

Making ICT Real

Today's young people are 'digital natives', having grown up alongside computers, mobile phones and the internet. How can we capitalise on this to help them develop as global citizens?

'Communication', says Alex Savage, 'is literally at the heart of ICT [Information and Communication Technology]. However, many schools have yet to realise its true potential for bringing the real world into the classroom.'

What did Notre Dame High School want to achieve?

Alex Savage is an Advanced Skills Teacher at Notre Dame High School in Norwich. He believed that providing students with the opportunity to communicate with a real audience for a real purpose would provide greater motivation, improve results, challenge stereotypes and foster a sense of common humanity – as well as improving their ICT skills.

How did they set about doing this?

The school has some years' experience with various types of school linking and has found that short-term linking projects with a specific focus are easier to achieve than long-term, whole school linking and can be carried out without funding. For this project, Alex adapted a QCA Year 7 sample unit on creating a leaflet about your school to allow students to develop ideas that they really wanted to communicate, and invited link schools to join in. He asked his students to think about how they learn best and what makes a good teacher. They shared their ideas on a blog post, to which students from a link school in the USA also contributed.

The students were given digital cameras to take images of the school which they could use to illustrate their leaflets. These were uploaded onto a digital gallery, along with photographs from a link school in Malawi, and both sets were shared with the students from the USA. A selection of quotes about education were provided, along with information about the Millennium Development Goals and the universal right to education.

Using the ideas, information and photos they had gathered, the students created 4-page leaflets on: a right to education; what helps me to learn better; what makes a good teacher; and what I would like to learn. The best examples, selected through peer assessment by the students, were sent to a link school in France and the whole collection was sent to the USA school.

The project culminated in a flashmeeting video conference between a class in each of the UK and USA schools to discuss and compare school life and a recording of the conference was put

onto a blog post to be viewed by the other classes. The work was evaluated by student comments on the blog post and an online survey using SurveyAtSchool.

How well did they achieve their aims?

In the online survey, 78% of the students said that sharing their ideas on the blog helped them to write better ideas and 88% said that having a real audience gave their work a clearer sense of purpose. Middle ability students benefitted most, with a higher proportion than expected achieving Level 5.

Inviting students from the USA to contribute to the blog increased motivation to read the blog and challenged the Norwich students' stereotypical ideas about the US, drawing out common feelings about education between the two countries. Seeing and hearing students from another country through a video link had a major impact on the students, at no cost. Using free, open access platforms enabled information to be shared more widely, for example the USA and French schools have access to the pictures from the school in Malawi.

What do they plan to do next?

The school will continue to develop opportunities for short-term linking projects with a specific focus. This particular piece of coursework has been written into the timetable of the participating schools to be repeated over the next three years. Next year pupils from a school in India will be invited to add photographs to the digital gallery, so the range of images of education will build. Information from the blogs and leaflets about what helps students learn and what makes a good teacher will be passed on to the school's Teaching, Learning and Assessment group.

Organising a live link was complex and time consuming. Next time, UK students will send a recording of their questions in advance and ask link schools to record their responses. This will be easier to organise and may lead to higher quality responses, while retaining the benefit of seeing and hearing students from different countries.





Reflections:

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a useful starting point for debates about 'development'.
- Sharing images and ideas with schools in other countries and considering the MDGs and the universal right to education puts education in a global context and helps draw out common educational needs, interests and concerns.
- Links between schools are most effective when the starting point is shared educational outcomes rather than a focus on difference.

I LEARN BEST WHEN!

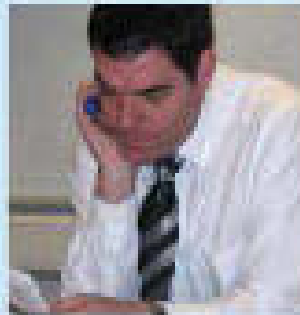


I learn best when the teacher breaks down work step by step to make it easier to comprehend.

I also learn best when we have class discussions, because it helps me to understand the task more clearly.



MY IDEAL TEACHER!



I like a teacher that will make the lesson fun and easy, but at the same time challenging students.

I also like a teacher who is calm and relaxed.

So if the teacher is in a mood we won't get in a mood as well.



What I Would Like To Learn

I would like to learn about the people, culture, and history of a single country.

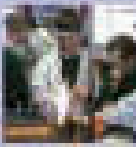
Personally, I would really enjoy taking a creative writing course, coupled with business management, as well as other things that would help me survive after I have graduated college.

On a more educational note, I would love to learn how to speak and read Japanese.



A right to learn

Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day, teach a person to fish and you feed them for a lifetime. *Chinese Proverb*



Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. *Nelson Mandela*

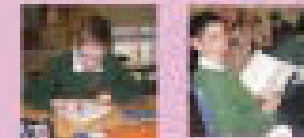
Some children have to work to buy food so they can't go to school.



© 2010

What I would like to learn

I would like to learn about the history of the world, it's exciting.



Computer has a great lot of information!



A right to learn

Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day, teach a person to fish and you feed them for a lifetime.

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.



Everyone has a right to education.

90% of the children are not getting any education.

10% of the children are not getting any education.

© 2010



Leaflets the students created on the right to education

More information:

- Alex Savage's website: www.communiqy.org.
- Notre Dame High School website: www.ndhs.org.uk.
- Short-term linking projects: www.elanguages.org.
- Set up free blogs at: www.edublogs.org.
- Free online digital gallery: www.bubbleshare.com.
- Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals.