

Intercultural Telementoring in a Ninth Grade Creative Writing Project

Jeff Kupperman

The University of Michigan

Mailing address: 1655 McIntyre Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone: (313) 764-8201 [home] (313) 647-2076 [office]

E-mail: jkupp@umich.edu

The Internet has made it possible for students to interact with distant "telementors" having a certain area of expertise, but telementoring as a way of fostering intercultural communication is an idea that has been little explored. In this pilot project, five 9th grade students in the United States sent e-mail letters to telementors from three African countries, and they used the replies to rewrite an invented "folk tale" they had previously written for class. The letters asked questions that would allow the students to construct richer, more accurate settings for their stories. Each student received replies from at least two telementors. The rewritten stories were published on the World Wide Web. Data collected for the study includes interviews with each student before and after the project, as well as all written correspondence during the project. Building on research in intercultural communication and writing for authentic audiences, the correspondence, interviews, and final products will be analyzed around the following questions:

- How well were students able to integrate information from the correspondence into their own creative writing?
- How did students evaluate the replies they received, and how did they deal with contradictory replies from the telementors?
- Did the students' image or attitude about the telementors' countries change as a result of the project?
- What were the students' affective reactions to the project?

I will explore the potential for intercultural telementoring for secondary students, and I will discuss ways to scale projects such as these for participation by larger groups of students.