

Missouri/Taiwan High Tech-High Touch Excursion

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Was John Naisbitt, author of *Megatrends*, correct two decades ago when he predicted that, the more technology is introduced into society, the more people will aggregate? Since fall 2001, the University of Missouri has facilitated a high-tech partnership involving high school students and teachers in Missouri and Taiwan. In summer 2002, students from Taiwan will visit Missouri to collaborate in lessons and activities facilitated through extended partnerships with Boeing Corporation and the St. Louis Science Center.

This venture will take Missouri and Taiwanese students on high-touch excursions through a flight museum, planetarium exhibits, astronaut wind tunnels, an aircraft assembly line, an avionics electronics lab, and a simulated space station. Throughout the excursions, the students will capture digital artifacts for inclusion in a documentary of the visit. Designed by students during the Missouri event, the documentary will be created and displayed during ThinkQuest. Using various software development applications and large databases (e.g., satellite photographs, maps, etc), Missouri students in Seattle will work directly with students in Taiwan using Internet Video and Shadow netWorkspace (SNS is an open source CSCL environment), the goal being to assemble a multi-media, multi-lingual digital documentary of the recently completed visit. Event observers will have the opportunity to see the “real-time” work of these students and to play an active role in finalizing the documentary. Decide for yourself...was Naisbitt correct?

This paper describes in depth one project that the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Education (MU CoE) has implemented as part of a globalization initiative. There are currently 4 schools in Taipei, Taiwan that are connected with K-12 schools in Missouri as well as MU faculty and pre-service teachers. This year, the MU CoE sent three faculty and staff members to Taipei to develop and implement a literature-based English curriculum for students to share with their American counterparts. The goals of this globalization initiative are a critical 3-part model that is a unique experience that currently does not exist. This experience evolves around information and learning, enabling technology, and global connections. This 3-part model is based on: 1) connecting K12 schools in Taipei, 2) with K12 schools in Missouri, and 3) MU CoE Literacy faculty. The connection is provided through utilizing Internet2 and video conferencing equipment.

The process of this globalization initiative focuses on individual school needs, but all involve utilizing technology to allow students to have email as well as face-to-face conversations to practice online communication, establish friendships with students of other cultures, exchange cultural information, and develop and understanding and tolerance for other cultures. Students from both cultures benefit from the opportunity to improve their English language (written and verbal) skills as well as identifying the benefits and limitations of online communications.

Current projects where partners include schools in Taipei working with Missouri schools include two elementary schools, one K-9 school, and one senior high school. Projects include development of web sites for descriptions and pictures of participating teacher and students, the school and surrounding community, special events and holidays, as well as information on foods and day-to-day life for students their age. Schools have participated in paired reading of English children's literature books and had face-to-face video conversations around the books. Several schools are participating in science projects together where they collect samples of vegetation, water, and wild life to compare and contrast on the web site with their partner school. With the time difference between Taipei and Missouri being a complicating factor, partners are sharing information through threaded discussions and emails as well.

The impact of this globalization initiative has proven to be beneficial to the Taiwanese students having authentic conversations with native speaking English speaking students their own age and improving their English writing and oral skills. The Missouri students have discovered a new cultural appreciation as well as developing friendships. The MU CoE faculty and pre-service teachers have acted as cyber-tutors to help in the writing process as well as professional development for the Taiwanese teachers.