

International Education for Students in Washington State
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From the primary classroom in Pullman, Washington, where I was a classroom teacher from 1990 to 2002, we had the opportunity to connect with schools around the world to collaborate on teaching and learning using the global community of schools who participate in the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN: <http://www.iearn.org>). Using new technologies of the Internet, including email, exchanges of digital images, classroom websites, video and videoconferencing, we did curricular projects in social studies, literacy, science, math, world languages, visual arts and service learning by communicating with children, youth and teachers in countries of Central and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and North America.

From our first global connections in 1994 through the 2002 school year, the first and second graders in our classroom were highly motivated to work on their reading and writing skills so that they could communicate with their friends across continents and cultures. We continually saw children reach education goals beyond expectations when doing their iEARN curricular projects with global peers. What was remarkable was the way these young students and their families embraced the opportunities to learn from people and places around the world. They embraced both commonalities as affirmation of how we are alike in the experience of being humans and they embraced diversities as an opportunity to know and think about people and the world in ways they hadn't previously imagined.

These young students understood, in their first years of school, that we live in a multilingual world – receiving email messages in different languages motivated them to want to learn more how to read and speak languages. As importantly, receiving email from countries where our students had family provided a wonderful opportunity for those parents to come into the classroom to translate messages and teach their language to our class. Over the years, many parents in our classroom expressed deep appreciation for the opportunities their children were having in school to learn about, communicate with, and understand people and places in the world.

With the technologies of the Internet in educational online communities such as K-12 schools of iEARN, where students are connecting with teachers and students known to them in a safe and purposeful educational environment, we can provide all students opportunities to know and understand their world today through communication with schools globally. In many of the iEARN curricular projects, students not only come to understand the world today, but they also have opportunities to make positive contributions to their world, locally and globally with what they learn in collaboration with schools around the world.

We live in an interconnected, interdependent world. It is essential that all students in our state from grades kindergarten through high school, have the opportunity to learn about

their world through interactions with teachers and students worldwide. IEARN is just one example of how this is possible. With connections among many countries, teachers and students in iEARN have developed a model of international education, including teacher professional development and curricular project opportunities that are making a positive difference in the lives of children, youth, their teachers, families and communities because they are building a world of understanding together. Programs such as iEARN are demonstrating not only how international education can make a difference in the world but also how international education can make a difference in the learning success of students. I invite you to visit the archived websites of our Pullman Washington classroom to see the global curricular projects first and second graders did from 1994 to 2002 as example of what's possible:

<http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/SocialStudies/socialstudies200001/SocialStudies0001.html>

<http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/Literacy/Literacy200001.html>

<http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/SchoolYear0102/socialstudies0102/GAPcaring02/GAP0102.html>

<http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/SchoolYear0102/socialstudies0102/SOS/SOS.html>

<http://www.psd267.wednet.edu/~kfranz/iearn.html>

http://learnweb.harvard.edu/ent/gallery/pop3/pop3_1.cfm

In my current education role of providing International Education Teacher Professional Development, I have the opportunity to collaborate with schools in King County to mentor teachers and students in doing iEARN curricular projects with schools globally. It is very exciting to see teachers and their students enthusiastically discover how they can connect with other schools in countries around the world to learn with one another. Through these connections, being in school takes on new meaning and importance for both students and teachers because being in school means an opportunity to teach and learn with others in the world. With support for international education collaborations and opportunities for teaching and learning world languages in grades K-12, the children and youth of Washington State will not only be prepared to participate in their world, they will have the experiences, knowledge and understandings to make many positive contributions within local to global communities. Thank you for your support of international education!

Publications:

Rennebohm Franz, K. and E. Gragert. 2003. Global Education for Today's World: Creating Hope with Online Learning Communities. *Better Teaching and Learning in the Digital Classroom*. David T. Gordon, Editor. Harvard Education Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Rennebohm Franz, K. 2003. Building Better School-Home Connections with Technology. *Better Teaching and Learning in the Digital Classroom*. David T. Gordon, Editor. Harvard Education Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Wiske, Martha Stone with K. Rennebohm Franz and L. Breit. 2004. Teaching for Understanding with Technology. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, California.

Rennebohm Franz, Kristi. 2001 *NCREL enGauge* Professional Development Website Resources:

"There's Lots of Learning Going On- Use Multiple Assessments to Capture it All" (Alignment With Vision) <http://www.ncrel.org/engage/framework/efp/align/efpalisu.htm>

"Literacy Learning Through Technology: Primary Classroom" (Engaging Learning Environments) <http://www.ncrel.org/engage/framework/efp/environ/efpenvsu.htm>

"The Pedagogical Practice Behind the Technology in A Primary Classroom" (Research and Best Practice) <http://www.ncrel.org/engage/framework/efp/research/efpressu.htm>