As I’m driving home from that staff meeting, I think back to that international student from South Africa who was my undergraduate roommate. A collaboration between our school and hers would definitely open the communication lines to exploring diversity and some global learning. But we need to tie responsibility in there too and then it hits me. I just attended a webinar on an interesting collaboration tool that should allow us to meet all three of the main points my principal desires. The first thing to do is make contact with my old roommate and see if she would be willing to be part of this experiment and then to figure out what the experiment will look like.

I want to use Edmodo for this experiment in global collaboration because it seems to be a secure social network that is used worldwide. Doing a teacher search on Edmodo, I find that there are teachers from Cape Town, South Africa registered already so internet access should not be a problem. One glitch might be the amount/type of devices available, as well as, the time difference as Cape Town is 6 hours ahead of Boston. Any live meetups would need to take the time into account. I envision our teacher and “their” teacher setting up class groups separate from each other and creating a larger class group with both teachers as co-teachers and all the kids from both classes added together. Students don’t need email addresses to sign up and can not send a post directly to a single student (no private chatting available). Because posts are available 24/7, each group can review what has been posted and respond when it is most convenient for them. The teachers can post surveys/polls to gauge prior knowledge either in their own class groups or in the combined group. Files such as worksheets, web links, videos, recordings, and documents can be posted for all to review and comment on.

One reason why Edmodo came to mind for this task was a teacher story that was shared during the webinar. One class in Massachusetts partnered with a class in Ohio. It’s not exactly global but what they did for a field trip could be expanded. The Massachusetts class went on a field trip to Plimouth Plantation. While there, they were contacting the Ohio class through Edmodo on mobile devices and the students on the field trip were able to relay the information they learned as well as asking questions that the remote students had. I can see this allowing the explorers to explore with new eyes and giving them the ability to make new connections with information. I envision our global collaboration to work something like this where one group is the eyes and ears for the remote group and vice versa. For example, while we go to a nature center here and share New England animals with South Africa, they could go to an animal refuge and share African animals with us. Not only would both classes learn about the others’ native animals and habitats but they should gain a new appreciation for their own.

So we’ve explored diversity and global learning. That just leaves us with the responsibility part. Here is where we get the students to understand that how/what they project visually, verbally, and electronically represents not just themselves but their society and that as good global citizens it is very important to be responsible in all our actions. Through diversity, they should learn that it is important to understand that not everyone has the same historical setting to interpret communication against and that when dealing with diverse peoples it is key to communicate in the common arena rather than use phrases, words, and meanings that will be misunderstood or lost.

Where does this project start and where does it end? It starts with two members of the global community saying “let’s make the world seem a bit smaller” and it ends, hopefully, never. I can see this project beginning with students making videos of a day in their life to share and compare with the other group. It would be great to see some science experiments being done where the environment or climate has a basis on the results so students can see that just because something happens one way here doesn’t mean it happens like that everywhere else. Current events could trigger posts and reactions from all members of the group and field trips could be used to share a common experience as well as expose remote class members to a different experience.

Throughout this process, Edmodo works as a great collaboration tool in that it is a secure learning environment that encourages collaboration and networking while teaching students how to use social networking tools responsibly in a controlled environment. The idea that there will be a whole new group of students added to your class should engage students in the social aspect that will increase the potential for learning because they are excited and paying great attention. This expanded class group will increase the opportunities for modeling as students read posts that express ideas that they may not have thought yet or that they can then expand on. Through inclusion of other Web 2.0 tools like SKYPE, both classes will get a better feel for the realness of their remote counterparts and will be able to internalize that online actions have consequences that do impact real people that you may not be able to see face-to-face.

Edmodo is a tool where teachers can establish rubrics for writing that will help support proper and complete communication in an environment where students often take short cuts with grammar, spelling, and usage. Students who may be reluctant to experience new things or speak out in class, are able to explore from a safe place and engage in discussions without being put on the spot in a live classroom.

This tool has lots of support within the site from peers and professionals as well as many blogs, videos, and articles with advice on how to use Edmodo to its fullest. Case studies are available for just about everything you might want to pursue with Edmodo and a google search for “Edmodo for global collaboration” came up with the example from Pernille Ripp from Wisconsin who founded the Global Read Aloud project using Edmodo and an archived webinar entitled “From Connection to Collaboration in the Global Edmodo Network.” I am enthusiastic that the learning curve with Edmodo will be much smaller than with other collaboration tools since much of the work done before seems to be readily available and this tool seems destined to be a global collaboration tool – perfect for the scenario of this day!