



BRIDGING THE WORLD THROUGH EPALS

Sharin Tebo, a Pre K- K12 IT Teacher at Berkeley International School, explains how she uses digital technology to connect her students with students from schools in the United States

REMEMBER when you were a young student and your elementary teacher matched your class up with pen pals from a different school? Well, ePals is the 21st Century version of a typical pen pal, except technology is what makes ePals come alive! At Berkeley International School, we are integrating ePals into IT lessons and making connection to other subjects in our school curriculum.

When I arrived at Berkeley, one of my first tasks was to create an online profile on ePals for our school. Here, I

was able to write a description detailing what kinds of collaboration I was looking for. I had no idea I would get such a resounding response from classes and teachers all over the United States! I chose to focus my efforts on matching our students with American classrooms, as one of our Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLRs) is becoming an Effective English Communicator. This gives our students the opportunity to communicate using English to reach across country borders and learn about the lives of students their age in the United

States. We are also ensuring our students are Life Long Learners.

My 3rd grade students received their first 'snail mail' letters from the students in California at the end of September. I had asked their teacher specifically to write snail mail because many of my students have probably never received a letter in the mail from a new friend before. The students are working on writing a friendly letter back to their ePal using Kidspiration software and Microsoft Word. We will cover a wide range of topics this year with our ePals in California.

Grade 4 students are collaborating with a private Jewish school outside Charlotte, North Carolina. Using technology, their teacher sent me a YouTube link of an introductory video she took of her students on the playground. When I showed my grade 4 students the video, they were so pumped and enthusiastic to learn more about these students. One of the most common reactions I get from our students is how

similar their ePals are to themselves. We will focus on Global Warming this year with the 4th graders from North Carolina.

Grade 5 has used Google Earth to zoom in on Incarnate World Academy in Ohio, United States. Our students will be working on the ePals collaborative project called "The Way We Are" with the 5th grade students at Incarnate. They started by creating one PowerPoint slide each, which I combined in to a full slide show to send to their teacher. We received their class's PowerPoint slide show, and have continued our email exchanges using Google Docs for surveys on what Fall is like in Ohio, and here in Bangkok. Most importantly, our classes have been focusing on real-world issues, as the teacher in Ohio has been keeping her students up to date on the recent flood situation here in Thailand that has affected Berkeley students.

Finally, Grades 6 and 7 students are paired up with an ePal from a Language Arts class in Neenah, WI, just outside my hometown of Green Bay, WI. These students will be using Inspiration software to compose their first friendly letter and I



