilitate discussion of the following questions:

1. How are the people of Burkina Faso like us and how are they different from us?
2. What are the greatest challenges facing the people of Burkina Faso?
3. What kinds of community projects can respond to these challenges in a culturally appropriate manner? Think about independent school-based community service projects or contributing to projects carried out by NGOs (non-governmental organizations such as the World Health Organization, various missionary organizations, Save the Children, etc.). Possible resources for NGOs can be found at these sites:

*Enfants du monde:* [www.edm.ch/brkfa.html](http://www.edm.ch/brkfa.html)

*Action contre la faim:* [home.worldnet.fr/~ny-maat/action6.htm](http://home.worldnet.fr/~ny-maat/action6.htm)

*Société Tiers Monde:* <http://perso.infonie.fr/drachir/burkina/uncentre.htm>

Burkina Faso, like many African nations, is a land of contrasts, from the mud-brick *cases* of tiny villages to the hustle and bustle of cities like Ouagadougou. It is also one of the poorest nations in the world. By studying the history and culture of Burkina Faso, students have a better idea of the challenges facing the people of this African country and of appropriate community service projects that we might undertake to support them in their development.

## Credits and References

*Photos by Isabelle Punchard, Normandale Elementary French Immersion School*

*WebQuest template by Bernie Dodge, The WebQuest Page (<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/overview.htm>).*



*Burkinabe mother and child.*