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## Where in the World?

### Do a Mystery Skype!

**YOU HAVE LIKELY** heard about Skype. Did you know that it could be an amazing tool that will engage every student in your classroom? A long time ago when I was a fourth grader (1982), I remember having a pen pal from somewhere in the United States (it was a long time ago, I can't remember the state). I never did keep in touch with that person, but I specifically remember how enthralling it was to write letters and interact with someone from a region that we were studying in class.

#### Fast forward

Fast forward to 2012. Why not give the students in your class an authentic learning experience utilizing a 21<sup>st</sup> century tool? Download Skype and get to Skyping! Last year my classes participated in several *Mystery Skypes*. It is a very simple process. You contact another teacher from somewhere in the United States, and have your students try to figure out the location of the other class. I found other participating teachers by using Twitter and the #4thchat and #mysteryskype hashtag. There are several sign up lists, which I will list later, and I would recommend adding your name to the lists. Once you have found another willing educator you just need to follow these steps:

- Assign student jobs using the lists I have provided for you on the Mystery Skype 2012-2013 website listed at the end of the article (I assigned jobs on a

Google Doc that I shared with the students prior to class so they would know what they would be doing).

- Go over student responsibilities for each of the topics. Clear expectations now will make for a smoother Mystery Skype later.
- Have stations set up in your classroom with maps, pencils, cameras, backchannel links, so you can discuss them with students as you are covering job responsibilities.
- Once you have covered student expectations and job responsibilities, make the call to the other participating teacher!
- Have your greeters introduce your class and vice versa.
- Start the questioning process. For example, my class loved to ask the following for their first question, "Are you East of the Mississippi?" Let's say the other class answers, "Yes." Your mapmakers will now shade out all of the states West of the Mississippi on the maps you provided.
- Now allow the participating class to ask their closed ended question. While this is happening your mapmakers and logical reasoners will be collaborating to get their next question ready based on the answer they just received.
- This process will go on until the students think they can correctly identify which state the other class is from.
- When your class is ready to guess the location, have them

tell the other class that they think they know where they are from.

- The other class may have to ask more questions or they may be ready to guess as well.
- Once both classes have correctly identified locations, I like to bring my students together so they can learn more about our new friends. We would continue our Skype call and have students ask questions to the other class. Students might ask questions pertaining to geography, school uniforms, school lunches, technology in their school, etc. Be creative and enjoy this time together with your new friends!

#### Don't be nervous!

I was a nervous wreck the first time we did a Mystery Skype. I was worried that it would be too loud, kids wouldn't know their geography, or students would be off task. Well, I was wrong! Every single student in my classroom was engaged!

Why not get signed up so you can try a Mystery Skype in your classroom this year? If you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email!

#### Mystery Skype Resources

Mystery Skype Sign Up—  
<http://mysteryskypes1213.weebly.com>

Blog Post with resources—  
<http://goo.gl/gwkw2>

Student Blog Post about Mystery Skypes—<http://goo.gl/W3q9j>