

How might the history of science been affected if the great physicists of the early 20th century had been able to take part in transatlantic teleconferences at the touch of a button?

Would their positions have changed about using scientific knowledge to build an atomic weapon? In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to develop their scientific literacy skills by discussing controversial social issues in which scientific knowledge plays a substantial role.

And they'll be able to create a digital media product and use it as a vehicle for collaboration in and out of the classroom.

Have students take the positions of famous scientists as they discuss controversial social-scientific issues in a moderated cell phone conference

The use of cell phones, in conjunction with a teleconferencing web site, expands the potential circulation of these science symposia almost exponentially. That expanded circulation can boost student motivation, stimulate further class discussion, and provide a tangible product (an MP3 file of the conference) which can be easily assessed by teachers and students alike.

AHA!: Scientists who are famous sometimes use the media to give their opinions on politics as well as science!

Key Question #4 for Producers: Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Grade Level: 9-12

Virtual Science Symposium

Written by Quentin Hancock

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Materials: For teacher, computer with high speed internet connection to access FreeConferencePro website; for students, individual cell phones with current coverage subscriptions.

This virtual conference activity is not a complete lesson, but rather an activity based on national science and technology standards. Please feel free to adapt it to fit a variety of purposes and contexts. The activity itself has been adapted from *Toys to*

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Standards: National Educational Technology Standards for Students--Performance Indicators for Grades 9-12:

7, 8, 9, 10. National Science Education Standards:

Science in Personal and Social Perspectives, Content Standard F:

Grades 9-12

Activity/ Lesson Description: Students in two different schools will participate in joint virtual cell phone conferences concerning topical issues in science. T

Topical issues include stem cell research, nutrition, global warming, genetically engineered foods, and cloning, to name a few.

Students will be placed in groups of five, in which two students from one school will be paired with two students from another school; the remaining student (from either school) will be the moderator or host of the conference.

Each student in the group will research and “become” a well-known scientist in a specific field.

The students will take on the scientist’s perspective on the issue and participate in a virtual conference for homework.

The virtual conferences will automatically be saved as an MP3 file with the assistance of FreeConferencePro.

Process

In Class

1. Two teachers from different schools in the same or a similar science subject area pair up and decide on the topical issues they want their students to discuss.
2. Each teacher assigns two students to each agreed-upon controversial topic.
3. In their groups, the students select current or past scientists who have contributed to a specific controversial scientific topic.
4. Students research their particular scientist and the scientist's perspective on the topic.
5. The teachers select one additional student to become the moderator or host for the group. This student records the conference and asks questions to keep the conference flowing.
This student also develops a list of questions for the virtual symposium.

6. One of the teachers sets up a FreeConferencePro account. Here is how:

□□□□□□□□□□**A.** Go to FreeConferencePro at <http://www.freeconferencepro.com>

B. Click on *SIGN UP NOW*.

C. Fill in the appropriate information and click on *submit*.

D. A new screen will appear with the conference access number, the passcode,

and the host ID. Copy down all three of these numbers. Students will use

the conference phone number and passcode to access the conference from

their cell phones. The host student can use the host ID to start and stop and

control the conference.

7. The teachers give their students the conference phone number and the passcode. They also give the host students the host ID.

Outside Class

8. Students in each group select a mutual time to conference for homework.

9. The host student dials in to the conference phone number, types in the passcode, and presses the asterisk (*) symbol.

10. The host will then be asked to type in the host ID. Once the host ID has been entered, the host should select the pound sign (#) and number 9.

This will start the conference recording.

11. The rest of the students can now dial in to the conference phone number.

12. Students should type in the passcode followed by the pound sign (#).

13. Once all the students in the group are on the conference line, they can begin the conference.

14. When the conference is done, the students can just hang up.

Back in Class

15. For the teachers to listen to and evaluate the conferences (or share them with the rest of the class), they have to log in to the FreeConferencePro portal. Here is how:

A. Log in to FreeConferencePro at <http://www.freeconferencepro.com>

B. Sign in to the portal account. The portal account shows when conferences were recorded and how long they lasted.

C. Click on *Recordings*.

D. In the Recordings window, teachers can download an MP3 file of the conferences. There is also an option to listen to recordings over the phone.

Extensions

- If you do not have another school or classroom to pair up with, your students can

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participate with students in other class periods of the same subject that you teach.

- Teachers can ask an expert scientist from the local community (or anywhere) to participate in the virtual conferences.
- The virtual conferences can be posted on the class blog or Web page so that other students can listen to them and parents can listen and comment.
- Teachers can also participate in the conference sessions.
- Instead of doing the conference sessions all at once, a conference could be conducted about once a month (or at the beginning each new unit, as an introduction for that topic). Each group of students would be in charge of the conference for only one month (or unit) during the school year.

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2009, Center for Media Literacy, [http:// www.medialit.com](http://www.medialit.com)