Camp Internet Distance Education Program

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Camp Internet is a K-12 distance education program currently providing daily classroom curriculum and programming for over 9,000 students in Southern California. Over the next year, through a new USDA RUS grant the program will include an additional 300 classrooms in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada. Sponsored by the California Department of Education and the USDA Rural Utilities Service as well as through private subscriptions by school districts such as Los Angeles Unified School District. The Camp Internet program, now in it's 10th year, provides project based learning as well as a strong mentorship component bringing students online daily for math, science, history and reading studies. Using advanced technologies such as GIS (we give GPS units along with a variety of other learning tools to each classroom at the beginning of each year), video chatrooms and personal electronic student portfolios Camp Internet provides an environment for both teachers and students to learn and develop technology skills essential for the 21st Century. Subject experts from universities, federal and state agencies as well as authors, musicians and artists come online weekly as "trail-guides" to give the students direct contact with the sources of their information. Chatrooms are used to teach students skills in “dialog”, learning to listen, ask good questions and then report on the question and answers. Current programs include "Exploring the California Channel Islands", "Exploring the California BackCountry", Exploring the Ancient Southwest” and "Exploring the Global-Garden". Camp Internet is also responsible for ongoing Teacher Technology training for all of our school districts, providing 4 day intensive training sessions during the summer at our Technology Center in Santa Barbara, California and ongoing teacher training at school district labs throughout the year. (we train around 400 teachers each summer). Our paper will review recent activities and results in teacher training and methods used as well as a review of current classroom activities and results from the past year. Camp Internet was just awarded its 5th USDA Rural Utilities Service distance learning grant to take the program into the southwest opening the program to schools in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada. Working with the California State University system Camp Internet also provides credit to teachers taking part for a full year as well as a $1,000 stipend. Participating classrooms receive cd-roms each month with new GIS, math and video units to encourage participation by schools which may have limited bandwidth. The Camp Program also works with the CYFAR program setting up programs for youth, family and children at risk projects and provides an excellent study in the application of new technologies to parts of our communities with limited literacy or limited English language skills. Our paper will provide current updates on both Teacher Technology Skills training methodologies and classroom programs.