



Teaching
SMARTer



"Pixels Affect Perception"

A Dozen Ways to Use Skype in Your Classroom

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How did I get started with Skype? I was working at a very small private school as the grade 5/6 teacher. I signed my class of 10 up for a webcast where Taylor Swift was going to be interviewed on the topic of Literacy to promote her newest album RED (Read Every Day). Schools could sign up and receive a live link allowing them to stream in and watch the live interview with Taylor. Unsure and unfamiliar, but curious about the whole thing, I clicked the link and we morphed into this New York studio and were instantly part of the hustle, bustle, and excitement. As a young, brandnew teacher, I was instantly sold on using streaming services like Skype and Adobe Connect to bring the world into my classroom.

Streaming is what I bought, and my students' expressions were the receipts!

Here's the link to that Taylor Swift live-to-air. <http://bit.ly/skypetaylorswift>

Four years later, I have compiled a list of a dozen ways I've used Skype in my classroom. Before we jump in, one tip prior to the call is to schedule a test call first to make sure the connection works good. See point three! Each idea below is linked to a subject taught in elementary school.

FYI...

For an article written about my class and I using Skype, click here: bit.ly/skypearticle2015

For a video produced about my class and I using Skype, click here: youtu.be/IIJaxTINUTs





1. Warming Up to Skype --- Teaching Partner

One of the things I love about Skype is that calls can be across oceans or just across the hallway. That's exactly how a teaching partner and I used Skype. Nicole Crook wanted to try Skype for the first time so I did a test call with her during one of my preps. We then tried the first live Skype call with my grade 5 class and her grade 6 class. We were literally next door to each other. We chose the safe format if Mystery Animal Skype. Each class choose one animal and We took turns asking yes/no questions until one of the two classes got it.

Easy-peasy. Try it with someone in your school before you venture outside the school walls.

It was a meaningful experience to try a first time Skype call with a class right in my school.

2. Poetry Writing Unit -- Patrick de Belen

One of my earliest experience using Skype was with a very talented spoken word poet named Patrick de Belen. It worked so well that I've used him every year since to help teach my poetry units for writing. It's usually



worked where he's Skyped in, met the kids, and shared a few poems the first week. Then during the second week, my students got to share some of their poems with him, and he gave them feedback.

It was a meaningful experience to learn poetry from a poet!

Click here to see how Patrick could help your poetry program:

<http://bit.ly/skypepoetry>

3. Watercolours for Art -- Artist

For this lesson, I used Google Hangouts because the artist had a Google account and so did I. She streamed into our classroom using the Hangouts App on her Android phone. Holding her phone in left hand and pointing it to the paper with the front facing camera, she held a brush in her right hand and painted the picture. In my own classroom, I had 22 students with a clean sheet of paper, a brush, and a group set of watercolours paints. She gave the instructions and the students followed along, asking questions as they went

It was a meaningful experience to learn art from an artist!





4. Grade 5 Science ‘The Human Body’ -- Medical Doctor

In the Ontario Science curriculum, students learn about The Human Body in grade 5. A doctor's time is very busy and stepping out of the office for an inclass visit is costly and time consuming. 15 minutes on Skype is much more inviting. I scheduled a question and answer period for my students to blast the doctor with as many questions as they could think of. We used Adobe Connect and had some trouble with the connection. Adobe Connect uses Flash and the doctor's office Mac had some trouble with the signal.

It is more meaningful to learn about the human body from a doctor.

5. Media Literacy --- Business Executive

In December as the excitement of builds Christmas, I teach a Media Literacy unit. Students learn about advertising, marketing, and target audiences. This past December, I arranged for a business executive to Skype into our classroom for a conversation on how the large toy companies market and advertise popular kids toys. Eyes were glued to the screen that day.

It was a meaningful experience to learn about the how businesses target kids from a business executive who targets to kids.

6. Informational Report Writing --- Virtual Educator at a Museum

Kids love animals and I try to include them in a research writing unit at some point in the year. This year, animals were linked to an Informational Report unit. To give us an overview of some animals, I signed up for a virtual field trip through Skype Edu with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science. Kaytee Smith

(katherine.smith@naturalsciences.org) is the Coordinator of Virtual Education at the museum and she does a 45-60 minute live presentation called, ‘Meet the Unhuggables’.

Using live animals and a half dozen camera views, she introduces each animal to the students and gives time for questions. One of my students said it was so much better than reading a book or watch a YouTube video because *you could talk to this video*.

It was a meaningful experience to learn about animals for their research reports from an expert on animals who also used live animals to teach.

Find the Skype lesson here: bit.ly/meettheunhuggables





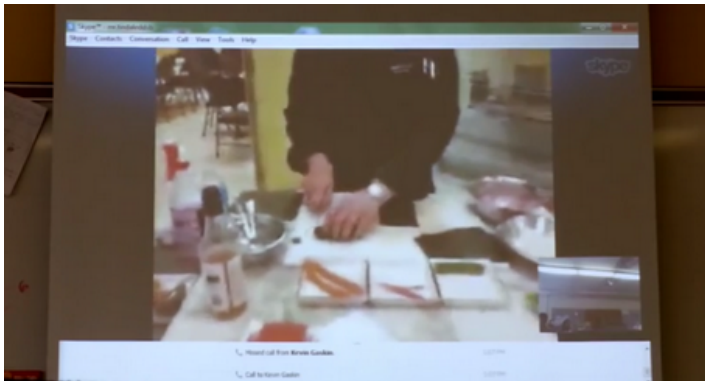
7. Decimals --- Dr. Marian Small



I saw Marian Small teach in 2014 and I approached her after the conference wondering if she'd ever taught over Skype. "I've taught many teachers through Skype, but I've never taught students." So I asked if she'd like to teach my students... and she said yes! After a few weeks of emails and a test call, she Skyped into my classroom and I got to co-teach a lesson on decimals for my grade 5 students. She did the minds-on and asked them some question that I wrote up on our whiteboard for them to remember. I then gave them a worksheet that I got to co-create with her, and then we shared the consolidation questions at the end. It was one of the neatest experiences of my teaching

career.

It was a meaningful experience to learn math from a math textbook writer.



8. Procedural Writing --- Sushi Chef

Procedural writing is one of the standard forms of writing that many teachers teach each year. I've often used recipes to teach with and this year I used a Jamie Oliver video of him cooking spaghetti to add some technology spice. They loved it but the pausing, cuing, and rewinding got

tiresome. I sought the help of a professional chef by emailing a few of the local colleges to see if someone might be willing to Skype in. Liaison College was the one that offered to help. After a few emails back and forth, teaching chef Kevin Gaskin was the one that ended up helping. He taught my students how to make sushi and instead of me pressing pause, the students could raise their hand to ask the chef directly for clarification or to repeat something. Pretty cool! <http://www.liaisondurham.com/>)

It was a meaningful experience to learn about the procedure to make sushi from a professional teaching chef.





9. Gathering Writing Ideas --- Award winning children's author

In early September as students are getting back into gear, getting them to write is often harder than getting them to read. One common complaint is that they have nothing to write about. Wondering where authors get their ideas, I went looking for help through Skype and found Donna McDine, an award winning children's author from New York. Donna, whom at the time was new to Skype, was offering live book talks for classes through Skype. I signed us up with the focus of asking a children's author, "Where do you get your ideas to write about?" It was one of the most fascinating Skype calls I've been part of.

It was a meaningful experience to learn about gathering writing ideas from an author.

At this time, Donna is no longer offering inclass Skype conversations, but can be reached at www.donnamcdine.com or follow her blog at www.donna-mcdine.blogspot.com

10. Informational Report Writing --- Marine Biologist & Founder of Wiseoceans

Coupled with idea 5, the hope of this idea was to give students a chance to ask questions and take notes from a live expert, rather than from a book or YouTube video. Cue Abbie Hine, the founder of Wiseoceans. I found Abbie through the Skype Edu site (link is below to the lesson) and when she agreed to do the call, I linked the topic with our Informational Report writing unit. The students had to choose a marine animal from Abbie's talk or a reptile from Kaytee's talk above.

It was a meaningful experience to learn about ocean animals from a marine biologist.

Find the Skype lesson here: bit.ly/wiseoceans

Contact Abbie directly at abbie@wiseoceans.com





11. Mystery Skype --- Engaging Activity to Spark Good Questioning

A Mystery Skype is essentially a Skype call mixed with mystery. Similar to a blind date where you're highly interested in finding out info about the other person, your students have to quickly and efficiently figure out where the other class is. The mystery with the call can vary from call to call but I've used it as a Mystery Skype with location and animals. The questions that are asked would start basic and narrow down as you get closer and closer. Start with hemisphere, then continent, country, state or province... In a Mystery Skype, questions can be yes/no to make it more competitive. To date, we've called classes in:

- France
- Long Island
- Montreal
- Pennsylvania
- Right in our own building as I shared in point 1

It was a meaningful experience to practice good questions with a live class somewhere in the world.

12. Holiday Traditions and Weather in Brazil --- An English teacher living in Brazil

I found Stephan Solomon through the Mystery Skype tab on the Skype Education site. The intention was to do a one time Mystery Skype but as we did our test call and emailed back and forth, we thought it would be neat to do a call where students could ask about time zones, weather, and since it was December, about holiday traditions in Brazil. I remember one boy asking if they had Christmas trees in Brazil. With a grin, he said, 'Of course!' but then proceeded to tell us that every tree was plastic because Brazil is filled with palm trees and rainforests.

It was a meaningful experience to learn about holiday traditions and climate of Brazil from a someone who lives in Brazil.





13. Pen Pals --- Pennsylvania

I found a teacher willing to do penpals 3 years ago when we both taught grade 6. Since then, she's kept grade 6 and I've had a 4/5 and a straight 5 so we've kept the relationship going. We've kept the traditional paper writing a wee mail back and forth a few times a year. How we've used Skype is to let our students meet each other face to face! We won't include pictures in the mail incase the package gets lost but Skype offers that face to face experience. We took it one step further still and used a chatroom called Todaysmeet.com to give them a chance to write back and forth in a safe, controlled setting that we set up for them. They wrote letters, met each other through Skype, and talked in real time in a chatroom.

It was a meaningful penpal experience offered with Skype.

Calls yet to make --- with lots of people to making teaching fun!

- I have a Skype call with a live penguin colony booked for April.
- I'd love to interview a basketball player and figure skater for biography writing.
- Live author visits
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

Add your own...

The form I used for our author visits is below
The permission for I used for students is also below...





Dear Speaker,

Thank you for generously giving your time to speak to my grade 5 students either in person or through streaming (Skype / Adobe Connect). I started this school year off with a unit giving students an opportunity to talk with adults about topics related to reading and writing. I'm glad that you can help!

Below are a list of questions that my students may ask you, among a few others.

1. What were some of your favourite books growing up?
2. Did you enjoy writing when you were in school? What did you enjoy writing about?
3. What was your favourite subject in school?
4. When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?
5. We are a French Immersion school. Did you enjoy French or did you learn another language in school?
6. If you could change one thing about your experience in school, what would it be?
7. As an adult, how does reading and writing help you at work?
8. In class, we've talked a lot about imagination. Does imagination help you in your profession? Can you give us an example?

Is there a short story that you'd like to read for us? You're welcome to bring it along.

Life's given you a unique perspective and a list of experiences on the topics above. We look forward to hearing about them.

Appreciatively,





Dear Parents and Guardians,

Skype is an amazing program that I'll be using to bring in guest speakers to talk with our class about ideas and experiences based on what we're studying. Because your child's face would be shown over the internet, your permission is needed for that to happen. We'll also be using Skype to give our students a chance to meet their pen pals, French authors and other guests.

If you wish for them to participate in the calls that we'll be making, please sign your consent below. If you do not wish for them to participate, they can still remain in the classroom during the call, but would be out of the sight of the camera and would not interact (ie. ask questions) with the guest speaker.

Hoping for great learning!

 I give permission for _____ to have their face shown over the internet this year.

I do not give permission for _____ to have their face shown over the internet this year.

Parent's signature

Date signed





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www.youtube.com/channel/UCxVyxscsNz4TvDysiuwrbbg

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