

Distance Learning Column

"Videoconferencing in the Classroom" is a new publication to be made available to all schools by the UK Department for Education and Skills

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Teachers throughout the UK can now see how videoconferencing can enhance learning thanks to a new publication launched in May called 'Videoconferencing in the Classroom.' The guide is written by Devon Curriculum Services and sponsored by the Department for Education and Skills, (DfES), the British Educational Communications and Technology agency, (BECTa), and Global Video-Com, (GVC), a leading video conferencing provider in the education field.

Polycom, the leading provider of voice, video, data and web communication solutions, has supplied its ViewStation videoconferencing systems for the research of the publication.

More schools adopting videoconferencing

The number of schools that are adopting videoconferencing is continuing to increase and this guide has been put together to illustrate the full potential of the technology as a communication tool in the classroom.

Advocates of videoconferencing within the education sector believe that the technology not only improves the presentation and communication skills of students, but also their knowledge of world culture and current affairs as they link to other pupils and experts throughout the world.

Case studies written by teachers

The guide includes case studies written by teachers in Devon and Slough and covers all aspects of videoconferencing, including details of the equipment needed to operate it and suggestions of how to incorporate it into subjects across the curriculum.

The publication also highlights how videoconferencing can be an extremely valuable tool in today's current climate, supporting collaboration between schools, helping deliver minority subjects and supporting the professional development of staff.

Teachers can order a free copy of the guide (£3 for posting and packaging) from Devon Curriculum Services, www.devon.gov.uk/dcs. Extracts from the book can also be seen on the BECTa website at www.becta.org.uk. Case studies can be read at www.global-leap.com, the website of Global-Leap.

The Global Leap project

Global Leap is a videoconferencing project offering help and support to schools and an educational videoconferencing directory and web site based at Arbour Vale School in Slough.

The launch of the publication "Video Conferencing in the Classroom" was organized to coincide with the second birthday of Global Leap (see The Global leap 2002 day story on pages 2-3).

There was a six-point videoconference with links to schools throughout the Commonwealth, Robben Island, a Museum in South Africa, Ecole Sanquer and a primary school in Brittany. There was also a link with an actress playing the part of Queen Victoria from the Public Record Office in London to discuss what she did as part of her Golden Jubilee 1887.

The Global Leap 2002 day was financed and supported by the UK Department of Education and Skills and arranged by Mike Griffith, Assistant Headteacher at Arbour Vale School and director of Arbour Vale's Global Leap project.

VC radically alters the way children interact

Tim Arnold, Devon's adviser for media education, commented on the handbook: "Harnessing the newest technology to support their learning in schools is a challenge to which schools must now rise. Videoconferencing offers enormous potential for enriching children's learning in ways that cannot easily be achieved by other means. It can radically alter the way children interact with one another and with the world outside the classroom walls. We hope this book will help teachers exploit this powerful learning tool."

The benefits of using videoconferencing in the classroom are endless

Jane Morato, Account Manager at Global Video-Com said: "The benefits of using videoconferencing in the classroom are endless and we are seeing a definite increase in the number of schools that recognise this. Pupils can learn about subjects in a lively and interesting manner and hook up to locations to talk to specialist and expert teachers in addition to other pupils all over the world.

"Examples include links to the natural history and science museum in London, divers at the Reef Education Centre in Australia, and even to NASA to talk to astronauts. ■

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