



Collaborative Project Guidelines:

Collaborative Projects (CPs) are a unique way to make use of many of the affordances of the Internet. Students are able to research and develop information literacy, collaborate with peers asynchronously and synchronously, and demonstrate their learning through varied forms of online publishing. As a relatively recent phenomenon, many teachers are attracted to the allure of extending their traditional research projects on the WWW. But for all the potential benefits it can offer, there are also pitfalls and potholes which need to be avoided along the way. As with all worthwhile academic endeavors, CP's require lots of advanced planning and groundwork before students ever begin to work online. There are also controversial issues regarding the filtering of content and the monitoring of student activity while working the Web. Most of all, there is the issue of following through on your commitment once you design or join a project - there is a tendency to think there are no ramifications for dropping out of site simply because classes have never met face to face. Nothing could be further from the truth. Honor your commitments! In the end, the necessary preparation is more than worth the rewards you will reap with your children. Consider these guidelines as you embark on your own CP experience:

Do

1. Make sure there is a natural connection between your class work and the CP
2. Collect signed parental permission slips to take your class online (know your school division's AUP!)
3. Plan ahead for your CP:
 - teach lessons on netiquette, information literacy and copyright law ahead of time
 - select a project based on how well it fits into your existing curriculum
 - contact the sponsoring teacher ahead of time via email and phone and be sure you are comfortable
 - know the guidelines, timeline, teacher supports, contact person and what is expected from students
 - make sure there is a website for the project with all pertinent information therein
 - write objectives for each step of the project
 - know ahead of time what product your students will produce
 - have your plans for assessment in place before the project begins
4. Be sure your CP is in your lesson plans
5. Follow through on your commitment to the project
6. Keep in touch with the project sponsor periodically during the CP's duration
7. Follow up your CP with in-class activities which summarize the learning experience
8. Design your own project for others to join once you are experienced participating in CPs
9. Run a mailing list to facilitate communication among participating teachers
10. Use established teacher mailing lists to announce your project and recruit interested teachers
11. Have a website online for the project so interested teachers can see what you have to offer
12. Include synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication – (e.g. email, chats and MOOs)
13. Be flexible
14. Always keep your goal in mind - it will help you through the difficult days

Don't

1. Bite off more than you can chew - start small!
2. Join a project which may commercially exploit students
3. Drop out of a project once you join
4. Allow students to participate in a project without your constant guidance and support
5. Design your own project until you have participated in at least one other CP yourself

-Walter McKenzie