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Preparing Questions for Your Videoconference

Some videoconferences are student question directed, such as the **ASK** programs, **COSI Columbus' Expert Interviews**, interviewing your senator or representative, and other similar activities. Other content providers offer programming that includes a 5-10 minute question and answer period. The type of program may determine the number of questions your students generate. But either way, preparing questions in advance will make your videoconference more educationally meaningful.

Content Lessons

Students should learn about the concepts to be presented in the videoconference. This may include pre-activities provided by the content provider or project organizer, or reading a book and completing the **ASK process** in preparation.

Writing Questions

Notes for Writing Questions:

(Thanks to the ASK program for the details here.)

The answer to your question cannot be "yes" or "no."

The answer cannot be found in the book, textbook, or other print materials. It should be something you can't find out on your own.

Set your question up:

- In the book.....
- In chapter.....
- On page
- In class we studied.....
- In lab we did this experiment....

Question starters that don't work:

- Did you ever.....
- Do you know why.....
- Have you ever.....
- Do you think.....
- Will you.....
- Would you ever.....
- Do you.....
- Can you.....

Question starters that work:

- Why do you think.....
- Describe.....

- Would you explain.....
- Where did you.....
- Where do you.....
- How many.....
- What are.....
- How do you feel.....
- What was your reaction.....
- How would you.....
- How come.....

Questions for Partner Schools

Sometimes also you may be participating in a videoconference with a partner class for a specific project. Often there is time for students to ask each other questions. While questions like, "What time is your recess? What is your favorite subject?" are interesting questions, you may want to delve deeper to take advantage of learning how people live in a different area. Talk with your students about what you might want to learn from the partner class. Consider where they live, how it might be different, and what questions could help you learn more about them. Encourage students to think of questions related to the other class' presentation as well.

Question Resources

- [The Question Mark](#)
- [A Questioning Toolkit](#)
- [Interview with an Elder](#)

Procedures

Show examples. As the teacher, you should also write some questions and show them to the students so that they can see how it should be done.

Place the students in pairs and encourage them to select their best four questions. Each pair should select only four questions that will be presented to the class.

Conduct a round robin elimination process. When your students have selected their best four questions, ask each group to read their questions to the class. Eliminate duplicate questions among the groups.

Revise the questions. When the elimination process is completed, each student should have at least one unique question to ask in the interview. It is okay if the question has been rewritten to include aspects of duplicates that were eliminated.

Preparing for the Videoconference

Conduct a practice session. Have each student stand and read his or her question in a confident manner. This is very important. This practice session will prepare the students to interview the author or expert.

It's a good idea to have students should ask their questions in pairs or threes. This allows more students to be on camera and reduces stage fright.

Question Asking Etiquette

Group students to ask the questions. Each group should have 3-10 questions (in case another school asks their question). It will work best if during the conference the groups come up to the mic together. They should say something like this:

Student 1: "Hello my name is Janine."

Student 2: "My name is Sue."

Student 1: "And our question is"

Students should stay at the mic until the presenter finishes answering their question. Then they should say "Thank you."

This procedure will allow all students "on camera" time, even if they don't get to ask their question. In addition, it gets all students involved, and takes away some of the pressure students feel standing at the mic alone.

While other schools are asking their questions, the teacher should get the next students ready. Students should be ready & standing at the mic when your turn comes. We don't want to waste precious time with the guest waiting for students to move. So have them ready at the mic or lined up at the mic. You don't have to move fast, but be organized.

In addition, everyone should listen carefully to make sure their question (or some variation of it) isn't asked by another school. Don't ask questions twice!

Organization

1. Have all the questions written on 3x5 cards. You may think students will remember their question, but there's nothing like stage fright to clear the mind! In addition, 3x5 cards are harder to rattle. The microphone will pick up rustling paper. Have students bring the card up, put it down in front of them, and ask the question. You may want to have them practice.

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