

Making Your ASK Videoconference a Success

Before You Start

1. Watch the ASK video to get an overview of the project. Note especially how the teacher explains the difference between a “reaction” and a “summary.”
2. Look through the materials, lessons, and resources included and decide which ones might enhance the unit.

Students Journaling & Writing Questions

1. Encourage students to move beyond basic reading comprehension. Get them to tie what they are reading to their own lives and experiences.
2. If desired, hang the posters of the journal process in your classroom.
3. Each time students read, they should journal. If it is a chapter book, have them write down page number, their reaction, and questions based on that section. We want students to tie their reading to the interview process.
4. Write questions that draw out the author or specialist. Have them explain or describe things.

Ideally How the Conference Should Go

1. Usually the facilitators will do sound checks with all participating sites. Then there will be a welcome and the author or specialist will give a 5-10 minute introduction.
2. Students should ask their questions in pairs or threes. Group students to ask the questions. Each group should have 3-10 questions (in case another school asks their question). It will work best if during the conference the groups come up to the mic together. They should say something like this:
Student 1: “Hello my name is Jim.”
Student 2: “My name is Arnie.”
Student 1: “And our question is”
 - Both students should stay at the mic until the author finishes answering their question. Then they should say “Thank you.”
 - The facilitator will then call on the next school.
 - This procedure will allow all students “on camera” time, even if they don’t get to ask their question. In addition, it gets all students involved, and takes away some of the pressure students feel standing at the mic alone.
3. Generally the facilitator will ask for three questions from each school at a time and rotate through the schools in round-robin fashion.
4. While other schools are asking their questions, the teacher should get the next students ready. Students should be ready & standing at the mic when your turn comes. We don’t want to waste precious time with the guest waiting for students to move. So have them ready at the mic or lined up at the mic. You don’t have to move fast, but be organized.
5. In addition, everyone should *listen carefully* to make sure their question (or some variation of it) isn’t asked by another school. Don’t ask questions twice!

6. When about 5 minutes are left, the facilitator may ask for just one or two questions from each school. The author or specialist will give closing comments. At the end the students should applaud the guest.

Organization

1. Organize the questions in the order of the book or chapters. Group the “general” questions after the “book” questions.
2. Have all the questions written on 3x5 cards. You may think students will remember their question, but there’s nothing like stage fright to clear the mind! In addition, 3x5 cards are harder to rattle. The microphone will pick up rustling paper. Have students bring the card up, put it down in front of them, and ask the question. You may want to have them practice.
3. One teacher who participated in ASK had a master list of all the questions and checked them off as they were answered. She also had 3x5 cards with extra questions in case their questions were taken.

Notes on the Conference

1. Have students in place 15 minutes before the connection.
2. When your school is not asking questions, you should be muted. Your distance learning person may take care of this, or they may teach you or one of your students how to mute & unmute the mic.
3. At the beginning, the facilitator will poll the sites for audio & video checks.
4. Then the facilitator will provide the order for the questions and give opening comments.
5. If you know you are next, get your students up to the mic and ready to ask questions.
6. Have the mic in the front of the room so the author can see the students. Don’t stand too close to the mic.
7. After your set of questions is finished, then mute the microphone until it’s your turn again.

Afterwards

1. Debrief the conference with your students. Talk about what you learned. What the best questions were. What answers surprised you? How did the other classes do?
2. Practice writing a friendly letter and have students write a letter of thanks to the author.
3. Fill out the evaluation form.