

Using Online Projects to Enhance Learning

<http://www.more.net/~janice/portfolio/MACE>

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STEPS IN DESIGNING AN ONLINE PROJECT

1. Start with your own curricular goals.
2. Find or design your own project that will meet those goals
3. Take into consideration value for other participants as well as your own class.
4. Make your first project a simple one. Do it during summer school when there are less curricular demands. Choose a project that someone else has been running and join it.
5. If you want to join a project search the sites and possibly post your interest on a discussion list or on some of the project sites.
6. If you are designing your own project begin with a timeline. Decide on a clear beginning and ending date and milestone dates along the way. Make sure that this timeline is communicated to the others who may be participating.
7. Decide how many participants you need (story about too many!!)
8. Make a plan for sharing the results (a web page, e-mail, publishing something, etc...)
9. Write a "Call for Participation" and post it in several places where you can find participants at least one month before the beginning of the project. These things should be included in a "Call for Participation": title, description, subject, grade level, objectives, number of participants, requirements for the participants, benefits to the partners, timeline, contact information, expected project outcomes.
10. Implement the Project. Wherever it is possible include students in keeping up with work on the project. Train a few to be data collectors or email deliverers, depending on the needs of the project.
11. Always have a plan B. Be ready to do other things on days when the technology is not working.
12. Evaluate the effectiveness of the project at the end and be sure to share the outcome with others who were involved.

TYPES OF ONLINE PROJECTS

1. Keypals

E-Pals Classroom Exchange

<http://www.epals.com/>

This is one of the best. It is a commercial site, but you will not see irritating ads on every page. E-Pals offers teachers their own e-mail account and the possibility of setting up accounts for each student in the class that can be monitored by the teacher. The accounts that the teacher sets up are temporary and meant to be used for a certain project. The teacher can be notified if there is any bad language in messages automatically. Teachers also have access to read and delete messages.

Mighty Media Keypals

<http://www.mightymedia.com/keypals/>

This is another site that will match students with keypals. It is much safer than a child connecting to any stranger on the web, but it is not as controlled by the teacher. Mighty Media Keypals is basically a database of teachers and students who have registered to be put into the database of possible keypals. You can search by interest, location, type of interaction, gender and/or age. They do not provide an e-mail account for you, but do route your mail through their site and evaluate it somehow, although the details are not explained on the site. I put my name on there years ago and have not received any requests!

100th Day of School Project

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/proj/100th/>

This project is a variation on Keypals. Taking advantage of the fact that many classes across the US count the first 100 days of school as a way to work with numbers and counting this project connects these classes into one big network. Each class chooses 100 other classes and send them Happy 100th Day messages. Then each class hopes to receive 100 messages. Besides involving a great deal of reading the students in this project experience the reality that the 100th day falls at different times depending on when schools start. They also have a chance to map the locations their messages arrive from. Many people who send messages tell a bit about their area.

2. Web Mentor

Pitsco's Ask an Expert

<http://www.askanexpert.com/>

This is a terrific site to search for an expert to answer questions that your students may have in some area. It is a database and has experts on all kinds of things like science, animals, health, repair/trades, etc... Read the "How To Ask" section to see how the site works.

Steven's Institute of Technology Ask an Expert

<http://k12science.ati.stevens-tech.edu/askanexpert.html>

This is very similar to Pitsco's Ask an Expert. It is a non-profit site that is funded by partnerships and sponsors. It also contains links to many other Ask an Expert sites! This site leads to other sites that may answer the student's question before actually connecting you to a person

3. Web Collaboration

Journey North

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>

In this project students from all over observe the migration of various animals and the blooming of various plants. From the information that they send in charts and maps are made that show the path that these animals are taking or the times that blooming is happening. For younger students this ties directly into the study of weather and shows how weather affects plants. Older students can do more sophisticated things with the data and the exchange of information. This project has been around since 1995 and has archives of information dating back to that time. This information is not only valuable for your students, but also for scientists who study these things and observe trends.

4. Adventure

Quests-Classroom Connect

<http://www.classroom.com/home.asp>

Classroom Connect offers several quests that your students can join and be involved in. This year there is AustraliaQuest, IslandQuest, and AmericaQuest. There is a subscription fee to benefit from all of the features of these quests. The cost is \$149 for one class, \$419.95 for 5 classes or \$639 for 10 classes. These Quests involve teams of experts who travel by bicycle to another area in search of an answer to a question. Along the way they send daily reports about what is happening, post pictures on the website and pose questions to the students. The students actually guide the quest by voting in daily surveys about what the quest team should do next. Through these quests students have shared first hand in archaeological discoveries. The quests also often bring up challenging questions of culture to discuss and bring students in contact with animals and plants from another area. Also, each day there is a "kid profile" telling about someone from the area that the experts met up with.

Adventure Online

<http://www.adventureonline.com/>

Along the same line Adventure Online allows students to participate in adventures that would not be possible without the Internet. These projects take the Oregon Trail up a notch. This Website is provided by an eLearning Company that designs learning experiences using the web. Registering to be involved with this quest costs \$49 for a teacher or \$249 for a school site license.

Globalearn

<http://www.globalearn.org/>

Very similar to the other adventure sites above. Offers one class participation for \$155.

Travel Buddies

<http://rite.ed.qut.edu.au/oz-teachernet/projects/travel-buddies/>

Maybe your class cannot participate in an online adventure, but they have a stuffed animal or mascot that they can send on an adventure. In the Travel Buddy projects one class sends a representative on a trip around the world to different classes. The representative has a journal. The sending class is in e-mail contact with each of the schools that the representative is going to along the way. The buddy sends back e-mail reports about the trip (with the help of the people he/she is visiting of course) and collects postcards or something from each place. Eventually the buddy makes the whole trip and returns to your classroom richer for the experience.

Flat Stanley

<http://flatstanley.enoreo.on.ca/>

A variation on the Travel Buddy project based on a book about Stanley who gets flattened and travels in an envelope.

5. Web Survey

Global Grocery List

<http://landmark-project.com/ggl/>

Students from all over the world send in prices for certain common grocery items and the various prices are posted on the site. This is the 11th year that this project has been done. Data from back years is still available, so besides comparing prices between countries students can look at how prices have changed over time. The data that has been collected can be accessed in table form that is easy to look at, or in tab-delimited form that can be copied and pasted into a spreadsheet for manipulation of data.

Do You Have Homework Tonight?

<http://www.chinooksedge.ab.ca/OES/timeforworkplaypreamb.html>

This is a simple survey from a 4th grade class in Canada that might generate some authentic data that your students would be interested in.

Here are some places that you could post your survey so that other teachers might participate or look for surveys that you might want to participate in:

IECC Intercultural Email Classroom Connections

<http://www.iecc.org/>

IECC is a place where you can register your survey and ask others to participate. It is also a good place to look for Keypals. IECC has a mailing list so all new projects are sent out to the list of teachers who are interested. It is free.

Global School House

<http://www.gsn.org/project/index.html>

Global Schoolhouse is a non-profit organization that has been supporting use of the Internet in education for a long time. Their Project Registry can be searched. You can add your project to the list and you can join a mailing list called Hilites that will automatically send you newly registered projects.

6. Cooperative Challenge

Math Forum-Problem of the week

<http://forum.swarthmore.edu/>

The Math Forum is a great site for promoting the NCTM Math Standards. They call themselves An Online Math Community Center. It is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). One activity on the site is a Problem of the Week. Students not only need to send in the answer, but also how they solved the problem. A real person from the Math Forum sends an answer to each response, so that the students get feedback on their thinking about math.

Minds Eye Monster Project

<http://www.win4edu.com/minds-eye/monster/>

In the past you may have tried the activity where one student writes a description of something and the other student attempts to draw what was described. Students learn about descriptive language, careful reading and picturing what they are reading from this exercise. The Monster Project is like this, but it also brings in connections to students in another area. This project has been active since 1995 and galleries of the past drawings with the descriptions are fun to look at.

7. Social Action

Frog Watch

<http://www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/frogwatch/>

"Frogwatch USA relies on volunteers, like you, to collect information regarding frog and toad populations in neighborhoods across the nation." The US Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center actually uses the data that students send in to monitor the health of frogs all over the United States. Involvement in this project can have an important impact on an actual ecological situation.

North American Reporting Center for Amphibian Malformations

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/narcam/>

This project is very similar to the Frog Watch project. Students learn about amphibians and the ways that changes in agriculture in our country are affecting them. The data that they collect is entered into a national database and may help in finding the solution to this problem.

8. Community Connection

Global Schoolhouse CyberFair

<http://www.gsn.org/project/index.html>-Then follow links to Collaborative Projects and then to CyberFair

The CyberFair is an annual contest where students and classrooms create web sites about particular parts of their community. There are eight different categories that the web pages can be entered into the competition under; Local Leaders, Community Groups, Historical Landmarks, Environmental Awareness to name just a few. There are platinum, gold and silver winners for each category and the prizes include computers, printers, scanners, software and many other things.

The Mayors of Valparaiso

<http://www.schooltv.com/mayors.htm>

An ongoing project in a school in northwest Florida is a study of the history of the mayors of the town. Students researched the mayors by talking to living people who had been mayors or were related to mayors, looking up information on landmarks named after mayors and many other methods. They put together the information in a website that is of great interest to the community there.

9. Simulation

Communication over the Internet without a visual aspect allows for some interesting simulations.

Shakespeare and Mark Twain

At Margaret Beeks Elementary School fourth graders had great fun learning about William Shakespeare and Mark Twain and their writings. The excitement grew when the class located both authors on line who, via e-mail, wrote encouraging letters and answered the multitude of questions the students had about the authors' lives and their works. Talk about making literature come to life! These young students fell in love with Shakespeare. They enjoyed corresponding with Twain, but found his works to be somewhat troublesome. They made Shakespeare's words their own. One day, on the playground, a boy began bedeviling a very diminutive girl. She looked at him in disgust and intoned, "You loathsome toad!"

from <http://pixel.cs.vt.edu/melissa/projects.html>

10. Web Publishing MidLink Magazine

<http://longwood.cs.ucf.edu/~MidLink/>

One of the most well-known site of this kind is the Midlink Magazine. It was created for Middle School Students, but it is a good example of what can be done. Although most of the projects highlighted on the site have been done by middle school and above, there is no indication that it is limited to older students and there are some submissions by elementary classes. This site is full of good ideas.

The Global Gazette

<http://library.thinkquest.org/18802/gazette.htm>

The Global Gazette is a product of the ThinkQuest competition which is talked about under Student Created Projects. There is a link on this Gazette where students can post their own work. It is a terrific example of what students can do with the web when working together.

Hotlist: Kids did This!

<http://sln.fi.edu/tfi/hotlists/kids.html>

This is a collection highlighting student work that has been published on the web.

Cyberkids

<http://www.cyberkids.com/index.html>

Cyberkids takes submissions of student work and posts it on their site. They have a stated privacy policy. Submissions are done through e-mail and if acceptable posted on the site. It is managed by a .com which is working on posting children's work on the web and creating content for kids. Kids must register for free to participate.

Poetry Pals

<http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/5165/index1.html>

Poetry Pals is a K-12 Student Poetry Publishing Project. There are clear guidelines on the site for submitting poetry. It is a project that has been in existence since 1997. It also has links to many other good sites that publish poetry or about poetry.

11. Multimedia

Multimedia on the World Wide Web is getting much easier. Including sounds, video, graphics, text, animations and other elements into a web page can be as easy as working with PowerPoint or Hyperstudio, saving the document as a web page, posting it on the web and linking to it. Here are some examples of what some students have done related to Halloween. This is published on the Midlink Magazine site. You can find other examples on this site also.

Virtual Haunted House

<http://www.ncsu.edu/midlink/vy/hh98.call.htm>

This year is the sixth annual contest run by Midlink Magazine. This is a terrific way to use Multimedia publishing.

12. Student Created Projects

ThinkQuest

<http://www.thinkquest.org>

Students who enter this contest must work with a team to create a web site that will teach other students using the best interactive qualities of the web. There are significant prizes for the individuals and schools that win this contest.

Other Helpful Sites

Articles about Online Projects and Good Advice

More Than Just Keypals

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/article/penpal.htm>

Keys to a Successful Project

<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/livetext/docs/keyproj.html>

So What is it About Keypals?

<http://www.wcape.school.za/otc/keypals.htm>

“INTERNETionalisation” Place to find International ePals

<http://www.wcape.school.za/otc/keypals.htm>

Learning with Online Projects-This is a course that runs at the University of Missouri-Columbia. On this page are many links to project sites, examples of projects designed by students in the class, and a discussion list that you can join.

<http://www.coe.missouri.edu/~olp>

Project Sites

Loogootee Elementary West

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/proj/index.html>

Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connections (IECC)

<http://www.iecc.org/>

Online Class

<http://www.onlineclass.com/>

The Global Schoolhouse

<http://www.gsn.org/project/index.html>

Think Quest

<http://www.thinkquest.org/>

Classroom Connect

<http://www.classroom.com/home.asp>

ePals

<http://www.epals.com/>

SCRTEC

<http://www.scrtec.org/>

Canada's Grassroots Program

<http://www.schoolnet.ca/grassroots/e/index.asp>