

@bel IN ACTION

Connecting the Classroom



“ As new technologies develop, ABEL is at the forefront to provide them to its members as tools and services that offer students and teachers new learning opportunities. ”

Videoconferencing technology is one example of this. From guest expert visitors from universities and colleges to virtual field trips and author visits, videoconferencing provides authentic learning opportunities that cross barriers of geography and enrich the learning experience.



Connecting the Classroom

How Does It Work? What are Some Examples?

Richmond Green Secondary School's senior arts students participate in a videoconference with two professors from the Ontario College of Art & Design (OCAD) with ABEL's support. The students have the opportunity to show their portfolios to the professors before submitting their application to OCAD. According to Mari Nicolson, the head of the visual arts program, the students get "direct feedback on their work, and also feel much less nervous when they go for their real interviews later in the year." All of the students see the videoconference as a "good experience, as it demystifies the application process a bit, and they are able to see the Profs as regular and friendly people."

Other classrooms are using videoconferencing for virtual field trips. Students visit museums, hold question and answer sessions with organizations such as the NASA Space Centre, and participate in interactive learning sessions from the Royal Botanical Gardens without ever having to leave the classroom.

York University also uses videoconferencing for collaboration by connecting researcher to researcher across geographical barriers and researchers to other public sector partners. This activity mobilizes knowledge and applies theory that informs public policy. York is also using videoconferencing to expand education expertise by having Faculty meet with students in classrooms across the province (e.g. Science Speakers Bureau).

ABEL provides the tools and support for educators to take their classroom and learners into the 21st century. For more information on the tools ABEL offers or to get ideas and spark your creativity, please visit the ABEL website at www.abelearn.ca.



Connecting for Professional Learning



“ ABEL uses a blended approach to professional learning design; collaborative technology can make online learning as interactive as face-to-face sessions. ”

When teachers are engaged in professional learning and make effective use of information communications technologies (ICTs), they apply those instructional strategies in their classrooms. One tool that ABEL offers that can be used in the classroom and for professional learning is Second Life.





Connecting for Professional Learning

ABEL's Second Life for Teens

Schools are using Second Life in classrooms across the GTA. For example, ABEL made a private island on the teen grid of Second Life available to a York Region District School Board (YRDSB) grade 10 programming class.

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In a typical programming course, students work on challenging assignments, but those tend to be two-dimensional. On our Second Life island, the students are creating their own physical environment and animating it with their programming. This makes the experience compelling, and has produced an enhanced engagement and a flourishing of creativity.

– Mark Matchen, YRDSB teacher

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Second Life for Professional Learning

ABEL has also created a space on Second Life, known as the ABEL Second Life Island, for professional learning. The official launch of the ABEL Second Life Island took place on May 14, 2009. Educators already online teleported their avatars to ABEL Island for the first professional learning session: “Social Networking for Educators.” This event included facilitated discussions about the use of Web 2.0 tools such as Twitter, Laconica, cell phones, Second Life and e-portfolios for professional learning and in the classroom. Through the use of their avatars, participants watched a PowerPoint presentation and relevant videos then participated in an online discussion on Second Life as a learning resource.

ABEL hosts professional learning events on its Second Life Island. Dress up your avatar, visit ABEL Island and join us!

ABEL's Professional Learning Program provides a variety of training days and online content to all ABEL members for professional learning and development. For more information, check out our Professional Learning Program Guide online at the ABEL website at www.abelearn.ca.



Connecting the Community



“ Collaboration is an important mandate for the ABEL Program. ABEL values collaboration between its members and within the community. ”

Using videoconferencing, video streaming and collaborative technologies, the ABEL program makes education-based activities accessible to parents, families and community members. ABEL also works with its private and public sector partners and researchers to connect to the community.





Connecting the Community

ABEL Working with Researchers and Connecting Community

The Canadian Business Ethics Research Network (CBERN) has submitted a Community/University Research Alliance (CURA) grant application that focuses on northern economic development by providing training services to First Nation Communities in the Canadian North. ABEL is participating as a partner with CBERN in the CURA grant and offering its expertise in online collaboration and broadband learning. ABEL's role in this partnership will support the collaboration between researchers and the northern communities in Canada as they build capacity for sustainable economic development.

Another Example of ABEL in Action: Connecting the Community

ABEL also linked various satellite sites across the GTA to allow community members to connect to the York Region Data Sharing Symposium. The event held a series of forums that focused on how data can build on the capability of York Region agencies to serve children, youth and families. ABEL's Program Director, Janet Murphy, presented at the event. ABEL frequently works with York University to help promote community and university activities, and connect participants.

For more information on the CURA grant and ABEL's other partnerships projects, please visit the ABEL website at www.abelearn.ca.