

### An experiment gone right

**Doing a science fair project** is a time-honored passage in grade school, but it can be intimidating if you don't know where to begin. Students at Glen Oaks Elementary School in Hickory Hills will have a head start next year, thanks to the work of enterprising fourth-graders at the school.

Students in Ingrida Latoza's class put together a step-by-step science fair project guide that uses photos and narration to explain the Scientific Method to viewers. They got the idea for the project when—having to do their own projects for the school science fair—they watched older videos from the school library about participating in the fair. The videos didn't quite match the classroom goals and learning objectives, so Latoza had the students design their own guide.

The students formed small groups and each conducted an experiment in the classroom. They broke down their steps into individual frames and photographed them. They used notes from their science journals and the class experiment report to write the narrative for each frame. They then assembled the package, with transition music, in Photo Story 3.

The project was a solid learning experience on several levels. Because they had to explain the Scientific Method clearly and simply, they had to have a good understanding of it themselves. ("They didn't realize how much work they had to do before they ever sat down at the computer," Latoza says.) They also improved their tech skills by working with a digital camera and using Photo Story. And, of course, they learned themselves how to put together an experiment for a science fair project.

And Latoza points out that the students were enthusiastic about creating a guide that would be kept in the school library and used by other students. "Any way that students can act as peer tutors," she says, "it's a new audience, and they take great pride in their work."

### Peru up close

**With the help of technology**, sixth-graders at St. Mary School in Riverside became Peruvian explorers last year. And when they were done, they had also created a detailed guide of Peruvian life.

The students' "Peru Inside and Out" project was based on a unit in The Wilderness Classroom, an interactive Web site that allows participants to follow online expeditions. The St. Mary students, who were following a trans-Amazon expedition, could read explorers' journal entries, listen to daily Podcasts, look at photos and follow maps.

The students used the expedition as a springboard to developing their own guide to Peru; while their main focus was researching the effects of global warming on the country, they used a multi-subject approach to putting together the guide. Students could select an area of concentration—the Andes, Peruvian people, the Amazon, animals and plants, a Peruvian school or the summary—and worked in teams to present their subject matter.

They learned about global warming in science; read *The Secret of the Andes* in literature, and listened to Peruvian music. Through online research, they linked up with the Carmelitas School in Lima, worked to translate the school's Web site from Spanish and wrote to students at the school.

Once they'd completed the research, the teams used Keynote software that taught them how to make a Quicktime movie. They were able to incorporate the music, video and photos into the movie. One student served as editor to coordinate the overall project.

The end result? The students learned more about global warming and its effects, but also learned much more about the Peruvian people and their history. One other side benefit, noted teacher Kathy Lifka: "This group of students decided to do more walking to school than coming by auto—which they did until the end of the year."