

Global-Leap/Videoconferencing in the Classroom



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www.global-leap.com

Promoting Interactive Communication Technology to add value to teaching and learning across the curriculum in classrooms around the world

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Global-Leap Newsletter.

February 2006

Global-Leap arranged and delivered a four day almost continuous programme of live VC links to colleagues across the UK and internationally from the **Polycom** Stand at the BETT show in January.

The links included schools, classes, content providers, and colleagues in locations around the world, to show visiting teachers the range of possibilities and the potential this resource has to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

In all, visitors were able to take part in some 20 hours of VC links.

Thank you, to all our colleagues who gave their time to support Global-Leap, and demonstrate these wide ranging possibilities to visitors at the show.

It was a very busy 4 days, and very tiring for all involved, but it was also good to meet many of you who visited the stand in person.

Many of you will have picked up a copy of UK Distance Learning Association Today- Education and Innovation magazine when visiting the stand. If you were not at the show, and would like a copy of this, please send an SAE, (A4 size) to me, and I will send you your copy. (Global-Leap, PO Box 446, Pinner, Middx, UK. HA5 9AY.)

You will all be aware of the funding difficulties the programme has experienced this year, since BECTa and DfES funding ceased last March. Although we have continued to give practical support and advice to all our providers of VC lessons and promote their VC programmes to schools across the UK and internationally, through the website, and other written materials, to ensure there **was** a programme for schools, RBC's and LEA's to use this year, the costs associated with identifying and supporting colleagues and also supporting and troubleshooting the increasing numbers of new inexperienced schools accessing

these programmes for the first time, have been considerable. It has been a 7 day a week task, and resulted in a large financial loss.

This has been a particularly difficult period for colleagues and schools, as new connectivity options, and various new bridging options have become available, creating new technical issues each day and a considerable amount of background support has been necessary in many instances to ensure a successful outcome for both school and lesson provider. Schools using the JVCS bridge (an excellent facility, but sometimes a little inconvenient), still account for a very small number of overall VC activity, but account for a disproportionate amount of additional work and support, per school. Getting schools in some areas registered is still problematic, time consuming, and confusing.

Sometimes there has been a steep learning curve, but happily, as a result of background support and advice and ensuring testing and communication has taken place, the failure and disappointment rate has been kept to a minimum. Several RBC's and LEA's have been helped to take part in their first VC activities outside their local area, through direct support to individual schools and the availability of suitable lessons and support for the far end teachers involved.

However, the financial cost of providing this direct support and advice has greatly exceeded any small amounts of income and sponsorship that we have been able to identify.

Sadly as predicted, some providers of VC lessons have been forced to suspend their VC programmes during the year because of difficulties with staff availability, space, and admin support. However, we have also managed to identify and give practical support to some new providers of VC lessons who will be able, in time and with support, to offer an increasing variety of new VC opportunities for schools.

Proper funding for providers of VC lessons and for Global-Leap is essential if the VC content programme, practical support programme and international programme can continue to be available to meet the growing demands from schools.

Direct practical support for individual international colleagues has enabled many UK schools to make their first VC link outside of the UK

Without this support and the established VC programmes and continued support for those programmes, the new schools and their RBC's would have struggled to find VC opportunities to use their new equipment over the last 12 months. The enormous cost to Global-Leap of sustaining this programme and the many opportunities made available for schools through the programme are generally not acknowledged or recognised by most RBC's or LEA's (with a couple of exceptions). Many schools, incorrectly assume that the support and help and many of the international and MFL opportunities they like to use, comes for

“free”. Nothing happens by magic, and there is no such thing as “free” connectivity either!!

Please remember that VC activities should not be recorded.

This project and the support it gives to schools and the other colleagues we work with, has not been funded since March '05.

This programme should not be represented as the work of any LEA or RBC unless by prior consultation and agreement they have made some financial contribution or direct sponsorship to the programme.

In an effort to try to address these matters, we have continued to explore all options this year.

Subscription is an option we have been considering. Like any club, or group of like-minded enthusiasts, whether the National Trust, the Girl Guides, or your local Music Society or Gardening Club, some sort of membership seems to be necessary, to try and identify some sort of basic level of funding to enable the programme to be sustainable. We cannot support you or provide and support a VC programme for free, any longer.

We also would like to ensure that our network of schools using VC remains useful. If schools do not update their details or have registered invalid addresses, then “communication” (the basis of all successful VC activity) is impossible, and those schools are not proactive. We want our International Network of Staff Rooms to be up to date, useful and include proactive schools.

Global-Leap was started to enable proactive schools to find each other. We would like our schools to be able to work with proactive colleagues in other locations. The network should be more than simply “a list” or a directory.

Effective videoconferencing requires a great deal more than simply the purchase of a piece of equipment and somewhere to plug it into, as many a school has discovered to its ongoing frustration and cost.

Please watch out for more news on this.

Other VC News.

Belfast Institute, after many months of planning, finally came up with some dates and times for their first venture into delivering content for other schools. As soon as we received the information, from Paul McGladdery, the events went up on the website, and in view of the topic of the proposed VC, “The Titanic” the obvious first customers had to be, of course in Southampton and New York. Suitable proactive schools were quickly located by Global-Leap, and the sessions booked up.

The feed back following the VC's in February has been positive and we look forward to a repeat programme from Belfast.

The VC subject options, now available from the **National Portrait Gallery** has now reached some 12 or 13 subjects. This has meant extending the fields available on the website, to avoid confusion!! If you haven't looked recently, I would urge you to check these new programmes out. As well as the well known and ever popular Famous People sessions, and Tudors, Stuarts and Victorians, the NPG also include sessions on Votes for Women, Images of Power from Divine Rights to Parliamentary Democracy, and Human Rights and Medicine through Time.

The **National Maritime Museum** have also introduced a new session (starting this week on Wednesday 22nd!) about the **Armada**, and Sir Francis Drake. If you have enjoyed meeting Dan Pew, Tudor sailor, you will enjoy this session too. There are still two Trim the Cat sessions for THIS week for key stage one classes. Also Slavery sessions are still available.

Museum of London have two **Black Death** sessions still available for NEXT week.

Check out also the **Aztec** sessions and **History of Medicine** sessions.

I am regularly asked for sessions about the Holocaust. The **Anne Frank House** has just three sessions available over the next few months. These opportunities are quite rare, because the museum is very small, and has very limited facilities/staff to offer these opportunities, so please ensure that these scarce sessions are not wasted. Please note, these particular sessions are only available to schools able to make a direct point to point ISDN connection, and dates/times offered are not flexible.

Our ongoing CPD Trans Atlantic **Literacy Programme** involving teachers at three UK, Global-Leap Project Managed Primary Schools, and Elementary Schools in the USA is continuing. Teachers are collaborating to learn more about each other's classroom practice and methods in the teaching of literacy.

As part of another project, four of our Project Managed primary schools have been recommended to be included in a **Read Across America** programme, as a pilot this year.

Last summer's very successful **Human Rights** programme developed in collaboration with John Blaser, is being repeated this year.

The first session of this years series took place in February, looking at the Genocide in Cambodia. The programmes will continue through March and into April.

This year we have restricted the sessions to involve just 2 UK schools and 2 US schools for each of the sessions. The students will be working closely with each other in between each of the VC sessions to explore the issues discussed.

Many new schools continue to take advantage of the opportunity to explore the potential of their new VC facility in a relaxed and straightforward **First VC** or **Inset** session to my studio. I really would recommend that schools try this opportunity to help them to feel confident and consider the classroom issues that they may not have thought of. Please telephone me to discuss, and arrange a mutually convenient date/time for your lesson or twilight session.

If you have a lot of new staff, please consider arranging a twilight session to introduce these staff to the possibilities for projects they could develop using your probably expensive but underused VC facility. **Remember that you can use your schools e-learning credits to buy some project support for your school.**

This week I have taught students in rooms where I could only see the back of the student's heads, students I could barely hear, and teachers who were too nervous to speak, let alone stand where I could see them.....

I'm used to this, but please don't subject our hard pressed museum and international colleagues to this sort of thing!!!

Please ensure you have sorted these issues out, **before** you book a session to a colleague in a museum/gallery, or an international colleague who has given up their time for you.

All teachers/students are shy/nervous to begin with....

The value of presenting a relaxed and successful VC to a new teacher/class is of lasting value for your future project development. Presenting something complicated, that doesn't work to a new teacher, will have the opposite effect.

They won't want to do it again! Please don't choose to make your **first VC** an international location or to a foreign language session. If you haven't sorted out the technical issues, and the practical issues, you will be wasting your teacher's time, and more importantly, the international colleague's time. They won't want to offer you a second opportunity if you waste their time. Remember, these colleagues give their time voluntarily. I have a responsibility to these colleagues to ensure that new schools do not create additional work for them.

Wait until you are confident that you and your students know what they are doing.

Please watch carefully for news regarding funding for the project, and please, please continue to support us, so that we can support you.

A quick count through the diary for March tells me that about 65 VC sessions are currently booked from the content programmes. There are still sessions available across all key stages.

In addition to these sessions, some 40+ additional sessions and CPD and presentations will also be delivered from my studio. These sessions will not feature on the website. Many of these are to support colleagues in international locations.

News from some Global-Leap supported International schools.

“We are a primary school in the south of Poland. It is a big school with many classes on each level. Our pupils start learning English when they are 8 so at the age of 11 or 12 some of them are really good at English and they need something more than just a book on their lessons of English. Last year I found out that there was such a possibility given to teachers of English by Mike Griffith and his equipment. I felt lucky when I got a videophone from another Polish teacher (from Lodz) supported in all her undertakings by Mike Griffith. The videophone, whose owner is Mike`s organization, opened "the window to the world" at my school. I found partners in Spain, Germany and Finland and made the first videoconferences. It is absolutely fantastic and amazing to see how my kids fight to be communicative and well understood by their friends from other schools in the world. They still keep on asking me about the next and the next meetings. But the most wonderful thing is to observe!

those who has not been good at English so far. The possibility to use real English gives them the necessary impulse to learn the language. Besides, they can believe in their abilities and language skills. They can see the world, they can hear the world, they can talk to the world. It is a huge thing both for them and for me. Thank you, Mike. You do a wonderful job for all of us from all the schools regularly supported with your help and equipment. You are our "window to the world". Thanks a lot.”

Beata Wrona, Poland

“Just to say thank you so much for all your support during the last two years. It really was you who opened doors to Bertha-von-Suttner-Realschule in Cologne/Germany and so we called the joint website of our first EU comenius school project [/www.comenius-openingdoors.com./](http://www.comenius-openingdoors.com/)

We wouldn't have found our partners in the UK, Norway and Spain without your support.

We also thank you very much for giving a helping hand any time we struggled with technical problems.

And we must not forget all your suggestions making our video conferences more effective.

Best of all is replacing our own very poor equipment with your equipment loan (polycom viewstation) offering unbelievable possibilities to improve videoconferencing in the classroom”.

Daniela (16): Videoconferencing really has improved my English skills.

Milena (15): I have got a lot more self confidence in English, now.

Markus (16): We have made many friends since taking part in the videoconferencing in the classroom project.

Oliver (16): The new loan equipment by Global-Leap makes our video conferences much more effective because we now can show prepared presentations to our partners. High quality of picture and sound.

Michael, **Germany**.

And from Olga in **Moscow**:

“The possibility which gave us Global-leap project, when we join the program is very important for us. Now we can use videoconferencing method in our projects and can take part in new different projects. Videoconferencing on real time with students from different countries made our school life much more interesting, bright and amusing for our students. We call it learning with fun.

Sometimes during videoconferences we discussed serious problems and sometimes we like to show our friends our national dishes like pancakes. After having Polycom Viewstation and connecting with schools around the world with the same station we have a better quality of our videoconferences and the more students are involved in this projects. Can you imagine Mock Trial project when students from our school are prosecutors in the judge, and American students are defenders and we have a real case connecting with our school life. It is very important to improve students knowledge about law, their communicating skills and English language practice. Working with this program we start discussing very serious problems like Youth problems around the world with youth conference in Washington and join Global –Nomads group projects. We took part in International Debates project with American and Italian students. And discussed such theme as Crusades and different religious views on it. Also our students can have video lessons with professionals from Greenwich Observatory on real time videoconferencing lesson organized by Global-Leap program. They don't have a real possibility to come to London and to go to Greenwich Observatory but this program gave them a real chance to visit the museum and to talk to specialist on Astronomy.

Global-leap program give teachers and students from schools all over the world a great chance to communicate, to use Internet, to improve their skills. Students can feel themselves citizens of the world not only of their country.”

You will be able to read the full stories on the website.

If I have forgotten to include reference to your particular project, please excuse the accidental omission. I'm juggling an awful lot of plates....

Many thanks,

Mike

Mike Griffith (Teacher/Adviser/Consultant "Videoconferencing in the Classroom")

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<http://www.global-leap.com>

Global-Leap.com website is a resource for teachers and part of the "Videoconferencing in the Classroom Project" which has received funding from the DfES. The project does not represent any resellers of videoconference equipment.

My Telephone Contact Number:+44 (0)20 8866 6036

Videoconference Help and Support for schools (Technical and Curriculum content and application).

Lessons and Testing on Request, School partners and International Links, Museums and Galleries.

Global Leap Automated Videoconference Test Facility ISDN +44 (0) 20 8426 2194

IP Automated Test 80.68.51.35 (recommended 128K)

To arrange a face to face videoconference test telephone: +44 (0)208866 6036 and ask to make an appointment