

Distance Education: A Student's Point of View On Getting Started

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Background

- ❖ San Felipe Pueblo Elementary School, B.I.A.
 - ❖ First grade teacher for 7 years
 - ❖ Currently the school's technology coordinator
 - ❖ One technology goal: begin a distance education at San Felipe Pueblo
- ❖ Introduced to the concept of Distance Education as a Master's Student in Organizational Learning & Instructional Technologies Program at UNM
- ❖ Introduced to CENTRA program as a RETA instructor
- ❖ Began the Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Program in 2003 as a DE student



Why I Chose Distance Education


- ❖ Maintain professional life
 - ❖ I can continue my job as a teacher while taking classes.
- ❖ Choice
 - ❖ I can choose what program I want to participate in, even though the university is miles away.
 - ❖ I would not be in the NMSU Curriculum & Instruction Program or a doctoral student without the Distance Education component.
- ❖ Convenient for my life style.
 - ❖ I do not have to travel to campus and attend a class from 7:00PM – 9:45PM.



What I Discovered About Being a Distance Education Student


Although there are many benefits, there are also potential issues that need to be addressed.

- ❖ A distance education student needs to be:
 - ❖ Self-disciplined
 - ❖ You do not meet face-to-face often, therefore you must rely on yourself more than a traditional program. You must keep yourself **motivated**.
 - ❖ Self-monitoring
 - ❖ You do not have the weekly face-to-face reminders from your instructor about assignments that are due or other important information. A DE student must be **organized**, aware of deadlines, and be able to pace oneself.




What I Learned as a DE Student

Prior to Beginning a Distance Education Program a Student Needs




Good, Fast, Reliable Internet Access



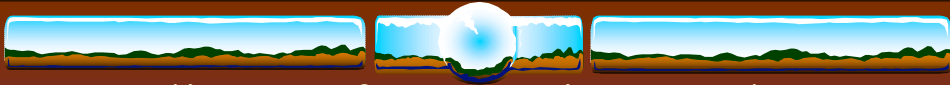
Easing the Transition From Traditional Student to DE Student

- ❖ Face-to-face time prior to beginning on-line coursework.
 - ❖ Discuss syllabus, expectations, required reading assignments, etc.
 - ❖ Establish a human connection; get to know one another
- ❖ Formation of Teams
 - ❖ Support system
 - ❖ Lessen isolation
 - ❖ Foster cohesiveness among students




Transitioning continued...

- ❖ Continue periodic face-to-face meetings
 - ❖ if Distance Education program lasts over a semester
 - ❖ great way to end a semester; bring closure
 - ❖ showcase student's work



Delivery of Instruction: WebCT

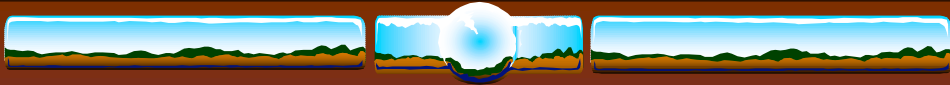
- ❖ Basic Course Information
 - ❖ Information that remains constant e.g., syllabus, grading policy, instructor contact information, assignments, etc.
- ❖ Communication
 - ❖ E-Mail: Student/Teacher or Student/Student communication; one way to submit assignments; get feedback from instructor or peers; ask questions
 - ❖ Chat Rooms: Synchronous communication; a method of having a real-time discussion between multiple students; team chats focusing on reading assignments



Communication Continued...

-Discussion Board; Asynchronous communication

- ❖ Students post answers to questions, viewpoints, opinions, regarding weekly reading assignments or related issues



Learning Experiences as a DE Student

- ❖ Method is different but I'm learning!
 - ❖ Think time: Ability to reflect, formulate and revise thoughts and answers prior to posting to discussion board. Works for various learners, especially bilingual and diverse populations
 - ❖ Teamwork: I feel connected to my cohort more than I did with peers in my traditional Master's program.
 - ❖ Student Lead Learning: I am responsible for facilitating chats, posting questions for the entire group to address, helping my team; I know my team is cheering me on!