

Collaborative Video Projects K-12 Types, Tips, Does, and Don'ts

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At Region 14 Education Service Center we have been 'dabbling' in Collaborative Video Projects for several years. While we certainly do not claim to be experts, from our experience we hope through this document to share with you what we have learned through trial and error.

Collaborative Video Projects

A collaborative video project (CVP) can be defined as when two or more schools agree to develop and share projects through interactive video.

I. Types: Collaborative Video Projects can be divided into two main categories: 'Coordinated' and 'Open Request'.

- A. Coordinated: This is a CVP where someone is coordinating or serving as a director of the project. Characteristics include:
 - 1. Someone serves as the coordinator or contact point for the event.
 - 2. The coordinator also develops the parameters for the project, seeks and secures players, provides participating teachers with information, develops the schedule, and maintains a website to centrally post information.
 - 3. Coordinated events usually involve 3 or more schools.
 - 4. Large events may involve several different coordinators with different program responsibilities.
 - 5. The coordinated CVP will have a person that serves as the moderator during the event.
 - 6. All participating endpoints develop a program revolving around a central theme.
 - 7. Coordinated projects are usually a 'one time' event.

- B. Open Request: This is a CVP where someone post or otherwise distributes information where they are seeking a partner school for project. Characteristics of an open request CVP include:
 - 1. A teacher usually posts their project on a web site seeking a partner teacher.
 - 2. They are usually point to point.
 - 3. Depending on the nature of the project it can be ongoing where the classes meet multiple times or that can be one time connection.

II. Advantages and Disadvantages

A. Advantages

1. They are “FREE” to the participating schools.
2. Students become teachers and take an active role in their education.
3. Student’s research, plan, develop, produce, and deliver the program.
4. Students get ‘hands-on’ use of the technology.
5. CVP can fit any grade level and any curriculum area.
6. Creates interest in video conferencing opportunities.
7. With a ‘Multiple Control Unit’ often referred to as a bridge, it can be distributed to view only sites so more students receive the educational benefits of the project.

B. Disadvantages

1. You never really know the quality of the content you will receive.
2. Network issues effecting connectivity, especially when making connections outside your LAN.
3. Accents and local terminology sometimes effect understanding of the content being delivered.
4. For coordinated events, the complexity of the conference compounds with the number of participating sites.

III. Tips

A. Pre-conference

1. Participating teachers need to correspond with each other or with the event coordinator. While email is an effective way to communicate setting up a CVP, meeting each other face to face during a test connection is also very beneficial.
 - a. Determine the order of the student presentations.
 - b. Establish the time for the conference (watch differences in time zones).
 - c. Share general information about your student’s respective topics.
2. Exchange contact information for technical consultants including cell numbers or telephone numbers where the techie can be reached on the day of the conference.

B. Presentation Tips

1. Divide your class into groups and assign each group a responsibility. With some guidance, allow each group the flexibility of presenting their information in the manner they select.
3. Suggested Groups:
 - a. Welcome Group – This group opens the conference with some background information about their school and location. It is very common to show pictures or graphics of the school, Principal,

Teacher(s) and class. Other pictures could include your town or city, local landmarks, historical sites, etc. Younger students may also want to show pictures of their playground. Remember, to highlight local features that may not be common with your participating school. What is everyday and common to you will be new and fascinating to sites that are not in your general vicinity. Examples could be the ocean, major rivers, ships, mass transportation, snow, rural life, small towns, agriculture, etc.

- b. Map Group – This group uses maps to show your location. Sometimes map groups also use maps or graphics to show the distance between the connecting sites.
 - c. Topic Group – This group introduces your presentation
 - d. Presentation Group(s) – This group, usually involving more than one group of students, does the presentation
 - e. Close Group – This group closes the presentation and opens up the dialogue for questions from the receiving site
 - f. Question Group – this groups is assigned is to watch the other sites presentation and ask questions.
 - g. Technology Group – this group works the DL system
4. ALWAYS start a student presentation with a map of you location.
- a. If the sites are in the same state, show a map of your state pen pointing your location. If you are a rural school, include larger cities on your state map as reference points.
 - b. If the sites are in different states, show a map of your state in reference to the other site, such as a US map.
 - c. If the sites are international, so a world map with reference from your state to the foreign country.
 - d. For CVP referenced in b and c above, after a reference map showing the distance between your sites, and then show a map of your state pen pointing your location.
 - e. Google Earth is also an excellent way to show your location in reference to nationally recognized landmarks.
5. Practice your presentation to make sure you do not go over your allotted time.
6. If possible, practice the presentation through video technology so your students can get a feel for the technology. (If you have another video system at your campus or within your school district, just make the practice connection locally.
7. If possible record your practice presentations and show the recording to your students. Watching a recording will help them to understand how they will be viewed and heard.

8. Designate some time after each sites presentation for Q & A between the students.
9. As you students watch the other sites presentation, have them jot down questions they would like to ask and submit their questions to you. This allows you time to pre-screen questions your students will ask.
10. Try to keep point to point CVP's to about 30 or 40 minutes total depending on the topic and age group of the students.
 - a. For lower elementary grades, each site's presentations should be 5 to 7 minutes.
 - b. For upper elementary grades, each site's presentation should be 10 to 12 minutes.
 - c. For middle school and high school, each sites presentation should be 10 to 15 minutes.
11. For multi site CVP's, try to keep the entire program less than 60 minutes.
12. Stay on time to make sure all sites have the opportunity to do their presentation.
13. Always allow time for student interaction. Teachers or the moderator may need to facilitate Q & A to get it started.
 - a. Assigning a 'Question Group' as referenced above is the best way to insure student interaction.
 - b. It is impolite 'not' to ask the presenting site at least a few questions about their presentation.
14. For multi-site CVP's, interaction seems to work best after the last presentation. The moderator should rotate between sites for questions. When a site asks a question, they should identify who the question is for.

C. Effective Presentation Techniques

1. Move the students to the camera, not the camera to the students. Have several presets established and do the different parts of your presentation from these camera presets. If several students are doing one segment of the presentation, line them up in order and have them move into the camera shot for their part.
2. Do NOT move the camera from student to student as they are seated or from student to student as they ask question. You will waste too much time and make the receiving site dizzy.
3. After establishing camera presets, put an 'X' on the floor at each preset using tape. This helps the students to find where to stand for their part of the presentation.
4. Presentations should be live. While video clips may be played as part of a presentation, the entire presentation should not be prerecorded.
5. If you use a corded mic, put it in a central location up off the floor. Do not touch or move the mic by hand without muting. If you are in a large room, you may need to move the mic from position to position. That is OK; just remember to mute the mic before you handle it.

6. Avoid background noise. Do not have other classes or non participating students in the room during your student's presentation unless they are ABSOLUTELY quite.
7. Mute your mic if the bell rings or you have an announcement.
8. Presenting students should be located close to the mic and should speak in a normal tone of voice. If your students cannot be heard, their part of the presentation will be worthless.
9. Mute your mic during the other sites presentation.
10. Have a mic position and a camera preset for the Q & A segment when your students are asking questions. Just have each student that is going to ask a question to line up and then step up to the mic when it is their turn to ask a question.
11. DO NOT have a student read a long dialogue without inter dispersing visual graphics of what they are discussing.
12. Examples of visual graphics include:
 - a. Pictures
 - b. Objects
 - c. Maps
 - d. Captured video
 - e. Power point presentations
13. At least 80% of a student presentation should be visual graphics. Don't keep the video selection on one source too long. If showing a computer presentation and/or using a document camera, be sure to come back to the presenting student periodically.
14. Presenting students should be shown at the beginning of their segment. They should identify themselves by first name ONLY.
15. A document camera or a power point presentation is an excellent way to show graphics.
16. For power point presentations:
 - a. Use a minimum of 24, preferably 36 font with dark letters on a white background.
 - b. Avoid weird font and the color red.
 - c. Don't have more than 6 lines per slide and remember that you don't want to type out every single word someone is going to say.
 - d. The slide should contain 'points' of information with related graphics rather than being a script for reading.
17. Document camera tips:
 - a. If you do not have a document camera – REQUEST ONE!
 - b. An expensive document camera is not necessary but one with a base and easy access to the controls would be preferred.
 - c. After placing a graphic, document, or object on the document camera, get it centered, keep it still, zoom in, and use a pointer.
 - d. For documents, use a minimum 24, preferred 36 font printed in landscape.
18. Do not take for granted that the receiving site will understand local terminology. For example if presentation is on a "Where Your Milk

Comes From” don’t just talk about a milking machine, show picture of one or a video clip of one in operation. What is the most simple and obvious to you could be new and foreign to the receiving site.

IV. Remember

- ✓ Have fun, it is OK to use some humor.
- ✓ Let your students be creative with their presentations.
- ✓ As you develop your topic, keep in mind that your topic will determine your audience.
- ✓ Look at audiences as regional, state, national, or international.
- ✓ A topic designed for a regional or state audience may not attract a national or international audience. An example would be a ‘geography quiz bowl’ of your state. While this topic would be appropriate for a regional or state audience, it would probably not be a topic of interest for a national or international audience.
- ✓ Conversely, some topics can attract all audiences.
- ✓ If you are concerned about a CVP taking instructional time away from curriculum objectives that will be evaluated on with a state exam, have your students develop a CVP on a measured objective. Better yet, research your student’s performance on your state mandated test for the past several years. Select the performance objective where your students have historically scored the lowest. Have your students develop a CVP on that objective and share that project with other students from your state.