



NEWS RELEASE

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Webconferencing Technology Project to Expand Course Selection and Flexibility

Students at Whistler Secondary and Pemberton Secondary will soon be taking the same course from the same teacher at the same time without having to leave their own schools. How is this possible?

The Howe Sound School District has received a \$28,900 grant from the Ministry of Education to acquire the technology to make it possible for a teacher to deliver a lesson by live streaming video from a central site to students throughout the district. The classes will also use other tools such as two-way audio and instant messaging on Smart Boards.

"Our School District has had great difficulty offering a comprehensive array of courses to students at Whistler and Pemberton secondary schools because they only have about 300 students each," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Rick Erickson said. "Generally, the two schools have four to eight courses that do not run each year due to insufficient enrollment. By using webconferencing technology to deliver real-time interactive courses, it will soon be much easier to provide students with the courses they need and want for graduation. Our goals are to improve student achievement, and parent and student satisfaction by offering improved course selection and flexibility."

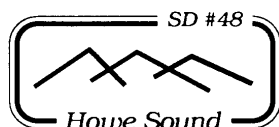
Whistler and Pemberton students are not the only ones who will benefit from these on-line courses. The courses will be archived so that any secondary student in the district will be able to access the courses using a web browser. "Video archiving provides an opportunity to reuse and share important instructional moments among students, staff and other districts as well as an opportunity for absent students to catch up on missed learning," said Pemberton Principal Lawrence Tarasoff, who is the administrator in charge of the project.

The project will begin with one linked class between Whistler Secondary and Pemberton Secondary from February to June 2006. In the 2006-2007 school year, four linked classes will run between the schools, two each semester. The actual classes to be offered will be determined on the basis of student course selections.

District computer resource teacher Scott McLagan will be responsible for building and testing the webcasting service, collaborating with teachers to construct an effective instructional plan and helping teachers and students to become comfortable with the service.

The Ministry of Education has also funded similar pilot projects in eight other school districts to improve access and opportunities for rural students

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