

Global Collaboration Question and Answer with Marsha Goren

Marsha Goren is a pioneer in global collaboration. Since 1992 her Global Dreamers, an internationally recognized website, has brought educators and children together in friendship and with authentic learning through the power of the Internet.

Marsha has been a member of ePals for many years and has found many partners through this wonderful website.

Q. What have you found to be the biggest advantage of collaborating?

A. In 1991 I wanted my students to become excited and interested in their learning and found that the internet offered children the opportunity to collaborate with other students all around the world and become involved in real world, authentic learning opportunities that could be fun and truly meaningful. I am the creator of the Global Dreamers web site (<http://www.globaldreamers.org>) and along with my students promote the vision of "worldwide peace". I am now a mentor for so many teaching professionals and present workshops locally and nationally and even internationally. I am always willing to share my time with other educators, "...Remember, knowledge is power and educators have been given the gift of finding and sharing it."

The children have always been my inspiration and so I've tried to inspire them. It wasn't until the web took the world by surprise, though, that teaching became an exciting challenge, an unbelievable experience where collaborative learning comes alive in classrooms around the world, and my students have become learners and leaders; partners and participants through their Global Dreamers involvement.

Looking back I now realize the social innovation that Global Dreamers has brought to the educators, students and of course me. It was the different strategies we implemented which have helped our dream come true for the last nine years. Indeed our work has helped to enrich and engage the lives of many of our global partners and friends around the world. This socially innovative way of teaching and sharing tries to answer to old problems that the world faced before the power of the Internet and technology touched our lives. It has also helped to change biased opinions by learning about others and has extended and strengthened the civil society and the future it may bring.

Q. What have you found to be the most difficult part about collaborating?

A. It seems to me that you have decided to become a global educator and that is the first step and your determination will help you overcome any obstacles. I can describe some of the barriers. First of all it demands a large commitment together with additional hours of work. This is of course depending on what you have decided to do for you and your students.

I feel the most difficult part is finding partners, although ePals has helped me tremendously to find some of the best partners we have until now. It is a good idea to "start small". If you can find someone willing to guide you then that is always a great benefit and will give you the confidence you need. I have found educators who have been working on the Internet with their own projects are always willing to share their knowledge and this is the beauty of the Internet. I started my work with a mentor and wonderful educator named Janet Barnstable from Oak Park, Ill. USA. Janet has taught me and my students more than words can say and she has become my friend for life. I hope I can be a friend for life for other educators and have tried to do the same for others as Jane has done for me and my kids.

Q. Did you have to deal with parents or administrators that did not support this approach to teaching? If so, how did you?

A. I was blessed to have a principal who believes in what we are doing; at first I am not sure she really even understood how far our work could go and how many educators and children would join us. She takes pride in our work and has many times announced that the value of work is amazing more than any book lesson could ever give kids. The parents in my school realize technology and English can bring their kids to a higher level in the school system in Israel so for the most part they are very supportive and immediately sign permission slips for their kids to participate in our work. I have never really had to deal with any problems as they know and appreciate our work.

Q. What types of resources or tools have you used with your classroom? (i.e. webquests, wikis, etc)

A. Israel is very similar to the USA in terms of where they are with ICT usage and infrastructure. Blogs, wikis, podcasting, Smart Technologies are also currently the ICT tools of the day. I have a Starboard in my classroom and my teaching has changed a lot since I began teaching more than 30 years ago. The kids and I have worked on forums, and made a webquest which you can find on the Globaldreamers site about Israel. We have made movies and animations in

creating stories and they love working like this. One has only to look at the site to see how much is being done by the kids at Ein Ganim and other kids from around the world.

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/activities/webquest/index.html>

We have also done Wikis in our work in the Global Virtual Classroom project.

<http://www.virtualclassroom.org/>

<http://winners.virtualclassroom.org/0801/index.html>

Q. What global activity did your students seem to enjoy the most?

A. My kids loved the GVC classroom project and we won second place with two schools from the USA, along with many of our Global Dreamers projects.

<http://gvc0902.gvc09.virtualclassroom.org/reflection/index.html>

We have participated in the Global Virtual Classroom [GVC] project (sponsored by [Give something back international](#)) www.virtualclassroom.org for the last four years. Last year we built a School of Kindness with two classes from the United States. It was indeed an unforgettable experience. What a great idea - an alliance of schools to spread kindness in our schools, community, and the world - through acts of kindness. This complete project has made me happy from start to end. The website creation for the Kindness Project has just been amazing, the level of collaboration was extraordinary, and the interaction in Nicenet (<http://www.nicenet.org>) to the creation of podcasts as a communication tool has been heartwarming. The students literally reached out to assist each other in their work. Of course, that is the goal of GVC – getting students from different areas, hopefully even different countries, to work together for a common goal. My students were quite used to doing that because of Global Dreamers, so expected to discuss ideas, give in sometimes, lead sometimes, follow sometimes, and always care about their partners.

This year my class and I were the leaders in the GVC project and we won second place with our Past, Present and Future website. Both teachers from the USA expressed gratitude in their feedback and how helpful the kids from my class were in putting it all together and teaching others about global collaboration and friendships.

<http://gvc0902.gvc09.virtualclassroom.org/>

You can read about it here.

http://www.virtualclassroom.org/win09.html#E_CAT

I am including judges' comments about the website.

"This is a well thought out site which is clear and easy to navigate through. The use of multimedia is wonderful."

"I really liked the introduction. It was clear that the schools worked collaboratively on the site. I really liked the title "Cha-Ching for Chili and Haiti". The poetry from Roberto Clemente was great. I really enjoyed learning about the first Jewish settlement."

"The incorporation of voiceovers with artwork was a humanistic touch. I could hear your excitement for being involved."

"What a wonderful front page. I love the beautiful music and narration. The site is chock full of very informative history. The innovative use of cartoons, visuals, and colorful background screens made the site very enjoyable to visit. I enjoyed learning about the interview with the Mayor. The theme was wonderful – clearly the team learned a lot and shared a lot about the past, present, and future. I also appreciated the reflections on the experience and learning. Wonderful job!"

Charles Elsey
Program Manager
Global Virtual Classroom – www.virtualclassroom.org

Q. What kind of technology is available to you in your school and classroom?

A. We have an old lab with about 25 computers; I also have four computers and a Starboard in my classroom. I also implement a lot of work at home and have a dialogue with the kids through email. It is amazing how a teacher with a basic dial up connection can implement a huge project!

Q. Did you ever have to deal with technology malfunctions while trying to do a web-based lesson? If so, how did you deal with this?

A. In technology you can expect this and we have learned to wait for the technician and put off for a day or two or if the server is down to go back on later and try again. Believe me it all works out in the end.

Q. What type of background knowledge did your students have about using these web-based tools before you began to use them in your class?

A. I think kids have a lot of basic knowledge in general because they enjoy the computers so much today. I have even taught my kids basic html skills, as well as many software programs that are available for educators like Photoshop and Pixie which the kids simply love! I have a wonderful mentor who taught me through email and many documents that she had prepared for her students, they now belong to me and my kids and we all teach each other!

Q. What kind of advice would you want to give a teacher before they decided to use global activities in their classroom?

A. Try to join a project that offers global collaboration and that is not too demanding. I have always invited educators to join us in a voluntary way, what I am saying is I send out an email inviting educators to join in an online activity. Teachers choose what they feel is appropriate to their classrooms, examples of such projects.

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/09peace/eg/peace.html>

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/09rainbow/index.html>

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/10holocaust/index.html>

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/road/index.html>

Q. How did you become involved or interested in global communication activities?

A. I was looking for ways to interest my children in their English studies. After many courses and difficult work, I realized the value of the Internet as a way of spreading an educational message around the world. The process has led me to become a technology innovator and global leader in online collaborative learning projects. These projects now include thousands of children from more than 37 countries worldwide (<http://www.globaldreamers.org/share/flags.html>).

As an EFL teacher it was my wish to combine English teaching along with technology. I wanted my students to experience a social, cultural and personal learning experience. This project utilizes Internet technologies for genuine learning of the English language by activating and motivating children with various online activities. In addition to the utilization of technologies, studying English will also assist different cultures in participating with greater understanding in the challenge of globalization.

My introduction to collaborative projects was through the "friends and flags" project in Israel. I was now ready to begin my own collaborative projects and began developing "**Dream a dream with Ein Ganim**" (now called Global Dreamers).

Q. What grade level and/or subject areas do you think lend themselves to using web-based activities?

A. First of all there are many subjects that the Internet can assist with starting from basic English skills to Geography and technology skills. It also encourages creativity and can nurture research skills as there is so much knowledge available. In my opinion there is not a subject that can not be implemented through online activities, the resources are endless. I always start with my fourth graders but teachers can decide which activities are appropriate for their classes.

Q. Did you ever try to communicate with a teacher or classroom that did not follow through on the plans for the activity? If so, how did you deal with this?

A. This has happened a few times as some teachers are overloaded and do not realize what the extra commitment involves. However, we have many schools that have been partnering with us for many years and these kinds of friendships have made a huge impact on everyone involved.

Q. Have filters on your school's network been an issue for using the websites or tools you wanted to use? If so, how did you deal this?

A. I speak to the technician at our school that is also in contact with the server and we have no problems. I know that in the USA many of the schools have received permission to add Global Dreamers to their school sites and visit our site frequently.

Q. Have your students ever run into inappropriate information or had inappropriate discussions when collaborating globally? If so, how did you deal with this?

A. No, we have never had this happen to us.

Q. How do you think global collaboration has changed your teaching and your classroom?

A. I have personally seen changes in my classes, "their motivation has increased beyond recognition along with their technology and English skills." I also see my students as ambassadors for our school, city and country. Together we have successfully implemented our dreamers program in an older computer lab and with a lot of willpower and hard work. My classroom has no borders. Children are willing to invest in the authentic learning process and this is genuine learning.

*Project encourages active individual and group learning.

*Group learning encourages decision making as well as learning from others and contributing to the well-being of the class.

*Children compare and analyze Israeli culture along with other children in the world.

*Children learn cultural appreciation and a shared learning experience.

*Use educational technology to communicate/ collaborate with students and teachers from around the world.

This project utilizes Internet technologies for genuine learning of the English language by activating and motivating children with various online activities while supporting curricular expectations. The kids send email, upload and download materials, participate in an educational forum, and initiate subjects of interest to share on the discussion board. They have even improved their oral skills by presentations made to their peers. They have even learned html skills and are capable of building web pages and even a website and I have changed from a frontal teacher to a teacher who guides the kids to make their own decisions and create a learning environment through teamwork. I am there to guide them.

Q. Did you have to get parent permission before allowing your students to complete global activities? What would you do with a student whose parents refused to give permission?

A. I have never had a problem getting permission from parents. The kids know about the project even before I become their English teacher and are anxious and excited.

Q. How have global activities helped you to reach the diverse learners in your classroom?

A. Children are very motivated and willing to learn when it comes to technology. I have found that an ePal friend is really helpful in such situations and can really bring out the best in kids. In addition, they work in pairs or in teams and this can help kids improve in many learning areas.

Q. How did you assess that your students reached your learning goals through your global collaboration activities?

A. Assessment and Evaluation:

Assessment is viewed as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. It involves collecting evidence of learning over a period of time, using a variety of assessment methods. The goals of assessment are to provide feedback on both the on-going progress and the end-product in achieving the standards. Formative (on-going) and summative (end-product) assessment are carried out using both traditional tests and alternative methods of assessment. Since both traditional and alternative methods of assessment each have their own respective advantages, they are used as complementary components in the assessment process. The focus of assessment is on pupils' ability to apply their skills and knowledge of English to meaningful situations.

(Taken from the English teachers' web site in Israel <http://www.etni.org.il/>

By the Ministry of Education in Israel- English Inspectorate).

The Holocaust Unit has two rubrics: one for reading:

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/holocaust/active/readingrubric.html>

and one for writing:

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/holocaust/active/writingrubric.html>

The rubric for assessment from the "Dream a dream with Ein Ganim" Web quest is located on the website.

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/activities/webquest/index.html>

The rubric from the "**On the Road to Safety**" in cooperation with Intel- USA is located on the Intel – Educational website. It includes an entire workbook for educators to download on the site that was written by Marsha Goren and has been implemented in the formal curriculum in Israel for teaching.

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/road/teacher.html>)http://www97.intel.com/en/ThinkingTools/SeeingReason/ProjectExamples/UnitPlans/RoadSafety/SR_UP3_Assessment_Plan.htm

Also see: On the Road to Safety assessment-

http://www97.intel.com/en/ThinkingTools/SeeingReason/ProjectExamples/UnitPlans/RoadSafety/SR_UP3_rubric.htm

....and in Israel, the children's English test scores in my classes have just plain improved! Even in the national testing in Israel, kids did very well!!

Q. On average, how long does it take you to plan a global collaboration activity?

A. If it is a small project like asking for an image or drawing from kids like in our spring project, there is little planning but if it is a larger project like our peace project then it obviously demands time and thinking so everyone involved can benefit from such materials. If you look at the peace project, educators and children sent in beautiful materials for everyone involved.

Q. What resources and websites have you used to help you get in touch with other teachers and/or experts in a certain field? Which ones were the most effective?

A. How I promote my projects

I promote my projects in a number of ways. The first way is through the Ministry of Education. My project appears in the annual newsletters that the supervision sends to teachers throughout Israel. In addition I have advertised my site on Etni, The English teachers National Association of Teachers in Israel.

See: <http://www.etni.org.il/index.html>

I have advertised our school site on the GlobalSchoolNet Projects Registry <http://www.globalschoolnet.org/GSH/pr/search.cfm>

In addition I registered our site to Gigglepotz.com. Top School sites; <http://www.gigglepotz.com/>

I am registered on ePals. I have many of my partners on ePals and consider myself lucky to be a part of the international community there since 1992.

<http://www.epals.com/>

I have led various collaborative workshops in Israel and abroad. Since 2002 I have been to Rome four times and presented the "Dream a dream at Ein Ganim" (Global Dreamers) in Rome, Italy at a three day exhibition at the Campadillio Hall and at Walt Disney Elementary School for the entire staff and children. In addition I have taken part in the last Global Junior Challenge at the Galileo School I have also been a member on the international jury since 2004.

See: <http://www.gjc.it/2009/en>

In addition I also gave workshops to educators from Slavonski Brod, Croatia. It has been a privilege to meet some of the educators in person and this has made our work even more special to me.

<http://www.globaldreamers.org/08hvar/index.html>

I have met Lieven from Belgium, Janet Barnstable from the USA, Noreen Dempsey from the USA.. Nicki Barbeierri from the USA and Rozalija Baracevic from Slavonski Brod, Croatia. Meeting partners from Global Dreamers has been so exciting!! You can find these meetings on share on the Global Dreamers site.

I give workshops to the Ein Ganim staff at school and help in the lab. I also train students from the different seminars in Israel and give workshops on global collaboration.

In ending I wish to say that Global Dreamers has won many international awards but the biggest award to me is seeing the children learning in a happy and motivated way that brings them great satisfaction and preparation for the 21st century as a more tolerant citizen.