

# ASTRONOMY DAY AT McDONALD OBSERVATORY

## VIDEOCONFERENCE GUIDELINES

### **Welcome to the McDonald Observatory**

We hope that our Astronomy Day videoconference will excite your students about science and technology. Marc Wetzel will lead an interactive tour of McDonald Observatory during the Region 11 Connect2Texas Astronomy Day program on May 4, 2006.

### **CHECKLIST FOR THE VIDEO CONFERENCE**

#### ***When you receive this package***

- Carefully review the materials for you and your students.

#### ***One week prior to Astronomy Day***

- Finish pre-visit classroom activities.

#### ***24 hours to go!***

- Discuss appropriate behavior during the videoconference with your students. See the appendix for videoconference behavior details.
- Copy student handout sheets for student use during videoconference.

#### ***On Astronomy Day***

- Connect 10 minutes before the program start time to establish the connection and troubleshoot any problems that may occur.
- Introduce the students to Marc Wetzel at the beginning of the McDonald Observatory Astronomy Day videoconference.

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT CONNECT2TEXAS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

ESC Region 11 Connect2Texas: <http://www.connect2texas.net/>

<b>About Connect2Texas and Providers</b>	<b>Technical Assistance</b>
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## **INTRODUCTION**

We appreciate the time and effort that it takes to prepare your students for their program, and we will do everything we can to make the experience as rewarding as possible.

## **VIDEOCONFERENCE TEST**

It is important to test your videoconference connection at least one week (Thursday, April 27) before Astronomy Day. Please ask your school or district information technology administrator to test your videoconference connection. Contact your local Education Service Center for specific testing procedures. Ask for specific steps to follow if your connection fails during the Astronomy Day videoconference event.

## **STUDENT PREPARATION**

To keep students engaged, we have developed student program sheets. Please have copies for the students to use during the videoconference.

## **STARTING THE VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Please connect at least 10 minutes before the program start time. If you have trouble connecting, please contact your local Education Service Center.

## **STUDENT BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

Students should be familiar with the concept of a two-way connection and understand that each side can see, hear, and interact with the other. Please work cooperatively with the McDonald Observatory facilitator to manage the students in the classroom and to call on students who have questions or answers. If possible, direct the camera as much as possible toward the student who is speaking. Remind the students that when they are speaking, they need to speak slowly and loudly so that the facilitator can hear.

## APPENDIX

During Astronomy Day, several classrooms will be connected during any one session. Common classroom courtesy will ensure a fun and engaging dialog between students and the providers, like McDonald Observatory.

### VIDEOCONFERENCING ETIQUETTE

These common-sense behavior guidelines will help students comfortably share and contribute to the videoconference sessions.

- **Speak clearly:** Be sure that your speech is clear, loud enough to be heard in a regular situation (adjust volume if need be), and slow enough to be easily understood. Take a moment to test this out at the beginning and make adjustments. Be aware of possible voice delays across the system and accommodate for the delays. Look at the camera and your present audience when talking to ensure that you are interacting with your far-end audience as well as the participants in the same room. If you are wearing a microphone, be sure the volume is properly adjusted. If you are using a fixed microphone, be sure that you are in range to pick up your voice.
- **Minimize background noise:** Regular classroom noise easily disrupts a videoconference dialog. If there is a noisy activity planned during the videoconference, plan to mute your microphone.
- **Interruptions:** Unintended interruptions happen, but can be managed. Give students a chance to take care of personal needs before and after the videoconference. Work with your principal to decide what to do in case of a fire drill, and to minimize or defer school announcements during the videoconference..
- **Student Call-outs:** Instead of calling out answers or questions, develop a simple non-verbal way for students to signal that they would like to answer or ask a question.
- **Look your best:** Just like you check how you look in a mirror, check your class's self-view through the videoconferencing hardware to see how you all appear to everyone else in the session. You may discover several changes to make about how students are sitting, standing, or how to better arrange props and furniture. If several different students are presenting, mark spots on the floor to stand; or outline the camera's field of view so students know if they are on or off camera.
- **Presentation styles:** Adapt your presentation style to fit the videoconferencing logistics. If you are a "walker" during your presentations in a regular classroom, you will have to adapt the classroom camera set-up (or your style) so that you do not disappear from the screen. If you like to engage your students in discussion, be sure that you are including students at your site as well as the far end site and that the camera focuses on them when they are speaking.
- **Dress:** You and your students will look best in professional and simple clothing with soft colors.
- **Lighting:** Pretend your students are on stage. Avoid harsh shadows. Keep bright lights and sunlight behind the camera to softly illuminate students and props.

Practice in front of the camera: to ease "stage fright," let students practice presentations in front of the videoconference camera, and see themselves in self-view mode. They will be far more confident, relaxed, and engaged during the real videoconference.

Helpful hints:

- Do introductions at the beginning of the session.
- Schedule time for questions and answers.
- Select a small group of students, or a single student, to ask questions on behalf of the whole class.
- Record events of student interaction using a checklist to make sure all are participating in free-flowing events.
- Follow-up with individual students to comment on interactions.

*Appendix adapted from <<http://www.d261.k12.id.us/VCing/classroom/behavior.htm>>*

## DO AND DON'T LIST FOR VIDEOCONFERENCING SESSIONS:

<b>Please Do...</b>	<b>Please Do Not...</b>
Be courteous to other participants	Make distracting sounds
Speak clearly	Make distracting movements
Keep body movements minimal	Cover the microphone
Move and gesture slowly and naturally	Interrupt other speakers
Maintain eye contact by looking into the camera	Carry on side conversations
Dress appropriately	Wear noisy jewelry
Make the session animated	Shout
<b>Do be yourself!</b>	

*Table from <<http://www.d261.k12.id.us/Vcing/classroom/behavior.htm>>*