Tour, Think, and Tell: A Video Conference Virtual Field Trip

Lois Christensen, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US
Diane Tindol, Avondale Elementary School, US
Jiang Lan, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US
Betty Nelson, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US
Jeff Anderson, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US
Carla Kelly, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US
Tim Clemons, Birmingham City Schools, US
Lisa Chambers, University Of Alabama At Birmingham, US

Objectives:
Conferences attending this session about a video conference will discover how:
1. Urban schools with limited funding and resources can present otherwise unattainable learning experiences for underprivileged students.
2. To maximize school/university and PT3 partnering and learning through video conferencing.
3. To involve elementary students, preservice and inservice teachers, PT3 teacher educators, and technical assistants to collaboratively provide authentic, virtual classroom learning.
4. To collaboratively work together across educative roles to technologically prepare and implement meaningful learning opportunities for learners at multiple levels.

Presentation Outline and Format:
Beginning this presentation, the technology coordinator and a PT3 inservice participant at the urban elementary school will detail how a video conferencing project moved from idea to actuality. Each representative involved in the grant activity, the technology support director, and the school/university partnership liaison, will describe their role in making the video conference a reality for the third grade students and preservice teachers on site at the urban school and at the secondary university site. Digital photos and video clips inserted into the PowerPoint presentation highlight aspects of the descriptive portion of the project and image the realms involved in this collaborative technological effort. The project offered urban students an opportunity that most have not had, that is to virtually travel to the Tennessee Aquarium as a culminating activity to classroom study. Additionally, it provided elementary preservice teachers with a first hand, technological experience that made virtual resources available to field settings with limited resources. Educators at varied levels collaborated in partnership and modeled effective education. The third grade students accomplished literacy standards outlined by the ISTE, especially standards 6 & 7 for grades 3 –5. The performance indicators for teachers were met in this project. The ISTE professional performance profile was met by preservice teacher involvement. The format for this presentation is a panel, with interactive discussion. Questions and answers will be encouraged.

Research Implications:
Because the teaching force will change dramatically over the next decade, and the fact that the nation’s schools will need to hire 2.5 million teachers over the next 10 years (Hussar, 1999), provides an unequalled opportunity to transform the quality of teachers serving our nation’s schools. Researchers’ work led to clear conclusions. Teachers exert a powerful influence on the academic performance of students, and some teachers are consistently more effective than others. The success of teacher education programs ultimately will be judged by how well the K-12 students of our graduates perform. Furthermore, we recognize that to prepare students for success in careers and life within a technologically advanced society, teachers and higher education faculty must be able to model and reinforce effective use of available technology through teacher preparation: disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical practice, and clinical experience.

Technology implementation during teacher preparation is a predictor of whether preservice teachers use technology as inservice teachers. Unfortunately, most do not use it during field experiences, nor do they apprentice with teachers who do (ISTE, 1999). It is our commitment to establish sound pedagogical practice in effective learning environments to better educate youth, while providing model technological conditions for involved educators at every level (Wiseman, Cooner, & Knight, 1999). Tracing Virtual Travel: Touring, Thinking, and Telling about Video Conferencing, our presentation, is a component of a PT3 grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. By this activity, we prepare teacher/leaders through infusing technology into curriculum with the collaborative mentorship of inservice and teacher education faculty in clinical and university settings. This presentation features quality, educative, technology methods from a PT3 mentorship initiative. Conferences will see, hear, and discuss a project in which third grade students in an urban school/university partnership learn about animals/insects at the aquarium through a video conference session which was also viewed on the university campus by preservice teachers not yet placed in field settings.

The presenters’ qualifications range from technology coordinator/teacher in the elementary school, associate and assistant professors in teacher education, and a technical support director within the school of education.