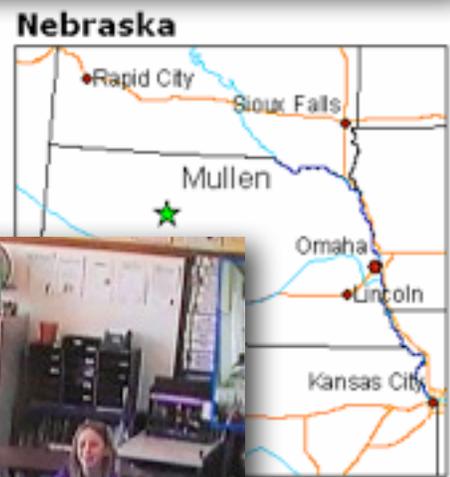


A window into elsewhere





Collaborative learning
with distant partners

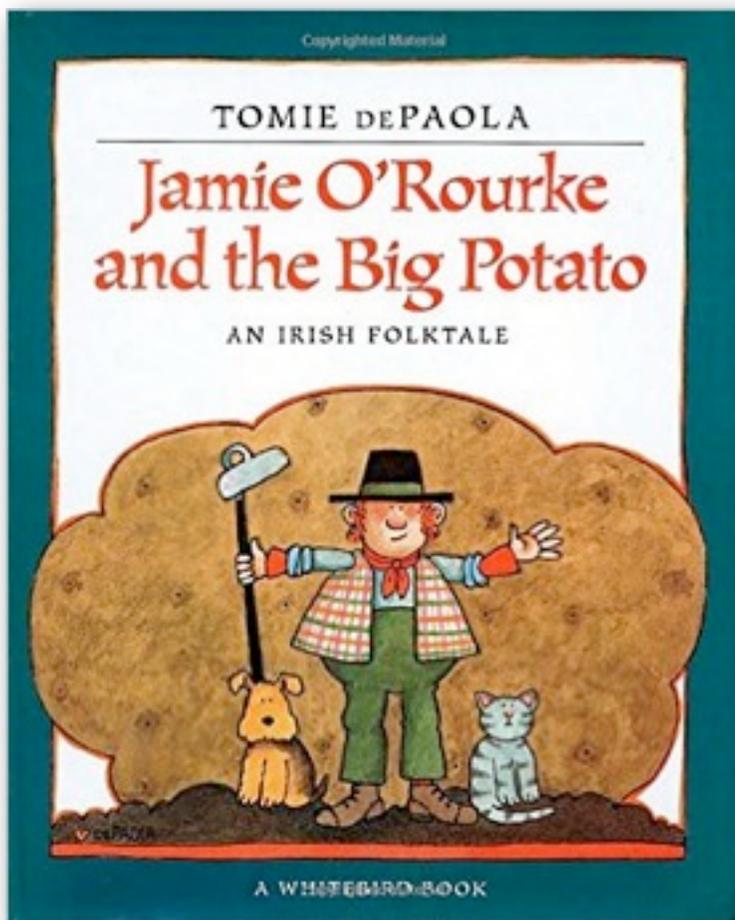


Nineteen first grade pupils in Lora Prebalick's class at Lincoln School learned some pretty cool facts about eleven second graders in Emily Brown's class in the rural Mullen Elementary School in Mullen, Nebraska during a 45-minute, distance videoconference March 20th.

Ably facilitated by Newark High School business teacher Kathleen Tanea, who among her other duties is the NCS D technology integrator, Lincoln students learned only 63 students attend the K-6 school in the sparsely populated village that has only 491 residents, mostly cattle ranchers.

The area typically has snowy winters and lots of snow days, but it just happened to be an unseasonably warm 57 degrees on the first day of spring when it was 36 degrees here in Newark.





Lincoln children were surprised to learn there is no gymnasium in the Mullen Elementary School and children have to either walk or be bused four blocks away to participate in physical education classes at the Mullen High School.

In addition to getting to know more about one another, Prebalick and Brown's students participated in a descriptive reading, writing/art project close to St. Patrick's Day, based on the children's book "Jamie

O'Rourke and the Big Potato."

The object was for each of the two classes to build a potato man or woman after they read the book by Tomie dePaola. The classes then wrote detailed descriptions of their potato man or woman and sent them to their partner class via email.

Then each class recreated the potato man or woman based only the written descriptions.



Each of Brown's 11 students sent a description for either a potato man or woman. Prebalick's class sent only the one that was required, but Prebalick's students replicated 11 male and female spud creations based on Brown's students' descriptions.

During the videoconference, the children compared their recreated potato men or women with the original one, noting similarities and differences.

For the most part, the results were strikingly similar and students in both classes seemed to really enjoy the challenge.

After, during a phone call, Brown said her students liked the experience, their first with a distance learning project.

Prebalick students, who happily waved goodbye to their new friends in Mullen at the end of the videoconference, gave the exercise a hearty thumbs up when asked if they enjoyed it.

Besides being fun, Prebalick said the exercise taught her students how to write clear, precise instructions and do their best to follow them to the T.

She said Tanea's role was key from start to finish in the fairly involved learning project.



Prebalick's students also made potato characters at home that they showed their new friends at Mullen Elementary.

