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Distance learning story

Global learning with ēno[®]

Carteret Middle School, New Jersey
meets Eigg School, Scotland



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Global learning with ēno

Carteret Middle School, New Jersey and Eigg School, Scotland



Overview

With the proliferation of modern technology, today's students live in an increasingly globalized world. Now, it is commonplace for them to share their perspectives on social and ecological issues in a global, interconnected society.

In the fall of 2010, two schools using PolyVision technology on opposite sides of the world, seized a unique opportunity to partner in a global learning collaboration focused on sharing lessons and cultural perspectives. Carteret Middle School, in New Jersey, teamed up with the Eigg School, located on a remote island off of the coast of Scotland. The goal of the program was to enable students to communicate with a group of peers from a completely different social background and share best practices for living sustainably.

Eigg School is located on the Isle of Eigg, an island that is approximately five miles long with 97 inhabitants. The student population is comprised of only ten students, ranging in ages from four to eleven. In 1997, Eigg became the first Scottish community to buy their own island. When the islanders realized the cost and environmental detriments of relying on the mainland for power, they decided to become self-sufficient and implement an independent electricity system. The island used its natural resources to create hydroelectric, wind and solar energy, supplying 24-hour power to all residents and businesses. The renewable resources contribute over 95 percent of the island's electricity demand. Now, generators previously used for power are silent and the island has leapt to the forefront of electricity

The challenge

To provide students a global perspective while enhancing 21st century skills, two schools on opposite sides of the world were challenged to connect through interactive whiteboard technology.

The solution

PolyVision® facilitated a global learning partnership between Carteret Middle School in New Jersey and Eigg School in Scotland, enabling students to connect and communicate via the web and ēno one interactive whiteboard technology.

The benefits

ēno one by PolyVision exposed students to peers from a completely different culture and background, opening their eyes to new ways of thinking and acting, which increased academic achievement through global learning.

generation using renewable energy resources. The Isle of Eigg is the first community to successfully integrate multiple renewable energy sources into a grid system to supply isolated and scattered residents with power.

Carteret Middle School is located in a densely populated, industrial city in one of the busiest areas on the east coast of the United States. Situated in the heart of New Jersey, Carteret is five miles in area and is home to roughly 21,000 residents from all over the world. Carteret Middle School serves 900 students in grades 6-8. In juxtaposition to the Isle of Eigg, the city of Carteret relies on fossil fuels for energy and oil refineries are located within one mile of the school. Carteret Middle School's vision is to create a highly regarded, safe and supportive environment that fosters high levels of student achievement, as well as productive and responsible members in a diverse society.

The Challenge

In 2009, a representative from PolyVision visited the Eigg School to conduct an ēno one interactive whiteboard demonstration. ēno one aligned with the green vision of the residents of Isle of Eigg: It is the only green interactive whiteboard in the world and is Cradle to CradleSM Silver certified. Consisting of a board, projector and height-adjustable mount and lesson development software in one system, ēno one provides a simple, effective solution to teach interactively. And, it requires no power from outlets, providing a safer, less-cluttered classroom where schools can take pride in a reduced carbon footprint.

The Carteret/Eigg initiatives using PolyVision interactive technology:

- Bring unlikely peers together to share cultural backgrounds and sustainable living practices
- Enhance student achievement with 21st century practices
- Raise awareness of students' global role in conserving resources

During the first visit with the teachers and students, PolyVision recognized an opportunity to connect Eigg students to other communities to share their eco-awareness knowledge and sustainable living practices. Despite living in a remote area, the children were extremely articulate and possessed immense first-hand knowledge and passion for sustainability.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic at Carteret Middle School, Mary Spiga, Principal, was talking with a PolyVision education consultant about global learning opportunities. The result: Carteret Middle School rewrote their curriculum to include PolyVision's interactive technology in 2009, with the goal of increasing student achievement and enhancing students' ability to learn in a 21st century environment. Carteret hoped to utilize PolyVision's solutions to raise student awareness of global issues and gain a broader perspective on life beyond New Jersey.

With PolyVision's assistance, the partnership between Eigg School and Carteret Middle School soon materialized. The two schools were faced with the challenge of connecting their technology to begin the peer-to-peer global learning collaborative.

The Solution

To proceed with the project, both schools assigned a Project Coordinator to lead the initiative. Carteret Middle School selected Special Education

students gain an understanding of life in different parts of the world while learning the shared importance of creating a sustainable, green school.

Three sixth grade classes were selected to participate in the project. A total of 27 students from Carteret Middle School participated in the collaborative

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Dan Farrar
6th grade Social Studies teacher, Carteret Middle School

learning project, including five special needs students. All ten of the Eigg School's students participated in the scheduled global learning sessions. Using Skype™ and ēno one interactive whiteboards, students and teachers collaborated live via the internet, demonstrated lesson content and shared best practices.

Over the course of the project, PolyVision's education consultants worked closely with the schools to ensure efficient progress and successful student outcomes. Matt explains, “I was in constant contact with PolyVision throughout the global collaboration. We shared creative ideas and brainstormed lessons and strategies to benefit all participating students. PolyVision was always just a phone call away.”

The Benefits

ēno one enabled both school's teachers to effectively simultaneously deliver interactive lessons to their classes, bringing together the perspectives and ideas of students living across the Atlantic Ocean from one another. Matt explains, “ēno one's dynamic interface enabled us to display a live feed from the Eigg School on one side and presentations, videos, notes and discussion topics on the other side.” He continues, “Personally, I believe the best feature of ēno one is the ability to use any software with the interactive whiteboard. If a program can run on my computer, then I can display it on ēno. This feature allowed us to employ a wide variety of interactive applications to help students gain background knowledge and prepare for lessons. For example, before our first shared lesson, we used Google Earth to locate the Isle of Eigg and view the geographical terrain of the island.”



Teacher and Technology Coordinator, Matt Finucane. Eigg School selected Principal, Hilda Ibrahim. Matt and Hilda created a series of lessons focused on sustainability and green living. The lessons concentrated on helping

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Through interactive sessions between the two schools, students learned what life was like in a completely different environment and culture. They created informative videos showcasing a day-in-the-life in their hometowns to share with their new friends overseas. Matt says, "Our first lesson ended with Hilda saying, 'We must go now; we have to go out to the field to pick peas.' Our kids were speechless. They could not comprehend how part of the school day in Eigg included farming." He continues, "The students from Scotland were equally confused when we shared a lesson that focused on the traditions of Thanksgiving. Watching football and eating turkey all day was a foreign concept to students on the Isle of Eigg!" Students learned that although they are different in many ways, they also shared similarities. Despite their varied backgrounds and upbringings, many students shared similar goals of becoming doctors or veterinarians.

Thanks to the example set by Eigg residents' green living, students at Carteret Middle School began to understand the importance of eco-awareness. Students from the Isle of Eigg shared creative ideas on how to incorporate sustainable practices into daily life. Without any prompting from teachers, Carteret's students instantly became more interested and involved in eco-living. They started their own environmental club to spread awareness about protecting the earth. Students also launched a recycling program that prompted their school to begin recycling for the first time in five years. Mia McGill, a sixth grade student at Carteret Middle School illustrates one of the important lessons she learned, "The people on the Isle of Eigg take better care of their resources than we do. It is important for us to change our way of life because we need to help our environment." Matt concludes, "It was extremely refreshing to see our students become motivated by the sustainable practices of the Eigg School's students."

The global learning project opened the eyes of students and faculty alike at Carteret Middle School. Dan Farrar, Social Studies teacher, explains, "The kids gained a new perspective on community life. Obviously, none of my students get the opportunity to speak to people who are several time zones away. The global learning collaboration gave them a broader perspective on the world, education and possibly even themselves." He continues, "For somebody my age, from my generation this is like science fiction. I never would have thought I would be teaching a class here in New Jersey while simultaneously teaching kids across the world. It's been a wonderful educational experience for me as well. I never would have thought, even ten years ago, that this would be possible."

Mary Spiga, Principal of Carteret Middle School, says, "We've learned so much through the Isle of Eigg's conservation efforts. When our students learned that the Isle of Eigg rations residential power throughout the course of each day, you could see the shock on their faces. This was such a strange concept to our students who live in homes with lights, computers

and televisions that are constantly powered-on." She continues, "You could see them sit back and think: 'What is my impact on our environment?' They became aware of the role they could play in decreasing our carbon footprint. Then, they got very excited about making our school green. The open dialogue that resulted created wonderful opportunities for teachers to



continue discussions with students about sustainable living. This is a perfect example of the global education I was hoping would result from this project!"

The global learning project is a springboard for Carteret Middle School as the district begins to integrate interactive technology into every aspect of the curriculum. During the 2009 school year, the district reached Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the first time since mandatory state testing went into effect. Suspension and absentee rates have also declined over the past two years. Matt believes that the biggest change made in his school cannot be recorded with tangible evidence: It is the fact that students are, once again, excited about learning.

What once was a failing school is now gaining national recognition for academic achievement. Since the global learning project launched, Carteret Middle School has been recognized as one of the most improved middle schools in New Jersey. Matt says, "This project has exceeded my expectations in every way. Last month we were published in an education magazine and we are currently in the running for ABC's Innovative School of the Year." He concludes, "We never could have accomplished any of this without the help of PolyVision's innovative interactive technology and the company's dedicated support staff."

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eVision PolyVision is committed to move toward sustainability in all areas of environmental stewardship—to protect people, replenish natural resources, and restore the communities in which we work and live.

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