

Maximize the Use of Your Videoconferencing Facilities

In addition to enabling distance learning classes for students, the videoconference equipped classroom can be used to support a variety of programming. Listed below are a sampling of different types of programs conducted by videoconference at schools and colleges in North Carolina.

Professional Development

Many schools use their videoconferencing facilities for meetings and for professional development sessions for teachers. Scheduled after the school day ends and or on staff workdays, videoconferences make attendance at required sessions convenient for faculty and administrators located across counties and statewide.

Enhancing Classroom Instruction - Virtual Field Trips

Schools take advantage of the **free** programs offered by content experts from the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, the NC Museum of History and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and NCSSM to provide K-12 students with “virtual field trips” to their sites. For these sessions hands-on materials are often shipped to the distant school prior to the session so the students can examine and manipulate real objects during the videoconference presentation. The sessions are typically 45-60 minutes in length and can be scheduled by phone request. There are many content providers situated outside of North Carolina that can be located using the program database at www.cilc.org Be sure to inquire if the content provider charges a fee for the presentation; some are minimal, some aren't.

Students Meet Students

Videoconferencing provides a convenient means to collaborate with students across the state and around the country. A wide variety of collaborative endeavors are posted on at www.cilc.org such as ones where students meet and share classroom projects, participate in a joint competition or practice language skills with another class either in the USA or in a foreign country.

Students Meet Public Officials

The US Senate and the US House of Representatives have videoconferencing facilities. Invite your representative to meet your students. Using a multipoint connection you can gather a large audience and share the presentation via videoconference with other schools.

International Meetings

Wilkes Community College has hosted sessions with England, Mexico, Canada, and Belgium. These sessions, organized by the NC Department of Commerce connected local industry and foreign clients. There are many K-12 and university sites equipped with videoconferencing technology you can invite to meet with your students. Videoconferencing sites around the world are listed at <http://www.global-leap.com/network/index.php> To access the list, you must register your own site.

Statewide State Agency Meetings

The Highway Patrol, The Division of Emergency Management, the Department of Transportation and the Health Department sometimes ask high schools and community college for permission to use their rooms to hold statewide videoconferences. The Department of Public Instruction often links as many as 12 to 14 school sites to share information on topics such as Teacher Licensure and Curriculum Updates.

Community Members

A videoconference site is a terrific resource for building ties with your community and good will for your school. Each year members of the Chamber of Commerce tour A.L. Brown High School and learn about the school's videoconference facility. Community members often initiate requests to use the site. City and county planners have connected with colleagues in the Triangle area to review and prepare for professional certification. Older members of the community have enjoyed videoconferences with the NC Museum of Natural Science to learn about plants.

Videoconferencing can open windows to the world for students and increase communications for administrators by saving travel time and money. By expanding the use of your DL room beyond the traditional school setting, you can promote the distance learning concept in your community and provide an awareness of how your school utilizes cutting-edge technology to provide educational opportunities to your students, staff and your community.