



Classroom Integration Ideas

Engaging in authentic-based email tasks will make writing more meaningful to students as they synthesize what they have read and learned from various sources as they write reports, opinion pieces and make oral presentations.

Some **California Content Standards** supported include:

- Students will write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives.
- Students will write responses to literature.
- Students will write research reports.
- Students will collect, organize, and represent data, identify relationships and share results.
- Students will identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries to gain local and global perspectives.
- Students will apply problem-solving skills to identify basic indicators of economic performance and conduct cost-benefit analyses of economic and political issues.
- Students will ask meaningful questions and conduct their own careful investigations.
- Students will organize information collected from multiple sources, process the information and finally evaluate the information.

In addition, studies have shown that the incorporation of online communications can also facilitate oral communication between and among learners. As result, students will want to talk about their research and what they are learning.

Write an Autobiography or Biography

Self-introductory emails are a great way to get started with email exchanges as well as to gather information to develop a biographical sketch. Students draft, edit, revise and finally share their completed autobiography with their new learning partner. During this process, students might first engage in peer editing exercises with classmates to polish their narratives. The activity might be extended to include a written biography based on their new learning partner or ePALS partner. To develop the biography students will gather additional information by probing into the lifestyle, culture or areas of interest of their ePALS partner through thoughtful and self-designed questions.

"...it's important to know that when students are emailing to their colleagues, to their peers, that they have the opportunity to read, to write, and to improve their literacy."

"Virtual" Country/Cultural Tours

Using email, have students plan a fictional trip to visit their "ePALS," analyzing best routes and modes of transportation and amount of money needed, and identifying sites to visit when they arrive. Students will first ask their ePALS partner for specific information and provide recommendations. As an extension of this activity, students are tasked with presenting their findings as a published project using various media tools, spreadsheets and descriptive narratives to talk about their "host" country/friend.

Web sites such as National Geographic also offer a number of project ideas in support of curriculum objectives in the areas of language arts, geography, social and cultural studies, politics, economics, environmental issues and science.

A Social Studies/Geography teacher notes:

"One of the reasons we continue to use ePALS email, is because it allows us to go beyond the four walls of our classrooms without spending time traveling."

Foreign Language Learning with Real Life Partners

Contact a teacher/profile creator in another country to have students use and apply the written target language with their ePALS partner. Consider modifying an existing unit activity and incorporating email exchanges as a part of the "authentic communication" element. For ESL students, activities might involve partnering with another ESL classroom for communication purposes or to engage in a collaborative project.

As one foreign language teacher puts it:

"Because of ePALS SchoolMail, what the students are learning has optimum relevance... We have an ongoing dialogue that is current, it's a primary source, it's a living textbook."

Ask an Expert

Instead of using the Internet to solely search for information, have students construct an email in order to contact an organization or person dedicated to a topic at hand and ask questions specific to their research or query. There are a number of "Expert" sites that enable students to search for experts in various categories. Responses usually arrive within a few days. Prepare students by discussing netiquette and showcasing different writing styles and purpose such as a letter of inquiry.

This is a great way to complete authentic communication tasks, and this type of exchange models the new role of the teacher in a "21st century" classroom: facilitator of collaborative inquiry. This type of communications based activity may be used across any curriculum and subject area.

Some possible expert sites include:

LibrarySpot.com provides a comprehensive list of "expert" resources:

<http://www.libraryspot.com/askanexpert.htm>

Includes: Ask Dr. Math, Scientific American, Experts Exchange, Ask Oxford.com and the Mad Scientist Network.

Kidspace and the Internet Public Library feature an author area along with other collaborative projects: <http://www.ipl.org/div/kidspace/askauthor/>

US History-Social Studies

Have students send e-mail messages to political representatives. It may involve requesting information relating to the role of local, state or federal government or how the political process works, to learn more about the constitution, to better understand the representative's viewpoints and/or to express their own opinions on issues that matter to them.

Creative Writing/ Progressive Stories

Using email, have students share their stories, poems, and other creative writing with one another. Students in one participating class start a story. Each story-starter emails the "story" to a predetermined class or partner, where students add a new section to the story. Stories rotate to the different classes/students until reaching the original class/student sender at which time the story might end or continue.

We also recommend the Flat Stanley Project. <http://flatstanley.enoreo.on.ca/>

This is an international literacy and communications activity for primary and middle school students and teachers. This activity is based on the book, Flat Stanley, by Jeff Brown. This premise provides a reason for us to keep in touch with each other. The Flat Stanley Project is a group of teachers who want to provide students with another reason to write. Students' written work goes to other places by conventional mail and e-mail.

This project can also serve as a "virtual tour" as Stanley makes his way around the world.

One technology coordinator overseeing students at an elementary school comments:

"Some of the benefits of email obviously are that it gets students to do a lot more writing. They enjoy writing. If students are going to enjoy something, they're going to do more of it. The more of it they do, the better writers they become."

Folk Tales

Have students use email to exchange and collect regional, ethnic, and urban folktales from various parts of the world. Search for common themes; discover what makes each story unique. ePALS also hosts a project, Traditional Mythology, a project that enables students to build and share stories based on the cultural traditions of indigenous Australian Aboriginals or Native North Americans. Students might be connected to a classroom in Australia and perhaps a native classroom from the United States.

Science Projects

The idea of this exchange is to begin an ongoing relationship between two classes by planning collaborative projects, with shared research, data analysis, and action components. Contact a science teacher locally in your state, elsewhere in the country or overseas to begin a collaborative investigative experiment. Students might begin the experiment on the same day with same tools and resources. Students share data results with other participants to compare and record results.

There are a number of web sites that offer engaging project-based science activities. Incorporating a collaborative element through the use of email can help enrich those activities:

Space Day: www.spaceday.org

Created by the Challenger Center for Space Science Education, the Space Day *Design Challenges* let students become scientists, engineers, and explorers working on the space frontier to design a totally unique solution to some "out-of-this-world" challenges. Using any planet, moon, comet, or asteroid in our solar system as the launching point for exploration, students can engage in a number of investigative projects.

Also recommended not only for science-based project ideas but for a variety of technology-based activities is the George Lucas Education Foundation:

<http://www.glef.org/>

Weather/Environmental Projects

Contact a teacher in another region and have students exchange, compare, and graph weather information with other students across the country and around the world. In another scenario, have students measure the quality of air and water (in a nearby lake, river, ocean, and compare findings with students in other parts of the world. This is a great way to measure and compare the impact of pollution, and other environmental factors.

Mathematics/Economics Projects

Connect with two, three or four classrooms from around the world to conduct lifestyle surveys or to “comparison shop”. Students will use email to collect, analyze and compare food, gas, clothing, and entertainment prices. Spreadsheets might be used to track and organize data. Students will share results with classmates and collaborating classrooms and elaborate on findings.

ePALS also hosts the Currency, Money and Exchange Project:

http://www.epals.com/projects/currency/money_4to7.tpl

Discoveryschool.com offers a currency project that could be adapted or used as an extension activity. To make this more relevant to students, consider incorporating a collaborative element with the involvement of a classroom (or classrooms) worldwide and using email as a means to conduct research and gather information.

Bucks, Banks and Business:

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/bucksbanksandbusiness/>

*Students by connecting with and engaging real life interactions will gather information as a part of the assignment. Students will be tasked to ask targeted questions, synthesize the information and finally prepare and share a report of key findings and observations.

Physical Education

Consider connecting with a teacher in another country who would be willing to have their classroom engage in a “mini-olympics”. Choose 5 to 10 activities that both classrooms are able to complete such as strength exercises, speed performance and fitness levels. Students in both classrooms complete the activities, record their results in spreadsheets, and then share the results with the collaborating classroom. As an extension, students might be tasked to learn more about physical education programs in that country and write a report, learn more about the national sports in that country or identifying famous athletes and sharing descriptions and opinions of their own favorite sporting activities and athletes.

Important to note:

In order to effectively optimize the use of the global classroom database, you will need to first ensure you have created a profile (in your account, see MY ACCOUNT, SHARED PROFILE) and when searching (SEARCH COMMUNITY) for partners be sure to select ePALS Global Community as the desired search option.