

HOW TO USE SKYPE IN THE CLASSROOM

(A COLLECTION OF TIPS AND EXAMPLES TO
IMPLEMENT VIDEO CONFERENCING)

**Creative Pursuits: Integrating
Technology Into 21st Century Classrooms**



October 8, 2009

Workshop Presenter: Kayleen Widdifield
kwiddifield@langleyschool.org

- **What is a video conference?**
- **What is Skype?**
- **How do I use Skype in the classroom?**
- **Will students benefit from using Skype?**
- **How will teachers benefit from using Skype?**

Internet connectivity in educational settings provides opportunities for interactive exchange and collaboration between students living on other sides of town or the other side of the planet. These synchronous, real-time discussions using free software like “Skype” can tangibly expand the walls of the traditional classroom and engage students to write, share, and communicate with an authentic audience inaccessible just a few years ago. Educators interested in helping motivate students to develop both traditional as well as twenty-first century literacy skills in the classroom can and should use audio conferencing technologies like Skype to literally plug their students into collaborative exchanges with global partners on a variety of projects. (Wesley A. Fryer http://www.wtvi.com/TEKS/05_06_articles/skype-in-the-classroom.html, 9/30/09)

What is Skype?

Skype (www.skype.com) is a software program using voice over IP, or VoIP, technology. IP stands for “internet protocol.” Cross platform, multi-lingual, and free to both download and use, Skype software permits users to make high-quality audio “phone calls” over the Internet. Skype can be readily downloaded and installed on any computer if the user has “administrative” access to install new programs. If your teacher login account at school does not have these access privileges, ask your campus network administrator to install the program for you. Teachers may want to download and try Skype first from home, and then try it at school. The slogan of Skype is “the whole world can talk for free.” The subject of this slogan includes the students in your classroom!

(Wesley A. Fryer http://www.wtvi.com/TEKS/05_06_articles/skype-in-the-classroom.html, 9/30/09)

GETTING STARTED WITH SKYPE

(Adapted from Wesley A. Fryer http://www.wtvi.com/TEKS/05_06_articles/skype-in-the-classroom.html, 9/30/09)

- After determining the microphone / audio input option to be used with Skype, download and install Skype software (www.skype.com) on a computer and launch the program to get started. Users are initially presented with a login screen and an option to create a user account. Register for a free Skype account using your email address and name. After your account is created, write down your username and password, and keep this information in a safe, secure place like your wallet. Keep all your usernames and passwords secret and safe!
- In addition to permitting VoIP conversations, Skype functions as an instant messaging software program like MSN Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger, or Yahoo Messenger. Like each one of those instant messaging programs, Skype only connects to other users running the same program (Skype) for instant messaging purposes. You cannot presently use Skype to instant message MSN, AIM, or Yahoo users.
- The best way to start using Skype is to get a friend or family member to also install the software and setup a user account. On a “real” phone or via email, exchange Skype usernames. Then in Skype, click the ADD button to enter the username and real name of your acquaintance. An instant message will be sent to your prospective “Skype buddy,” asking them to give permission for you to add them to your buddy list. Once permission is granted (by both parties) you will be able to see when your buddy is online with the Skype program running, and ready to talk over the Internet.
- To make a Skype “phone call,” click on the CONTACTS tab in Skype and click once on a contact’s entry. Click the large green phone icon at the bottom of the Skype window to place an Internet phone call to that person. You will hear a ringing sound (by default), and once the other person clicks to “answer” the call, you can begin talking!

50 Awesome Ways to Use Skype in the Classroom

30 June 2009 | <http://www.teachingdegree.org/2009/06/30/50-awesome-ways-to-use-skype-in-the-classroom/>

Skype is a free and easy way for teachers to open up their classroom and their students to a world way beyond their campus. With Skype, students can learn from other students, connect with other cultures, and expand their knowledge in amazing ways. Teachers and parents can also benefit from Skype in the classroom. Read below to learn how you can take advantage of the power of Skype in your classroom.

Dear Creative Pursuits Participants,

Please remember to give me your email address. I will email you this document so the hyperlinks will work for you! There are so many great ideas here!

Thanks,

Kayleen Widdifield

October 2009

Promoting Education

These great ideas are all about teaching students in dynamic ways.

1. [See Me, Hear Me: Skype in the Classroom](#). Read how these students had the opportunity to chat with an author of the book they studied via Skype.
2. [Videoconferencing in the Classroom with Skype](#). This teacher used the movie "Hoop Dreams" to help teach about social inequality, then was able to get the executive producer of the movie, Gordon Quinn, to participate in a Skype session with her class.
3. [The Many Roles of Skype in the Classroom](#). These amazing 7th graders used Skype as a part of their history project that resulted in their collaboration with the curator of the National Museum in Canada.
4. **Field trips**. If students aren't able to participate in a field trip due to factors such as budgetary or distance constraints, use Skype to [bring the field trip into the classroom](#).
5. [Using Skype in the languages classroom](#). Find out how this teacher uses Skype to help her students study foreign languages from native speakers.
6. [Skyping in Mike Artell- Illustrator & Author](#). This inspirational lesson has an illustrator working directly with 6th graders to work on the art of illustrating and story creation.
7. **After school help**. Use Skype as a tool to provide after school help to students needing extra attention. Tutors, teachers, or librarians can be available at set times in the afternoons for student access.
8. ["Not education as usual," with Skype and author Cory Doctorow](#). This class was practicing how to convince the school board to allow a controversial book to be taught in their school and had the opportunity to Skype with the author of the book to help promote their case.
9. **Interviews**. Whether you have students [conducting interviews](#) or your class is interviewed, Skype facilitates the interview process. Individual students can interview other teachers or school staff, sending the Skype feed to the classroom for all to watch.
10. **Guest lecturers**. Have [guest lecturers](#) come to your classroom via Skype.

Promoting Community

Using Skype in the classroom can promote communities within a school or globally.

11. [Inclusion — helping a classmate join the classroom from home](#). This blog post explains how a 4th grade class used Skype to help a classmate with leukemia become a part of the classroom from her home.
12. **Connect special needs students**. Students who may have to be out of the classroom due to special needs or IEP requirements don't have to miss any special events in the classroom with Skype.

13. [Blue tongue lizard, vegemite and cricket. What the...????](#). This Australian teacher describes her class' experience connecting with a Korean class via Skype.
14. **Foreign culture lessons.** Skype allows students to see first hand what people's homes, schools, clothing, weather, and more looks like. If a festival takes place, Skype can bring it to your classroom too.
15. **Connect with families from around the world.** Form friendships that can easily bridge distance gaps with Skype.
16. [Skype Calls for e-Twinning in L2](#). Find out how this teacher brought two classes together that had been Twittering all semester when they finally got to meet "face-to-face" with Skype.
17. [Best Day Ever!](#). This teacher describes three Skype calls her class had in one day—the most exciting being with a class in a different time zone with whom her students had been collaborating on a project through Google docs. With Skype, the students got to work at the same time and actually see each other, too.
18. **Present a performance.** Whether your class puts on a play, demonstrates a science experiment, or presents the results of a class project, share the fruits of their works with other classes, parents, or other interested people.
19. **Share field trips with others.** If your class goes out for a field trip, see about connecting with parents or other classes to share your classes' experience.
20. ['Slumdog Millionaire' inspiration uses Skype to help kids in India learn](#). Find out how Skype is connecting grannies in the UK with children in India for both a cultural connection and an educational benefit.

Skype Ideas for Teachers and Parents

Teachers and parents can benefit from Skype in the classroom, too.

21. **Professional development.** Teachers can use Skype to access professional development opportunities, such as watching [conference presentations](#).
22. **Share students' work with parents.** Let parents get a first-hand look at what their children are doing with Skype.
23. **Conference with parents.** Whether a parent has to miss a regular conference or a concern comes up that requires speaking with a parent, Skype can provide an opportunity to [connect with a parent](#) that may not otherwise be available for a conference.
24. [Innovative teacher uses Skype and Wikis to involve parents](#). See how this teacher helped share information with parents using Skype and the PBS program, [Growing Up Online](#).
25. **Collaborate with other teachers.** Who says Skype has to be fun just for the kids? With Skype, [teachers can collaborate](#) on ideas, projects, and more.
26. **Share travel experiences.** If you will be traveling during the school year, arrange for your substitute to connect with you via Skype and you can share the experience with your class.
27. **Receive teaching feedback.** Have an experienced or mentor teacher watch you teach via Skype and receive valuable feedback.
28. **Be available to students.** If your school is suddenly closed for a while or if you want to set up conference hours for students, use Skype to allow students to [contact you](#).
29. **Tutor former students.** If a student has moved away or you want to offer [accredited online degrees](#) or just moved up from your class, you can be available for tutoring (for free or for a fee) via Skype.
30. **Bring busy parents into the classroom.** A busy parent who has knowledge to share with the classroom may be more likely to be able to make the time for a presentation if she or he can do so with Skype rather than having to leave work and come to the school.

Resources for Getting Started and Using Skype

Find out how you can take advantage of Skype with the advice below.

31. [Using Skype in the Classroom \(or just learning how to use it!\)](#). This teacher provides the basics to get Skype set up with your class.
32. [Skype in the Classroom](#). This article offers help on ways to set up Skype, tips for finding other teachers on Skype, technical obstacles, and more.
33. [Skype Tutorials for Teachers, Authors, Librarians](#). Find a handful of video and text tutorials here to get you going with Skype.

34. [Classroom Collaboration with Skype](#). This primer offers help with using Skype, connecting with others, and ideas for using it in the classroom.
35. [eduwikius – SKYPE](#). This wiki contains plenty of information about using Skype in the classroom and also provides links to additional resources.
36. [A Skype from the classroom](#). Find information on videoconferencing in general, the pros and cons of using Skype, school project ideas, and more here.
37. [Using skype in the classroom](#). Learn from this teacher's experience as she describes using Skype and how to best prepare your class and yourself for a great educational opportunity.
38. [Skype is a Valuable Educational Tool](#). This podcast explains why teachers should use Skype and puts some nasty rumors about Skype to rest.
39. [Using Skype in schools – some tips](#). Read these helpful tips, including suggestions on using Skype usernames at school and home.
40. [Skype: Talk to Anyone, Anywhere for Free](#). Watch this "techtorial" or print the text version to learn the basics of Skype.

Finding Others Using Skype

Here are a few ways to connect with others using Skype in classrooms and to promote education.

41. [ePALS](#). Sign up for a free account here, then find other teachers and classes around the globe using Skype.
42. [Skype an Author Into Your Library or Classroom](#). This site will connect schools with authors through Skype. Short sessions are free, while longer sessions are subject to a fee set by each author.
43. [Skype in Schools](#). List yourself or find others in this directory just for educators seeking Skype collaboration.
44. [Skype in the Classroom – The EduSkypers Phonebook](#). Scroll through these comments to find other teachers from around the world looking to connect through Skype. The most recent are at the very end of the list.
45. [Global SchoolNet](#). This organization works to connect teachers and students around the world through [forensic science programs](#). Browse to find something of interest or start your own project.
46. [TakingITGlobal](#). Another project-based organization, this one focuses on youth looking to make positive global changes.
47. [Around the World with 80 Schools](#). This teacher is hoping to connect schools around the world through short Skype sessions.
48. [Skype in the Classroom](#). Join this community to find other teachers seeking Skype connections.
49. [Going Global – School Skype Author Visits](#). Linda Lowery and Richard Keep, children's book authors and illustrators, are available for Skype interviews for a fee.
50. [Mixer](#). This group helps connect language learners seeking partners to practice their language skills via Skype.

Teaching Example #1

The Many Roles of Skype in the Classroom

Sunday, February 15th 2009 by [Neil Stephenson](#)close **Author:** Neil Stephenson **Name:** Neil Stephenson

Email: neil.s@calgaryscienceschool.com

Site: <http://thinkinginmind.blogspot.com/>

About: You can find me on twitter: [@neilstephenson](#) [See Authors Posts \(3\)](#)

[Guest Posts](#)

GUEST POST BY NEIL STEPHENSON.

Neil Stephenson is a grade 6/7 teacher in Calgary, Alberta and has been his district's 1:1 PD coordinator for the last three years. Neil speaks regularly about technology and inquiry based learning, and was chosen in 2007 as a Apple Distinguished Educator. You can follow Neil's blog at [Thinking In Mind](#).

Last year my students participated in a year-long, Humanities Project called the Cigar Box Project. In a nut shell, the students walked through Canadian History by “remixing” historical images and artifacts into their own creations, designed to express their understanding while allowing students to use technology to build a holistic understanding of history. Along the way, students crafted historical digital stories, as well as creating voice-recorded, self-assessments that accompanied each Cigar Panel. The project was inspired by the online exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and after our students created their “cigar box panels” last year, the Museum asked us if we would be willing to link our student creations with the National Museum. The kids were pretty excited! There are a lot more pieces to project, and if you are interested, you can read more about the project here and here.

One of the pieces of the project last year was Skypeing with Sheldon Posen, the curator at the National Museum. Since all of our students' work (sketchbooks, iMovies, Cigar Panels, self-assessments, etc) was posted on student blogs, Sheldon was able to see and comment on the work. He immediately wanted to talk with the kids, not about his work, but about theirs, which was amazing. Using Skype, Sheldon was able to encourage my students, provide feedback on how the student creations compared to the historic panels, and speak about the curiosity the panels instilled in him. It was so powerful to see my grade 7 students fearlessly engaging with a PhD in Canadian History about their work!

This year I am teaching the project again, with some changes and improvements. One new layer is that another school just outside of our city has agreed to work through the same project at the same time as our students. The other teacher and myself use Skype (almost daily!) to collaborate, share resources, plan and track the progress of the project. I speak more with the other teacher through Skype than I do with most teachers in my school! Over the last 4 months, our students have been sharing resources, images and peer feedback through Google Docs, as well as providing providing editing suggestions through Voicethread.

All of this has been possible because Skype makes it so easy for the other teacher and myself to collaborate and plan, so much that it feels like we are in the same building.

I have also used Skype to introduce and teach parts of the project to the other school. Similar to Skypeing with Sheldon last year, this year I have become the expert that walks the other students through parts of the project. We have also created some Skype accounts for our students, and have planned some upcoming collaboration times for our students to use Skype to share the historical understanding they are building. As you can see, Skype has played a key role in the success of the project and how I now plan my work on a regular basis.

www.isteconnects.org/2009/02/15/the-many-roles-of-skype-in-the-classroom/

Teaching Example #2

See Me, Hear Me: Skype in the Classroom

Chat with authors, record podcasts, and cover reference—all online and for free—with Skype

By Carolyn Foote -- School Library Journal, 1/1/2008

<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6515247.html>

"Who's your favorite character?" "Where do you get ideas?" Imagine your students having the opportunity to ask an author these questions directly—without breaking your library budget. You can do this—and a whole lot more—with the free Internet telephony service called Skype (www.skype.com).

Through Skype, my students at Westlake High School in Austin, TX, were able to "visit" with Cynthia Leitich Smith, award-winning YA author of *Rain Is Not My Indian Name* (HarperCollins, 2001) and *Tantalize* (Candlewick, 2007). Smith, who is based in Texas, believes that events like these "reinforce the idea that books and technology don't have to compete. They can be celebrated together," she says.

Because her books frequently center on Native American themes, Smith has discovered other benefits of a direct, online connection with students. "Mainstream images of modern-day Indians are murky to nonexistent," says the author, herself a member of the Muscogee Creek nation. "So it occurred to me that one of the most effective and positive ways to bust the inaccurate stereotypes of Indian people as "primitive" was to embrace technologies that would help me connect with young readers." That resonated with my students, including Callie Wendlandt. "When you read the book, you form your own opinions," she says. "But when you talk to the author, you get to hear her opinions and understand the book better."

In November 2007, Wendlandt, along with teacher Kristy Robins's sophomore English class, "met" Smith in our school computer lab, where I had previously created several Skype accounts. After downloading the free software, Skype users can talk, chat, or make calls for free to others on Skype. (Calls to non-Skype numbers cost about two cents a minute.) For purposes of the class, we opted for a text chat.

After setting up a private chat between Smith and myself, I invited four students into the conversation. These kids were the scribes, responsible for posting questions to Smith on behalf of the class, while the others viewed the proceedings via LCD projector. We saved our chat for later review and discussion.

The students liked the immediacy of the session, in which they discussed how Smith created her characters, how she deals with writer's block, and whether or not she likes garlic (she does!) "You were able to interact directly with the author instead of having to wait on an email," says sophomore Emily Furnish. And what could be better than chatting in class? Swetha Kotamraju, another student, says Skype is an

ideal tool because teens already “use instant messaging and are comfortable with it.” And “it’s easier for shy kids to ask questions,” says Furnish.

What about having students record their conversations with authors or other interview subjects for later broadcast? An ideal springboard for podcasting, Skype has some built-in recording features. However, Australian educator Chris Betcher, creator of the Virtual Staffroom podcast (virtualstaffroom.net), suggests using additional tools, such as Audio Hijack Pro and GarageBand (both Mac only), and the free, Web-based programs Audacity and Levelator to reduce noise and add special effects. You can hear an example of a Skype podcast that we made for this article on Betcher’s site Virtual Staffroom (virtualstaffroom.net/2007/11/22/episode-19-beyond-the-filters).

Skype can also be used for book discussions with other schools or libraries. Clarence Fisher, a teacher in a remote area of Manitoba, Canada, is using Skype along with a blog to help his students discuss S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* with eighth graders in Barbara Barreda’s class in Los Angeles. (Publishers, too, are getting into the act. See Annick Press’s Skype program in “The Buzz,” pp. 26–27.)

Skype can even enhance reference service. Ohio University, for example, offers Skype-based research assistance at kiosks in its Athens library. Patrons can also call in questions from off campus. This service could work just as well in a K–12 setting, especially in districts with limited library staff. Even within a single campus, Skype reference helps put a “face” on library services and is less cumbersome than email. You might post your Skype ID and extend virtual reference service to students one or two evenings a week.

If you’re considering Skype for your school, you’ll need to decide first where to install it: in the library or media center, on teacher workstations, or in the computer lab. Some schools may balk at installing the program at all, due to bandwidth or security concerns. In that case, propose using Skype on stations with restricted access and assign student “scribes,” as we did, to do the actual posting. Or students could use one supervised computer to contact an expert with the librarian’s assistance. There may also be privacy concerns related to student accounts. Anne Smith, an English teacher at Arapahoe High School in Littleton, CO, had her kids register on Skype with a certain naming protocol, so they could easily identify classmates who might contact them. As with any tool, we need to help students develop good practices around using it.

By the time you read this article, my library will be closed for renovation, so I’ll have to set up temporary shop in another media center. Even at a distance, I will remain accessible to teachers, thanks to Skype. When they have a question, they can initiate a chat right from the classroom. With my webcam, they can even see me during our conversation. If I happen to be unavailable, the text chat “holds” the message until I return.

Work environments in the 21st century demand connectivity. I think our schools are no different. Our students must learn to communicate effectively in an ever-more global environment, and they need our help. You can start the conversation with Skype.

THE 6 BEST FREE VIDEO CONFERENCING APPLICATIONS

<http://www.voip-sol.com/6-best-free-video-conferencing-apps-services-tools/>

9/30/09



[ooVoo](#)

It might have one of those abstract Web 2.0 names, but ooVoo is a free video conferencing service not to be laughed at. It's a free download that can run on Windows and Mac OS X (with a Linux version in the offing). The free version of ooVoo lets you video conference with up to 3 people or you can upgrade to chat with up to 6 people. If your contact isn't online you can also leave a recorded video message, which is a very handy feature. Other non-video features in ooVoo include VoIP calls, IM, text chat and person-to-person file transfer. In all, ooVoo is most definitely worth trying out especially if you can foresee yourself only ever video conferencing with one or maybe two other people at a time.



[SightSpeed](#)

I've been a longtime fan of SightSpeed, even in the face of stiff competition from arch rival Skype. What I like about SightSpeed is that this application, which runs without issue on Windows, Mac OS X and Linux, offers so much: IM, VoIP and, of course, video chat all come as standard. Free video conferencing with SightSpeed is a real highlight; it's fast, crisp and responsive. The free version allows person-to-person video conferencing only but this can be upgraded to a 4-way video conference by signing up to the monthly plan.



[Skype](#)

This ubiquitous softphone offers VoIP, IM and video chat in one application. As this is a post about free video conferencing, I decided to place Skype behind SightSpeed simply because the option to upgrade is not there. Unlike SightSpeed, where you can upgrade and video conference with 4 people simultaneously, Skype is limited to free person-to-person video chat. It is free, however, and does work well on Windows, Mac OS X and Linux.



- **PalBee**

The great thing about PalBee is that it is completely web-based, therefore there are no downloads or installs: all you need is an account with PalBee and a webcam connected to your computer. Once you have got your meeting room setup it's just a matter of sharing the URL with up to five of your friends. The one caveat is that there is a one hour time limit on using the meeting room. PalBee has a great recording capability built right in that lets you record a conference and then embed it on your blog or profile, or simply share with contacts. If you don't mind the one hour limit and plan on conducting relatively small conferences (< 5 participants), then PalBee is definitely worth a shot.



- **Wengomeeting**

The Wengomeeting audio and video conference service is developed by the same French company behind the well known [Skype alternative](#), WengoPhone. Like PalBee, Wengomeeting is a browser-based service that uses Flash technology, which means that it can run on Windows, Mac OS X or Linux. Getting a meeting organised is fairly easy: simply use the online form to enter contact details and they will be given all information pertinent to the conference. Just as with PalBee, Wengomeeting will accommodate up to 5 users simultaneously.



- **iChat**

What list of free video conferencing apps, services and tools would be complete without Apple's iChat? While it may only run on Mac OS X, iChat lets you chat, talk and video conference with contacts on the AIM network. While iChat is an accomplished text and voice app, it excels at video. You can video conference with up to 3 others simultaneously with iChat, and it doesn't cost a thing. That sounds great, but iChat has other tricks up its sleeve. For instance, you can apply custom backdrop images or video to make it look like you are in a meeting room or on the beach. As well as this, iChat also has built in screen sharing support and capability to share any file supported by their Quick Look technology. Do I like iChat. Yep, I most certainly do. Is it the panacea of free video conferencing? No, not for everyone. But if you are looking for free multi attendee video conferencing on a Mac, iChat is pretty good indeed!