Global Projects in K-12

Abstract

DRAFT: Started to write an abstract..realized we'll be combing so this isn't needed right now.

Keywords: virtual environment, digital citizenship, project based learning, 21st century skills, global competence

Introduction

Through technology, our once broad world has become much more connected. These technological advancements have greatly impacted and continue to shape our educational system. As curriculum and technology converge, traditional forms of education expand (Lemke, Coughlin, Thadani, and Martin, 2003). This expansion has created a much more global educational environment. In the light of this global era, new ways to explore, learn and share knowledge are needed (Wagner, 2008).

Global learning allows us to connect and engage creative learners (Tochon, 2009). It allows students and teachers alike to discuss their ideas, findings and next steps with peers all over the world (Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, 2014). The communication environment strives to become an innovative, dynamic virtual platform that can link the global educational world. The variety of global projects are limited only by imagination; the benefits for students and educators are much more concrete.

Methodology

       The studies used in this literature review were located through a comprehensive search performed on ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Education Full Text (Wilson), and Google Scholar. A manual search through journals, articles and textbooks also revealed current information.

Related Themes

       Web 2.0. Several related themes were evident in the literature. In order to work globally, communication must take place between students from different schools, different communities and different countries (Wu and Huang, 2007). Students and teachers both must be familiar with utilizing Web 2.0 technology (Fontana, Moreno, Cosimi & D'Arcangelo, 2008). Web 2.0 is simply a coined term for sites that have moved past the static sites and utilize interaction (Boix, Mansilla and Jackson, 2011). While Internet usage may be limited in the younger grades, most all students and teacher are familiar and utilizing to some degree, web 2.0.

       Digital Citizenship. The ability to utilize web 2.0 technology, while necessary, is only the beginning. In our increasingly connected world, almost all students regularly use the Internet to share or gain information (Wiley, 2012). As tech tools become more accessible, digital citizenship is gaining momentum throughout the world. It is the concept that teachers and parents understand and share with students what is responsible technology use and what actions are acceptable online (Fontana et. Al, 2008). This concept, while in place through contracts across schools, should be constantly reinforced.

Global competence. Tochon (2009) notes that learning a second language has not only cognitive and academic benefits, but it also supports a greater appreciation for other cultures. "Global competence" is defined as "the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance," and is demonstrated by the ability investigate the world beyond one's own immediate environment, recognize perspectives, communicate ideas with diverse audiences and take action to improve the world (Boix, Mansilla and Jackson, 2011, p. xiii, p. 11).

Project Based Learning. Project based learning provides context and a reason to learn. Students generally have greater choice and reflection in their work. Global learning can stretch this further by providing a public audience where students are interacting and sharing with people beyond their classmates and teacher (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). Interactive curriculum-based groups exist and can be created that students are creating, researching, sharing opinions, and becoming global citizens (Vars and Beane, 2000). These attributes of project-based learning can increase students' motivation, drive to do higher quality work, and provide authentic learning opportunities.

Opportunities for Global Learning. There are many opportunities for teachers to participate in already designed and implemented global learning projects. Many of these projects are designed for all ages. A list of recommended sites for global projects is found in Appendix A.

Limitations

Global learning is widely accepted and encouraged. A lack of technology for individual students and planning guides for teachers seems to be the top two limitations for expanding global learning in today's classrooms.

Outcomes

Further research is needed to understand with depth the benefits of global learning on the educational outcomes of K-12 students.

Conclusion

Globally competent individuals are aware, curious and interested in learning more about the world and how it works (Vega, 2012). Skills gained from global learning such as thinking, using systems and collaborating will last a lifetime. There is a growing acceptance that "knowledge cannot be separated from context; it is integral to the relationships among people and situations" (Lemke, 2003). This ideal supports a global learning environment, a context that invites students to learn about the world with the world. With the demands of a changing world, it is necessary to recognize the central role that global interdependence will play. Global learning is a key step toward uniting students.

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Appendix A

Resource Opportunities for Global Learning Programs & Projects

- The Center for Global Education An International Resource Center
  http://globaled.us/K12.asp
- Global school net   Linking kids around the world
  http://www.globalschoolnet.org/
- Edutopia   What works in education. http://www.edutopia.org
- iEarn Global Learning Circles   www.iearn.org/circles
- National Education Association   www.nea.org/home/16868