Social Networks Facilitate Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Collaboration

This network has also been utilized as a platform for students to communicate with teachers, GK12 fellows, administrators and other students outside of the classroom environment. As research projects become more developed the site will serve as a stage and central location for students to share resources and advice and as a vehicle for research groups to coordinate efforts and share information.

Access to Computers

We are grateful that access to the site was not major issue for our students. AUP Students have access to a computer lab connected to the Urban Geography classroom, both during class and after school, as well as access to computers at the public library next door.

Extension

The Urban Sciences network has also proven useful as a tool for students to delve further into topics that have interested them through videos, web links and other media outlets. This vehicle has been adopted by several other 11th grade classrooms including advanced placement courses. This network has become a virtual community for students, teachers, GK12 fellows and administrators that has positively impacted the community within the Academy of Urban Planning’s walls.

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Susannah Ceraldi (Urban Ecology) and Adam Schwartz (Urban Geography), our two primary teaching partners at AUP, were integral to the promotion and development of the Ning for these projects. Josh Lapidus, Devin Bambrick and AUP principal Monique Derrisaw also significantly contributed toward making the site a successful academic platform for the greater 11th grade.

GK-12 Project Goal at AUP

Our goal was to research and understand environmental issues confronting Brooklyn, NY from an interdisciplinary perspective:

1) In Urban Ecology, we examined environmental issues from a physical sciences perspective, and
2) In Urban Geography, we examined environmental issues from a socio-historical perspective.

To facilitate this work, the GK-12 fellows used Ning.com, a free open-source social networking site private to our students. Ning allowed for greater student reflection, collaboration, and extension.

Reflection

Early in the year when students were acquiring content knowledge and research skills and interests, the Ning network was useful for students to reflect on their classroom experiences through blogs, discussion boards, surveys and other written assignments.

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