

## Time Warner Connect a Million Minds Proposal Text

Older adults comprise the fastest growing segment of American society, and our youth-oriented culture sometimes leads younger people to view older generations as less vital to society than those of working age. Simultaneously, older people sometimes have negative images about youth culture and work/social ethics. At the same time, computing ability has become an essential tool for all ages. For students, access to technology and the ability to use it well can enhance learning and future career opportunities. For older citizens, who are frequently less mobile as they age, access to technology offers promise for informing them about elder services and care through aging-related and medical Web sites. For young people, technology can open up both the future and the past and can inspire interest in careers relying on a strong knowledge of science, math, and engineering.

When students share an academic experience that emphasizes critical thinking, global and intercultural understanding, and exposure to a variety of points of view, they learn to make connections between what happens in the classroom and the world. An experiential project like Link 2 Learn provides a holistic view of knowledge -- learning does not take place in isolation. It helps students become responsible citizens, critical and compassionate thinkers, and lifelong learners. It can also help them understand how the technology they use today can influence their future careers and lives.

Link 2 Learn offers a meaningful way for students to participate in service learning while advancing their knowledge of technology. Students learn teaching skills that will serve them in the future no matter the career path they select. At Broughton High School, students were required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of community service to graduate long before it became a standard high school requirement. The Wade Edwards Learning Lab (WELL) and Broughton staff work together to provide students opportunities for service throughout the year. We established Link 2 Learn to offer a profoundly meaningful new way for students to participate in service learning while learning new technology skills. Karen Noon of Carolina Global Schoolhouse coordinated the launch of the Link 2 Learn program with Broughton Ethics classes in 2003; continued the program in 2004 and 2006, and since that time has worked with Broughton teacher Jane Forde to incorporate Link 2 Learn into the Human Geography class. This year, technology teacher Karen Duncan's class will participate.

Noon recruits students and senior citizens from Raleigh Housing Authority's Glenwood Towers, Capital Towers, and Carriage House facilities and provides the students guidance in how to share concepts and skills with older people. She helps the students create a curriculum to teach the senior citizens word processing, E-mail, Internet, multimedia skills, and other skills requested by the seniors. Workshops are held at the Wade Edwards Learning Lab (WELL), and students teach the senior citizens the skills covered by the curriculum.

This intergenerational technology training program has allowed several hundred students and senior citizens, many of the seniors having physical disabilities, to develop a learning partnership that provides a profound academic and personal experience for all participants. For the students, the project is a good lesson in flexibility and adaptability and provides good training for a future job in teaching or management. In addition, they learn to write collaboratively and to articulate in a verbal report their shared experiences with the seniors.

The goals include developing competencies in computer use, forming new social networks, and building community through these newly formed relationships. By establishing a personal relationship with someone of a different generation, students develop their capacity for caring and compassion for those who are older or have special needs, while older adults enjoy opportunities to express unique knowledge and talents and share life experiences. Students and seniors alike learn technology skills and life skills, and the process of developing these new skills provides new levels of confidence and the feeling they all have something valuable to contribute. The project creates new ways for older adults to stay connected and appreciate the perspective of a younger generation while giving each senior citizen involved a personal technology consultant. Seniors and students enjoy a positive learning experience that provides them new and enhanced technology skills and new life skills and perspectives.

The project uses information technologies as tools to foster and sustain vibrant and responsive communities among these older adults and youth. It enhances the self-image of elders who may consider themselves "technologically challenged" as it increases the students' self-esteem by transforming them into instructors. Offering technology as a tool that opens a new world redefines the senior citizen's worldview, and it redefines the young people's worldview by allowing them to reverse their roles with older people. While the seniors are "zooming out" into the world via technology, the students will "zoom" into particular incidents that make history real for them.

Sarah Lowder 2/26/2012

Overarching goals of the program include increasing the technology literacy of senior citizens and students; providing high school students an opportunity to develop leadership skills through training in tutoring, communications, and public speaking; helping students develop awareness of characteristics of senior citizens and an appreciation for their history; and helping students develop new life skills, perspectives, and self-confidence.

**Key objectives:**

\*Empower high school students to share their technology knowledge with senior citizens who live in subsidized housing.

\*Enable senior citizens to become technologically literate.

\*Empower teens to teach their elders while learning about themselves, the importance of the technology skills they have imparted, and the treasure of sharing a valuable skill with others.

\*Provide through Teaming for Technology (United Way of Greater Triangle) computers for senior citizens who successfully complete the class, thus enabling them to continue to use and grow their skills.

\*Create new ways for older adults to stay connected and appreciate the perspective of a younger generation while giving each senior a personal technology consultant; and provide service learning opportunities for students.

**Activities:**

Three workshops are held at the WELL using desktops. Some of the participants will bring their own laptop computers (received through the United Way of the Greater Triangle's T4T Program). The Broughton students teach the public housing residents to use various technology applications based on the residents' needs and desires. At the final workshop, each team receives an award (written and printed testifying to their attendance and a personal quality chosen by their Broughton student) and a framed photograph of themselves and their partner. The delivery of the computers to the senior citizens is facilitated by the Student Advisory Board (Broughton Students).

Prior to the first workshop session, students and seniors will meet at Glenwood Towers for a meet-and-have-lunch together time, including an icebreaker activity and goal setting. Students and senior citizens will share life stories and talk about the "life changing experiences" they have had. For example the seniors might reflect on historical events (various wars, Pearl Harbor, the death of JFK or Martin Luther King, the moon walk) that made a significant impact on their lives and world view and giving the students a chance to consider how events of the past will resonate throughout their lives. Or, they might discuss the technological changes they have seen in their lives and talk about how their adaptability will help them in the fast changing world and workforce of the future.

We also hope to tie in our new partnership with the Shodor Education Foundation, whose staff has conducted computational modeling workshops in the WELL's summer program, to enhance and leverage Time Warner Cable' grant money by adding new interactive components to the project. Shodor interns are writing programs and apps and creating exciting science for middle and high school students, and the WELL represents Shodor's first venture into Wake County.

Another possible new component of the project would be to expand it to the Wade Edwards Learning Lab at Goldsboro High School. We have discussed this possibility with staff there, and they are open to and excited by the possibility.

Link 2 Learn leaves participants and observers with many wonderful stories and memories. Last fall, Keith Poston paid a site visit toward the end of the sessions, and the teams he spoke with were very excited to have their photo taken with him. When Karen Noon and members of our staff and/or Student Advisory Board deliver computers to some of the Link 2 Learn senior citizen participants, the seniors express their gratitude over having been included in the program and can hardly contain their enthusiasm about having a computer of their own.

The project's ultimate goal is to inspire in the students a fired-up interest in technology and in increasing their own STEM exposure in the classroom by allowing them to share their knowledge with seniors who are eager to become computer literate. Our intent is that exposure to teaching technology concepts will become a cornerstone for their future use of technology and participation in math and science academics.