ePals Project

[Details of the site can be found at http://www.epals.com]

1. Goal, objective or purpose

- 7th grade students will be assigned digital pen pals with students at St. Anne's School in California
- They will send regular messages to each other over specific topics related to our standards
- Through these messages students will be able to work on their language skills, better understand digital citizenship, and discuss the importance of online safety, technology in society, and the effects of social media.
- Students will also exchange cultural information.
- Through this experience students will gain a greater understanding of their own culture and of life in the United States.
- Students will make connections with peers in a different country.
- Students will improve their digital literacy skills
- Students will work towards being a productive 21st century learner as well as a respectful and responsible digital citizen.

2. Background or History

One of the most important goals of technology education is preparing students to be 21st century learners and responsible digital citizens. This project is perfect for that goal. By giving students the opportunity to virtually connect with students outside of their culture, our kids will learn valuable lessons in communication, collaboration, and how technology can be used to explore and interact with the world outside of Barranquilla.

3. Justification

There is no doubt that technology, the internet, and social media has begun to create a globally connected society. Students regularly interact with peers around the world through video games and social media. Learning how to be a positive and respectful digital citizen is of the upmost importance, and the best place to learn those skills is in the classroom, with teacher supervision. Additionally, this project stresses digital literacy and 21st century skills which are an absolutely necessity for a students to be successful in today's society.
-Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society
-Digital Participation, Digital Literacy, and School Subjects

4. Procedures or Methodology or Program Design

This activity will take place once a week beginning in November or December (depending on when the sister school is California is ready for implementation). Every week, our students will write a short message on a specified topic. The contents of the message will be approved by me prior to being sent. The students will know that if they write anything inappropriate or that reflects our school in a poor light, they will receive a 0 on the assignment, their parents will be notified, and they will have a conference with the myself and the counselor.

Additionally, our students will reply to the messages of our sister school. I will also approve those messages before they are posted to ensure that they are appropriate and respectful.

Cyberbullying Sidenote – As this project will be message-based (i.e. not public like a blog or wiki) the potential for cyberbullying will be incredibly limited. Especially since both I and the coteacher in California will be reading all messages before they are sent, there should be no foreseeable potential for cyberbullying to occur.

5. Evaluation Design

There will be several stages of evaluation. Primarily, the students will be assessed on their weekly messages. However, I will judge the success of the programs in more anecdotal terms. Are the students excited to interact with students outside of their culture? Do they look forward to reading other student's messages? Are they learning about new experiences from peers in a different country? The answers to these questions will determine how successful this project turns out to be.

6. Resources Needed and Budget

This will cost the school nothing. The site that hosts the messages (epals.com) charges no fee. We already have the computers and internet access we need. Therefore, there will be absolutely no cost for this program.