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During this project, my students became digital storytellers by using video editing software to tell powerful stories in their own voices. We had an opportunity to meet Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel manager from Hotel Rwanda. After learning about the impact of that one man, I introduced the project scenario, and asked students to research a person who had used his or her life to positively impact others. We also collaborated with other classrooms engaged in the same project, giving students the opportunity to gain a much broader perspective of people throughout the world who are impacting our lives.

Since I had computers in my classroom and access to the computer lab, the first activity I did for this project was to show each student how to set up their own iGoogle* page and how to set up RSS feeds so they would have a place to store their research for the project. I then formed project teams and created Google Groups* so students could create group wiki pages, post documents and links, participate in discussions, and send messages to group members.

After conducting initial research and working with other classrooms, student groups chose an influential person, and created a story through images, music, and spoken word. Parents, soldiers, humanitarians, musicians, and actors were chosen as the focus of the movies.

"When I started the project, I knew that there was serious interest, but I could not even hope for what I actually witnessed. The level of engagement and interest in the project was electric. Students were making movies at home and publishing to the Web on their own. Students were begging to stay late, work at lunch, and e-mailing questions over the weekend. One student that normally checks out during instruction was one of the students wanting to rerecord his audio because it wasn't perfect. His project wasn't good enough, not because I said so, but because he wanted more from himself. It was a project that transcended the classroom and became about the greater audience. I have known for a long time that the classroom and the students in it were changing. The project allowed the students to delve with more passion into learning and life."
(Laufenberg)

"One of the schools we were working with was in Vanuatu in the South Pacific. The students were able to communicate back and forth by way of a chat room we created. On the last day of the project, we had a live videoconference with them. No small feat as they were working with a satellite link and getting their electricity from a portable generator. Just goes to show you that where there is a will there is technology happening." (Davey)

My students had to problem solve with the other schools involved in the project, work to solve the logistics of time zones, and think differently about their ability to communicate to a much larger global community. The project truly changed their perspective.

Adapted from scenario contributors. (2007). NETS•S 2007 Implementation Wiki
<http://nets-implementation.iste.wikispaces.net/Communication++and+Collaboration>