

The Virtual School Visit: Using Skype to Teach About Latin America



You may be familiar with The Center for Latin American Studies University at the Pittsburgh's longstanding outreach program that send college students into K-12 classrooms to share their knowledge on Latin America. In fall 2012, The Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) is now launching a "Virtual School Visit" Program using Skype videoconferencing. CLAS will hold a series of workshops for teachers to learn the basics of videoconferencing, using Skype and planning lessons utilizing the digital resources CLAS offers. Beginning in October 2012 CLAS will begin to arrange for undergraduates, graduate students, CLAS staff and/or appropriate community members to digitally "visit" with K-12 classes. The Virtual School Visits are designed to be interactive and involve the students in discussions and activities. Teachers may request two types of Skype lessons. The first, called an ancillary lesson, is designed to complement topics already being taught. For example, one or more Spanish speakers may visit a Spanish class to reinforce a grammatical lesson, vocabulary or a cultural topic. A world cultures class studying Mexico may be visited by a presenter knowledgeable on that subject. The second type of Skype session is an enrichment lesson, and is designed to introduce a Latin American topic as an enrichment activity for a diversity of classes and ages. In the past, school visit enrichment topics have included a variety of Latin American countries, regions, and topics. Some topics from past years are:

- Frida Kahlo: a Mexican Artist
- A Nicaraguan Folktale: Uncle Cricket, The Soothsayer
- Solidarity and the Andean Concept of *ayllu*
- Latin American cuisine: not just tacos
- Molas, an Art Form of Panama
- All about Brazilian Soccer: "Futebol!"
- Carnival/Semana Santa in Latin America
- Pablo Neruda: Poet of America
- Musical instruments of Latin America.

The Virtual School visit program is part of a CLAS outreach initiative to reach a wider audience, especially schools in rural areas and underserved communities. All that is absolutely required at the classroom is a laptop computer and internet connection. A projector is helpful, but not necessary. Although we will start with schools that are geographically nearby in order to provide hands-on teacher training, this program may, in the future, allow CLAS to provide school visits to national and even international classrooms. Please use the attached form to request a Virtual School Visit.

CLAS Virtual School Visit Request form

Name: _____

School Address: _____

School District: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

Email: _____

Grade, subject and level of class for which visit is requested:

Date and time visit is requested:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Request is for Ancillary Lesson on: (topic) _____

Request is for Enrichment lesson (topics to be announced) _____

Computer, projector and Skype in classroom? _____

Please return to:

Karen S. Goldman Ph.D.

Assistant Director for Outreach

Center for Latin American Studies

University of Pittsburgh

kgoldman@pitt.edu

Call Dr. Goldman at 412-648-7397 for further information or questions