



Caroline Freibauer

Zwaan was able to share the experience with students at East Northumberland Secondary School in Brighton, Ont. through video conferencing. The collaborative dance class with Ghana was a highlight for Zwaan. A teacher in Africa led a class involving students from both continents, and later, students in Canada were able to share their dances with their distant classmates.

“The technology opens our eyes to other communities and cultures,” said Zwaan. “It helps us become agents of change.”

Zwaan said the struggle and challenge of starting video conferencing are worth it. “My advice to teachers is to take risks to try out video-conferencing. It’s not going to always be pretty. I guarantee you it’s going to be messy sometimes! But that’s okay so long as we’re persistent and keep trying. We need to prepare our students for the world out there and taking risks using these technologies are real world skills and authentic learning experiences our students need to embrace.”

Zwaan’s enthusiasm for video conferencing is powerful. When I asked her to send some useful links for teachers wanting to try video conferencing, she also made some good connections to time.

“Video conferencing allows for that ability to interact and collaborate with real world experts in a two-way transmission (or even multiple site transmission) in real time and therefore provides for a deeper learning experience for everyone,” she wrote. “It’s also about giving our students a moment in time to have a voice on the global stage, and guiding them and empowering them to have a voice that makes positive change in their lives and in the lives of others around them. Video-conferencing opens a window of time to the world for our students to be agents of change, to achieve global competencies and to build bridges of inclusion.

“The other connection to time is that no time is wasted travelling long distances on the part of the expert or the students, therefore it saves time, money and travel costs by distributing live interactions between specialists and students and educators, with the added benefit that it brings the subject curriculum to life.”

Here are the links that Zwaan recommends to learn more about video-conferencing programming:

VROC: Virtual Researcher On Call (VROC) is an educational program that connects K-12 classrooms with Canadian subject matter experts for customized, interactive video calls. VROC is available to teachers across Canada at no cost (vroc.ca/en/vroc).

CILC: Centre for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) supports and advances learning through video-conferencing and other collaborative technologies (cilc.org).

CAPspace is a social networking tool for educational video-conferencing (projects.twice.cc).

Although Toronto is a hub for film in Canada, many schools can’t make the time or afford the transportation to take advantage of the city’s film festivals. **Gina Thurston** solved the dual problems of time and travel by bringing the Hot Docs festival into her school.

“I love documentaries and film festivals,” said Thurston. “Hot Docs allows you to book the films to set up in your own school.”

Hot Docs is a documentary film festival that takes place at the Ted Rogers Cinema in Toronto every spring. A parallel festival called Hot Docs for Schools runs at about the same time, allowing educators to select films from the festival lineup and show them in their schools. Several years ago, as the teacher-librarian at the City Learning Centre (CALC) Secondary School, Thurston decided to give it a try.

As the teacher-librarian, Thurston felt that she was in the best position to handle the administrative side of selecting the films, providing curriculum materials and setting up the screenings. She experimented with different ways to make the films accessible. At first she would organize class, lunch-time and after school screenings in the library. Some of the challenges were that students would end up seeing the same films more than once and often the film run-times did not fit neatly into a class period.

continued on page 26