



Email Pen Pals

Overview

Subject: Reading and Writing

Age Level: 8 years and up

Performance Standards Information

Communication Tools and Techniques A2b

The student composes and sends correspondence, such as thank-you letters and memoranda providing information; that is, the student:

- Expresses the information or request clearly;
- Writes in a style appropriate to the purpose of the correspondence

Activity Goals

- to have children correspond with each other via e-mail accounts
- to provide afterschool participants with the opportunity to talk with children from other centers.

Skills children will learn from the activity

- Keyboard typing skills
- How to write e-mail correspondence
- How to respond to differing thoughts and opinions

Materials needed

- Computers
- Internet connection
- Microsoft Word
- List of Topic Ideas

Prerequisites

Children must understand:

- Rules of the computer room
- That all materials and computers are meant to be shared
- Behavioral expectations
- What kind of language is appropriate in this activity

Procedure

DISCUSSION:

1. Choose a free email service (such as Yahoo!) for all of the children participating to use. Just make sure that the browser is standard for all the children. For reference sake, we'll use Yahoo!
2. Then have the students sit together in a circle and discuss the responsibilities they have as participants of this activity and what is expected of them. A good way to lead a discussion would be to ask the children what they think appropriate and inappropriate language is.

3. After the coordinator feels that the children understand the expectations of the activity, begin to provide the students Parks CRC e-mail addresses. When registering a child with an address, use the following format: child's name (or nickname)_crc_ center initials (jhw,brc,aes, etc.). There are two reasons for this standardization. Firstly, this will allow the CRC Coordinator to track a specific child if necessary, and secondly, this is how we register children for our internet chess tournaments and will save the coordinator an extra step during internet based special events.
4. To begin the project, have the children type up mini articles about themselves. Make sure that they don't include things like addresses and phone numbers. Hand out a list of topics that they could write about. Encourage the children to use a lot of details to make their articles interesting.
5. Then, have the children practice e-mailing to each other as well as retrieving messages.
6. Keep in mind that it might take some time for children to receive messages. So while children are waiting, have them come up with some questions they would like to ask another afterschool participant.

Extension Activities

- Have the children email fan clubs for their favorite musicians, sports stars or any other famous figure whose fan email can be found on the internet.
- Organize internet games and meetings between the pen pals groups over the YAHOO! site.
- Have the children write articles for the newsletter using information gotten by asking questions of their pen pals.

Points of Consideration

- How long will the e-mail pen pal program be conducted?
- When and or how will the e-mail addresses of these children be shared center to center? And, how can we assure that these addresses are not placed in the wrong hands?
- What are the rules regarding correspondence? How can we ensure the safety of our kids? What kind of language is/is not appropriate?
- Are we planning to check their mailboxes periodically? If so, we must be sure to our students are aware of that.
- Make sure that there is parental consent for this project.