Teaching Through
TELECONFERENCING

TEACHING THROUGH TELECONFERENCING

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Teaching effectiveness using an interactive audio system will depend on four components:

- presentation style,
- interactive participation from locations,
- humanizing the experience,
- feedback.

Presentation style

Organization — Organize the material to make learning easier.
- Provide *advance organizers* through mailings of materials to participants.
- Assign questions and readings (*thought-provokers*) before the session.
- *Color code* materials for easy reference during a session.
- Use *session outlines* to help participants focus on central ideas.
- *Summarize* the important ideas presented.
- *Pace* complex material in a way that aids retention.
- Use *verbal clues* to help listener know which points are most important during a presentation.
- Use *mental imagery* to facilitate learning through descriptive language.

Variety — Use variety in teaching and remember that spontaneity results from using a natural delivery style.
- Vary the *presenter's style* in pitch, volume, pacing and emphasis.
- Vary the *voices* by using different persons to present material.
- Use *short learning segments* and alternate straight lecture with discussion or question and answer periods.
- Use a *variety of teaching methods:*
— lecture,
— question and answer,
— celebrity/guest speaker (can be local or long-distance; live or prerecorded),
— interview,
— reports by participants at various locations,
— small group discussion,
— panels and reactor panels,
— case studies,
— group work sessions,
— brainstorming,
— role playing.

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Table 1. Communication Methods for Effective Teleconferences

Method	When and How to Use	Characteristics
Lecture	• To deliver large amounts of factual information **when audience motivation is no problem.** • Best interspersed at frequent intervals (10 to 15 minutes) with interactive periods. • Enhanced with printed back-up materials, organizers and visuals.	• Efficient method for transferring information in short amount of time. • If uninterrupted, allows no feedback, clarification.
Question and Answer	• Build into any other format to allow audience participation. • **Mention in advance so questions or discussion points are ready.** • Give opportunity for everyone if time runs out (answers by mail, and so forth).	• Good way for instructor to get feedback; participants to get clarification. • Can be informal "network opening" or formal, written questions.
Participant Report	• When content areas deal with material which participants have had specific problems or experience with. • "Preview" those selected by calling ahead to assign reports. • Keep report short (5 minutes is best; 15 minutes is maximum).	• **Generates feeling that participants' experiences are important part of content.** • Kicks off discussions.
Buzz Group at Each Site	• When group is too large at any site for problem-solving or discussion. • Suggest sites having larger groups divide into discussion groups of 5 to 10 — keeping same format each time. • Keep the basic task clear and simple. • Give groups explicit instructions for the task ("develop one question," "agree on one disadvantage").	• **Efficient way to promote discussion in large group.** • Encourages participation of quieter members.
Panel	• Any content area can be presented via informed representatives. • **Select members for their knowledge, enthusiasm.** • Members can be at different locations. • Moderator's summaries bring out central points. • Participants should be prepared for discussion by previous assignments.	• **Brings in wide range of informed opinion.** • Creates an informal atmosphere. • Variety of voices stimulates attention and interest.

Method	When and How to Use	Characteristics
Work Group Sessions	• Allow for individual problem-solving and discussion at local sites.	• Allows adults to help one another learn.
	• Provide practical work sessions in content areas.	• Encourages participation.
	• Plan segments where group activity is central goal.	• *Increases rapport at local sites.*
	• *Instruct group on how to proceed, then go "off the air" for a few minutes while activity continues.*	• Supplements "module" format with local discussion.
	• Have some groups "report."	
	• Let local leaders supervise.	
	• Mail "packages" of lab material ahead of program time.	
Pre and Post Sessions	• Whenever content of program is to be adapted to conditions at sites.	• Gives group a chance to "warm up" before program or to apply information learned to a specific local program.
	• *When application of material is critical.*	
	• *Suggest activities that can be carried out locally before and after program, include in printed material sent to each participant.*	
	• Encourage local group leaders to initiate these activities.	

Repetition — Use repetition to aid in learning and retention of material. This can be done through:

oral repetition,

printed back-up materials, including study questions,

using a variety of teaching formats,

visuals made available to each location,

summarizing letter or materials sent to each participant.

Encouraging Interactive Participation from All Locations

Plan interactive periods so participants know they will have an opportunity to share.

Emphasize group sharing and promote the concept of statewide sharing as a unique opportunity.

Prepare the group for participation through use of printed back-up materials to stimulate discussion.

Structure group participation, if necessary, through:

- "planted questions," participants are instructed in advance to ask them,
- calling on individuals at specific locations.

Humanize the Experience

Teleconferencing is not the same as face-to-face teaching, so it is important to "humanize" the experience.

- Provide biographical sketches and pictures of instructors and guest speakers so participants will know who will be directing the sessions.
- Let your personality come through by speaking in a conventional style that is natural and spontaneous.
- Use an informal roll call of participants at a few locations across the state to establish a relaxed, informal atmosphere.
- Share the roster of participant names with all locations.
- Use names, and ask speakers to identify themselves and their location when speaking over the system.

Feedback

Feedback helps those teaching as well as those who are learning.

- Use a variety of techniques to *evaluate learning:*
— written examinations or self-checks,
— oral evaluation,
— written assignments such as logs, special focus papers, responses to study questions and reports.
- Use a variety of techniques to evaluate teaching *effectiveness:*
— listing main strengths and suggested improvements,
— written questionnaire at close of session(s),
— group discussion of what worked, what did not work and why.

Table 2. Support Materials

— Provided in advance to participants or to sites for distribution.
— Coordinated by instructor or director.
— Handled at sites by program aide.

Method	When and How to Use	Characteristics
Printed Materials	• Illustrate almost any material. • Easy and inexpensive to prepare and distribute. • Provide participants with a permanent record of charts, graphs. • Aid learning for "print-oriented" participants. • Usually black and white, unless produced commercially.	• Can tie in verbal messages using outline format. • Can be "learning packages" including journal articles, pamphlets. • Typographical "cueing" can highlight important ideas — underline, capitalize, indent. • Agenda listing session objectives aids participant learning. • Photos of instructors printed on agenda increases visual contact.
Overhead Transparencies	• Illustrate simple concepts, processes, facts, outlines, summaries. • Fairly simple to duplicate and send to locations. • Possible to add some color details for emphasis. • Useful as "blackboard" for conveners at sites.	• Generally use horizontal format. • Limit content of one transparency to one concept. • Simplify content converted from books/magazines, or put into several transparencies.

Method	When to Use	How to Use
35mm Slides	• Useful when concepts need color for full comprehension. • More expensive, time-consuming to duplicate and distribute.	• Generally use horizontal format. • Letters should be at least ¼ inch tall on original to retain legibility in final slides. • To determine if material will make good slide, "preview" original from 5 feet away. Judge for simplicity, effectiveness in telling the message, design, detail, visual contrast.