

SMART aids Global Connections, Exchange-Africa

CAPE TOWN: SMART Technologies plans to support Global Connections and Exchange-Africa with the donation of educational technology to schools in South Africa, Uganda and Zambia as well as in the USA.

The initiative forms part of the 'Cultivating NetGeneration of Youth as Global Citizens and Media Literate Leaders in a Digital Society' project, under the auspices of the US State Department, which held its first Africa conference in Cape Town, South Africa on Tuesday, 1 February 2011.

SMART Technologies and World Link, in collaboration with NetGeneration of Youth, are partnering with three US and African high schools in a virtual and physical exchange programme. Each of three schools in the US is participating in a twinning relationship that matches them with a school in South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

In South Africa, Oude Molen Academy of Science & Technology in Cape Town, a participant in the Khanya Technology in Education project, has been paired with Foshay Learning Centre, Los Angeles, USA.

Project-based learning model

The schools are using a project-based learning model pioneered by NetGeneration of Youth to address issues related to media literacy in an increasingly global society. The latest technology from SMART, including SMART Board interactive whiteboards, SMART Notebook software and SMART Bridgit conferencing software, is being used to support the design and implementation of the cross-cultural programme.

Throughout the year, educators and students engage in virtual exchange over the internet using Skype, the NING social networking site and SMART Bridgit conferencing software, a desktop collaboration tool. Professional development schemes assist educators to design content to develop media literacy.

Exploring the role of media

The aim is to help students become proficient with technology as they explore the role of a range of media in their communities, country and around the world. Lessons addressing radio, print, television and interactive media are designed to cultivate youth not only as analytic thinkers and critical consumers of media, but also as creative producers of media who can apply new knowledge to create effective multimedia messages that can be shared with peers globally. Project activities in class and online are complemented by opportunities for students at each school to participate in a capstone project of community service.

Additionally, one teacher and two students from each school has the opportunity to visit their partner school in a three-week face-to-face reciprocal exchange programme, with experiences captured through journals and photo-essays and shared on the project website.

With support from the US State Department, a consortium of organisations from the fields of technology, media literacy, academic research, youth leadership and international exchange have joined together to implement this initiative. The aim of the programme is to inspire youth to inquire, aspire, academically achieve and pursue successful careers and meaningful lives as actively engaged, media literate, global citizens.

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