



Collection: Telecommunications

▼ The National Geographic Kids Network

REFERENCE: TERC. (1990). *The National Geographic Kids Network: Year 4 Final Annual Report*. Cambridge, MA: Author.

Description of classroom practice:

CONTEXT:

In conjunction with the National Geographic Society, TERC created The National Geographic Kids Network as a resource for improving elementary science and geography instruction in classrooms around the world. Since its inception in 1986, more than a quarter of a million students in over 7,500 classrooms have used the network to collaborate on science and geography projects ranging from the study of solar energy to acid rain. The primary goal of the National Geographic Kids Network is to promote science and discovery in elementary classrooms by combining hands-on science, geography, and computer technologies with telecommunications activities.

PRACTICE:

The National Geographic Kids Network includes seven 8-week curriculum units focusing on "increasing the time spent on inquiry-oriented, hands-on science instruction, strengthening science process and data analysis skills, raising public awareness of the value and feasibility of appropriate science instruction, and publishing and widely disseminating curricular materials that further these goals." While students research, collect, analyze, and share data with their peers they also problem solve and collaborate with students at other schools. In addition, the network also features a scientist who works with students electronically to evaluate their data, make comments, and offer suggestions. The seven 8-week units include:

- Hello!
- Solar Energy
- Acid Rain
- What Are We Eating?
- What's in Our Water?
- Too Much Trash?
- Weather in Action

In past summers, the National Geographic Society and the U.S. Department of Energy have held week-long Summer Institutes for teachers interested in using the Kids Network modules. These Institutes were held at several locations around the United States, coordinated by any of several participating U.S. DOE national laboratories. In 1995 and 1996, institutes were held in Atlanta, Georgia, coordinated by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science Education, and in Denver, Colorado, coordinated by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

Outcomes/Reflections:

Formative evaluation has indicated that students with special needs, especially students with learning disabilities, have benefited considerably from the National Geographic Kids Network curriculum.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The National Geographic Kids Network is currently sponsored by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a national laboratory managed by the Midwest Research Institute for the U.S. Department of Energy.

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