

PRESS RELEASE



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February 12, 2008

A Vanier College - Sept-Iles Cégep virtual classroom

They were 861 kilometers apart, but that did not stop over thirty students from Vanier College and Cégep Sept-Iles from getting together every week throughout the Autumn semester. Using internet tools such as DECclic II, the Skype internet phone system, the Virtual Window (IChat), and Google's Docs and Spreadsheets, the students followed their 'Knowledge' and 'World views' Humanities curriculum as though they were in a single large classroom.

The students were part of *Team-teaching in the Virtual World*, a project launched in September 2006 by two Humanities teachers, Sharon Coyle from Cégep de Sept-Iles and Sophie Jacmin from Vanier College. For the past year and a half, two groups of their students from each Cégep have explored values and beliefs from Quebec and from around the world and discussed ways of communicating that might enhance conflict resolution.

"At first technology occupies a big place in the classroom," observes Sophie Jacmin, "but as the semester unfolds, technology seems less important, less visible, and students start feeling close despite the distance. This magical shift happens, I think, because they realize that despite their differences, they have a lot more in common than not."

Throughout the Autumn 2007 session, students from both Cégeps grappled "virtually" with such questions as 'How do we know?', 'Can we be sure of anything?', and 'What kind of knowledge do we acquire outside of a classroom?' Technology, the project's best friend, remained itself a hot topic of discussion as students and teachers analyzed its impact on communication and ultimately, the kind of knowledge it allows people to access.

Then on September 21 the students from Sept-Iles visited Vanier and finally met their virtual classmates face to face. The visit was enriching for all and created a warm atmosphere during subsequent virtual classes.

The teaching-partnership has held pleasant surprises for the teachers. "One of the most exciting aspects of the project for me is how Sharon has become a kind of mentor, an inspiration, and a source of creativity for my own teaching," says Sophie Jacmin. "I couldn't have dreamed of a better team-teaching partner, and I feel profoundly enriched not only as a teacher, but also as a person, from having worked with her."

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