



# 7 Habits of Highly Effective iEARN Project Facilitators

*A Guide for educators/students who facilitates iEARN Online  
Collaborative Projects*

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## The 7 Habits of Highly Effective iEARN Project Facilitators

### *Habit One: Be Proactive.*

**"Proactive people are smart, they're value driven, they read reality, and they know what's needed."**

Sometimes the way we see the problem is the problem. Educators wanting to learn how to effectively facilitate the iEARN projects need to believe in themselves and look at teaching situations of their own as well as be sensitive to the needs of participating students and teachers from every angle in order. This will help them to decide what action will help them integrate the project in the right direction and how important it is for a facilitator to be there in the forums for continuous support .

- Don't announce a project and have your name as a facilitator unless you really want to, have time for it and see a need for it. Once it is launched ensure you are there for continuous support in the forums.

Find ways to schedule online time. Even small blocks or infrequent access is better than none at all. Log in for smaller period of time if you have to, but the key is to log in be there and interact.

### *Habit Two: Begin With The End In Mind.*

**"To begin with the end in mind means to start with an understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction."**

Start with a clearly stated end-goal, expressed in terms of the exact or possible project outcomes. Focus on the outcome you want to achieve. Guide participants towards achieving the project outcomes and suggest or help them design activities to reach these goals e.g. lesson plans, classroom activities, tips and suggestions.

Begin by making some general lesson plans, templates or participation tips for your project. This will attract more participation since the participating students and a teacher gets some guidelines. Think about doing some of the following and inviting others to post some of their own samples, this will create a great pool of resources for your project ensuring success.

- Reference material to print out for student use
- Lessons or materials for use for the projects
- Student activities or interactive sites
- Sites to use for student research

All effective iEARN project facilitators plan and plan well, creating different scenarios to cover the ways that project might go. Developing and using the resources for the project means planning and being prepared in the same way that you would plan for using a new text or video or science experiment. This type of planning is nothing new for a good teacher or educationist.

Know what your objectives are for your project and seek out the resources to help you meet them. Make sure the students also know their objectives for using the forums. That is the best way to keep everyone on task and ensure effective use of online time.

The use of any new strategy takes time to perfect. Realize there are management skills, scheduling, and new ways of approaching curriculum, which will be more consistently effective with the use of project forum and interacting with other participants .

***Habit Three: Put First Things First.***

**"Don't prioritize your schedule, instead...schedule your priorities."**

-Covey

First address all the issues on the project's critical path – that is how to participate and then when the project postings starts to appear respond to them and then attend to any other issues.

For teachers their students are the number one priority. If you believe that integrating and facilitating an iEARN online project can bring the real world issues, up-to-date information, rich primary source material and all of the other benefits you have heard that integrating the iEARN project can bring to a classroom, then focus on its use as a professional goal. This will help you set aside the time to prepare and schedule the facilitation time needed.

- Start with collaborating with your co facilitators.
- Look for ways to meet them online on a regular basis discussing project progression.
- Divide tasks related to forum facilitation among each other. If one of the facilitator is not available or has slacked, think about replacement immediately.
- Decide on a fair amount of presence in the forums , meaning how much each of you are required to be , interact and support the participants online.
- Bring equity to your forums. Have suggestions and support for those who do not have plenty online access at home/school. Have several alternates available to them for online interactions.
- The worse thing a facilitator could do is to be unavailable and non responsive in forums.

### ***Habit Four: Think Win-Win.***

An iEARN Project success is defined in terms of the issue it is focusing, participants maximum participation, timely completion, social action and a good quality outcomes, website, booklet, any other print material, exhibition and display etc. All the participants need to be satisfied and get support and opportunity from the facilitators to participate fully achieving the goals - compromise is not an option.

In iEARN interactive forum setting interactions with students and colleagues are paramount, "win/win" is a most important philosophy. The win/win process has four steps:

- See the problem from others' point of view, in terms of their needs
- Identify the key issues and concerns
- Determine what end results would make the best acceptable solution(s)
- Identify options to achieve those results
- Share the success with everyone which made it a success

Consider working with a co facilitator and some students in your project who can bring their expertise and ideas to your project venture. Planning with others and developing a team approach can help all contributors. Like wise be willing to reach out and help others learn from your experiences or share in lessons you develop. We all win when we can share and learn from as well as with others.

Work with students to help them understand their responsibilities in using the project forum. Evaluation of sources, organizing information and other information processing skills students need to use and you need to teach will be critical skills for the 21st century. Don't be afraid to learn side-by-side with your project participants. Seeing how they react and interact with online discussions can help you revamp your facilitation strategies and restructure your project and improve upon it.

### ***Habit Five: Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood.***

**"Seeking first to understand, diagnosing before you prescribe, is hard but it's the mark of all true professionals."**

**-Covey**

Read the postings empathically. Get inside the other person's frame of reference so you respond/react with one purpose - to understand. Then work on ensuring that you clearly communicate your thoughts and ideas.

Open the door to the potential that exists in participants by finding out what it is that will make a win/win situation for them. Providing the rich resources focused at the project for

their use, engaging in a collaborative online discussion, participating in challenging activities/contests , making information available in new/exciting ways, or providing opportunities for "authentic" research may be the key to reaching the potential waiting to be unlocked.

***Habit Six: Synergize.***

Synergy means the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The essence or key is to build on strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Synergistic communication means opening your mind to new possibilities and realizing that your new creative endeavors may be somewhat unpredictable.

Become a team player with your participants. Build a safe environment which encourages risk-taking, experimentation, creative endeavor and use of the information available online. Work in collaborative groups. Encourage team projects, brainstorming and idea sharing. Bring colleagues, country coordinators, school officials, iEARN Executive Council and others into your forum on line. Perhaps someone has expertise to share on which will help you. Perhaps a colleague has an upcoming unit on a topic which your students can research. Together you can achieve much more than working in isolation

***Habit Seven: Sharpen The Saw.***

"Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."

Goethe

Sharpening the saw refers to a commitment to continuous improvement in each of the four aspects of human existence: Physical, Mental, Spiritual, and Social-Emotional. The process of continuous improvement is essential for schools and also for those who work inside of them. Educators must continually renew themselves, moving upward in the spiral of growth and change.

Post-implementation review - or even more frequently, have participants in your project forum talk about their experiences, challenges and what can be done to improve the participation and enhance the quality of project outcomes.

Affirm the proactive nature of your students by treating them as responsible people. Support them, appreciate them and help them become confident, independent learners of an online community. Let them develop research questions and activities to investigate. Help them to design products to demonstrate their learning.

Never stop learning yourself. Read professional journals and books. Attend workshops and in service sessions, continually interact in the iEARN facilitators forum about using the online collaborative projects "sharpen" your skills and learn new ones. Research new

topics online. Learn to create your own website to publish student work. Find time for you to better yourself.

## **Suggestions for Successful Project Facilitation**

- Use online forums instead of direct e-mail whenever possible. Forums accommodate a variety of school schedules by archiving messages and allowing new contributors to see the project's progression, understand who is involved, and determine whether the work will be of interest to them. And, by using the iEARN forums, you are enabling participants to participate by e-mail or by way of the web, on discussion boards hosted on servers around the world, thus keeping cost to a minimum.
- Encourage discussion and interaction among participants. iEARN projects are meant to be collaborative and interactive. As a project facilitator, part of your role, and that of your students, is to facilitate interaction among participants. This increases the opportunities for students to receive feedback on their writing, so that responsibility for responding to messages doesn't just fall on the project facilitators. Our goal is that every student who posts a message will receive a response. This can be attained if people respond to 2 other messages for every new one that they post.
- Involve participating schools and students in leadership roles. Appointing international student editors and facilitators not only provide additional sources of feedback to contributors, but it also helps other students to see ways that they can take leadership roles within the project. Participants may even choose to share the role of compiling project materials into a final publication, thus allowing a variety of classrooms the experience of analyzing and presenting a piece of the project's "final product."
- Update project information periodically. This way, participants aren't referring to outdated information. Project updates should be posted as responses to the original announcement in your project forum, and can also be sent to [newsflash@us.earn.org](mailto:newsflash@us.earn.org) for inclusion in the twice monthly online iEARN newsletter, "iEARN in Action."
- Participate in another project. This is a great way to meet other participants, and learn about the many projects initiated by teachers and students throughout the world. In this way, your classroom truly becomes a global community member that can draw on the breadth of the network as your classroom develops throughout the year.

**GOALS of iEARN's ONLINE PROJECT FORUMS:** iEARN is a community of individuals who believe that by working cooperatively, we can promote global understanding, service, and action. All of its participants share the responsibility for creating a cohesive online community by participating actively in projects on the network, helping plan and facilitate new theme-based projects, and welcoming new participants as they join us online.

## **General Guidelines for Teachers and Students Posting to the Online Forums**

- Try to describe the essence of your message in the Subject line. And, if you are responding to a message, do not change the Subject line.
- Be brief and write the most important things in the first paragraph. You may be writing in a language that is not the native language of those reading your message. In addition, some subscribers to the forums use dial-up access and pay for telephone time (sometimes for kilobytes too).
- Do not post too many attachments to the forums. Try to configure your mailing software so that it sends out only plain text and no attachments of encoded word/graphic documents and html files. If you want to share a large attachment, just send a note asking people if they want to get it by email or place your document on the web.
- Do not post chain letters or any commercial advertisements to the forums.
- Include your name and country with each message you post.
- Everyone wants responses! Please post at least 2 responses for every new message you post to the forums.

Jay Holmes of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, USA, and a facilitator for the YouthCaN project, gave the following advice to create postings that will elicit responses. There are many people who have trouble getting responses on the forum. Remember, dialogue goes both ways. To get answers you have to give answers and you have to lead people into dialogue with questions and responses.

There are a few suggestions that I can make:

- 1) Always have a subject line or title to your message that explains what your message is about, water pollution, endangered species, recycling....
- 2) Ask your readers one or two specific, easy questions that they can answer.
- 3) Read other postings in the forum and respond to them, answer their questions and then ask them a question or suggest that they read your messages in the forum and give them the exact subject line of your message so they can find it easily.

## **Ethical Use Of Materials: Giving Credit For Online And Print Resources:**

iEARN project work encourages students to share information as they collaborate. This often requires research online or in school libraries. The World Wide Web has made it increasingly easy for students to share with others by copying and pasting into forum postings. This information may come in the form of pictures, graphs, text, videos and even original ideas. It is important to understand that all material online and in print belongs to someone. The rights of these individuals are protected under copyright laws in many parts of the world where, once something is printed or published, it is automatically copyrighted without any formal procedure.

There are Fair Use Guidelines that make it legal to share material with others for education use. David Warlick in his book "Redefining Literacy in the 21st Century" has created a Students' and Teachers' Information Code of Ethics. This points to four areas of concern, and lists proactive considerations that students and teachers should apply to every information decision that they make. It can be found at: [http://www.us.earn.org/professional\\_development/curriculum/copyright.php](http://www.us.earn.org/professional_development/curriculum/copyright.php). Also on this page are tools for creating citations for material used and information on the Fair Use guidelines and copyright.

## **Features of Successful Online Collaborative Projects**

**Successful online collaborative projects give ample opportunity to students to:**

- **Learn together & from one another** about a **common** issue, concern or problem that is of interest to both parties.
- **Communicate with their peers:** Teachers report that working on projects with their classes enhance students' social skills. They learn to work together and build healthy relationships. For the same process to happen in online collaborative projects, the online communication has to be beyond: "*Yes, thank you*" or "*I like what you are saying*" or "*What you are saying is correct*". Online discussions should engage students in cross-comparative studies and analyses, reflections, reports about a common issue/problem in order to exchange information, thoughts, opinions and reach possible solutions, share resources and learning outcomes. This plays a crucial role in their feeling actively involved in a culturally diverse community.
- Be **actively** involved in the learning process
- Engage in complex **real** world issues that require **problem solving &**

**reflective, creative and critical thinking.**

- Apply knowledge in a **variety of contexts** and are involved in activities that explore their talents in a variety of ways
- Learn and apply **interpersonal** skills as they work cooperatively
- Be **responsible** for their learning and involve them in **life skills** such as time and resource management.
- Have **tangible outcomes**; projects end with a finished product that is assessed in a variety of ways such as compiling and delivering presentations, creating and producing a brochure, a pamphlet, participating in conference etc.

## iEARN First Steps to get involved

**For help, write to your Country Coordinator/Contact/representative**

	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>1</b>	Complete iEARN Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Log into the iEARN Teacher Database <a href="http://amity.learn.org/signin.lasso">http://amity.learn.org/signin.lasso</a></li> <li>• Use your e-mail address and your first name as a password (all lowercase). Complete any missing personal contact information. Here you can also add additional teachers at your school and do searches for teachers around the world.</li> <li>• On this page, click to register your students with their own User Names &amp; passwords, if appropriate, to enter the iEARN forums. You can use your e-mail address instead of student addresses if you prefer</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Choose a project that fits your curriculum, the ages of your students, appropriate languages, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Browse through the "Project Description Booklet" or project descriptions at <a href="http://www.learn.org/projects/">http://www.learn.org/projects/</a></li> <li>• The Interactive forums for the projects, where teachers and students are interacting, are ID/password protected and open only to members of iEARN.</li> <li>• Log into the iEARN project discussion forums <a href="http://foro.learn.org">http://foro.learn.org</a> Your User Name is your first name and last name separated by a space. Your password is your first name.</li> <li>• Browse through the Teacher's Forum and introduce yourself and your class at <a href="http://foro.learn.org/learnforums/teachers">http://foro.learn.org/learnforums/teachers</a></li> <li>• After reading a message in the forum by clicking on a discussion topic, you can respond by clicking on "add a message" at the bottom of the page.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Create a list of your objectives for choosing and joining this project	<p>Your objectives should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a tentative time-frame</li> <li>• lesson progression</li> </ul> <p>This "action-plan" can be handy in your meetings with school coordinators to share all the activities related to the project and the time spent to achieve them. A full description of the project and its activities and coordinators appears at the top of each project forum.</p> <p>Some possibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teddy Bear Project</li> <li>• Daffodils and Tulips Project</li> <li>• Folk Tales Project</li> <li>• Children's Rights Through Art</li> </ul>

4	Contact the facilitator	<p>Write an initial email with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of you and your students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Tell where you are from</li> <li>★ Share your objectives for joining the project.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>All facilitators are listed beside the description of the project found in the Project Description Book. If you don't have one, it can be downloaded at: <a href="http://www.earn.org/projects/projectbook.html">www.earn.org/projects/projectbook.html</a> and in the project's online forum.</p>
5	Introduce the project to your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about what iEARN is and prepare them for online collaboration.</li> <li>• Introduce your students to the forums and have them read other students' writing already posted from that particular project.</li> <li>• Your students can introduce themselves in the youth Forum: <a href="http://foro.earn.org/earnforums/youth/">http://foro.earn.org/earnforums/youth/</a></li> </ul>
6	Have students respond to other students' writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use an agreed upon writing process. What excites and motivates students to engage in online learning and sharing is the interaction they have. So, we hope students will post three responses for every new message they post.</li> <li>• Remind them to make connections and ask brief questions of their online partners to keep the conversation moving forward. Remember, English is probably not their first language.</li> <li>• Review Internet etiquette (<a href="http://us.earn.org/professional_development/multimedia/prepare/index.html">http://us.earn.org/professional_development/multimedia/prepare/index.html</a> ) Encourage them to contribute their own ideas and perspectives to the discussion.</li> </ul>
7	Have students write and publish	<p>Peer editing is a key part of student learning in iEARN.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to post their own writing within the project, as well as</li> <li>• Respond to other students' postings, asking questions for clarity and giving constructive comments on how writings could be improved. Remember, students are working toward a collective final "product" in each project (web page, hard-copy publication, etc.) and together they want that product to be the best possible.</li> </ul>
8	Continue participation of the project	<p>Keep the momentum going as planned with your students and the project coordinator.</p>
<p>In addition, more suggestions can be found on the iEARN Global Website at <a href="http://www.earn.org/professional/prof_connections.html">http://www.earn.org/professional/prof_connections.html</a>.</p>		

## Plan and Implement Your iEARN Project

1 - Ask yourself:

- What do I want my students to get out of this year's work with me?

- What **content** or **base knowledge** will I cover?

2 - The project you select should address a real life question or problem that:

- Is **interesting & exciting** to you **AND** your students.
- Has **accessible & age appropriate resources** to investigate the topic.
- Provide **opportunities to make connections** to other classes as well as **in and out of school** and **enhances critical thinking** and **problem solving skills**.
- Will involve your students in **team work**.
- Can be addressed through a **variety of strategies & activities**.
- Will help students with various **strengths and inclinations**.

Select a project & plan your curriculum

3 - Plan learning activities that:

- Give you the chance to see their understanding develop in **new & challenging** situations
- Require them to show their understanding in an **observable way**.
- Involve students in **publicly demonstrating** their understanding

Select a project & plan your curriculum

4 - Plan ongoing assessment: What criteria will help my students and me figure out what they understand?

- Instructor Informal checks: observations, dialogue & feedback
- Peer assessment
- Self assessment
- Quiz / test
- Academic prompts
- Instructor/students dialogue
- Performance tasks/projects: Oral Presentations, reports and other tasks.

Before You Begin:

- Safety on the NET
- How to Use Search Engines
- Get your students ready for online collaboration: sensitivity exercises
- Netiquette, E-mail and Newsgroup basics

Netiquette:

- Be sensitive to others.
- Be explicit and clear.
- Learn as much as you can about the other cultures you are working with to avoid cultural and language misunderstanding.
- Avoid sending capitalized messages.
- Avoid writing messages when you are angry.
- Avoid hurting people's feelings.
- Always be courteous and polite.
- Be responsible online.
- Avoid using slang and abbreviations.
- Always acknowledge receipt of messages.

### Sensitivity Exercises:

- To raise the level of awareness and understanding
- Get to know the students you are working with
- Interests Surveys: team creates, sends, collates and reports results
- In parallel prepare your classroom bulletin board
- Post your students' "buddy contract"
- Difference in time zones
- Something special about your peers
- Pictures
- Messages to be sent / received

### Steps to follow

- Articulate your goals, select the project, and set your leading question.
- Compile resources.
- Set your objectives and plan your lesson progression, project activities and timeline.
- Distribute the project objectives.
- Discuss project expectations and the frequency of communication.
- Discuss the project in depth with your students.
- Create teams, discuss what is expected from them and agree on due dates.
- Clarify your evaluation method.

### Steps to follow

- Send a note to the project coordinator introducing yourself and your students
- Introduce iEARN's mission and vision to your students and visit the web site.
- Prepare your students for online collaboration and have them prepare their introductions.
- Go to the FORUMS, have them post their introductions.
- Have students respond to other students' writing using the writing process.

### Steps to follow

- Have students write and publish their own contributions within the project
- Create a tracking system – grid and discuss it frequently with the students
- Generate weekly project reminders.

**•BE PROUD OF YOUR WORK! SHARE IT WITH OTHERS AT SCHOOL**

### Stay connected!

- Use iEARN resources.
- Check the iEARN Teachers forum regularly.
- Read iEARN in Action "Newsflash".
- Share your story with iEARN teachers!