Hello World: Teacher Experiences with Global Collaborative Projects

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Program Background

- teacher professional development program taught in U.S. and Finland, spring/summer '16
- training teachers to make cultural connections, collections, and reflections with technology, to apply in their own classrooms
- 15 teacher participants in Raleigh-Durham area
- supported by a grant from the Triangle Community Foundation’s Borchardt Fund
- http://finlandccr.weebly.com
- forthcoming... http://swedenccr.weebly.com

Cultural Connections Project

- schools closed in summer when we travel overseas, so we added a "connections" project to introduce teachers first-hand to Finnish education system and educators in spring
- asked teachers to complete a cross-classroom project with a Finnish (or other Nordic) teacher
- in a January pre-departure class, we discussed the rationale for global collaboration, types of projects teachers might consider, how to connect with international teachers, and technologies that can support global projects

Establishing the Rationale

- global awareness listed as one of five interdisciplinary 21st century themes to weave into core subject instruction (P21)

Introducing Project Types

- ICT Rationale
- Understanding Difference Rationale
- Self-Skills Rationale
- Issues-Based Rationale

Global Awareness

- digital literacy to understand and address global issues
- learning about and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and traditions
- understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages

Note: same rationale for inclusion:
- ICT Rationale
- Understanding Difference Rationale
Introducing Project Types

• Level 1 (intra-connection within own classroom): helps prepare students for more advanced collaboration; start by co-editing wikis and collaborative Google documents, asynchronously commenting on one another’s Voicethreads and blogs
  • students may sit face-to-face at first, but eventually ask them to sit across the room from each other and begin to build online communication skills needed in geographically dispersed projects

• Level 2 (inter-connection within the school or geographic area), a teacher creates a project in which students from different classes or different schools in the district connect
  • as students are in different classes/schools, they must rely on asynchronous or synchronous communication modes (e.g., discussion forums, document commenting, chats)
  • these projects have a global feel, although they are not and students tend to be more homogenous than they would be in a real global project

Introducing Project Types

• Level 3 (managed global connection), teachers join a project someone else has planned out with detailed lessons and resources available
  • in many managed projects, student-student connection is limited, and the teacher may upload student work products to share
  • Alternate Reality project (iEARN), students exchange photos of each other, Photoshop global peers into scenes around their school, write captions about what life would be like for them in their school, send composites back to partner school and engage in a discussion

Introducing Project Types

• Levels 4 and 5 (student-to-student connections, either teacher-managed or teacher-facilitated), the teacher plans a project in which students engage with global peers on an individual basis
  • a level 4 project tends to be more teacher-directed with students tasked to complete certain activities or placed in certain roles
  • elementary students paired with a global partner in Edmodo, collaboratively write “poems for two voices,” then create a Voicethread with both persons reading aloud sections of their poem (Richardson, 2012)

Introducing Project Types

• math talk, high school students across classrooms use common wiki to share personal representations of math concepts by embedding GeoGebra animations and Jing screencast videos on wiki to explain their thinking (Lazarus & Roulet, 2013)

Introducing Project Types

• Lunch Box Project, students communicate what they eat for lunch in their school with other countries, share the ideal healthy lunch with instructions or video of how to prepare, then students attempt to make the lunch of another country and share the result (http://lunchboxproject.wikispaces.com/)

• Read Around the Planet, students read aloud/share stories they’ve written with international peers using videoconferencing technology (McDermon, 2010)
Introducing Project Types

- A level 5 project tends to be more open-ended with students working on project teams, setting their own rules, with teacher facilitation.
- Students from two global classes placed in small groups, research businesses and publicly traded stocks in each other’s countries, co-develop a mock portfolio using a set budget, and track progress against other groups.
- Students from two global classes placed in small groups, research and co-edit a wiki on appropriate responses to climate change.

Showing How to Connect

- Global SchoolNet (globalschoolnet.org) includes an existing project registry to search, with a filter to look for projects that are currently accepting new registrations; or, start a new project.

- ISTE has a global collaboration PLN that its members can join, with an active message board with frequent projects/resources shared, http://connect.iste.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer?GroupId=229.
- This community co-edits a Google sheet with a listing of existing collaborative projects you can join: http://tinyurl.com/ISTEglobalpinsheet

- International Education and Resource Network (iEARN) provides a fee-based platform ($100/teacher, $400/school, per year) with a collaboration center and monthly newsletter.
- Search for groups actively collaborating around a pre-designed, facilitated project (3), or search for individual educator partners (4/5).
- Free to search for projects to see what is available, but you must pay fee to join projects.

- GVC will create a school listing for you, and you can browse existing partner schools to look for collaborators (4/5).
  https://gvc-clubhouse.wikispaces.com/Schools

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• CILC (Center for International Learning and Collaboration) has a free collaboration center where you can search for partners, http://cilc.org

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• view posted projects for project ideas
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Showing How to Connect

• ePals.com provides a free, powerful search/filtering system to find other global teachers partners

Introducing Collaborative Tech

(Gill & Tonks, http://goo.gl/MtIDja)

• co-editing virtual cork boards on prompted topic (padlet, lino, beeclive, dotstorming)
• group brainstorming/mind mapping (popplet, pearl trees, mind maple, processon)
• sharing and discussing images/video (voicethread)
• collaborative writing/authoring (mixedink, google docs, poetica, etherpad, wikis)
• synchronous whiteboards (stoodle, drawitlive, flockdraw, twidddle, screen leap)
• collaborative video editing (vyclone, wevideo, wirewax, watch2gether)

Introducing Collaborative Tech

(Gill & Tonks, http://goo.gl/MtIDja)

• back channel chats (todaysmeet, chatzy)
• online polling (polleverywhere, participoll)
• synchronous meeting (google hangouts, zoom, anymeeting, big marker, meeting.io, tinychat, chatterous)
• asynchronous meeting (discussion forums, tack discussion around posted content)
• both synchronous and asynchronous (twitter)
• social networks (fakebook, google groups)
• add to group-curated collections (history pin, google maps)
see these other comprehensive lists:
• http://www.docurated .com/101-free-free-try- online-collaborative- learning-tools-teachers- educators
• http://tinyurl.com/ KirrTech

Acknowledging Challenges
can be overcome, but need to keep in mind:
• different time zones
• different holidays/vacation periods
• different school day structures, scheduling blocks, and homework expectations
• different access to the Internet and technology, and different technology skills
• different languages, developing English skills, particularly for the youngest learners

Findings: Partners and Projects
• 12 of 15 teachers responded to a post- survey about their collaborative project
• teachers found partners in Finland (n=7), Sweden (n=3), Denmark (n=2), Canada (n=1), Egypt (n=1), Norway (n=1), South Korea (n=1), Turkey (n=1), and Ukraine (n=1)
• projects typically took one of two forms: sharing cultural information with a discussion of differences, or pen pal projects with solicited conversational topics or sharing of personal artifacts with a peer

Findings: Projects
six projects had a comparative focus where each school would share something specific from their culture with follow-up conversations about represented differences:
• students shared folktales from their country with a tool like KidBlog, and then commented on one another's posts to discuss the different cultural values and traditions represented
• students shared school lunch options as Google Slides and discussed differences in nutritional value
• students created VoiceThread presentations about their respective schools to share with a partner class

Findings: Projects
six teachers assigned international pen pals to their students for correspondence:
• students discussed violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and solicited opinions from their pen pal in another country regarding potential solutions
• pen pals shared personal artifacts such as "Where I'm From" poems that were recorded in a student's voice with images captured as Prezi presentations, and art work between two Christian schools that was reflective of the quote "God is Our Refuge" in depicting childrens' personal refuges or safe places

Video Excerpts
teachers created short summary videos about their global projects; some excerpts illustrate the types of projects they engaged in: http://swedencr.weebly.com/collaborative-project-excerpts.html
Findings: Supported Goals

- research skills: basic facts and figures about partner countries and their own country to share with international peers (e.g., local clues to give the other classroom during Mystery Skypes, North American folk tales); nutritional value in foods
- critical thinking/problem-solving: supported only minimally in our teachers' projects (e.g., offering solutions to combat human rights issues)
- creative thinking: designing original artifacts about their culture to share (e.g., media showcasing a town/school, video clips of dance performances/ballgames, images of art work)

Findings: Supported Goals

- intercultural communication: practice in carefully selecting written words and projecting spoken words for peers who were just learning English; practice interpreting writing from and carefully listening to peers whose first language was not English; learning how to represent self through media; learning to respect difference...

One student giggled after reading the simple English of one of her pen pals. Another student reminded her that her Finnish would be considerably less understandable.

Findings: Supported Goals

- technology skills: students learned to prepare and share different media such as Google docs and slides, VoiceThread, Prezi, and Lino boards; students prepared audio and video clips for peers with supplemental tools such as GarageBand, iMovie, MovieMaker, and the SnagIt screen recorder; shared writing between classrooms was supported with tools such as email, KidBlog, and Google docs
- significant gain also reported pre-post in terms of teachers' understanding of collaborative tools to carry out global projects (e.g., wikis, blogs, group docs), $t_{13} = -4.020, p < .001$

Findings: Cultural Understanding

among students:

- weather and geography in international locations, including hours of daylight at different latitudes
- similarities (common ground)--clothing styles, topics of conversation, sports, hobbies
- differences--cultural traditions such as storytelling, languages, holidays, and foods; education systems and length of school day, number of recesses, school lunches, world language learning
- how others view Americans

Findings: Cultural Understanding

among teachers:

- international school structures--smaller class sizes, more time for teacher planning with less meeting time and paperwork, more flexible hours with fewer hours of classes, and more recess breaks with many extracurricular activities after school
- international school resources--free lunches provided to students, less technology than U.S.
- how other cultures value education--teachers provided with opportunities for international professional development, importance of learning English to progress academically

Findings: Cultural Understanding

- on a five-point scale where 5=strongly agree, teachers largely agreed that their global projects supported cultural understanding among their students ($M=4.36, SD=.84$)
- six teachers specifically mentioned the global project in survey comments as something that should "definitely" be kept as a "must do" part of our professional development program
Video Excerpts

Teachers created short summary videos about their global projects; some excerpts describe the type of cultural understanding students developed through participation:

http://swedencr.weebly.com/collaborative-project-excerpts.html

Findings: Noted Issues

Percent of teachers who agreed/strongly agreed that an issue negatively impacted their ability to run a global collaborative project (n=11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Issues</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing project due to a lack of time in my curriculum</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics or working across time zones</td>
<td>97.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding an international partner teacher in my content area grade level willing to collaborate</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-planning the specific activities in a collaborative project with my international partner teacher</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical issues and certain tools not functioning as expected</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a partner that matched my curriculum standards/requirements</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication or getting participants speaking different languages to work together</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and preparing students to use certain tools</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences or getting students with diverse backgrounds to work together</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings: K-2 Student Reactions

- I have participated in similar global projects before this one... never = 68.3%
- Percent of K-2 students who responded to questions about their global project using the top two levels of “smiley face” (n=84)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like the global project.</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned a bit from the international students.</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technology helped me work with the international students.</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you like this project?</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings: Grades 3-12 Reactions

Percent of grades 3-12 students who agreed or strongly agreed with questions about their global project (n=72)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have participated in similar global projects before this one... never = 88.9%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned something important from this project.</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience was better than what I expected.</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technology used to complete this global project was sufficient.</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher met us through the global project effectively.</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students in my class and the international partners we collaborated with were understanding and respectful of each other</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations

- General sharing of cultural information was a good place for teachers unfamiliar with global learning to start (pen pals, info exchanges)
- But we can go beyond sharing a photo/video about our culture, and receiving/giving comments on similar artifacts about their culture
- We can encourage real student-student collaboration and enhanced interaction around common issues to both countries (remember from standards—the issues-based rationale for doing global projects)

Recommendations

Three forces shaping the planet (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011):

- Flattened global economy, changing demands of work, need for understanding of markets, labor, demands of development
- Global migration, increased exposure to cultural and language difference, need for understanding of how to coexist and work together
- Climate instability, need for understanding of causes, impacts on habitats and health, and the role of policy and innovation to remediate
Recommendations

Teacher Partners

one third of our teachers arranged to meet partner teachers when we visited Finland last July, hopefully solidifying friendships and future collaborations

References