



Level Up Village®

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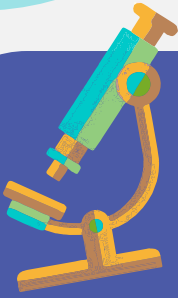
Case Study

# Developing Global Citizenship

through STEM-based Virtual Global Collaboration



Newfane Elementary School & Kenya Connect



# Summary

Nancy Simmons has always been interested in solutions that would help her students be more engaged in learning, spark their curiosity about the world, and build their 21st century skills. When she learned about a global collaboration program offered by Level Up Village in cooperation with Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES and an NGO Kenya Connect, to engage students in New York State with peers in Kenya, she knew it was going to be an unforgettable experience for her students.



Her fourth graders participated in an 4-week project called "Connecting with Communities Around the World" with students from the Kyawango Primary Public School in Kenya. The project aimed to educate students about geography and the human impact on the environment in both regions. Through friendly video exchanges, research, and discussions, Simmons' students not only completed a research project on the impact of humans on Lake Ontario but also gained a deeper understanding of environmental challenges faced globally. The exchange also resulted in her students raising \$1,000 for the building of the first library in the region through Kenya Connect's efforts.



I have been an educator for over **20 years**. Participating in Level Up Village was the most rewarding experience I've ever had with my students.

**Nancy Simmons**



## Goals

- Provide meaningful learning opportunities that go beyond the curriculum.
- Help students gain global perspectives.
- Promote the development of the 21st century skills and digital literacy skills.



## Implementation

- Connect with classrooms in rural Kenya using the Level Up Village platform.
- Exchange videos about the project over 4 weeks.
- Complete an in-depth research project on human impact on the local environment.



## Results

- Successful completion of the first in-depth project.
- Deeper understanding of issues facing communities around the world.
- Improved communication and digital literacy skills.
- Enhanced understanding and appreciation of other cultures.
- Successful fundraising efforts to help a community in Kenya.





## ● Goals



Nancy Simmons, a fourth-grade teacher at Newfane Elementary School in Newfane, New York, is an experienced educator and a strong believer in providing students with learning opportunities that go beyond the curriculum. She has always been interested in enhancing her curriculum with projects that would engage her students and foster the development of 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and information literacy.

Simmons' goals for her students also include learning opportunities that develop their global perspectives and cultural understanding. She values projects that challenge her students

to learn new things by researching and seeking solutions.

She learned about a Level Up Village course in partnership with New York's Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES and Kenya Connect to pair fourth grade classrooms in New York State with fourth grade classrooms in a rural area southeast of Nairobi, Kenya—a course tied to both New York and Kenyan social studies requirements. Simmons knew this program would check all the boxes and be a unique experience for her students.



It goes beyond the curriculum, and it's important to not just teach what's in your curriculum; when opportunities like this arise, not to be afraid to say yes and to take that leap of faith because the journey you go on with your students can be incredible.

**Nancy Simmons**



## ● Implementation



In January 2022, Simmons enrolled her fourth-grade classroom in a global collaboration project titled **“Connecting with Communities Around the World,”** in which students research human impact on the environment in their regions and exchange videos to reveal the issues they are facing and the actions they should take.

Simmons’ students were paired up with fourth graders at the Kyawango Primary Public School.

In Kenya, the exchanges were facilitated by Kenya Connect, an NGO whose mission is “to engage and empower students and teachers in rural Kenya to succeed in the 21st Century.” Since electricity and internet are scarce in that area, Kenya Connect representatives helped the teachers at Kyawango record and post videos. In New York, Simmons collaborated with Rich Meyers, the AP Environmental Science teacher at the local high school, and Nick Kiser, the

Technology Instructor at her school. Her students were paired with Meyers’ AP Environmental Science students to guide and mentor their research and Kiser helped students record and produce their video presentations, in which they utilized a green screen and drawings of their research findings.

Students focused first on getting to know each other through a friendly video exchange and then moved on to research and discuss environmental issues in both regions.

Simmons’ students researched and reported on issues relating to Lake Ontario, such as invasive species, rising lake levels, litter, and fish consumption. The Kenyan students focused on soil erosion, poaching, deforestation, and water usage. Each week, students exchanged videos in which they presented on their research, discussed environmental issues in both regions, and asked their global partners questions.

The whole exchange was facilitated on the secure Level Up Village platform. Everyone involved found the process easy to manage.

Each week, Simmons played their Kenyan partners' video on a white board and discussed with her students what they had observed and learned. **"We really looked forward to the day. There were specific days we would receive the video, and that was a big celebration when we got to watch their videos. We would watch them multiple times."**



## • Results

The virtual exchange experience was unforgettable and highly educational for Simmons' students. **"It's a transformative experience that they [students] might not have otherwise, and they may not ever have again."** Since Level Up Village exchanges provide opportunities for hands-on and inquiry-based learning, Simmons credits the New York-Kenya exchange for her students' deep learning about the environment as well as more meaningful understanding of issues communities face around the world. Not only did students complete their first-ever scientific research project, but they

also learned about Kenya, Kenyan culture, and the environmental issues people face in that region. "Students gained a global view, which this experience brought to them. They wouldn't have learned about Kenya [as part of the regular curriculum]. We had additional books we took out of the library to read and learn more about Kenya itself. And just to have that global view of the world and cause and effect of environmental issues, and to know that there are environmental issues no matter where you live that affect your life was a real lesson for my students."

Other positive results of the exchange were improved communication and digital literacy skills. Preparing and presenting their research and asking questions about their peers' videos helped students gain confidence in speaking in front of others. Working with the green screen and creating their videos boosted their digital skills. **"I love it because not only are they learning content, but they're learning technological skills that will be important when they go on in education and in the workplace."**

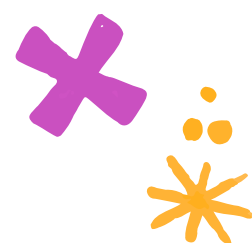
Finally, Simmons lists the cultural observations and comparisons that the video-based exchanges allowed her students to make as well as personal connections her students developed with their peers in Kenya. **"I think what they probably noticed was kids are kids no matter where they live. They work, they play. It's almost like we started to form a friendship with some of those students."**

These cross-cultural connections Simmons' students developed spurred them to action when they learned about Kenya Connect's efforts to build the first library in the region. Her students launched a fundraising event in which they asked K-4 students at their school to donate spare change to help build the new library. They were able to raise about \$1,000. **"Through Level Up Village and Kenya Connect, my students learned that when they share information, they can raise awareness of problems in the world. When people know there is a problem they can improve things—in their own backyard or across the globe!"**



“It's a transformative experience that they students might not have otherwise, and they may not ever have again.”

**Nancy Simmons**”



# Level Up Village®

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The mission of Level Up Village is to globalize the classroom by facilitating cultural collaboration between students from around the world. Guided by our carefully curated content, students build communication skills and collaborate with their global peers to explore topics in Arts & Sciences or Languages & Cultures through our safe and secure online platform. Through these exchanges, students enhance their understanding of other cultures, strengthen their intercultural communication skills, and gain empathy.



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