



Western Teacher Network: A Research Project



An Internet bridge

I'm interested in researching the potential of sharing live classroom time between teachers that have interactive whiteboards, teachers that might be found locally, regionally and internation-



ally. The bridge that connects these classrooms is Internet conferencing software that enables screen sharing. I've been working with the software from Centra and Elluminate so far. Participants have the option to share with each other whatever is on the projection screen whether interactive whiteboard or interactive wireless tablet. Through this conferencing software, students and teachers can not only see, but write on and interact in other ways with each other's screen displays in each other's rooms. With microphones and speakers we can hear each other. Though with camcorders added we can also see the larger room scene, there are advantages to sharing only the computer screen activity, not the room view.

In the past 4 semesters, my own students have participated live and online from many off-campus locations. My students have also shared interactive whiteboard time over the Internet between my university classroom and teachers' classrooms at Swain West Elementary. This morning I was talking over the Internet to an educator in Hong Kong, 12 hours ahead of us. This evening we'll meet again online. A new world has opened for teacher collaboration and teacher education, what we can call the Western Teacher Network or **WTN**. Recent and future developments are rapidly advancing our options and opportunities.

What is the promise of such activity? We research because the answers are not known. That said, I do know how challenging it is to find even the physical classroom arrangements that enable team teaching. Networked arrangements give teachers significant control over when and how often such collaboration occurs. I can say from the work so far that networked whiteboards have interesting potential for ending the professional isolation of teaching time. This can have an impact on teacher retention and support. There are also opportunities to extend work being done on teacher coaching. Further, teacher education methods classes can visit and observe without disrupting. I'm confident that further interesting questions and results will emerge.

I'll provide the connecting Internet software. As the pool of interested teachers grows, I will be looking for matches between those teaching the same grade level or the same subject. If you already have someone in mind as a teaching partner, contact them, and let me know.

I'm looking for teachers that have:

- Or will have in place by fall some form of interactive whiteboard, or tablet with projector system
- A computer connected to the Internet
- A willingness to partner to cross-teach lessons with other classrooms

Please contact me about WTN:

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(put "Western Teacher Network" in the subject line)

The future has arrived. It's just not widely distributed yet.