



SKYPE MASTER TEACHERS

Reaching the world from your classroom

Jed Dearybury's Twitter: <http://twitter.com/mrdearybury1>

Jed's website: <http://mrdearybury.com>

Dyane Smokorowski's Twitter: http://twitter.com/mrs_smoke

A Facebook group with ideas for K-12 teachers: <https://www.facebook.com/edtechk12/>

Gina Ruffcorn's Twitter: <http://twitter.com/gruffcorn13>

Gina's class Twitter account: <http://twitter.com/MsRsfunkyfives>

Skype Education website: <http://education.skype.com>

Jed Dearybury

"Diversity and the respect of diversity is so important, and it's never been more important than it is right now."

"Skype has been a way for me to have the world come to my little town."

"Skype tears down walls of hate where it opens doors of love."

Skyped with a class of inner city kids in New York with his rural South Carolina students

- Had a long discussion about camouflage, hunting deer, etc. ... and the kids in New York didn't know anything about it
- Skype brought the world together, made it very small
- Discussed the culture of the South vs. the culture of New York City

Gina Ruffcorn

On her first Skype experience with students: "It was the most harrowing experience in the classroom I've ever had in my life." It was a "humongous, epic fail for me."

- Stumbled upon someone who wanted to do a Mystery Skype game early in her career.
- She had never used Skype
- "Well, how hard can this be? It's a geography guessing game, 20 questions. This shouldn't be that tough."

- They epicly failed. At the time, it was the most awful thing I had ever seen in my classroom.
- They were lacking in critical thinking, were asking irrational questions.
- “This is a skill set my kids are missing, and I’m not sure how to teach critical thinking.”
- She asked her students what they wanted to do about their Mystery Skype failure. “I felt never more uncomfortable in my life as a teacher than I did during that call, but my kids were so excited about the ability to reach out to another area and to another classroom and to take that risk.”
- After a secret vote, the students voted overwhelmingly to try more Skype calls.
- “I had to take a backseat to my kids at that point ... trying to understand how to ask good questions and how to work together as a team to problem solve and critically think.”
- That year, they did more than 100 Mystery Skype games.
- If she hadn’t let them try all of those calls, “it would have been a horrible terrible loss for them, and for me as well.”

Jed Dearybury

His go-to resources for finding people, classes and virtual field trips for Skype: Dyane and Gina (see contact information above), but the Microsoft Educator Community (<http://education.skype.com>)

- It offers resources from around the world: Skype lessons, virtual field trips, Mystery Skype games and virtual guest speakers
- At the website, you can get in touch with real people to connect with via a Skype call
- You can filter based on age, subject, time zone, language, etc.
- Example virtual field trips: visit the Lisbon Zoo or the sea turtle hospital
- The Skype education site is a database where you go to find people/classes/guest speakers. “A hub of all things Skype.”

Twitter is another fantastic resource

- [#SkypeMT](#) or [#Skype2Learn](#) or [#MysterySkype](#) or [@SkypeClassroom](#)

Dyane Smokowski

Other places to find video calls for your classroom (partner classes, field trips, guest speakers):

- [FieldTripZoom](#) (they can cost money but can be worth it)
- NASA’s Digital Learning Network (dln.nasa.gov) -- Connect students with NASA educators for free (sometimes astronauts!). Go to “Register for a DLN lesson” and send an email to sign up. (Dyane suggests Michael at Johnson Space Center with Glenn Research Center a close second!)
- Dyane’s super secret, super effective Twitter/Google search for finding guests--
 - Search for the kind of person you need (i.e. “entomologist”)
 - Add “site:twitter.com” to search for those kinds of people on Twitter
 - Click “Search tools” to filter within the past week to find people tweeting within the last week.

- Scan the search results to find active people on Twitter in the field you're looking for.
- Click on a search result to see that person's Twitter account. If they have a website associated with their Twitter profile, click on it to find contact information.
- Almost 95 percent of people you find through the Google/Twitter will agree to help, according to Dyane.
- Use the Google/Twitter search without even having a Twitter account or logging in. Use it like your virtual Yellow Pages.
- This trick works with Google/LinkedIn as well.

“Research in books is great. Research on the web is great. But research with humans is even greater because you can ask questions.”

Gina Ruffcorn

What can we do with Skype in the classroom? Start with a Mystery Skype game!

Mystery Skype: the gateway to other Skype experiences

- Contact another class (with SkypeintheClassroom.com) or the Twitter hashtag [#mysteryskype](https://twitter.com/mysteryskype)
- Set up a time to do a video call
- “It’s a 20 questions back and forth with the other class trying to locate somebody”
- Gina’s classes start with rock paper scissors to see who asks the first question. “It’s a commonality that everybody shares”, regardless of location or any other difference.
- Students introduce themselves and ask questions back and forth.
- Promotes problem solving, team building and critical thinking.
- Teaches them process of elimination, critical thinking and formulating questions to think on a deeper basis
- Can spin off into valuable life skills that you can’t teach with other classroom activities

If you’ve done lots of Mystery Skype calls, how can kids keep learning?

- Setting goals for themselves
- Working together as a team
- Speaking and listening according to standards
- Evaluating themselves personally and as a group
- Debriefing on what went well and what didn’t
- Sharing about the other class’s culture after the Mystery Skype game (they get to see how alike they are compared to the other class)
- Exploring their curiosity about the other class’s culture

“I don’t know that anybody should not be Mystery Skyping in their classrooms.”

Dyane Smokorowski

Other activities beyond Mystery Skype

- [Gingerbread STEM project](#) (started by Skype Master Teacher Micah Brown) -- How can we build something more powerful than just gingerbread houses at Christmas time? They created a model of their communities out of gingerbread houses (i.e. graham crackers) and Skyped with another class to compare/contrast communities.
- [Awesome Squiggles collaborative art project](#) -- Everyone starts with the same four lines (squiggles) and finish it, transforming it into a work of art. Share your art and see what everyone else's art looks like. Some use different medium (i.e. pencil, watercolor, etc.).

“Make it brilliantly simple and let students create something.”

Activities conceived by students and teachers ... they dreamed something up together. You can create your own activity too.

Don't be afraid to dream big. If you have an idea that students are curious about ... throw the question out and don't be afraid to give it a shot.

Jed Dearybury

Virtual field trip: One of the best experiences was visiting a bee farm in Maryland. The beekeeper put on her suit, showed honeycombs, shared roles of male and female bees, importance of bees to environment, what honey really is (bee throw-up!)

- It was supposed to be a 30-minute call, but it lasted an hour
- Students took furious notes
- Jed brought honey from a local beekeeper that students could taste
- “This was something very simple. It was an incredible experience.”
- The teacher met a local beekeeper that came in to extend the lesson beyond the Skype call.

Gina Ruffcorn

Virtual field trip: Mount Rainier National Park

- Studied volcanoes and earth formations
- Met with a park ranger to talk about their volcano and how it came to be
- Pre-session: What they knew about volcanoes
- Took down new info they learned
- Activity with students: played a “should we evacuate?” game with them

Virtual field trip: Volcanoes in Guatemala via Learn around the World (Brandon)

- Talked about how warm the earth was there: dig a hole and roast a marshmallow in the earth making up the volcano!

- About the non-active volcano at Mt. Rainier and the active one in Guatemala -- compare/contrast
- “It was amazing the kinds of connections the kids could make.”
- Spun off great questions that the students wanted to explore themselves. Led to a great student-led project.

Dyane Smokorowski

Virtual guest speakers

- Penguin Publishers (books for children and adults) have a partnership with Skype in the Classroom (search “penguin visits skype”) ... Authors will Skype with students. Cost starts “in the free digits”
- Remember the Drew Carey show? Remember Mimi? She’s now “Mrs. P” (mrsp.com) and Skypes with K-4 classrooms about imagination. She’s an actress and she knows her stuff!
- “There is someone that’s passionate about something that you need.”

Jed Dearybury

Where do I get started? How do I start doing this?

- Jed started by asking people who were more experienced than him with Skype for ideas.
- Jed says, feel free to contact him by Twitter or email (mrdearybury@hotmail.com)
- When he first got started, he was intimidated ... saw huge projects that were amazing. It held him back, but he got over that fear and just did what he could do.
- Played the hokey pokey on three continents.
- He didn’t start with “let’s have this big global project”. He just tried something, and if it failed, he would try again!
- “All of us started with something small, and like a snowball rolling down a hill, it gets bigger and awesome with every roll.”
- “A bad Skype call is better than a good worksheet any day!”