

Sesame Workshop

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Sesame Family Newsletter

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



October 10, 2007



For Parents

Raising Global Citizens by Jordan Brown

A father and son explore the world... without leaving home.

Featuring:

- Around and Around and Around It Goes
- "But, DAD, I Was Globally Responsible Yesterday!"
- Finn Becomes a Panwapa Kid
- Creating a "Welcome Kit" for Our Community
- When Kids Inspire Their Parents

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Games and More: Playing in Panwapa World JOIN PANWAPA to play these games.

- [Hide-and-Seek with Koko](#)
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From the Workshop



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Presenting Panwapa!



Sesame Workshop is proud to present **PANWAPA** --a new multimedia experience for children ages 4-7. Its ambitious mission is to inspire children to be "global citizens." Child psychologists and educators believe that learning "social responsibility" and becoming engaged in

the world around them are keys to healthy development. By exploring the web-based world of Panwapa, curious children and their families experience many of the world's languages and cultures through engaging games, an immersive global environment, streaming videos, and printable [activities](#). Best of all, PANWAPA is safe and FREE!

Panwapa means "here on this earth" in the Tshiluba language, spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa. Panwapa is also the name of an imaginary floating island that is the home of Azibo, Koko, and other new Muppet characters. Produced in partnership with the Merrill Lynch Foundation, Panwapa is a fun, innovative place where children from around the world can discover and grow together.

[Read all about it!](#)

Raising Global Citizens

AROUND AND AROUND AND AROUND IT GOES

One afternoon a few weeks ago, I took my 6-year-old son Finn and daughter Olivia (age 2) to the indisputable hub of our small rural town: the public library. Housed in a charming old building, I go there when I want to feel connected to our community. Hattie and Corrine, the two wonderful librarians, not only know everybody's name, but also are always eager when children arrive, and don't mind at all when kids talk passionately about their discoveries or messily explore the place as only children can. The library even has containers of pretzels and vanilla wafers for hungry explorers.

What does this library story have to do with Panwapa? Hang on and you'll find out.

That afternoon, Finn eyes were drawn to something that completely mesmerized him... a globe! We have various maps at home, but nothing three-dimensional. Finn began to spin the globe really quickly... and LOUDLY! Ever since Finn was little, he's had a fondness for spinning things, such as fans, tops, and so on. (The library was relatively empty at that moment, so Corrine let him spin-spin-spin it, with the hugest grin on his face.)

"Check it out, Daddy," announced Finn. "I can close my eyes, spin the globe, put my finger down--and it always lands on Africa!" He demonstrated. The first time his finger landed somewhere in Europe. Next time, he pointed to Asia. And eventually in Africa! But he really didn't seem to care about where his finger actually landed. "See, Daddy!" Finn gloated. "It lands on Africa EVERY TIME! I'm a genius!"

Not wanting to squelch Finn's excitement, I decided it was not necessary to point out that his finger was stopping on other continents, too.

Like most children, Finn's interest in the wider world is motivated by personal experiences. When he learned about the Komodo dragon in one of his favorite books, *ANIMALS NOBODY LOVES* by Seymour Simon, Finn was determined to find Komodo Island on a world map. When Finn was about 4, his favorite babysitter Heewon told him that she was born in Korea. She showed him where Korea was on our world map shower curtain. Soon, Finn was able to find this location by himself. His interest in Korea has been boosted by Taekwondo lessons, a martial arts form that originated in Korea. In class, Finn and his classmates stretch as they count to ten in Korean.

Like Finn's experiences with his babysitter and his martial arts class, I hoped that Panwapa would encourage my son's interest in other parts of the world. It seems to me that simply being aware of other places and people from around the world can help Finn to recognize these countries when he hears of them in other contexts.

Panwapa seeks to bring together children from all over the world and inspire them to appreciate their similarities and differences. It is the goal of Panwapa to create a vast community of young "global citizens"--kids who go out of their way to improve their communities and approach the world with curiosity, hope, and a sense of adventure. By introducing Finn to other places around the globe--through books, movies, and experiences like Panwapa--I hope to inspire an eagerness to connect with a broader community.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY
[A dad guides his son to appreciate differences.](#)

MOMMY, WHY IS THAT BOY'S SKIN BROWN?
[Teach your child to see the beauty in our differences.](#)

YOU CAN ASK!
[This advice can help you talk to your child about people's differences.](#)

MAP OF MY WORLD
[Your child can become an explorer with a homemade map.](#)

"BUT, DAD, I WAS GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE YESTERDAY!"

If you're a beleaguered parent like me, you might be thinking, "I have to help my child master the 3 Rs, use the potty, learn good manners. . . and NOW you're telling me I have to make my kid a 'global citizen!'" Frankly, my astro-minded son seems more interested in what might be happening in other planets or galaxies than in other countries. I have enough trouble getting Finn to pick up his toys so how am I going to get him to focus on becoming "socially responsible?"



socially responsible:

Needless to say, I wasn't sure if Finn was ready for the Panwapa experience. Before exploring the Web site with Finn, I reviewed Panwapa's educational goals with Finn in mind:

Goal A: Panwapa Kids are Aware of the Wider World Around Them

Though it usually takes something right in front of his eyes to capture Finn's attention, I do know that my son is a very curious child. He not only loves to learn new words and facts, but enjoys sharing them with others, especially adults. Like many kids, he gets a kick out of learning something cool, and then gloating, "Daddy, I'll bet you don't know... ." I had a hunch that he'd enjoy learning the names of new countries, a few foreign words, and so on.

Goal B: Panwapa Kids Appreciate Similarities and Value Differences Between Themselves and Others

I have always been proud that Finn is a deeply independent child--the kind that "follows the beat of a different drummer." He rarely goes with the "crowd" in terms of opinions. If he likes a particular hobby, he isn't concerned whether others like it, too. He understands that he and his younger sister Olivia have many differences. She's into "ballet" and "mermaids" and he's more into "electronics" and "inventing." But he is also aware that they share a fondness for swimming, cooking, and poop jokes!

Goal C: Panwapa Kids Feel a Sense of Responsibility for Their Behaviors

The idea of Finn becoming a "considerate citizen of the world community" seemed a stretch. Like most children his age, Finn is self-centered. Often his attitude is, "What does that have to do with ME?" Yet he has a wildly charitable spirit. He talks about having a kid-run business, like a lemonade stand, to send money to people in trouble (such as those during the New Orleans disaster).

Goal D: Panwapa Kids are Active Participants in Their Community

At Finn's martial arts school, there is a "good citizenship" program. Children are rewarded with special stars if they help at home, such as cleaning up after meals, picking up toys, and most importantly showing respect for, and listening to, parents.

I would love it if Finn felt that he could make a difference in the world. I also wish that I could set a better example in this area. I tend to focus on day-to-day matters like work, running errands for the family, walking the dog, and so on. Part of me yearns to connect with a wider community, but this hasn't happened yet. My son recently joined Cub Scouts, so I'm hoping this will be one way that we can broaden our connections in the community.

Goal E: Panwapa Kids are Understanding Of and Responsive to Economic Disparity.

Fortunately, Finn and Olivia never have to worry about getting their basic needs met. My wife Ellen and I sometimes wonder if our children recognize how lucky they are. (My heart breaks every time I think of an editorial cartoon I saw years ago by Tom Toles. In it, children are waiting to see Santa. The child on Santa's lap is rattling off the long list of toys that she wants that year, and ends by mentioning "an Apple computer." A frail boy also standing in Santa's line overhears the girl's last request and thinks she just asked for an apple (as in a piece of fruit). But I digress...

Developing empathy and understanding that the world isn't always fair, is an abstract concept for children. Panwapa has another set of games that help children think about these matters. My friend tried an activity called "Needs and Wants" with his children, ages 7 and 9. The goal is for children to imagine that they are packing for a trip to a new part of Panwapa Island. After they list all the possibilities, they learn that the boat is small, so they have to pare down their list to just the essentials--the "needs." I look forward to trying this game with Finn. At first, I imagine he would insist that he needed his "robot kit." Eventually, I could see him coming around to what is truly important in order to survive.

EMPATHY

[Three experts discuss how children learn to identify with the feelings of others.](#)

CALL OF THE CROW

[Use this ancient South American tale to teach your child about acceptance and caring.](#)

THROUGH THE YEARS:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

[A through-the-years look at emotional intelligence.](#)

FINN BECOMES A PANWAPA KID

Upon sitting down at the computer to explore Panwapa's online world, the first thing I had Finn do was make his own "Panwapa Kid." I explained that this would be a cartoon version of himself to share with kids from other countries. I reminded him that no one would ever know his real name, or what he really looked like, but he'd still be able to meet other kids who shared his interests. He was intrigued by the idea that his character could really have his "mark" on it.

Clicking away, Finn created a Panwapa kid with brown skin and purple hair, who sported both a cowboy hat and scuba mask. For clothing, he picked a yellow and red "superhero" outfit. Finn loved the idea that his Panwapa kid could look like an astronaut or a superhero. (see right)

After creatively designing his very own Panwapa Home (a polka-dotted igloo), Finn moved on to his favorite part: Designing a Panwapa Flag. The flag has six sections to identify things he likes best. For Favorite Food, Finn picked the bag of popcorn. For Favorite Animal, he went with shark, and for Favorite Sport, he chose martial arts, naturally. Then for Favorite Instrument, he selected electric guitar, for Favorite Activity, he picked origami, and finally for Favorite Craft, he chose a mask of Tutankhamen from Egypt. His finished Panwapa flag did a nice job of capturing some of Finn's interests:(see right)

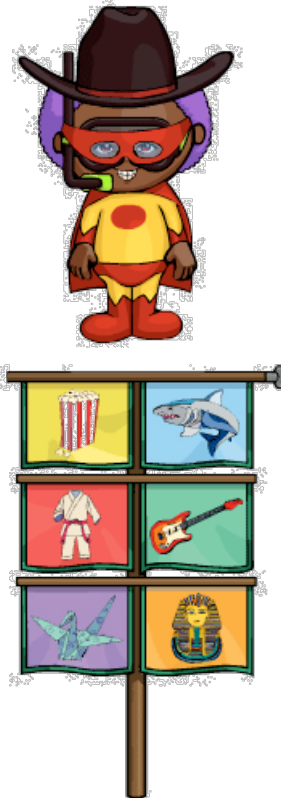
Finn enjoyed Panwapa's global Treasure Hunt. Tungal the tiger invited Finn to "Find a Panwapa kid who likes kite-flying and sushi." Using the easy-to-follow navigation, Finn eventually found a Panwapa kid in the Ukraine who had these two interests. When he clicked "MATCH," the character said, "You found me!"

I told Finn that when we had more time, we could go back to this game and earn special Panwapa Cards, such as the Rare Animal Card Set, or the World Card Set. Finn was excited by the idea that he could email (pre-determined) messages to another Panwapa kid after visiting his or her "home." My son also enjoyed seeing the world organized into different imaginary continents, such as an island where everyone loves eating popcorn, just like Finn.

Eventually, Olivia wandered over to see what we were doing. It seemed the perfect opportunity to try another online Panwapa game: Hide and Seek with Koko. In this game, a silly penguin named Koko tells the user where she will be hiding. The trick is she shares this information in another language. Koko told us she was hiding behind the "isu." "I'm sure the penguin's behind the chair. Click it!" Finn urged. Sure enough, Koko was there. Olivia loves to count to ten, so her favorite part of this game was when Koko counted to ten in a foreign language. Later that day, Olivia said "Uno, dos, tres" as she bounded down the stairs. At the bottom of the steps, she told me, "It's Spanish, Daddy!"

LOG ONTO PANWAPA WORLD
[Sign up for free to create a Panwapa Kid, and explore the world.](#)

TAKE-AWAY TIPS: MONEY
AROUND THE WORLD
[Search for household items made in different countries to teach your child the idea of a global marketplace.](#)



CREATING A "WELCOME KIT" FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Before children can truly be "global citizens," they need to become active members of their local community.

They need to embrace the idea that individuals can make a difference. The [Panwapa magazine](#) includes one of my favorite quotes by Margaret Mead about activism: "A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Ellen and I hope and dream that as Finn and Olivia grow up they will be among those "thoughtful people" who are committed to making a difference.



VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER
[When families with preschoolers reach out to those in need, everyone stands to gain.](#)

The Panwapa materials suggest an offline activity creating a welcome package for families moving to our area. I knew this would appeal to Finn's creative side. I asked Finn to pick a different country that a family might come from. He picked New Zealand. I told him to imagine that this family also has a boy 6 years old, and a girl who is 2. Then I asked him to compile a "survival kit" that would make this boy and girl "feel at home" in our town. For the kit, Finn made a little map of his school and labeled all the important stuff like "playground" and "cafeteria." He also made a list of the "Total Funnest" places to go with your family, including the local community swimming pool, pet store, bakery, and toy store. He made sure to tell them that our local supermarket has special shopping carts that look like cars. In addition, Finn and Olivia created a Welcome sign for our door that says "Welcome!" in a number of different languages, including Italian, Mandarin, and Spanish.

WHEN KIDS INSPIRE THEIR PARENTS

In the coming weeks, Finn and I look forward to delving further into Panwapa's resources, such as the Panwapa board game. While I admit that I'm certainly not the paragon of a "global citizen." I sincerely hope that by participating in activities such as those in Panwapa, that Finn and Olivia will expand their sense of community as they grow, and look for ways that they can make a positive difference in the lives of others, regardless of where they live.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

Did You Know?

Kevin Clash, the Muppeteer who plays the part of Elmo, is also the Muppeteer and voice of Azibo, the lead Panwapa character.

FROM THE WORKSHOP

Free five minute episodes for your computer or iPod.

<http://sesameworkshop.org/podcasts/>

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

Tell us what's on your mind. Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like Dragon Tales and Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat, Pinky Dinky Doo and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of Sesame Street, Dragon Tales and Sagwa products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at www.sesameworkshop.org

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