Executive Summary

Connected Learners Technology Innovation Grants
Round One (Jan - June 2006) Survey/Project Results Brief
BC Secondary Schools
Canada

Project Overview

In fall 2005, a Ministry of Education review committee awarded nine Connected Learners (CL) Grants to selected school districts in BC, Canada. These grants were designed to improve educational access and student achievement in BC’s rural areas through the innovative use of technology. An independent team was charged with managing the request for proposal (RFP) process, distributing the grants and in following the progress of each grant through an action research project for each of the nine case studies.

The objectives of the project were to increase:

- the number of high quality educational opportunities and choices available to students in rural communities through online learning.

- opportunities for students to participate in online educational activities that enhance learning, student engagement and student achievement.

Due to low enrollment numbers, rural schools often find it difficult to offer a full array of course options for students. As future enrollment projections for BC schools continue to predict decline, educators in rural districts will become increasingly challenged to find more efficient and innovative ways of providing access and equity to educational opportunities for their students.

Interactive technologies can help to solve many of the issues associated with access and equity in rural areas by connecting students to more course options. The purpose of the Connected Learners Technology Grants was to increase technology usage in BC schools to connect students with online learning options.

The types of technology researched in Round One of the CL grant projects include three online delivery models: virtual schooling, live time courses via video feed, and virtual tutoring. The scope of the nine CL Projects involves: students from 14 public school districts, nine First Nations schools and French Cadre classes in four regions across the Francophone Language Authority.

The results and findings of the development, implementation and delivery of these projects are being monitored by an independent research team. Data is being collected on the following key metrics: the student, parent, teacher and community satisfaction of the projects; as well as the best practices and lessons learned, the ROI and the student achievement that is achieved as a result of implementing technology solutions in these
areas. The CL research team is collecting data on these metrics over a three round process: Round One (Jan-June 2006); Round Two (Sept 2006-Jan 2007); Round Three (Feb-June 2007). The data collected is a blend of qualitative and quantitative data compiled over a series of online surveys, focus group interviews and district summary reports from each round. As an end result, the data for each CL project will be compiled into an individual summary report for each project; and a meta-analysis of global themes that emerge as shared results across the nine CL projects will then be used to create a summary list highlighting “best practices of ICT integration” as observed in the CL projects.

The results presented for this round table discussion are the preliminary data results, lessons learned and best practices observed across the nine projects in Round One. The results are intended as a practical discussion of the “Best Practices of ICT Development, Integration and Delivery” for educators to use when looking to plan ICT solutions for their own educational settings.