The Challenge

The Hawkesdale P12 College is set in a rural and remote location of Western Victoria. It is a Prep to Year 12 School drawing from middle to low socio economic levels and is geographically and culturally isolated.

This isolation can mean restricted access to experts because the college is far from major cities – Anne Mirtschin, a secondary teacher at the college says “it is often too expensive and time consuming to bring experts to the school”. The college wanted to understand if technology could be a solution for “bringing outside experts virtually to the school”.

“These technologies can bring the world into a remote rural school that would not have such opportunities, keeping the curriculum open and full for schools that could not otherwise offer such subjects.”

The Solution

Take the step and join a video conferencing event.

The Result

A creative and innovative expert engaged students via video conference.
The school had received as part of a Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Videoconferencing Equipment rollout a mobile Polycom video conferencing unit. Keen to use the equipment in the first week of its delivery they registered for an ELB Education video conferencing event, ‘Developing Character Through Drama’ where they would use ‘our new Polycom equipment in combination with our Interactive Whiteboard for teaching.’ Through the event they would have their students taught drama and interpreting book characters from illustrations by Ms Delightful.

The school had “had no formal moderator or PD training. They “just went in and did it!” They had to change timetabled rooms for the linkup which meant the Polycom equipment had to be moved to another room, with extra data points for both the Polycom mobile unit and the SMART Board. It took them approximately 10-15 minutes to setup the room, “but it was worth it!”

The school joined the ELB Education video conferencing event where the virtual teacher Ms Delightful simultaneously taught two classes located in different schools. She used a document camera to read the book which the students from both schools could simultaneously read on their SMART Boards. An image of her was projected via the Polycom video conferencing unit so she could talk to the students and model practices.

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The music kept playing initially and overrode Ms Delightful’s voice. However, a phone call via the helpline solved this. ELB’s helpline was great and is absolutely essential for support. The whole class listened to the story, were then broken into small groups for the purpose of creating short dramas.

“Our Year 2/3 Students learnt about building great characters through drama in a fun and meaningful way. They performed in small groups to the other schools involved. Their dramas were based on their choice of a picture shown to them by Ms Delightful. All small groups of students acted out their character roles – the shy along with the confident.

Students followed most instructions from their virtual teacher, the classroom teacher had to only intervene a few times. It took a while for students to realise that they were not watching TV but that they were to interact with the ‘teacher’ who was ‘in the monitor’ and another space altogether.” The students also learned to make pottery masks of characters and were deeply engaged with the task.

The chat function in Bridgit is good for feedback and support. The school decided it would also be useful to have their school name visible so the expert always knows who we are. Students could also wear name tags to assist the interactivity.

“The great teaching style of Ms Delightful engaged the students and kept them interested for the hour – a long time in the life of a grade 2/3 student. The students were very motivated and it improved their focus.

“We do not have drama teachers in our school, so it is up to the classroom teacher to run similar activities. However this does not occur very often. Using images and book characters was a great tie in with literacy.

“The Interactive Whiteboard and Polycom video conferencing enabled an expert with creative and innovative ideas into our classroom at no or little expense and effort. These technologies can bring the world into a remote rural school that would not have such opportunities, keeping the curriculum open and full for schools that could not otherwise offer such subjects.”

Please contact your local ELB Education Consultant to find out more:

ELB Education offers a full range of educational technology solutions to suit every educational setting. Choose from a variety of interactive and collaborative technology products to transform your classroom into an engaging and creative learning space.