

<http://encarta.msn.com/alexandria/templates/LessonFull.asp?page=454&lvstart=K&lvend=12&majorsubject=Information+Technology&minorsubject=&source=%2D99&keyword=&search=1>

## **E-Communications- This is an example of a project that can be done in this area.**

Grades 6 to 12

Subjects Information Technology, Social Studies, Integrating Technology into the Classroom, Human Relations

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### **Overview**

In the Stereotypes Project, students write about their stereotyped ideas of life in other countries. They then read about others' view of them. Students give and receive more accurate information about life in their respective countries.

### **Objectives**

In this activity, students will:

Become aware of the misconceptions they have about life in other countries and the misconceptions others have of them

Receive accurate information about others' lives and disseminate accurate information about their own lives

### **Materials**

This activity requires the following resources:

An e-mail connection and an Internet browser

Reference materials, including Encarta® Encyclopedia, Encarta® Virtual Globe (Encarta® World Atlas), and Microsoft® Bookshelf®.

### **Procedure**

We begin by establishing an e-mail partnership with a class of students of the same age level in another country. Ideally this link is with a country that our students "know something about" through seeing movies or TV shows that present a picture of life there.

This connection can be made through the Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections list at St. Olaf College or through the International WWW Schools Registry (both URLs are given in the References and Links section at the end of this lesson).

Students in each school then write about their stereotypes of life in the other students' country, being careful not to hurt the other students' feelings and making it clear that these are stereotypical ideas based on media images.

The teacher helps students differentiate between knowledge and stereotypes through discussion and examples. If you know someone and get to know their personality, you could say that they are usually hard-working or usually lazy; that they are clean or that they rarely wash; that they are fun to be with or boring. We move beyond knowing one person to stereotypes when we say that other people of the same religion, country, sex, or age are lazy, dirty, or fun to be with because that one person is.

Sometimes, we make up stereotypes ourselves, but movies, TV, books, our friends and families, even our teachers are "selling" us stereotypes all the time. As we watch a movie made in another country, we may think that we are getting a true picture of what people in that country are like. We forget that we are seeing an actor playing a role in a script that someone wrote. Through discussion we differentiate knowledge from stereotypes, individual differences vs. cultural differences, and prejudice vs. openness to learn about a person. To what extent do we pre-judge people based on color, religion, age, or nationality? Are we open to changing our minds when the person doesn't turn out to be what we expected?

Students respond to the e-mail letters with accurate, factual information (gleaned from reference resources such as Encarta Encyclopedia, Encarta Virtual Globe, and the library print reference shelf) about life in their OWN country. They also write about their own personal experiences with the issues involved: violence, sports, music, dating, parents, work, driving....

Students ask each other further questions about similarities and differences in their lives.

Students carry on a personal interchange on these and other topics.

Students summarize their findings. The papers the students write are shared with each other and with the other class through WWW posting.

### **Background**

See our detailed description of one such project at <http://www.messalonskee.sad47.k12.me.us/auspapr.htm>

### **Variations**

At younger ages, students exchange information about other age-appropriate subjects, including:

Favorite toys or TV shows  
Favorite foods and recipes  
Games and hobbies  
Ways to spend spare time

### **Evaluation of Student Work**

#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

Student is able to send, receive, reply to, and forward e-mail: 40 points

Student is able to copy and paste text between the word processing program and the e-mail message and vice versa: 20 points

Student is able to identify the difference between stereotypes and factual knowledge, between opinion and fact, and between prejudice and openness to learn about people, and student is able to give examples of each: 40 points

Student identifies personal prejudices about the partner country and sends a polite e-mail message about this: 40 points

In reading the partners' e-mail, students identify the partners' stereotypes and prejudices and identifies where these stereotypes come from (TV, movies, books). (40 points)

Students respond to the partner's e-mail in detail, with factual information and personal opinion and experiences about the similarities and differences between the reality of life in this country and the partners' stereotypes and prejudices about it. (80 points)

Students respond to the partner's questions about life in their country and ask questions about what life is really like in the partner's country. (40 points)

Students summarize their findings in an 8-page or longer paper, using quotations from their e-mails and the partners' e-mails to identify what they learned about:

- E-Mail
- The partner country
- Their own country
- How stereotypes and prejudices develop

(100 points)

Total possible: 400 points. Divide student score by 4 to get conventional grading numbers.

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For additional relevant information, visit the following Web sites:

Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections

<http://www.stolaf.edu/network/iecc/>

A mailing list and list archive for finding classroom partners for e-mail exchanges. You need not join the list to use it to create or find an exchange.

International WWW Schools Registry  
<http://web66.coled.umn.edu/schools.html>

Another place to find email partners through school Web sites, organized by country.

Reflections on our Australia exchange project: December, 1996  
<http://www.messalonskee.sad47.k12.me.us/auspapr.htm>

Our Australia Stereotypes Project—A Longer Summary.

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Submitted by Stan Davis, Messalonskee High School, Oakland, Maine

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Schoolhouse Partners About ELC

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# Student Activity Sheet

Search Encarta.com Enter a question or keyword

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## The Stereotypes Project

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### Overview:

This activity will help you examine the ideas you have about life in other countries and the ideas people in other countries have about how people live in the United States.

### Procedure:

Write about the following questions. Then create an e-mail letter to our partners in \_\_\_\_\_ about what you think life there is like for people your age. Include some questions. Apologize in advance in case you hurt their feelings. Ask them to correct any errors and to give you their ideas about life in the USA. Check spelling and grammar carefully. They will get to know you through your writing. We don't want your partners to think you're stupid or can't use your own language. And remember that if, English is not their first language, they will not be able to understand misspelled words or bad grammar.

### Questions:

Imagine that you are the same age that you are now and that you are living in \_\_\_\_\_.

How would your life be different than it is now in the USA?

The same?

What ideas do you have about life in \_\_\_\_\_?

Where do these ideas come from?

What ideas do you think our partners will have about life in the USA, if they watch American TV and movies?

### Next Steps After Exchanging the First E-Mail Letters

Now that you have read our partners' letters, let them know about the ways in which they have an accurate picture of your life and the ways in which their picture of American life is incomplete. Be kind; your ideas about their lives were probably wrong too. And if their pictures of American life hurt to read, remember how they learned those ideas. Help them to see real life here. Use facts and cite sources as you correct their inaccurate ideas. Don't just give opinions. Your own experiences and how your individual life is is also important. Work together to create a picture for our partners about different aspects of life here for young people. Tell them about friendship, dating, money, drugs, music, toys and hobbies, school, violence, hopes and dreams, work, and other things they want to know about.

Keep asking them for more detail until you know what you want to know about their lives.

Get to know your partners through continuing to write back and forth about your lives.

### Final Paper

Write about:

How young peoples' lives are different and the same in the USA and in the partner country

What you have learned about Internet technology

What you have learned about life in the United States.

Support what you say with quotations from your e-mail messages and from your partners' e-mail messages.

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