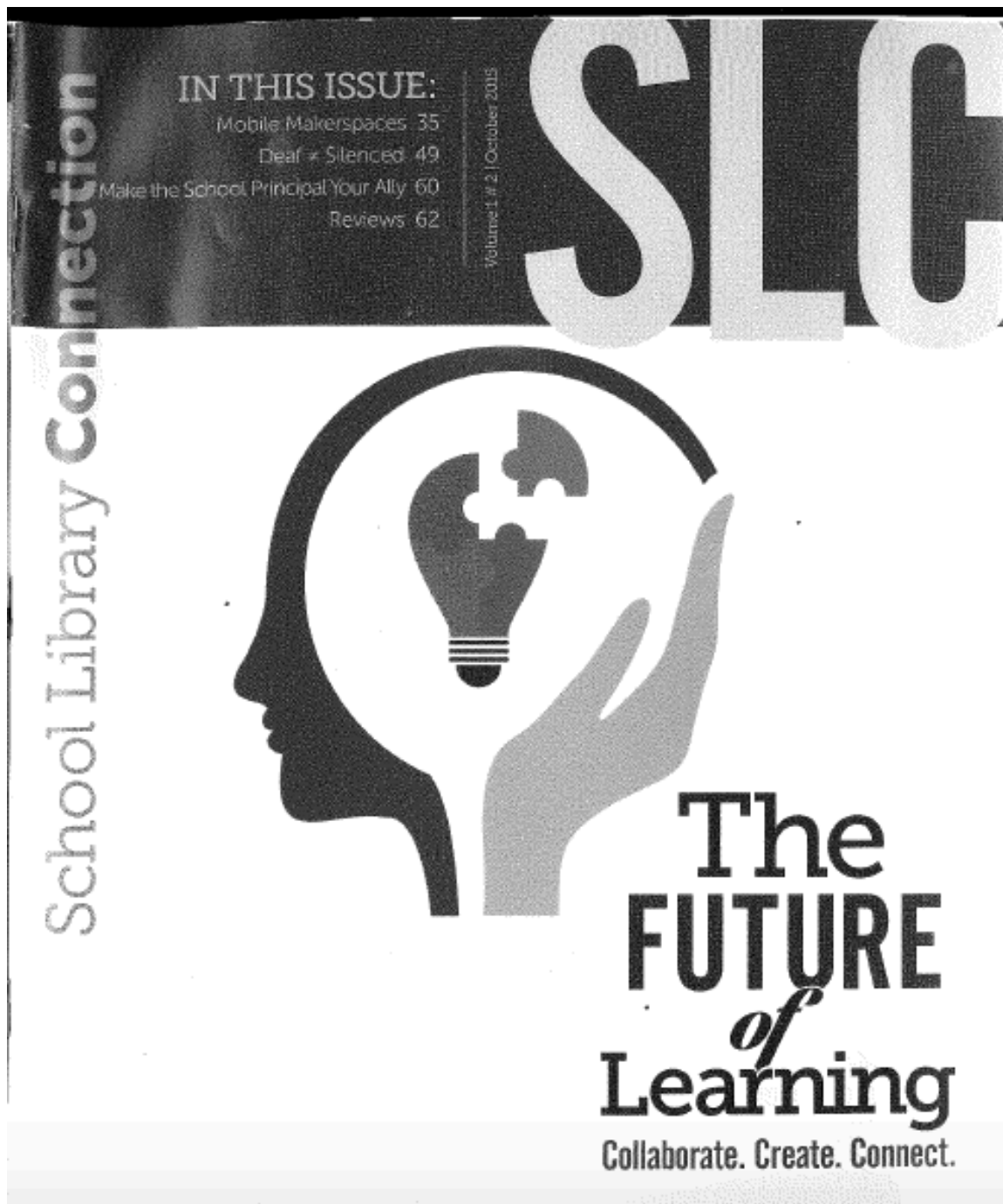


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HEARTBEATS

Google Hangouts and Teddy Bear Exchange Students

By Christina Cucci



I used Google Hangouts in Education to partner with two educators from Colegio Newlands in Buenos Aires, Argentina: Viviana Lopez Larretchart, the primary headmistress, and Florencia Gonzalez, a second grade teacher. We initiated the collaborative project using a Teddy Bear Exchange. A teddy bear exchange is when two schools partner up and mail a teddy bear to one another. The teddy bear becomes the exchange student, and spends time in the new school learning about cultures and people. This project fit nicely into our first Grade Social Studies unit on History, Culture, and Perspective. Teachers, students, and parents participated throughout the project using a blog. (<http://teddybearexchangeproject.blogspot.com/>)

At the close of the unit, we scheduled a Google Hangout so our students (and teddy bears) could meet one another, virtually. Students shared information about their country, asked questions, and sang songs during the 30 minute Google Hangout. One first grader remarked, "I feel like I just made a new group of friends."

I am excited to incorporate other Google Hangouts in my curriculum for next year. I envision participating in a Google Hangout with experts in the sciences, as my school begins using the Next Generation Science Standards. For example, during the second grade unit on Changes in Terrestrial and Aquatic Habitats, I would like to connect with a biologist, using a Google Hangout, to bring the science to life. As students learn to speak Spanish, perhaps I can find a teacher from Spain to connect with. This would give children an authentic experience in practicing their language acquisition skills.

If you are looking for an engaging way to expand your classroom walls and join educators around the world, then Google Communities is the place for you.

Christina Cucci is a School Library Media Specialist working at Reynolds School in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. She works with students in Kindergarten through Second Grade teaching media science and technology. She is a proud member of the ALA Emerging Leadership class for 2015. Christina Cucci can be reached at christinacucci2@gmail.com or on Twitter at @librauno.