



December 7, 2009

Oasis Charter students learn to design Web site

Class joins global online competition

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As Kaylie Rose and her computer partner scrolled through the different images, they tried to determine which animal they would choose.

The two Oasis Charter Middle School teens were preparing to make a PowerPoint presentation about one of Florida's endangered species. In the end, they decided on the Caribbean Monk Seal, which is already extinct.

"I love animals; This is my kind of thing," said Caitlin Robb, 13.

Elisa Collins' seventh-grade elective class at Oasis will be learning how to create and design their own Web site this school year. They've joined an international Global Virtual Classroom competition sponsored by the Give Back Foundation.

GVC is a free online collaborative learning project that encourages teamwork, creativity and cross-cultural understanding in addition to teaching technical and Web site design skills, Collins said.

There is no cost for the class to join the competition. Collins' class became partners with a class of fourth-grade students from Shumway Elementary in Chandler, Ariz., and third-graders from Wodunga Primary in Wodunga, Australia to design the site.

About 2,100 students from 23 countries will participate in the annual contest. The winning primary and secondary teams are awarded \$3,000 for first prize, \$1,000 for second prize and \$750 for third prize. The sites must be completed by March 31.

"We'll use as much technology as we can," Collins said. "... and develop skills the students will need in the 21st century."

The three schools have chosen a theme that studies each community's unique and endangered species and habitats.

The three teachers have been communicating using Skype — a Web site that allows the people to talk and see one another through a Web camera. Each of them has discussed the conversations with their classes and shown them screen grabs, or photos, from Skype.

Students also have been writing letters to the other students telling them about themselves, their school and surroundings.

"I think it's actually very fun," said Caroline Picciolo, 12. "We get to meet other people from around the

world and we get to learn their customs.”

Collins' class has been gathering information to begin working on the site. Some students have been working on PowerPoint presentations about endangered animals.

“It would be nice if people could try to preserve the habitats of these animals because most of them live in mangroves,” said Matthew Pena, 12, who was working on a presentation on sand hill cranes, alligators and the roseate spoonbill.

Other students have been taking photographs of the school and animals in the community. All of the information will be posted to a central site where all of the groups can work on the Web site's content.

Eventually, the class will learn how to animate objects, use a flash player, create links and everything else needed to bring a Web site to life.
