

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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They did the ‘monster match:’ Comal ISD elementary students use videoconferencing for collaborative project

“Ooos,” “ahhs,” and surprised giggles rippled throughout Megan Heath-Moreno’s fourth grade class at Freiheit Elementary School on Oct. 30 as her students watched Diana Monroe’s fifth grade students at Startzville Elementary School display the “monster” they created via videoconference.

The two classes paired together for the first-ever districtwide collaborative distance learning project, “Monster Match.” Classes in elementary schools across the district participated in the “Monster Match” in which each class created a monster and wrote a description of how to create that monster for their partner class. The classes used the written descriptions to recreate the other class’ monster. Partner classes then met via videoconference to compare and contrast their original monsters with the recreated monsters.



It was the first time Moreno’s students used the distance learning and fourth grader Camryn Weaver said it was exciting.

“It was exciting because we got to see kids from a class outside of our school,” she said. “I liked working together with everyone. We tried our best.”

Moreno said the “Monster Match” project was a great experience for her students and that it provided valuable lessons for them.

“It was great for the kids to work as a team and to have a chance to see their ideas come to life,” said Moreno. “I hope they learned the value of working together as a team and how important problem solving is. I really think it gave them a chance to communicate on so many levels.”

Monroe and Moreno’s classes discussed the similarities and differences between their monsters via videoconference, and the students continued to giggle as they compared their recreated monster with the other class’ original monster.

“Look at the bodies of Startzville’s monster,” Moreno told her class. “The body of our monster is a cylinder and theirs looks more like a sphere.”

After the classes reviewed both monsters, the teachers and students asked questions such as what they could have done differently to make it easier for the other class to follow the instructions. The students at Freiheit said they thought it was easier to write, and the students at Startzville agreed it was easier to follow instructions.

“We learned a lot from each other,” Moreno said. “It was neat to see the students point out what they could have done to write a better description of how to make the monster. Through our discussion, we also learned that our classes used the same method to make the monster. Each student sketched a picture of a monster and we chose which one we were going to use. Ms. Monroe’s class did the same, so that was neat, too.”

Every Comal ISD campus has a videoconferencing system that can be wheeled into any classroom. A videoconference allows two or more sites to interact simultaneously with both video and audio. The sites can be two campuses within Comal ISD or include sites from around the world allowing students to have a classroom without walls.

“Distance learning helps our students better learn what we’re trying to teach them because it allows them to visualize themselves in the learning/teaching process,” Moreno said. “They can see themselves taking ownership of their own learning and participation. It’s also a great opportunity for the children to be exposed to more technology. After all, this is the way of the future. By the time they are in the corporate world, face-to-face meetings will be a thing of the past.”

Moreno said she is looking forward to utilizing the videoconferencing system for future projects and field trips for her class.

“I would love to use the distance learning system on a more regular basis,” she said. “I am looking forward to using it again centering it around math and science, and I’m looking into the program lessons available from NASA. Distance learning is just another way to make learning fun and creative and that is the most important thing.”

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IN PHOTO: Freiheit Elementary School fourth graders Camryn Weaver (left) and Matthew Smith hold up their class' original monster for the fifth grade students in Diana Monroe's class at Startzville Elementary to compare their recreated monster with via videoconference. The monster creations were part of the districtwide "Monster Match" collaborative project in which elementary classes paired up to create original monsters, sent written descriptions to their partner class to recreate the monster, and then met via videoconference to compare and contrast both monsters.