

Google's Connected Classrooms link global schools to SA history

Google has launched 'Connected Classrooms' aimed at exploring historic spots related to South Africa's 20 Years of Democracy. The second in the series offered schools from across the world the opportunity to visit South Africa's famous Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, without leaving their classrooms.

The virtual field trip, organised by Google and 21 Icons, allowed children to follow a tour through the Constitutional Court, the Old Fort and Number 4 prison, participate in interactive learning sessions and ask questions of historians. Classrooms could either join via Google+ Hangout, or watch live and chat on YouTube.



Doodle 4 Google competition

Connected Classrooms form part of this year's Doodle 4 Google competition, which invites children to create a Google Doodle along the theme of "South Africa of my Dreams". The winning Doodle will be displayed on the home page of Google South Africa, and the winning school will receive a R100,000 technology grant. While the children get creative, teachers can use the classroom activities provided to understand how to use technology as a teaching aid. Besides Connected Classrooms, the activities also include a series of lesson plans developed in conjunction with Pearson.

"It's been exciting working with Pearson and 21 Icons to bring South Africa's history alive online and bring together children from around the world to experience it. With the Internet, teachers have access to more resources than ever to explore our culture and history, and foster collaborative learning," says Elizma Nolte, Country Marketing Manager for Google South Africa.

Although these are the first Connected Classrooms to take place in South Africa, globally they've already helped schools take educational trips as far and wide as visiting the White House in the US, learning how to make cheese in Wensleydale, UK and explore the Arctic tundra with Polar Bears International.

The next one, on 13 October 2014, will visit Vilakazi Street in Soweto, the only street that was home to two Nobel Peace Prize laureates.

Teachers can view upcoming Connected Classrooms at connectedclassrooms.withgoogle.com.

Entries for Doodle 4 Google close on 22 October 2014. For more information, go to www.google.co.za/doodle4google.