

Online Global Classroom Communities:  
Using ePals to Increase Student Engagement

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### Abstract

Keeping students engaged in learning is the goal of all educators. Often, this is also a great challenge, especially in the middle school grades. Middle school is often where students become disengaged and unmotivated. Subsequently, technology is often used to keep students engaged and motivated. Recently, global networks, which allow students to collaborate and communicate online from different countries, have brought more learning opportunities to students. Teachers are able to find classrooms in any part of the world to collaborate with. Action research conducted in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classroom examined the use of the global network ePals and whether or not the use of ePals increased student engagement. Students were given a pre and post-study survey to determine attitudes about social studies and learning, specifically about government. Qualitative data was taken from teacher observations, and quantitative data from assignment turn-in rate and surveys was used to determine the effect of ePals on student engagement.

## Introduction

### *Problem Statement*

As educators, engaging our students in the material we are teaching is an important key to successful learning. We want our students to be motivated by what we teach. I believe both my school and district are not much different from others in the sense that often, many 8th graders can become disengaged and unmotivated in school. Middle school is often when some students become less excited to be in school. With curriculum that can be difficult to relate to for the kids, it can be a struggle to keep 8<sup>th</sup> graders engaged in social studies. For the past several years, I've given informal surveys in the first week of school, asking about student interests and feelings about school. Many 8th graders have expressed that social studies is not one of their favorite subjects; it can be boring because they don't understand why it relates to them.

The 8th grade social studies curriculum in the Hortonville Area School District covers five major areas including geography, the Constitution and American government, psychology, sociology, and economics. In general, students' least favorite topic is government. The first 9 weeks of the school year are spent learning about the articles of and the history behind the Constitution. In order to become responsible and informed citizens, students need to understand the major laws and functions of our government. Kids should develop an awareness and understanding about the world around them. How do we achieve this?

My goal is to change the overall level of student engagement during this first unit of the school year. In order to be engaged, the content needs to be relevant to students. Traditionally, history and government is taught mostly from books. It can be difficult to make government

seem relevant to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who question why they really need to know the material. One of the most famous questions from students is always, “Why do we need to know this?” When the content is relevant and personal connections are made with students, they can begin to understand why they need to know the information. When 8<sup>th</sup> grade students teach their peers about their own country and government through use of technology, my prediction is that my students can start to see why it matters.

### *Purpose and Rationale*

When I started learning about ePals last year, I knew that its tools would be very useful in class. Students seemed highly interested in the opportunities to work with students in other countries through email and online projects. Since kids today use so much technology outside of school to communicate, I wanted to find a way to incorporate a form of technology similar to forms students already enjoy using for communication outside of school. Students choose to communicate through email and Facebook, so I believe ePals will be effective because students are already familiar with some of its components.

My action research will use the ePals global network to increase student engagement during the first unit in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classes. By using technology to connect my students with pen pals in other countries, student engagement will increase. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be assigned a pen pal to exchange email with. They will create projects to be shared on the ePals network, teaching their pen pals about the US government and culture. The intent is to put a new technology spin on the government unit. Instead of the teacher just teaching students, I want to incorporate more independent work for the students, giving them the responsibility of teaching their peers through the use of technology.

### Literature Review

The purpose of my study is to examine whether or not using the online community ePals has a positive effect on student engagement in a social studies classroom. A group of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be given the opportunity to use ePals to communicate with students from another country. My prediction is that student engagement will be increased by using ePals to develop relationships with foreign students.

Although some research discussing the use of online communities and collaborative projects in the classroom exists, I did not find any research that looked specifically at ePals in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classroom. My research into the topic revealed that most researchers and educators tend to agree that as students use an increasing amount of technology outside the classroom, educators need to incorporate appropriate technology to keep students engaged. In a journal article written by educator Elaine Chapman (2003), she quotes researchers Skinner and Belmont (1993), who concluded, “Children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone”. They also say that children who are engaged “show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest.” Though this definition was published years back, it’s still valuable today as educators reflect upon how to engage students.

Student engagement is a crucial part of a successful education. The problem we are facing in school is that students are becoming “disengaged”, especially in middle school. In a study done by Bland, Brady and Carrington, they discuss that disengagement is becoming a major problem (2009, para. 1). A group of students in the study described middle school teachers as bullies who cause disengagement. This is the image educators should be striving to avoid. We

must work to make sure that students are taking an active and enthusiastic part in their own learning. Students should also be interested and happy in the classroom in order to reach their potentials. Appropriate technology is a strong tool in reaching student engagement.

This review of literature will look at several factors. It will describe an online classroom community and discuss current uses and practices. It will examine existing research dealing with the connections between technology and student engagement. There are also several concerns about the topic that should be addressed as well as some challenges that come with using online communities. Lastly, I will overview some existing conclusions dealing with online communities.

### *Online Classroom Communities*

A recent study by educators Spires, Lee and Turner examined middle school students' perspectives on school, technologies, and academic engagement and showed that students ranked using computers and doing research online "as the school activities they liked the best" (Johnson, p. 506). This same study also found that students wanted more technology being used at school and felt that many teachers don't understand that technology is such a huge part of students' lives outside school. Online communities can help bring that part of students' lives into the classroom while offering some of the freedoms they are familiar with at home.

An online community can be described as a group of people interacting online for a common purpose, usually a way to exchange information using multimedia. Online classroom communities provide resources for students to exchange information while working collaboratively towards similar educational goals. EPals is "the world's largest online classroom community and provider of school-safe email and collaborative technology" and connects more than 100,000 classrooms in 200 countries (ePals, 2010).

As with many other online communities, ePals gives teachers and students opportunities to communicate with pen pals from all over the world while being very user friendly (Masek and Zikmundova, 2006). This article supports the basis for my study that using this type of community will increase student engagement and participation. These authors also conclude “web communities...could...promote students’ participation in activities that contribute to high-level thinking...” (p. 658). By giving students the opportunities to actively exchange information with students in other classrooms or countries, students are taking a more active role in their own learning.

### *Global Projects*

In addition, ePals takes pen pals to a new level. The ePals network sets up global projects such as The Way We Are, which offers teachers established lesson plans that have classes explore cultural differences among students. Directions and details about the project are posted on the ePals website allowing for teachers from any country and language to collaborate more easily. Lessons are already set up and questions are posted, saving teachers time and work. Lessons can be previewed by both teachers working together (ePals, 2010). Translator options on the email are available. At the same time, teachers can create their own global projects to post and search for another classroom to work with. The search feature allows teachers to search as specifically as they want, by country, language, age group, and many other factors, to find collaborators to fit with the objectives students need to achieve.

Based on established research, overall, students seem to be more engaged when teachers correctly and effectively use technology, especially with technology such as global projects. Berson and Carano (p.67, 2007) emphasize the validity and importance of online communities and projects and conclude, “Online projects are effective in developing students’ cross-cultural

competence in a society that is increasingly globalized (Merryfield, 2003).” It used to be that when kids had pen pals, they wrote using pencil, paper, and stamps through the mail. The use of an online community such as ePals means students much faster feedback for students. With the click of the send button, their messages travel instantaneously across the world. This technology also allows for the sharing of information through multimedia projects such as Power Point and video. This type of communication enhances learning about other cultures in ways that actively involve the more digital learners we have today.

### *Challenges Presented*

There can be challenges to consider when using online communities and global projects. According to Carano and Berson, this technology could end up being a “roadblock” if not planned and used effectively (2007, p. 67). Students cannot just be handed the technology; they need to be taught how to use it. Consequently, students need to have a clear objective for the work. For example, if not taught properly, some students have a difficult time differentiating between reliable and unreliable online sources. In the previously noted study, Spires, Lee and Turner found that students felt that much of the technology was too restrictive with too many rules. They felt at home they were able to use computers and technology the way they wanted, but felt it was made “boring” at school (Johnson, 2007). The challenge presented to teachers is to use technology in an engaging way, offering choices and options so students feel free to learn in ways best for them.

### *Connecting Engagement and Technology*

In my action research, I will use the online community ePals to increase student engagement based on the idea that by using technology effectively in the classroom, students become more engaged. David Strahan suggests, “In a school setting, momentum is the strength



of a student's engagement with learning activities" (2008, para. 3). Engagement is extremely important for students to become successful. When students are engaged, they are learning and seeing more success. They see "momentum" with their success.

Keeping this in mind, it is important to consider that a major factor in increasing engagement is to connect the technology students use at home to the technology at school. Based on the findings by Lee, Spires and Turner, kids highly value their technology time at home, but have a more negative attitude towards it at school due to the restrictions in place (Johnson, 2007). With using communities such as ePals, students should be able to find a way to bring their communication and internet skills into the classroom. Middle-school students spend so much time communicating through Facebook and email, so in turn, they should be able to feel like they can use something similar to help them learn content in class, specifically for becoming more globally literate in social studies.

According to Johnson, in the study done by Spires, Lee and Turner, the main difference between technology use at home and at school "relates to personal or social communication and entertainment" (2007, p. 507). Students in the study said they use technology at home mainly for talking to friends located locally or far away. Tools such as ePals have the capability to fill in the gaps between at-home and at-school technology use and bridge social communication technologies for students. Along the same lines, Marc Prensky points out that all students we teach have "something in their lives that's really engaging" (2005, p. 62). Furthermore, all students can become engaged when teachers can find a way to tap into making things challenging within students' capabilities as well valuable and worth-it to students.

A study published this year by Teklu Bekele of the Institute for Educational Research, found that in general, internet-supported learning environments in higher learning supported

student motivation (2010). The study also found that motivation and performance were positively related. This might suggest that student engagement would consequently be positively related as well. Bekele found that technology was a motivation source for some student and says that these findings imply that motivation and achievement are positively related. When students are motivated and performing well, they will most likely be more engaged in learning. The use of online classroom communities would fit into the mold of a type of internet-supported learning environment.

### **Summary**

In Marc Prensky's recently written article, he reminds us that education for students needs to be "real...not just preparing students for some test based on "standards" but actually dealing with the problems of our — and especially the students' — day" (2010, para. 4). By making education "real" educators will engage their students and prepare them to be life-long learners in a world that truly needs problem solvers and critical thinkers. By bringing in more of the outside world into the classroom, learning starts to seem more real. EPals and other online classroom communities are just steps towards helping students become more engaged.

My prediction is that I will see an increase in student engagement in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classes as I integrate the use of ePals. Brown, Bryan and Brown predict that "web-based, student-centered sites will increase and expand" (2005, para. 20). As this happens, students will have more ways to become and stay engaged in the classroom.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of my study is to investigate if using the global network ePals has an effect on student engagement in my social studies classroom. We start off the year with a unit that covers our three branches of government. My goal is to have my students correspond with

students from other countries. My students will teach their ePals about our government and learn about their ePals' cultures. The idea is that through educating their peers, my students will learn the material and be more engaged in the material. I will use several methods of data collection to complete my research, qualitative and quantitative.

### *Context*

The research study will take place at Greenville Middle School in Greenville, WI. Greenville is part of the Hortonville Area School District. The district consists of two elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Greenville is home to a middle school and elementary school for the district. The middle school in Greenville is a newer school; it was built in 2002. Prior to that, all middle school students in the district attended Hortonville middle school. Greenville Middle School continues to grow; in 2002, the school had 375 students. Last year, approximately 540 were enrolled in the school. Greenville is located approximately 4 miles from Appleton, WI. The majority of the student body consists of Caucasian students with a small Hispanic population. Students come from a mix of middle and lower class families.

### *Participants*

The participants in the study will be students in two sections of 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. After strong recommendation from the administration at Greenville Middle School, it was decided that both groups, class A and class B, will be using ePals and will be asked to participate in the study. Both classes will be observed and surveyed. These groups will be compared to groups in previous school years. The numbers and genders of students are unknown at the present time and will be determined when class rosters for the 2010-2011 school year are assigned to teachers. Special education students and students with IEPs will also be included in the study. Specifics about these students will not be known until the school year starts.

All required paperwork and IRB forms have been completed and submitted. Approval is pending. CITI training has been completed as well. I have met with the school administrator, who granted site permission for my research. Child and parent assent forms are prepared and will be given out at the start of the school year.

### *Instruments*

Initially, my students will take a pre-survey. 2 sections of 8th grade social studies will participate in the study. The engagement levels in these classes will be compared to the previous school year. The purpose of the survey is to gain an understanding of my students' attitudes at the beginning of the school year, before they have had time in class. They will have to predict what it will be like in comparison to the school year they just completed. They will be asked about their interest level in social studies as well as how they view the importance and relevance of learning about government. The survey will help me gauge an idea of how my students view their own engagement levels in social studies class as compared to other core subjects.

Throughout the study, I will record informal observations during class to help measure the level of student engagement. I will be observing whether or not my students seem engaged in class and at what level they seem to be engaged and participating. If there are students who are not working on the assigned activity or who are refusing to work, examples such as these symbolize disengagement. I will record their comments and attitudes as they spend time communicating with their ePals. My hope is to observe a climate where students have generally positive attitudes and are excited to be participating in the class activities. I will be comparing the level of engagement with the levels during the previous school year.

To measure quantitative data, I will be recording and calculating the completion rate for homework assignments in the government unit. I am predicting that the rate will be higher if

students are engaged in the material. Because many of the homework assignments will involve ePals communication, my hope is that the turn-in rate will be high.

Students will also take a post-survey that will be similar to the pre-survey; the post-survey will have some very minor changes in comparison to the post-survey. The survey at the end of the study will gather students' opinions about communicating using ePals and if it was a motivating and engaging factor for students in the class. The results will be compared to the pre-survey results to look at changes in attitudes and engagement. My prediction is that if students enjoy sites such as Facebook, they will be engaged in using ePals because of the similarity to Facebook and much of the communication they do outside of school.

### *Procedure*

During the first week of school, students will be given the student assent form. It will be discussed in class with them, allowing opportunity for questions. Parent assent forms will be sent home in person with students. Forms must be returned within one week. Parents will be encouraged to contact teachers with any questions or concerns. When permissions are returned, students will set up their ePals accounts and will become familiar with the system.

By the second to third week of school, students will begin communicating with their ePals and will gain basic information about each other through email after completing the pre-survey. Over the course of the next 6 weeks, students will correspond with their ePals and will share what they are learning about the US government and constitution as part of educating about our culture. Correspondence will be done during various scheduled computer lab time in class or outside class during students' free time at school or outside school. Students will be given clear deadlines for each required email to be sent to ePals. Grades on emails and correspondence will be given based on completion and appropriateness.

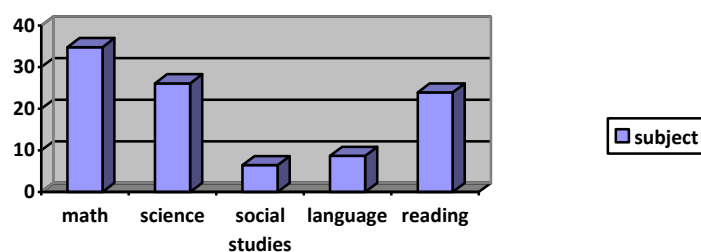
Students will be given guidelines for the information they need to provide about themselves and gain about their ePals during the study. Outside of these requirements, students will be encouraged to freely communicate as they do with friends as long as the communication is kept appropriate for a school setting. All emails and correspondence to and from all students will be monitored, filtered, and approved or disapproved by the researcher. Material that is inappropriate will be grounds for student discipline. At the end of the six weeks, students will complete the post-survey.

### Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to look at the impact of using ePals in 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. Does the use of ePals enhance student engagement? Students today use so much technology outside of school. As an educator, I wanted to incorporate technology into the social studies curriculum. The use of Facebook, email, and texting are 21<sup>st</sup> century examples of the ways in which students communicate. Throughout this study, I examined what happens ePals is integrated into government unit lessons. After analyzing quantitative data from the pre-study and post-study surveys and assignment turn-in rates, and qualitative data from teacher observations, I found that using ePals does have a positive impact on the engagement levels of students. However, as my study came to an end, I realized there were other factors that may have had an impact on student engagement. Regardless, I believe ePals has proved to be a valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tool for students.

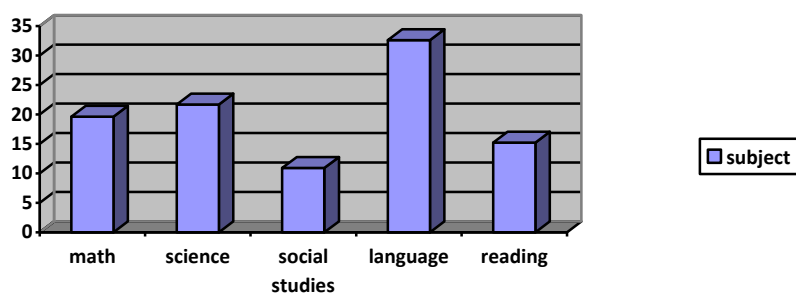
#### *Pre-Study Survey Conclusions*

Quantitative findings in the pre-study survey (Appendix E) yielded some very interesting information. When surveyed at the beginning of the study, students were asked to indicate their favorite school subject.



*Figure 1.* Pre-study survey question 1: School subjects enjoyed the most

As shown in Figure 1, only 6.5% of students indicated social studies to be their favorite subject. Because of the low interest in social studies, this indicated that there was a strong need for increasing student engagement. It was interesting to see that although social studies was least chosen as a favorite subject, when students were asked, “Which school subject do you enjoy least?” social studies was the last chosen.



*Figure 2.* Pre-Study Survey Question 3: Subjects Enjoyed Least

Figure 2 shows that only 10.9% of students reported social studies was their least favorite class. This indicates that even though social studies is not an overall favorite, it's not the overall least favorite.

Since the ePals study was designed to be linked specifically to the government unit of curriculum, students were asked questions about their attitudes surrounding learning about the US government.

Table 1

*Pre-study survey question 7: Attitudes on learning about our government*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Very important	41.3%
Somewhat important	58.7%
Not very important	0%

As indicated in Table 1, 58.7% of students reported they felt learning about our government was somewhat important, indicating the subject material is relevant to them, or that they realize the information is connected to their lives and the “real world”. All students said government was either very important or somewhat important to learn about, and 69.6% said they are somewhat interested in learning about our government.

Table 2

*Pre-study survey question 9: Is social studies an engaging subject?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Yes, it is very engaging	19.6%
Sometimes it is engaging	69.6%
No, I am not engaged very often	10.9%

However, Table 2 shows that 69.6% of students agreed that social studies is engaging only sometimes. This led me to believe that overall, students realize as US citizens, they need to be knowledgeable about our government; however, the lack of engagement in class occurs in how the information and material is delivered and presented to the class.

It’s important to understand this lack of engagement, and understand how, as an educator, I can change the presentation and delivery of information to increase engagement and learning. Because of this, I asked students about using technology. Based on the study by educators Spires,



Lee and Turner that showed that students ranked using computers and doing research online “as the school activities they liked the best” (Johnson, p. 506), I predicted that the vast majority of students would feel that technology in class is very important. I was surprised to find that the majority, 52.2% of students, felt it was only somewhat important to use technology in class. I had thought the vast majority would have stated it is very important for them to use technology in class, but only 41.3% selected this answer. However, as I had predicted, a large number of students, 47.8%, did indicate that using technology in class would definitely make it more engaging.

Since ePals is a type of social network, I surveyed students about their use of other social networks such as Facebook and My Space. I had made the assumption that most students use Facebook and as a major communication tool, so I was surprised that 39.1% of students said they rarely use a social network, and 45.7% said they rarely use email as a form of communication; I had expected percentages much lower than those.

On the other hand, 84.8% said they were either very interested or somewhat interested in using email and social networks in school, and 87% said they felt using these tools would make social studies more engaging. This particular information was very encouraging going into the beginning of the research; in addition, 91.3% answered they were either very interested or somewhat interested in communicating with an ePal and felt that it would make class more engaging.

#### *Using ePals to Enhance Student Engagement*

At the beginning of the study, students were introduced to the concept of communicating through email with peers from another country. According to the qualitative data, the teacher observations noted in Appendix G, students were enthusiastic when introduced to the project. It

was observed that usually introverted students were highly interested in the project. All students were assigned ePals and were given guidelines to follow as far as internet safety and acceptable conduct. Students were instructed to only use first names and to not give out any personal information such as address, phone number or pictures. I discussed the requirement that all grammar and conventions had to be correct since their ePals in Poland are learning English as a second language. This meant that “texting” symbols and “slang” was not acceptable; all emails should be edited before-hand and that I would also be checking emails as they came through.

We also discussed that ePals is a secure network, meaning teachers have control of everything that comes in and is sent out. For example, I reminded them that each email they sent to their ePals would first come to me, and I would read over the emails before sending them on. We discussed the fact that there may be a slight language barrier since the other class of students is from a European country and English is their second language. To gather some background knowledge, students viewed a short video about Poland.

The first email assignment required that students introduce themselves to their ePals and offer basic information about themselves and their families. Emails were required to be at least 7-10 sentences with correct grammar. The turn-in rate for the first email assignment was 96% (Appendix F). 45 out of 47 students turned in the assignment on time. Although 96% completed the assignment on time, the grades were lower than expected.

Based on reading the first round of emails, I believe that because they were possibly anxious to receive a reply back, students rushed through the first email. I also believe that students have become very used to “casual” email and texting language. I get the sense that many students do not edit emails the way they feel they need to edit Word documents. Overall emails were shorter than required and poorly edited. The mean score for the assignment was 6.63

points out of 10; I had been hoping for a mean of 9 or 10 due to the low difficulty associated with the assignment.

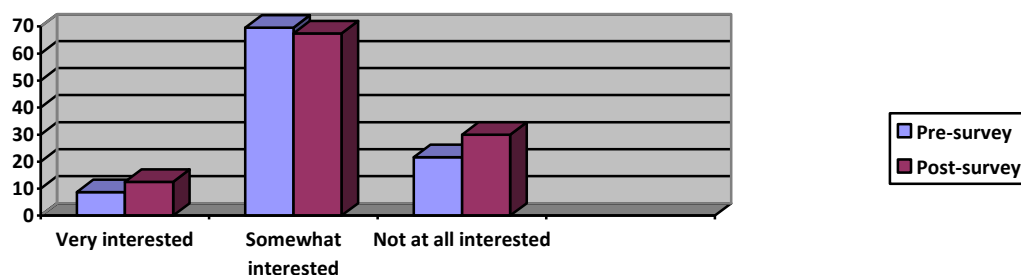
After the first email was assigned, I encouraged students to reply back to their ePals as they received the replies from their ePals. This part of my plan did not go as I was planning and hoping it would. I had originally hoped that I would be able to give several email “assignments”, but this proved to be difficult. The responses took a lot longer than I had anticipated. Due to unforeseen circumstances such as student absences and a school trip to Paris, the other teacher I was working with expressed that she was having difficulty getting her students to reply back in a timely manner. Unfortunately, I feel that this caused some frustration for my students, who were very anxious to receive replies from their ePals. Because of this frustration, some of the initial excitement for my students wore off while waiting a long period of time for an email back. As warned in the study done by Carano and Berson, discussed in the literature review, “This technology could end up being a “roadblock” if not planned and used effectively” (2007, p. 67). The lack of control over the classroom in Poland did present a “road block” for my students.

However, reply time varied from student to student, so instead of counting the emails sent and assigning specific topics to be covered in each of the emails, I suggested the following topics and encouraged students to reply back to their ePals as soon as they received an email: hobbies and interests, musical artists and popular music, favorite movies and TV shows, favorite books and types of reading, school subjects and topics, friends, pets, vacations and trips, and any other topics of interest that came up while emailing. It was interesting to have several introverted students approach me to ask about their ePals, interested in when they would receive a reply or if they were able to send another email to their ePals without waiting.

As students were emailing and waiting for emails, they were learning about the US government. As part of learning about the legislative branch, students were required to create a digital project: a Power Point, Movie Maker movie, a podcast, or a wikispace/website. Students were told they should design these projects with the purpose of educating their ePals about the US government. They were instructed to give their ePals access to their projects through email or website link. As an informal observation, students were anxious to share their projects with their ePals. Students who had problems uploading and sending projects to their ePals were very concerned about their ePals not being able to see their projects. This indicated that students felt some type of motivation to complete their assignments and share with others.

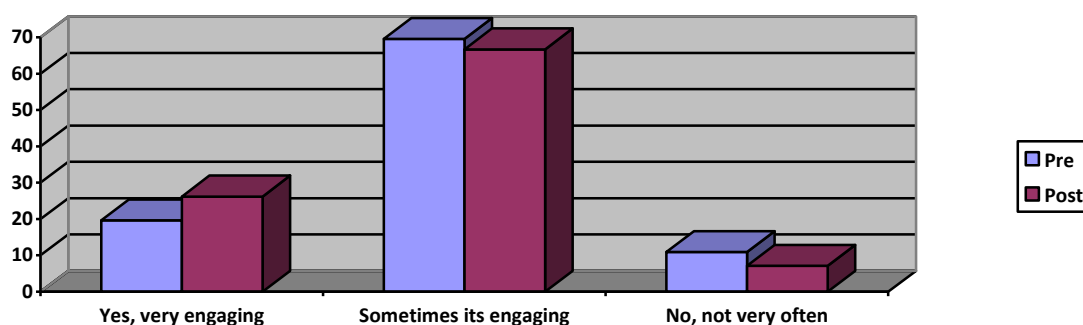
#### *Post-Study Survey Conclusions*

The quantitative post-study survey results were very interesting. When asked again what subject they enjoyed the most, 25% of students said they enjoyed social studies the most, an 18.5% increase from the pre-survey. When asked what subject they enjoyed the least, only 7.5% chose social studies, a 3.4% decrease from the pre-study survey. Even more encouraging, 67.5% stated that they felt they enjoyed social studies more than when they took the pre-study survey. Overall, this could indicate that students began to enjoy the class more over the course of the project and research.



*Figure 3. Post-Study Survey Question 7: How interested are you in learning about our government?*

Figure 3 shows that attitudes surrounding learning about our government did not become more positive. On the pre-study survey, there were not any students that felt that learning about our government was not important; subsequently, on the post-study survey, 5% of students surveyed said that they did not feel learning about our government was important. In the post-study survey, attitudes became more negative when students were asked how interested they were in learning about our government.



*Figure 4.* Pre-study and post-study question: Do you feel that social studies is an engaging subject?

As shown in Figure 4 above, the post-study survey did reveal a positive increase in students' positive attitudes about their levels of engagement in class. When asked if they felt that social studies was an engaging subject, 26.2% of students felt social studies was an engaging subject, a 6.6% increase from the pre-study survey. In addition, only 7.1 % of students said they were are not engaged in social studies very often, a 3.8% decrease from the pre-survey. Importantly, 65.9% of students said they felt that using technology and email in class made it more engaging and only 4.8% of students indicated that technology and email do not make class more engaging. This information agreed with the study done by Spires, Lee and Turner, which found that students wanted more technology being used at school (Johnson). I found these

percentages to be a positive indicator that the majority of students were possibly becoming more engaged in class.

#### Reflection and Action Plan for Change

##### *Reflection*

My intent for the study was to increase student engagement in my classroom using the global network ePals. My study involved the exchange of emails between students from my classroom and a classroom in Poland. My students were also asked to design and share projects with their ePals. By sharing information with ePals, I had hoped students would become more engaged in the government unit during first quarter. Based on the data collected, the majority of my students felt that using technology and email in class did make it more engaging. It is my conclusion that using ePals does make class more engaging. However, I believe the validity of the study may be uncertain due to factors outside of ePals that may have contributed to the increase in student engagement.

Though the majority of students did state that using email and technology made class more engaging, it cannot be determined for certain that it was ePals alone that increased the engagement. Question number ten in the Post-Study Survey (Appendix H) should have been worded differently to isolate ePals. The question should have been worded, “Did using ePals make class more engaging?” By isolating ePals from other uses of technology in class, the validity of the data collected would be more reliable in determining the amount of influence ePals alone had on the increase in engagement.

I also feel that the response time between emails from the Polish students needed to be shorter. The students in my classroom became impatient, which I believe may have affected their engagement in the project. Although question ten in the Post-Study Survey (Appendix H) determined that 65% of students felt email and technology made class more engaging, a shorter

response time could have kept more students engaged at deeper levels for a longer period of time. Consequently, more emails could have been exchanged. Because of the time constraint of the project and the long response time, many students only received one or two emails back from their ePals. To have a truly valid study, I feel that more time was needed to exchange more emails and projects.

#### *Future Plan of Action*

I will continue using ePals with the partnerships that have already been established this year. The teacher we are currently working with mentioned having her classroom present projects to teach my students more about their government. I believe my students will be interested in learning about a different government from their ePals rather than from me or in a traditional way. I will build on what we have been doing, although I will still not have much control over the response time between emails. However, when my students view projects from their ePals about the Polish government, this will provide an opportunity for comparison with the US government. Students will be able to take our government unit to the next level.

It would also be beneficial to create a time table of due dates for both classrooms for emails so that students will know exactly when they can expect their next emails from ePals. If the other teacher and I can agree on due dates, we can further structure the project. If students are checking their email every day and not receiving messages, their interest is lost. With certain due dates, they can know when to check their email and when to just wait. Most students expect instant feedback or very short response time, much like they are using Facebook. They need to better understand ahead of time to expect longer response times. I would also have given them more specific topics to email about in the beginning, had I known about the longer response times.

*Summary*

In conclusion, although I believe using ePals did increase student engagement in class, the study would be more valid with specific changes. In the Post-Study Survey, I would have worded question ten differently to isolate ePals specifically. The question did not separate ePals from the other technology used in class, so the results were skewed, assuming students' responses on the Post-Study Survey were influenced by the other uses of technology in class separate from ePals. The results would also be more valid given a longer length of time for the study, in which more emails and projects could be exchanged. If given a longer length of time, students may be given more opportunities to become more engaged in the project. In addition, I feel strongly that a shorter response time between emails would also keep more students engaged for longer. Overall, the use of ePals does increase student engagement and is a valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century tool for learning.



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## APPENDIX A. IRB Approval

**From:** Heimerl, Marc D **On Behalf Of** Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 31, 2010 3:13 PM  
**To:** 'heathermetzler@hasd.org'  
**Cc:** 'pprice@greenbay.k12.wi.us'  
**Subject:** IRB Protocol Approval - P101108038Q

Researcher Name: Heather Metzler

Your project titled "*Using ePals Global Community to Enhance Student Engagement*" has been reviewed by the Marian University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB). It has been determined that under rules governing protocol review, the project qualifies for expedited review and is approved for one year without modification.

1. If you should make any future changes in the protocol involving 1) method, 2) subjects, 3) informed consent, and/or 4) subject identification, you must submit a protocol modification. Contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for instructions regarding protocol modification.
2. The case number assigned to this protocol is **P101108038Q**; please reference this number in all future correspondence. You are responsible for maintaining all records related to this project for at least three years after completion of the research project.
3. Your protocol approval is valid from 08/31/2010 to 08/30/2011. You will be required to submit an Annual Progress Report (APR) to the IRB at the completion of your project. Before your proposed end date, you will be sent a reminder to complete this form and return it to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to disclose the status of the research, which can be found on the [Marian University IRB website](http://www.marianuniversity.edu/irb). You may also request an extension of IRB approval for another year beyond the approved end date by completing this form.

Please do not hesitate to contact the ORSP ([orsp@marianuniversity.edu](mailto:orsp@marianuniversity.edu) or 920-923-8976) if you have questions or require additional information.

MARC HEIMERL, IRB Secretary

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Marian University

45 S. National Avenue; Room R006

Fond du Lac, WI 54935

Telephone: 920-923-8796

Fax: 920-926-2114

[www.marianuniversity.edu/irb](http://www.marianuniversity.edu/irb)

## APPENDIX B. Site Coordinator Permission

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HORTONVILLE****Greenville Middle School**

N1450 Fawn Ridge Drive

Greenville, WI 54942

(920) 757-7140


**BRUCE A. CAREW, PRINCIPAL**

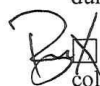
Institutional Review Board  
Marian University  
45 S. National Avenue  
Fond du Lac, WI 54935

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Heather Metzler, from Marian University to conduct her research at Greenville Middle School. I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine using the global network Epals to enhance student engagement and motivation.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

 ☒ MU researcher, Heather Metzler has permission to be on Greenville premise. She may also consult in person with staff/faculty of MU on the Greenville campus during her study.

 ☒ MU researcher, Heather Metzler has unrestricted access to the data she collects to perform the data analysis for presentation to Marian University. Permission from HASD must be granted for data use/publication beyond Heather Metzler's action research paper.

Sincerely,



**Bruce A. Carew, Principal**  
Greenville Middle School

July 13, 2010

## APPENDIX C. Letter Seeking Parent Consent

School of Education

**Study Title: Using Epals Global Community to Impact Student Engagement****Researchers:**

- Heather Metzler, graduate student, Marian University School of Education, (920) 757-7140, heathermetzler@hasd.org
- Penny Price, Instructor, Marian University School of Education, pprice@greenbay.k12.wi.us

You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study carried out by Mrs. Heather Metzler. Please read this form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Ask the researcher to explain anything you don't understand. This study has been approved for human subject participation by the Marian University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

You may refuse to give permission, or you may withdraw your permission for your child to be in the study, for any reason. Your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this study. Even if you give your permission, your child can decide not to be in the study or to leave the study at any time.

**What is this research study about?**

This research study is being done to examine the effects on student motivation and engagement using the global community, ePals. My goal is to improve instruction and consequently enhance my students' learning. We are asking your permission for your child to be in the study because he or she is a student in one of the social studies classes that will be using ePals.

Taking part in the study will take the first quarter of the school year. Your child cannot take part in this study unless this form is signed by a parent or guardian.

**What will my child be asked to do if he or she is in this research study?**

If your child takes part in the study, he or she will be asked to:

- Join the ePals global community.
  - Students will contact a pen pal that has been assigned and will be asked to share information about themselves, while learning about their pen pals.
  - Students will be asked specifically to educate their pen pals about our culture, and at the same time, will learn about the culture of the country of their pen pals. For example, students will share information about hobbies, interests, family and friends.
  - Other assignments will ask students to share information they have learned in class, such as facts about how our government works. Students will share this information and knowledge through emails, podcasts, Power Point, and other communications tools chosen. When media recording is used, I will let students know, and I you won't record students without their permission. This will be an on-going process that we work on through at least the first quarter of school this year.
- If media recording is used, I will let you know and I you won't record you without your permission.

**Are there any benefits to my child if he or she is in this research study?**

By taking part in my study, students will be able to email and communicate with a student from another country. Students will be able to learn about culture and life in another country.

If your child takes part in this study, it might help me learn how to help other kids get more information using technology and global communities such as ePals.

**Are there any risks to my child if he or she is in this research study?**

The potential risks to your child from taking part in this study are no greater than minimal. For example you may undergo some physical discomfort, emotional stress, and inconvenience, loss of time and breach of confidentiality. I will take every precaution to minimize these risks from happening, but should they occur, will refer you to the guidance counselor, give you extra time to make up for work

**Will information about my child be kept private?**

The data for this study are being collected anonymously. Neither the researcher(s) nor anyone else will be able to link data to you. The data for this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent allowed by federal and state law.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your child's name will not be used or associated with the findings. The data for this study will be kept for 3 years.

**Are there any costs or payments for your child being in this research study?**

There will be no costs to you or your child for taking part in this study.

**What are my child's rights as a research study volunteer?**

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child may choose not to take part in this study, choose not to answer specific questions, or leave the study at any time. The child will still take part in the regular classroom activities, but the child's information will not be used in the study.

There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are entitled if you choose not to give your permission for your child to take part or your child withdraws from the study.

**Who can I talk to if I have questions?**

If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact the researcher, Mrs. Heather Metzler, (920) 757-7140, [heathermetzler@hasd.org](mailto:heathermetzler@hasd.org) or regular mail at N1450 Fawn Ridge Dr., Greenville, WI 54942. If you have questions about your rights or your child's rights as a research participant, or would like to report a concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Marian University IRB Administrator at (920) 923-8796, or e-mail [orosp@marianuniversity.edu](mailto:orosp@marianuniversity.edu), or regular mail at: Marian University ORSP, 45 S. National Avenue, Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

**What does my signature on this consent form mean?**

Your signature on this form means that:

- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved for your child.
- You understand that even if you give your permission, your child may choose not to take part in the study.

---

**Study Title:** Using Epals Global Community to Impact Student Engagement

**Researchers:** Mrs. Heather Metzler

**Statement of Consent**

I give my voluntary permission for my child to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

---

Signature of Parent or Guardian

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the parent of the child being asked to take part in the study what will happen to their child.

I certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and potential risks of his or her child's participation.

I also certify that he or she:

- Speaks the language used to explain this research
- Reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her
- Does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means for his or her child to take part in this research.

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Person's Role in Research study



## APPENDIX D. Child Assent Form

*School of Education***Study Title:** Using Epals Global Community to Enhance Student Engagement**IRB Approval File Code:****Researchers:** *Principal Investigator: Heather Metzler, (920) 757-7140,  
heathermetzler@hasd.org**Research Advisor: Penny Price, Marian Instructor*

My name is Mrs. Heather Metzler. As part of my master's studies at Marian University, I am doing a classroom action research project. I am inviting you to take part in my research study. Your parent(s) know I am talking with you about this project, but it is up to you to decide if you want to be in the study. This form will tell you more about it to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

**Why is this study being done?**

The purpose of the study is to help us learn about using the ePals Global Community to communicate with students from other cultures. You will learn about other cultures and will share information about your culture. You are being asked to take part because you are a student in my class.

**What am I being asked to do?**

If you decide to be in the study, I will ask you to:

- Join the ePals global community. I will walk you through the process of setting up a secure email account using ePals.
- You will contact the pen pal assigned to you. You will be asked to share information about yourself and will learn about your pen pal. You will be asked specifically to educate your pen pal about your culture, and at the same time, you will learn about the culture of the country of your pen pal. For example, you will share information about your hobbies, interests, family and friends.
- Other assignments will ask you to tell your pen pal about how our government works and other important facts about our country. You will share this information and knowledge through emails, podcasts, Power Point, and other communications tools you choose.
- This will be an on-going process that we work on through at least the first quarter of school this year.
- If media recording is used, I will let you know and I you won't record you without your permission.

**What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?**

By taking part in my study, you will be able to email and communicate with a student your age from another country. You will be able to learn about your ePal's culture and life in that country.

Taking part in this research study may not help you get straight A's, but it might help me learn how to help other kids get more information using technology.

**Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?**

The potential risks of taking part in this study are no greater than minimal. For example you may undergo some physical discomfort, emotional stress, and inconvenience, loss of time and breach of confidentiality. I will take every precaution to minimize these risks from happening, but should they occur, I will refer you to the guidance counselor, give you extra time to make up for work

**Will my information be kept private?**

The data for this study are coded and anonymous. The master list and the key will be kept separately in a restricted computer and a locked cabinet. Neither the researcher(s) nor anyone else will know which data is yours. The data for this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent allowed by federal and state law. The aggregate data and summary results will be shared with my research advisor, the school principal and parents who may ask for the results. Under rare circumstances, your data you may be reviewed by MU officials or people from the organization or agency that funded the study. When we tell other people or write articles about what we learned in the study, we won't include your name or that of anyone else who took part in the study. The data for this study will be kept for 3 years.

**Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?**

There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study. And you will not receive money or any other form of compensation for taking part in this study.

**What are my rights as a research study volunteer?**

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to be a part of this study if you don't want to. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part and no one will be upset or angry at you. You may choose not to answer any questions you don't want to answer, and you can change your mind and not be in the study at any time. If you decide to not be in the study, you will still take part in the activity but your data will not be used in the analysis.

**Who can I talk to if I have questions?**

If you have questions at any time, you can ask the researchers and you can talk to your parent about the study. We will give you a copy of this form to keep. If you have questions about the study, call Instructor Penny Price at (920) 495-7404 or email her at [pprice@greenbay.k12.wi.us](mailto:pprice@greenbay.k12.wi.us)

The Marian University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study to make sure that the rights and safety of people who take part in the study are protected. If you have questions about your rights in the study, or if you are unhappy about something that happens to you in the study, you can contact them at (920) 923-8796 or [orsp@marianuniversity.edu](mailto:orsp@marianuniversity.edu).

**What does my signature on this consent form mean?**

Your signature on this form means that:

- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has answered your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

**Study Title:** Using Epals Global Community to Enhance Student Engagement

**Researchers:** Mrs. Heather Metzler

**Statement of Consent**

I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and potential risks of participation.

I also certify that he or she:

- Speaks the language used to explain this research
- Reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her
- Does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Heather Metzler  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator  
Role in the Research Study

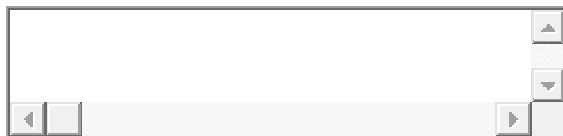
## APPENDIX E. Pre-Study Survey

Found at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q73Q7WX>

**1. Which school subject do you enjoy the most? Choose one.**

- ☐ math
- ☐ science
- ☐ social studies
- ☐ language
- ☐ reading

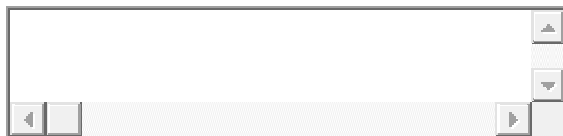
**2. Explain your answer to number 1.**



**3. Which school subject do you enjoy the least? Choose 1.**

- ☐ math
- ☐ science
- ☐ social studies
- ☐ language
- ☐ reading

**4. Explain your answer to number 3.**



**5. What do you enjoy about social studies?**



**6. What do you dislike about social studies?**



**7. Do you feel that learning about our government is important? Choose one.**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not very important

**8. How interested are you in learning about our government? Choose 1.**

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested
- ☐ Not at all interested

**9. Do you feel that social studies is an engaging subject? If you are engaged in class you are actively participating, interested, and working. Choose one.**

- ☐ Yes, it is very engaging
- ☐ Sometimes it is engaging
- ☐ No, I am not engaged very often

**10. Explain your answer to number 9.**



**(Social Studies 1 continued)****1. What types of things help you enjoy learning? Choose all that apply to you.**

- ☐ Reading books or articles
- ☐ Working in groups
- ☐ Making art projects
- ☐ Using computers and technology
- ☐ Watching videos
- ☐ Writing

**2. How important to you is using technology in class?**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not very important

**3. Do you feel that using technology in class would make it more engaging for you?**

- ☐ Yes, definitely
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No, it would not

**4. How often do you use a social network such as Facebook or My Space?**

- ☐ Very often - almost every day
- ☐ Sometimes - once a week, a few times a month
- ☐ Rarely - almost never

**5. How often do you email friends and family members for fun? Choose one.**

- ☐ Vary often - almost every day
- ☐ Sometimes - once a week, a few times a month
- ☐ Rarely - almost never

**6. How interested are you in using email and tools similar to Facebook in school? Choose one.**

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested
- ☐ Not interested

**7. Do you feel that using email and tools similar to Facebook would make social studies more engaging for you? Choose one.**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Possibly
- ☐ No, it would not

**8. How interested are you in communicating with a student your age from another country?**

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Sort of interested
- ☐ Not really interested

**9. Would sharing information about our country and government with a pen pal from another country vs. just our class make class more engaging?**

- ☐ Yes, it would
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No, it would not make it more engaging



## APPENDIX F. Grade Book Record of Turn-in

provided by provided by - HNSD					
grb08.w					
Greenville Middle					
Teacher: Heather Metzler Class: 201008 / 6 Prd:4 Social S...					
Email#1					
Week 6 - Wednesday - 10/06/2010					
Category: PRT - 25% Max Score: 10					
This Grade Period is closed for Grade Entry					
Score	Special Code	No Count	Missing	Comment	
8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	R	
2		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
10		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

et Explorer provided by provided by - HASD

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**Greenville Middle**Teacher: **Heather Metzler** Class: [201008 / 5 Prd:3 Social S...](#)**Scores****Email#1**

Week 6 - Wednesday - 10/06/2010

Category: **PRT - 25%** Max Score: **10****This Grade Period is closed for Grade Entry**

	Score	Special Code	No Count	Missing	Comment
	7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	4		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	0		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	6		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	3		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L
	3		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	8		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	10		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## APPENDIX G. Teacher Informal Observation Journal

**Observation Journal**

Sept. 1, 2010: When I briefly mentioned to students that we would be using the ePals network to communicate with students in other countries, students turned to their classmates and stared whispering to each other and commenting, “Oh, that’s cool,” and similar remarks. I asked for a show of hand for those who’d be interested, and almost all students raised their hands.

Sept. 7, 2010: All permission slips but 1 were returned, on time and signed by parents, for the project. A phone call was made to the parent that did not sign the permission slip. I explained the project and what was involved. The parent discussed her concerns with me and decided that she would give permission for her son to participate. This means I have 100% participation from my classes.

Week of Sept. 19: As students have been working on other activities for class, I’ve noticed that students are checking their ePals email even when they are supposed to be working on other things. I’ve had to ask several to close their email until the other assignment has been completed. I don’t want to discourage students from the ePals project; I am glad they are anxious to check their email, but I do want them using class time to work on assignments as well.

Oct. 4, 2010: A very quiet, reserved, usually unmotivated student approached me to ask when I thought his ePal would write back. Another quiet student asked how much information he could tell about himself.

Oct. 5, 2010: As students worked on emails, I observed they were excitedly discussing what they should say and what they thought their ePals would think. They seemed very focused on the email.

Oct. 6, 2010: Several students per class asking when their ePals would write back. They are very anxious to hear back and are asking to check their email. I’m glad they are excited, but I’m worried they are getting a little frustrated since replies are taking a long time.

Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2010: Students seem to be checking email each chance they get. They are also asking to for passes to check email during study hall.

Oct. 12, 2010: Unfortunately, students are impatient that ePals have not written back. I explained this is because of the time difference and the “assignment” time the other teacher has given.

Oct. 15, 2010: A quiet student who does like to participate asked me if he could reply back to an email he received from his ePal, indicating his interest in the project; however, I am sensing some frustration that replies are taking so much time.

Oct. 19, 2010: As replies come back from ePals, my students seem excited to share the replies with classmates. One girl comments to me how she noticed the language ability differences when

her ePal wrote about using make-up as “making up.” She thought it was funny and was writing back. I suggested the kids check their email and immediately, they logged on. As emails come through, students are responding right away.

## APPENDIX H. Post-Survey

1. Which school subject do you enjoy the most? Choose one.

- ☐ math
- ☐ science
- ☐ social studies
- ☐ language
- ☐ reading

2. Which school subject do you enjoy the least? Choose one.

- ☐ Math
- ☐ science
- ☐ social studies
- ☐ language
- ☐ reading

3. Do you feel you enjoy social studies any more now than at the beginning of the year? (Even if you don't really enjoy social studies now...)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. What do you enjoy about social studies?

**5. What do you dislike about social studies?****6. Do you feel that learning about our government is important? Choose one.**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not very important

**7. How interested are you in learning about our government?**

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested
- ☐ Not at all interested

**8. Do you feel that social studies is an engaging subject? If you are engaged in a class, you are actively participating, interested, and working. Choose one.**

- ☐ Yes, it is very engaging
- ☐ Sometimes it is engaging
- ☐ No, I am not engaged very often

**9. How important to you is using technology in class? Choose one.**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not very important

**10. Do you feel that using technology and email in class makes it engaging for you? Choose one.**

- ☐ Yes, definitely
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No, it does not

