



Lower Yukon School District

Videoconferencing: A Solution for Multiple Challenges

The Client

With 2000 students and 175 certified teachers, The Lower Yukon School District, located about 500 miles west of Anchorage, Alaska, is about the size of Oregon and consists of 11 school sites, none of which are connected by roads. Each site is overseen by an Instructional Leader whose responsibilities include the role of principal, transportation director, and the provider of lodging for non-native teachers. Ninety percent of the jobs in the region come from the School District and Health Corporation.

The Challenge

Due to the geography and the climate, travel is a very difficult and expensive proposition. Air is the only viable mode of transportation and even that depends on the weather. Since students are disconnected from the outside world, they have a very limited or non-existent view of other cultures and values. Travel time and costs also limit the frequency of school board meetings. Parent and teachers face difficulties getting to student events and professional development is very costly.

In addition to affecting travel, the cold, dark days affect everyone, even the teachers.

Tangible Results

For Students: Virtual fieldtrips via videoconferencing provided a link to the outside world. Since all programs posted on www.cilc.org must be linked to educational standards, they offered an outside, expert view which deepened their understanding of vital concepts. Evaluations revealed that students, teachers and content providers alike learned new information, vocabulary and skills! In addition, connecting to other classrooms enabled them to learn more about others and their values, making students feel less isolated.

For School Board Members: Videoconferencing from their local schools enabled members to meet, discuss, and resolve issues more frequently and provided them more opportunity to engage with their village students and teachers.

For Teachers and Parents: Student activities were captured by videoconferencing equipment and streamed to their home villages enabling students to be supported from home.

For Teachers: Videoconferencing with content providers and other classrooms offered an extra spark during the long, dark days. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on the teaching and learning strategies of others—both positive and negative! Their special Saturday sessions, providing professional development via videoconferencing for 15 teachers simultaneously at various locations, were effective, efficient, and engaging to all involved.

Future Plans

- The School Board plans to increase their use of videoconferencing technology.
- More student activities will be captured and broadcast.
- Virtual fieldtrips will continue to engage more teachers and students.
- Departmental meetings and trainings at all levels will begin to utilize videoconferencing.
- The curriculum department will explore sharing higher level math and science classes among schools.

GCI School Access

As an education partner, School Access staff work with district administrators, teachers, support staff and board members to provide quality experiences for students and staff when using videoconferencing.

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THE TEAM

Lower Yukon Valley School District

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Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC)

CILC District Package included dollars for student content as well as trainings to build excitement, generate curricular design ideas and explore videoconferencing possibilities.

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