

Live From McDonald Observatory! Important Videoconference Information and Guidelines

Welcome to the McDonald Observatory Videoconference Program

We hope that the McDonald Observatory's innovative videoconferences will excite your students about both science and technology. The program is built around a series of observation sequences that are designed to make the experience as interactive as possible. 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.

A. MCDONALD OBSERVATORY CONTACT INFORMATION

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B. ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKLIST FOR THE VIDEOCONFERENCE

Immediately upon receiving confirmed date(s) and time(s) for your videoconference...

Download materials

- Carefully review the materials for you and your students.
- Download all instructional materials including pre and post conference assessments, student sheets to be completed during the videoconference, teacher guides, required activity materials, related TEKS, and a program evaluation.

<http://mcdonaldobservatory.org/teachers/live-from-mcdonald>

One week prior to videoconference

- Finish pre-conference assessment. After the videoconference, give students the post-conference assessment, which is identical to the pre-conference for comparison.
- Begin 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, and prepare any activity materials as necessary.

On videoconference day

- To establish the connection and troubleshoot any problems that may occur, the RETN Connect2Texas technicians will connect McDonald Observatory to your classroom about 10 minutes before your program. Please have your videoconferencing equipment turned on and ready, **your microphone muted**, and video camera pointed appropriately.

C. TEACHER PREPARATION

Before and after the videoconference, have your students complete the pre and post assessments. During the videoconference, please have copies of the Student Activity Sheet for each student to complete during the videoconference. All instructional materials designed for your

videoconference, such as the Student Activity Sheet, are available for download at the following URL:

<http://mcdonaldobservatory.org/teachers/live-from-mcdonald>

D. DURING THE VIDEOCONFERENCE

The Live From McDonald Observatory videoconference is not television show. Instead, it is an extension of your classroom instruction, led by McDonald Observatory astronomy facilitators trained in 5E science pedagogy. All videoconferences feature small group or individual student activities, telescope observations, science drawings, and the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the videoconference facilitator. Please have all materials prepared for the student(s) to use during the videoconference by carefully selecting from the list of videoconferences at the URL listed above.

E. 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 see the appendix below for further guidelines on videoconferencing etiquette.

APPENDIX

VIDEOCONFERENCING ETIQUETTE

These common-sense behavior guidelines will help students comfortably share and contribute to the videoconference session if they are asking questions to the facilitators during the videoconference.

- **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.

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

Do and Don't List for Videoconferencing sessions:

Please Do...	Please Do Not...
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
Do be yourself!	

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

QUESTIONS ABOUT CONNECT2TEXAS AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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

About Connect2Texas and Providers	Technical Assistance Lori Hamm ESC Region 11 Telecommunications and Distance Learning (817) 740-7516 lhamm@esc11.net
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