The ePals Global Community™ (www.ePals.com) is the world’s largest online community of K-12 learners. The community includes nearly half a million teachers in 200 countries and territories. Founded in 1996 and merged with In2Books in 2006, ePals offers K-12 students and teachers around the world a safe environment for building global understanding and exchanging knowledge based upon research-based, authentic, collaborative learning experiences.

It’s a one-stop for teacher resources, digital literacy, and authentic, collaborative learning experiences:
- Safe and secure email and blogs
- Easy to locate classrooms across the globe to study with
- High-quality curriculum units designed for collaboration
- Highlights exemplary teacher activities
ePals – A safe and secure social network for collaborative learning

- SchoolM@il, SchoolBlog, moderated forums and social tools adapted for learning (with embedded translation) facilitate purposeful discussion

- Classroom Match™ connect classrooms & users for learning experiences, locally or across the globe

- ePals Projects - Collaborative learning experiences centered around global issues

- Focus areas and learning contests – designed for student engagement and deeper learning

- In2Books – ePal’s first dynamic, adaptive learning application
A curriculum-based eMentoring program at ePals
Based upon rigorous instructional models

Music and sports instruction model helping students systematically move from novice to master:

• Meet children where they are
• Intersperse play and targeted skill instruction
• Expect daily practice
• Provide ongoing expert examples
• Ongoing coaching and encouragement
In2Books’ similar instructional model

• Select books at different levels-
  *(meet children where they are)*

• Intersperse letter writing with targeted skill instruction
  *(dedicated website and rich resources)*

• Encourage daily reading, writing and thinking

• Provide adult learning partners-
  *(expert examples, coaching and encouragement)*
How It Works

With In2Books, 3rd – 5th grade students:

• Are connected with carefully screened adult pen pals

• Select and read 5 books closely each year

• Engaged Adult pen pals read the same books

• Exchange 6 online letters each year with their adult pen pals
  – One “Getting to Know You” letter
  – Five book letters – about the important issues in the books

With In2Books, teachers: Reinforce and extend the learning with in-class book discussions about the books and related instruction in genre and literacy skills.
Complements any classroom curriculum

• Aligns with **standards** to complement any curriculum
• **Raises** standardized test scores in reading
• **Minimizes** teacher planning time by providing flexible literacy strategy and genre lessons, book selections, graphic organizers, and assessments; and,
• Fosters student **choice**, critical thinking, and independence.
• Enables **authentic** development of digital literacy
Students are connected with carefully screened adults

Q: Who are the pen pals?
A: Successful adults of all ages and professions, college students to retirees, librarians to business executives

Q: How does In2Books ensure the safety of its students?
A: Safety is very important at In2Books:
• All Pen Pal applicants undergo a background check
• Teachers must read and approve every Pen Pal letter before a child sees it.

Q: How are pen pals coached to support classroom instruction?
A: Pen Pals are provided many resources for how to write to elementary students
Pen Pal Place: Pen pals are coached with book-related resources designed to help them encourage and inspire their students.

The site has explicit resources to help pen pals learn about the genres, the topics, and literacy.

**Home Page** –
Provides specific directions and topic related websites, vocabulary, genre study, etc.

**How to Pages** –
A step-by-step approach to support the development of literacy skills.

**Writing Center** –
Everything a pen pal needs to write good letters:
- Sample letters
- Key vocabulary words
- Thinking questions
- Letter checklist
- Student’s letter
Pen Pal Place: Pen pals ask open-ended questions and encourage deep discussions about the books

Steve’s Letter (Pen Pal)

Dear LaTonya,

Thank you so much for your letter. I have to say your handwriting has really improved! You are doing a great job! I am glad you had a nice Thanksgiving. I hope you had a nice Christmas too. I also want to thank you for the student profile you sent me. My favorite color is blue too. The same color as your car! I also really like candy and sweets, especially doughnuts.

I just finished reading Diego. I really enjoyed the book. Before reading the book, I didn’t know of Diego Rivera, but now I know about one of the greatest Mexican painters in the world! He didn’t let being sick as a child prevent him from pursuing his dream of becoming a great artist. I also liked that he painted public murals, so that everyone could enjoy his beautiful artwork. Where do you think Diego got his ideas for painting his murals? If you could paint a mural, what would you choose to paint about?

LaTonya’s Letter (Student)

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your letter. I got two books for Christmas. a Barbie Computer and a big T.V. My class is reading a story about a man. We made animal books, too.

—I just finished reading Diego. I learned that Diego was a artist. Diego’s brother Carlos fell ill and died. Diego’s parents sent him away to live with Antonia and when he became sick, she took care of him. Diego’s health improved and he went back home. He was given colored chalk as a welcome home gift. Diego started drawing everything. Diego’s father made him a studio because he wanted to encourage his son. He wanted Diego to have a place to work. Ic

—I think Diego got his ideas for painting murals by being a careful observer. He painted everything he saw about life in Mexico. I think if I could paint murals the first one I will paint about my friends. Then, I will paint about my family.
Student Place: Students learn to choose a book that interests them at “just the right” reading level

Students become informed choosers by having:

- The book cover and author’s name in a carousel labeled easy to hard.
- A passage to read that shows the author’s style.
- The digital “five finger rule” to see if the book is too easy, too hard, or just right.
- The page numbers, publication date and other relevant details.

* Teachers guide the selection and have final approval of the book choice.
Student Place: Students are provided with writing tips & book-related resources to deepen understanding about the book

- Key vocabulary words from the book
- Thinking questions from the book
- Graphic organizers
- Pen pal’s prior letter
- Checklists
- Sample letters

The site helps students write thought-provoking letters by providing related information about the book and a writing center that includes:
“Getting to Know You”: The written conversation begins with students and their pen pals exchanging friendly letters.

Dear Pen Pal,

Hello, my name is Nancy. I am thrilled to be your pen pal this year. I am very excited about reading books with you and writing to you to discuss them. I hope you had a fantastic summer vacation.

Where did you go for your vacation? What did you do on your time away from school? I visit different places in my vacation.

Since we are going to be friends, let me tell you a little about me. I am from Maryland and used to work in Washington, DC until 1 year ago. I moved to New York City and that is where I currently live. I do legal search and writing for a pretty large women’s clothing company. This requires a LOT of reading and writing.

Once I find the information, I write a summary. So the people I work with can understand easily.

I love to read, go shopping, play in Central

Dear Nancy,

Thank you for the letter you sent me. I really liked it. I am happy to be your pen pal this year, too.

Yes, I do have pets. I have two pet gerbils. One of them is named Tommy. The other is called Pepper. They are cute boys.

You like a lot of the things I like! I wish I had dogs like you. Do your two dogs chase your cats? I never travel. But, my mom told me that I went to El Salvador when I was a little baby.

You asked me about what I like and dislike. I like playing basketball and watching TV.

What is your favorite TV show? My favorite TV show is **Donavan’s Word Jar**.

I like ice cream, just like you. My
Continuing the conversation: Students and pen pals discuss the books they read with online letters

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- **Realistic Fiction Cycle 1**: [Book Image]
- **Social Studies Cycle 2**: [Book Image]
- **Biography Cycle 3**: [Book Image]
- **Folktales Cycle 4**: [Book Image]
- **Science Cycle 5**: [Book Image]

A curriculum-based eMentoring program at ePals
Teacher Place: A one stop resource for teaching strategies and tips

Genre –
- 6 units – Getting Started, fiction, social studies, biography, traditional tales, science
- Genre characteristics and other elements, e.g., vocabulary
- Genre-related literacy strategies

Units –
- 5 or 10 lesson curriculum units
- Content, literacy, genre, critical thinking
- Can be used as a unit or select specific activities and/or lessons

Topics –
- 3 topics, e.g., fiction – bullies, family, pen pals
- 4-6 book choices on different reading levels
What do this year’s teachers say?

“They love being able to pick their books, share their learning, and share their writing.”

2008-2009 teacher

“Half of my students come from needy homes and lack mentors, so the letters and the connections they're building are incredible.”

2008-2009 teacher

“My students are writing for real people they care about and who personally respond to them.”

2008-2009 teacher
How Do We Know In2Books Works?

• 10 years of implementation in classrooms

• Used currently in 130 classrooms in 30 states

• In2Books students scored significantly higher on standardized reading tests than their peers in the same district who did not use the program. *(Phi Delta Kappan, March 2007)*

• 9 out of 10 teachers report that In2Books positively impacted their students’ achievement. *(Reading Teacher, May 2007)*

• Research shows that In2Books increases motivation – especially for boys
Become an In2Books teacher!

- Grades 3 - 5

- Build a local In2Books professional learning community

- Online curriculum resources and professional development

- Join at www.in2books.com