

OHIO LAUNCHES TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND WILL EVALUATE IMPACT ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Partnering with iEARN-USA, initiative offers teachers opportunity to internationalize classrooms through participation in online professional development and collaborative projects

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New York—The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) today announced a partnership with the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN-USA) to bring global learning and interaction into classrooms in the state. The partnership enables Ohio teachers to participate in an interactive online professional development course and to engage with classrooms in 118 countries worldwide using online collaborative projects, resources and tools.

“Education leaders in Ohio are increasingly recognizing the importance of “internationalizing” students’ learning experiences to prepare them for success living in a diverse society and working in a global, technology driven economy,” states Eric Calvert, Assistant Director for International Education in the State’s Office of Curriculum and Assessment. This project will provide a unique opportunity to evaluate empirically whether infusing traditional content with opportunities for international collaboration has the potential to improve student motivation and achievement in core content areas as measured by student mastery of academic content standards.

“We will select the pilot schools in mid-late June 2007, and will do our best to get a mix of schools that together reflect the geographic, economic and cultural diversity of the state,” Calvert added.

The pilot project is made possible through a grant from the Longview Foundation to support an innovative project that uses technology to infuse international education and cross cultural awareness in K-12 programs. The primary goal of the project is to provide professional development to teachers on how to integrate global online project work into their classrooms with schools worldwide. Specifically, professional development will focus on the technical, collaborative and organizational skills needed to participate fully in a global, collaborative, Internet-based learning environment.

The project will link Ohio schools to the iEARN network, provide high quality professional development to educators through a “train the trainers” model and provide students with opportunities to participate in select iEARN projects linked to Ohio’s Academic Content Standards. An evaluation study will then explore the effects of participating in online collaborative projects on measures of student motivation, technology skills, and interest in and perceptions of other cultures. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will compare student mastery of Ohio’s Academic Content Standards among students who participate

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in online collaborative projects to achievement levels of students in similar districts which do not participate in such projects.

“Through the Internet, students and teachers have the opportunity to go beyond international simulations and engage directly with students in other countries,” said iEARN-USA Director Dr. Edwin Gragert. “Students have the opportunity to both learn and teach through direct interaction, enabling them to gain knowledge about their classroom subjects and acquire the ability to work directly with other cultures instead of merely studying about them. Being comfortable working in teams with technology and with different cultures are important 21st century skills.”

“Based on similar models in Delaware, New Jersey and other states, we see the Ohio initiative as a powerful example of how classes can be internationalized using connective technologies and have student performance evaluated in meeting state educational standards. It is a model which can be replicated elsewhere in the United States,” Gragert added.

If positive results are found, the evaluation data used to encourage other schools to internationalize curriculum and create similar collaborative learning opportunities for their students.

About iEARN

iEARN was launched in 1988 as a pilot project between the US and USSR to demonstrate that students could use emerging new technologies to work together on meaningful educational projects that enhance the quality of life on the planet. It is iEARN’s vision that if students start working together globally from the earliest ages (5-19), they will learn better through experiential interaction with peers in other countries and learn that the world’s issues can be resolved by collaborative solutions. iEARN has grown to become the world’s largest educational network for project-based learning, with programs in more than 118 countries.

iEARN-USA was awarded the 2003 Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education and is a 2004 Tech Museum Laureate winner for “technology benefiting humanity.” Please visit www.iearn.org and www.us.iearn.org or e-mail: iearn@us.iearn.org iEARN-USA is based in New York City.

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