




Best Practices in Distance Education for American Indians

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New Mexico State University
Office of Distant Learning
and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
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Getting Started; Community Infrastructure Requirements, Funding Issues, Programming for Local Needs, and Student Orientation and Support

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Cultural Diversity and Distant Learning

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Vision Statement

Each individual will become self-sufficient
in the world economy.

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Today's Situation

- Lack of technology understanding within the home
- Lack home economic base
- Lack of self-discipline to use technology for learning
- Lack of tribal technology understanding
- Lack of technological infrastructure on the reservation

Does the scenario sound too familiar?

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Profile of the Distant Student

- Primary role of the student is to learn.
- Distant learning is more complex.
- The learner is usually isolated and needs to be a self-motivator.
- Distant students and their teachers have little in common.

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Distant Student's Development as Learners

- Surface Approach: Students who are not confident tend to concentrate on memorizing facts.
- Deep Approach: Students who are more selective and focus in their learning.

Morgan (1991)

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Improving Distant Learning

- "Becoming and staying responsible for themselves".
- "Owning one's strengths, desires, skills, needs".
- "Maintaining and increasing self-esteem".
- "Relating to others".
- "Clarifying what is learned".
- "Redefining what legitimate knowledge is".
- "Dealing with content".

Brundage, Keane, and Mackneson (1993)

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Distant Education In Your Community

- Collaborate:
 - Local schools and school boards
 - Branch colleges
 - Tribal programs
 - Tribal Leadership

"History does not suggest that equitable access to and use of the newest technologies will happen automatically or even easily." Delia Neuman, 1990

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Recommendations – Tribal Level

- Plan for equity
- Establish tribal internet capabilities within the TED and in the field.
- Establish regional technical centers

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