



Romani Gypsy participants from Hungary contribute to the iEARN Indigenous Global Art Project.

For example, iEARN educators developed three- and five-day sets of workshops for a World Bank program called “WorLD” (World Links for Development). The workshops, titled “It Takes Many Villages to Make the World: Honoring People and Learning,” emphasize community-building, respect for others, and a focus on methods by which teachers can empower students to use technology to make a difference in their lives and the lives of the 6 billion inhabitants of our planet.

In the first session of the program, typical of the kinds of approaches used throughout, each participant learns a different skill, such as bookmarking on the Web, and then teaches that skill to another participant, creating a “community of learners.” They go on to learn about integrating curriculum into their classrooms, but the methods of learning remain collaborative, and the focus is on learning the technology for what it can accomplish with students.

TECHNOLOGY NOT AN END IN ITSELF

There is an ocean of difference between a workshop whose purpose is to familiarize teachers with a particular piece of software or hardware and one with the purpose of teaching how educators can prepare students to address racism or

school conflict using technology. As educators, it is our responsibility to demonstrate how education can prepare students to address the issues facing the society in which they will be living.

Changing the focus of professional development to teaching and learning with a community purpose is only the first step. The next and ongoing component is interactive support when teachers return to their schools and their own computers. As the research of University of California education professor Hank Becker and others has shown, less than 10 percent of teachers with access to the technology actually engage in collaborative projects.

Significant support is imperative. Toward this end, newly-trained iEARN teachers are able immediately and meaningfully to interact online with peers through online support communities.

Articles appearing in *Issues in Global Education* (Issues) represent the opinion of the authors and are not necessarily those of the sponsoring organization. The intent is to encourage dialogue throughout the global education community. Although the editor believes that materials mentioned in *Issues* to be of interest to its readers, it does not reflect an endorsement. We have sought permission to reprint as required. If we have erred, please advise.

Comment on *Issues* articles, announcements, ideas and information about global education should be sent to the editor.

© 2001 The American Forum for Global Education
ISSN: 1088-8365.

To be sustainable, responsibility for this support structure is primarily in the hands of the teachers themselves.

IT WON'T BE EASY

But much more must be done, as evinced by complaints from students who move from a school in which global interaction is an integral part of the academic program to one in which it is not. Young men and women write back to us from college and say, “We’re so disappointed. We got to college, and they don’t even interact with native speakers in my Spanish class. In high school in iEARN, that’s all we did.”

The goal of iEARN is to have people go to the source in dealing with the problems we face—locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. If iEARN students learn when they are children that they can go directly to real people in China to learn about an issue, they will carry that knowledge with them to adulthood. They won’t have to rely on a 30-minute sound bite when they hear about a crisis on the other side of the world. They will be encouraged to think collaboration, not confrontation.

People, languages, cultures, and social structures in this global environment are in constant interaction. It is our hope that an increase in technology-facilitated collaboration will result in a lessening of ignorance about other cultures and realities and therefore result in a reduction in conflict. Our purpose as educators is to facilitate and nurture the powerful curiosity and natural enthusiasm for learning that all people have.

Edwin Gragert is the Executive Director of iEARN-USA.

President: Andrew F. Smith
Editor: Don Bragaw < dnb@prodigy.net >
Guest Editors: Aylin Kaya and Lisa Jobson
Managing Editor: Ria Boemi
Design: The Seymour Design Group
URL: <http://www.globaled.org>

Issues in Global Education
The American Forum for Global Education
120 Wall Street • Suite 2600 • New York, NY 10005
212-624-1300 • FX: 212-624-1412
email: globed120@aol.com