

# Best Practices of Technology Integration

**Title:** Surfin' the U.S.A. with Road Rabbit

**Submitted by:**

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**Subject Area:** Social Studies, English Language Arts, Technology

**Intended Grade Level(s):** 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> (could easily be adapted to fit any age)

**Description:**

This is a project based learning activity. Students take virtual field trips to places in the U.S.A. in conjunction with the stops made by the class mascot, Road Rabbit. As Road Rabbit travels to his destination(s) via snail mail, so do the students via the Internet. Information is gathered using a variety of Internet sites, mail sent via the postal service, email and other traditional sources such as books or pamphlets about each location. This information is incorporated into a "Travel Scrapbook" using Kid Pix Studio Deluxe software, a digital camera and/or a scanner. The multimedia Travel Scrapbook is shared with others and printed out into a class book.

**Narrative:**

This social studies unit is a real life extension of our reading series lessons on various habitats and environments. After carrying out reading lessons and activities regarding the community, neighborhood, farms, city life, river life, desert life, etc. students get the opportunity to interact with people that actually live in these kinds of environments across the U.S.A. The majority of our students do not travel outside of their own community much less other states. This project gives them the opportunity to be exposed to other communities.

Integration of students' relatives and friends as host families, access to email and the Internet, and the cooperative efforts of our 4<sup>th</sup> grade buddies have made this unit an especially successful project in my room. Because the host families are relatives or friends of the students' own families; the children seem to take an active interest in where Road Rabbit is each day and in what he's doing with people they actually know. Parents also take an active role in Road Rabbit's adventures for the same reasons thus opening the door for shared communication between parent and child about something they are both knowledgeable about.

Our fourth grade buddies are trained in the use of Kid Pix Studio Deluxe prior to this activity. Once trained, they and their 1<sup>st</sup> grade buddy are assigned one of Road Rabbit's

destinations. As materials arrive (post cards, email, etc.) from their assigned location/host family, the students plan, organize and create their portion of the Travel Scrapbook using Kid Pix. Materials gathered need to be evaluated and decisions have to be made as to what to incorporate into the final project. The enthusiasm, extensive conversations and cooperative spirit of students (both young and old) regarding Road Rabbit's adventures and during the process of organizing information into a multimedia presentation makes it evident that the project is fun yet challenging for all. It also allows for individual student creativity while working within the preset guidelines for the final project.

Access to email provides for immediate feedback on Road Rabbit's whereabouts as anxious students wait patiently to hear from him and allows for the host families to share information about their communities with the students. It is also a catalyst for young writers as they respond to host families through email. Students will extend their knowledge of unique locations in the U.S. by integrating the study of geography through the use of the Internet. The ability to access the World Wide Web enhances information gathering by allowing for the opportunity to access information unavailable through traditional sources. Students will compare and contrast information collected and will create graphic representations of that information thus promoting higher order thinking skills.

This project will promote the following:

- information gathering skills
- organizational and deductive reasoning skills
- information literacy skills (sorting relevant information and using it)
- critical thinking and analysis
- writing skills

### **Curriculum Benchmarks:**

**MI.SOC.II.4.EE.2** Compare their community and region with others.

**MI.SOC.V.1.LE.1** Locate information about local, state and national communities using a variety of traditional sources, electronic technologies, and direct observations.

**MI.ELA.3.LE.1** Integrate listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing skills for multiple purposes and in varied contexts. An example is using all the language arts to prepare and present a unit project on a selected state or country.

### **Total amount of time for lesson:**

This is an ongoing project to be determined by the number of stops made by Road Rabbit. I carry out the project during the second semester, January through the end of the school year, with Road Rabbit visiting each host family for approximately one week. This could be shortened or lengthened depending on the desire of the teacher.

The creation of the Travel Scrapbook is done during center time in my room since I only have one computer with Internet access. Appropriate bookmarks are set prior to center time to assist with locating resources (see Possible URL's). Each buddy group, a group of two 4<sup>th</sup> graders and two 1<sup>st</sup> graders, gathers needed information during their turn at that center. They will be doing some rough draft work when they are not in the computer center. Then they create

slides to be incorporated into a slide show (4<sup>th</sup> grade buddies join our center time for the time their first grade buddy is in the computer center).

**Materials/Hardware/Software:**

- A class mascot-stuffed animal
- Computer capable of running Kid Pix Studio Deluxe
- Access to the Internet, the World Wide Web and e-mail
- Scanner and/or digital camera (optional)
- Kid Pix Studio Deluxe software by Broderbund
- Addresses of potential host families
- Bulletin board materials (large U.S. map, yarn, push pins)

**Teacher Preparation:**

1. "Adopt" a small stuffed rabbit as class mascot (Road Rabbit)
2. Familiarize yourself with software.
3. Enlist students' families' help in locating host families around the U.S. Ask for email capabilities and stress responsibility and expectations that come with being a host family (see Parent Newsletter).
4. Plan trip choosing diverse locations across the U.S.
5. Prepare itinerary with names and addresses of participants for each numbered stop including your own school address as the last stop of the journey. See example.
6. Notify students' families of final itinerary so they can in turn let host families know of date(s) of Road Rabbit's arrival to their home.
7. Pack Road Rabbit with class photo, itinerary, mailing labels of host families, Road Rabbit letter explaining project and responsibilities of host family in box to be sent to first location.
8. Plan field trip to Post Office with class to send Road Rabbit.
9. Prepare bulletin board with U.S. map, itinerary, labeled stops, etc.
10. As mascot reaches each destination, mark it with pushpin (use yarn connected from one point to the next). Mascot's current location is always evident.
11. As correspondence from host families arrives, share with class and post for all to see.
12. Start "Travel Scrapbook" (multimedia phase of project). Assign locations to buddy groups. Students can take digital photos of souvenirs received, scan in postcards or pamphlets, incorporate other information found about that location from traditional sources and the Web, and include e-mail received to create their slide show.

**Prerequisite Student Skills:**

1. Basic familiarity with the computer
2. Buddy class training on Kid Pix Studio Deluxe and the Internet (using bookmarks)
3. Allow for student exploration of Kid Pix Studio Deluxe prior to creating the Travel Scrapbook. We do other small projects with this software before the Travel Scrapbook project.

**Student Activities/Procedures:**



Math – Graph

“Would you like to live in (Road Rabbit’s current location)? Graph the yes and no answers. Discuss.

Social Studies – Students create a time line of Road Rabbit’s itinerary.

Culminate project by writing thank you notes to host families sharing the multimedia scrapbook with parents, school board, and community. Print out the Travel Scrapbook for each student to take home.

**Possible URLs:**

<http://www.50states.com>

A great site for information on the 50 states.

<http://geography.miningco.com>

Annotated links to hundreds of the best sites for maps and geographical information

<http://www.weather.com>

Current weather info

<http://www.awesomelibrary.org/>

Provides news by city

<http://www.web66.umn.edu/schools.html>

School web site registry

\*\*The following are samples of parent letters, etc. used in this project.....

### Parent Newsletter Sample

Dear Parents,

Our class would like to embark upon an adventure. Let me explain the project and how you can help us.....

We have adopted a small stuffed rabbit as our class mascot. He is named "Road Rabbit" in honor of his upcoming adventures. I have told the students that Road Rabbit will be sent around the United States. I've explained that his route would depend on the availability of "host" families who would be willing to keep him for a short time and write to the class about his adventure in their community. Now comes the part where I need help from you. I need help in locating host families. They could be relatives or friends around the country who would like to participate in this project and be willing to host our class mascot. These "host" families MUST be committed to following through by writing to our class and sending the mascot on to the next destination on the itinerary. I will need names and addresses of possible participants. I would like to emphasize that it would be especially helpful to our class Goals 2000 project if these names had access to email or maybe the local school and their email accounts. Our Goals 2000 requirements are such that we will be emailing hosts (or local people of the hosts). Please include email addresses on the bottom line of the "Address" section of this form. Call me for further explanation if you have questions. My number at school is 111-222, home 000-222-3333.

I will plan Road Rabbit's route from the information that you send in, making his journey as practical and as broad as possible. I might not be able to include everyone's name that is sent in but I will do my best. I would like to include different states of course, small towns, large cities, rural areas, coastal regions and other diverse locations so the students can be exposed to a variety of places. A sequenced itinerary with names and addresses will be alongside Road Rabbit so that each participant will know where to send him next including our school address last where we

will be eagerly awaiting his return before the end of the school year. Road Rabbit will be packed in a box with his itinerary, a letter explaining the project (see attached letter), and a class photo. I would like to plan a field trip (we can walk there) to the post office to send him on his way. We will have a large U.S. map posted in our room with each stop labeled and current location marked. This project will involve reading, writing, geography, the Internet and FUN! Host families could include information about their community and/or state, photos or videotape of Road Rabbit enjoying sights or other interesting things in their immediate area, post cards "written" by Road Rabbit, or maybe even samples of natural items from their area. The sky's the limit and we hope to have a memorable experience with Road Rabbit!

If you know of someone who would be great for this project, please list them and their address and send it back to school to me ASAP. Make sure that they are aware of this project and would be committed to helping us make this a success. It must be people who don't mind their names and addresses being included on the printed itinerary that will be traveling alongside Road Rabbit throughout his travels.

Last year we received many exciting facts and things representative of the area he visited; oranges and a book about manatees from Florida, a video tape from N. Carolina, a fax from Georgia, pictures and postcards from many sights, etc. The sky's the limit!

Brenda Donley

### Sample Host Family Form

Please fill out the form below and send back to school as soon as possible. Thanks.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I have contacted the above and they are excited about helping us with Road Rabbit!

Your name/your child's name:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Itinerary Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

Road Rabbit will be on his way soon! Thanks to you we have plenty of host families. I tried to fit in most of the names that were sent to me. Thanks for your responses and enthusiasm! The kids are excited for our adventure to begin. We will be walking to the post office this week to send him on his way. Road Rabbit will be on a very aggressive schedule as you can see below. Please notify your friend or relative of his expected arrival date to their home.

| Stop number | Host/City/State                               |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1.          | The Reeves, Avon, Massachusetts               |
| 2.          | Mr. Stable, Woodbridge, Virginia              |
| 3.          | The Shay's, Cumberland Gap, Tennessee         |
| 4.          | Mr. Blank, Norman, Oklahoma                   |
| 5.          | Mr. Smite, Grayslake, Illinois                |
| 6.          | Back to Mrs. Donley's room, Mecosta, Michigan |

### Sample Itinerary Letter to Send with Road Rabbit

Stop number and name:

1. The Reeves, 0000 Rose Ave., Avon, MA 02322
2. Mr. Stable, W. High St., Woodbridge, VA 12345
3. The Shay's, Dans Road, Cumberland Gap, Tennessee 33344
4. Mr. Blank, Lake St., Norman, OK 66677
5. Mr. Smite, Rivers Ave., Grayslake, IL 60130
6. Mrs. Donley, Mecosta Elem., W. Main, Mecosta, MI 49332  
[bdonley@chippewa-hills.k12.mi.us](mailto:bdonley@chippewa-hills.k12.mi.us)

Dear Host Family,

Please send me (don't forget to include this itinerary, the remaining mail labels and my letter) on to the next name under your name on the dates indicated according to the calendar on the reverse side of this sheet. If the box that I came in is still in good condition please use it. Don't forget to seal the lid! Mailing labels have been made for your convenience. Either place the appropriate label over the previous one or peel off the previous one first and replace with the appropriate label. It is important that the dates are closely followed in order for me to return to Mecosta Elementary before summer vacation! If you have any question or concerns about my health or schedule please notify Mrs. Donley at 111-222-3333 or write to her at the address listed about (Stop #6). If you do call please tell the school secretary that your call is in regards to Road Rabbit and Mrs. Donley's first grade class.

Thank you!

## Road Rabbit

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Sample Letter to Send with Road Rabbit

Hello!

My name is Road Rabbit! I come from Mecosta, Michigan, and I belong to Mrs. Donley's first grade class. As part of their study of habitats and environments, they have decided to send me around the United States. The children brought names and addresses to school of people and places that I might visit, and your name was on that list as a host family--so here I am!

After I have spent a few days with you seeing some sights and getting a sense of the area where you live, please box me up and send me to the next name on the list under your name. The list of names is in an envelope in the box and must be kept together with this letter when you send me on.

The children would like you to send a letter back to them in Mecosta after I have arrived here to let them know that I am safe and sound. It would be wonderful if your letter also told a bit about you, your home, and your surroundings, since they want to learn about different parts of the United States. Photos and postcards may be included too, if you like. If it will be difficult to get a letter to them right away, please send me to the next person on the list when we are done visiting and drop the children a note in a week or so. It is important that I keep moving from place to place so that I will end up back in Mecosta, Michigan by the end of the school year to tell about my exciting travels.

The children have put up a big map of the United States in their classroom. As they get letters back from you telling them where I've been, they will mark it on the map. This way the

children can trace my journey around the United States. They will also display the letter and photos that you mail to them. (By the way, I love to get my picture taken in new places! If you would like to photograph me with you and send our picture to the children, I know they would love it!)

Even though I'm sure I will greatly enjoy my stay with you, please don't keep me longer than three or four days because I really want to get back to my friends in Mecosta on time. Thanks for your hospitality! You're helping Mrs. Donley's class take a "field trip" around the United States!

Sincerely,  
Road Rabbit