

## Distance Learning Planning

Teaching using interactive teleconferencing is different from traditional teaching with all students in one location. The following is a summary of teaching tips and strategies to assist you in planning your distance learning lesson.

An important consideration in distance learning is making the participants at distant locations feel part of the class. In a normal teaching situation, all the students are physically in the room. In a distance learning situation, if not brought into the class, students at distant locations can feel left out. As you are developing your presentation think of ways to directly involve the students at both the remote sites and the local site.

Develop humanizing techniques which will create an atmosphere which focuses on the individual student and overcomes distance by generating group rapport.

- Send a welcoming letter with your handouts which includes program goals, questions or problems for the students to be thinking about and biographical information about yourself.
- Ask for a roster of participants at each location and use it during the lesson to call on people by name.
- Create an friendly, informal atmosphere by asking for responses from distant locations such as "How's the weather there?", "How many people are there today?", "Have you read about (current event)?".

Encourage interaction and participation to maintain your students interest and commitment to the lesson.

- Your enthusiasm and encouragement is vital. Students at distant location may need more encouragement to participate so make special effort to include them.
- Send a list of questions with your handouts and use them to kick off discussion by asking students to select questions they would like to discuss in detail.
- Use formats which encourage students to participate such as case studies, interviews, panel discussions or role playing.
- Ask a specific distant location to answer questions either as individuals or as a group and then ask another location to discuss their answer.
- Assign group activities to each location, give them a specified time frame to complete and then let each site present their solution.
- Plan for feedback during your lesson by pausing and asking one or two participants to comment on the information your are presenting.

Use audio visual support effectively. In most teleconferencing situation you can use overheads, slides, video tapes and computer programs. Always check ahead of time to confirm availability of support equipment and to notify the technical staff of your  
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needs. When developing visuals for a distance learning lesson remember that the students at the distant locations will be viewing everything on a TV monitor so you have to plan accordingly.

- Think horizontally.... a TV screen is a horizontal format, if you set your visuals up in a vertical format you will waste valuable screen area.
- Keep each visual simple, 6-8 lines per page with no more than 25 letters per line.
- Leave room for a "safe area", because TVs cut off part of the edge of the screen you need to leave plenty of blank space around the edge of your visual. If you are using an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11 sheet of paper a 1 inch safe area around the edge works well.
- Use a large point size for your text, try and keep your text 24 - 36 point at minimum, larger if possible. If you can, look at your visuals on a TV monitor as you are preparing them to determine legibility.
- Use a blue or light gray background for your visuals, white is too bright for television.
- Think visually, use charts, arrows and clip art to add interest to your visuals

The day of the program wear solid colors, not white, and try to stay away from busy patterns. Arrive early enough to familiarize yourself with the classroom set up and preview any audio visual support materials you are utilizing. During your presentation remember a few key points.

- The students at the distance locations will be watching you on a TV monitor so be sure look at the camera in your room when addressing them. By doing so you will make "eye contact" with them. Usually the camera will be placed close to the monitor showing you the distant locations but make sure you know which camera it will be. Make eye contact with that camera as you look about the room just as you make eye contact with your local students.
- Remember you are not trying to emulate broadcast television, if technical problems arise ask the technician to help you correct the problem.
- Don't hesitate to ask the technician to show a particular camera (a graphic for example) to all the locations or to zoom in or out on a graphic or person.
- Try not to move aimlessly. Rocking back and forth and other movements like that are magnified on the TV screen. You can move, just make your movements a bit slower than usual and purposeful.
- And with all this information, try and be as natural and enthusiastic as possible. This is supposed to be an enjoyable experience for all participants, including you!