



## NEWS RELEASE

Monday, October 18, 2010

### Teachers win national technology award; get ready to compete globally

**SASKATOON, October 18, 2010** – Two Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools teachers have won a 2010 Microsoft Canada Innovative Teachers Award. The award recognizes teachers who use new technology to improve student learning.

Kelli Boklaschuk and Curtis Wagner were selected for creating *Connecting Canadian Kids to the World*, a social studies unit for Wagner's Grade 6 students at St. Angela School, a kindergarten to Grade 8 school in Saskatoon's Silverwood neighbourhood.

Boklaschuk and Wagner will travel to Cape Town, South Africa later this week to see how the project stacks up against entries from around the world.

The goal of their unit is to have students examine the social and cultural diversity in their community and others around the world to see how this affects global relationships. A key part of the unit saw Wagner's class create a partnership with a Grade 6 class in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. The students communicated via email, online chats and finally a video conference.

When it came time to show what they'd learned, Wagner's students presented to their classmates using their choice of more than 25 different types of software and technology including Photostory, Songsmith, the Marvin animation program, Zune (Microsoft's version of iTunes), Virtual Telescope, Deep Zoom and Bing Maps.

"We are still meeting the curriculum outcomes for Grade 6 social studies, we're just doing it in a different way," said Wagner. "It went over particularly well for the kids who are usually more challenging to engage. It was great to see them take ownership of the project and become so excited about their learning."

Boklaschuk said the online connection between the classrooms was a highlight. "Thanks to the technology, it's like the students were in the same room together. Learning from each other this way was a new experience for them, and now they have a continuing relationship."

Student reviews were also positive. "I really enjoyed this unit because we got to learn not only from the Internet and books but from a new friend we made. It was really cool to learn about how the two countries are the same and how they are different," said one student.

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Wagner and Boklaschuk hope the recognition the project has received will encourage more teachers to investigate how to incorporate technology into their lessons. Everything teachers need to use *Connecting Canadian Kids to the World* in their own classrooms is available for free online. Wagner, who is using the unit again this fall, has established partnerships with classes in the United Kingdom, Brazil and South Africa in an attempt to connect students in all four continents of the Atlantic Rim.

A total of five Canadian projects were selected to receive a 2010 Microsoft Innovative Teachers Award. All winning teachers are attending the International Innovative Teachers Forum in Cape Town, South Africa later this month. Wagner and Boklaschuk will be vlogging about their experiences in South Africa. Those interested in receiving updates can subscribe at [blog.scs.sk.ca/ar6](http://blog.scs.sk.ca/ar6)

The poster is titled "Connecting Canadian Kids to the World" and features a world map with lines connecting four continents. Text on the poster includes: "A grade 6 class from St. Angela School, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada."; "An inquiry-based Social Studies Unit that uses 25 different types of software and technology to link students from the four Atlantic Rim continents."; "Check out our blog to adapt this Engaging and Exciting unit for your classroom."; and the blog URL "blog.scs.sk.ca/ar6". There are also several quotes from students and a quote from Margaret Mead at the bottom: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Logos for sponsors like "sharps audio visual" and "LONDON DRUGS" are visible at the bottom.

The event is expected to attract more than 500 teachers, school leaders, press and education thought leaders from more than 75 countries. Teachers attending the event will be competing for one of 13 Global Innovative Education Awards to celebrate their best practices in the classroom, according to Microsoft.

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools is Saskatchewan's largest Catholic school division with 45 schools in Saskatoon, Humboldt, Biggar, Martensville and Viscount. We help all students strive for academic excellence and we also teach them about themselves. Our distinctive, faith-based education shows young people they are capable of reaching out to make a difference in the world.

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