

2001

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Recommended Citation

Burley-Hicks, Rosie L. Ed.D. (2001) "Distance Learning in Iowa for Health Occupations Education," *Journal of Health Occupations Education*: Vol. 15 : No. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/jhoe/vol15/iss2/6>

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Distance learning in Iowa for Health Occupations Education

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(This article is adapted from a presentation by Beverly Ransdell on behalf of Rosie Hicks at the 2001 HOE session of the ACTE conference.)

Overview:

Distance Learning is the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time (Perration, 1988). The characteristics or features of Distance Learning are:

- The teacher may transmit a fixed body of information via an external representation.
- The teacher may be a facilitator of learning.
- The teacher represents an abstract idea as a concrete image, then presents the image via a medium
- The learner perceives, decodes, and stores.

- The system must artificially recreate the teaching-learning interaction and reintegrate it back into the instructional process.

The Iowa Model recreates the teaching-learning integration like the traditional Face-to-Face instruction. In addition, the Iowa Model has intact classrooms; and live, two-way audio-visual interaction. In Iowa the Distance Learning system is referred to as the ICN (Intercommunications Network)

Traditionally we think of Distance Learners as adults, however, this is changing. Now there are Distance Learning programs to serve K-12 student populations.

A successful Distance Learning System must involve interaction between teacher and students. Furthermore, the system must involve interaction between students and the learning environment, interaction among students themselves, and active learning in the classroom. The distance learning experience must focus on the instructional needs of the students and not on the technology. It is important to know the intended users of the system, and to recognize learners as individuals. The teacher must realize that the student's outlook is different from theirs.

Iowa's Secondary Health Occupations Education Distance Learning Programs: There are four Distance Learning Programs reported in this study. The programs reported about are located at Iowa Valley Continuing Education, Northeast Iowa Health Occupations Consortium, Woodbury Central High School, and Waterloo, Iowa public High Schools.

The following is a discussion about each of these programs.

Iowa Valley Continuing Education. This is a two-semester program. The first semester includes the course “Introduction to Health Occupations,” the second semester includes a 135 hour Nurse Aide class. There is an ICN room located in each school and the instructor originates from one of the schools for each session-alternating school. In each school ICN classroom there are monitors, which makes it possible for all classes to be teacher/student interactive. The instruction techniques used include readings in the textbooks, outside classroom projects, test, job shadowing or five (5) occupations in the “Introduction” course. Area Nursing Homes and College laboratory participation occurs as a part of the course, though not on the ICN. Test are sent to each school to be administered, and each classroom has a classroom monitor who works with the students regardless of whether the instructor is originating from that school.

Northeast Iowa Health Occupations Consortium. This is also a two-semester program. The first semester includes classes in “Health Occupations,” “Body Structure and Function,” and “Nurse Aide” lecture. The second semester includes classes in “Introduction to Pharmacology,” “Medical Terminology,” and “Nurse Aide” clinic and laboratory (not on the ICN). There are five (5) participating schools. There is a maximum of 30 students per class with each participating school receiving six (6) seats. Each school pays an equal portion of the cost of the instructor and also pays for their line time. The instructor originates from each school every two-(2) weeks. The Nurse Aide clinic and laboratory are done at a Long Term Care facility. Classroom instructional

techniques include guest speakers, internet information, group information, and exploration of job seeking skills. The most difficult class is Body Structure and Function, which is being changed to Nutrition. Students interact well on the ICN and use email and the ICN telephone located in the classroom for further communication when desired.

Woodbury Central High School. This is a two-semester program also. At this school, the first semester includes such classes as “Health Careers on Monday and Thursday, and “Teambuilding in Health Care” on Wednesdays. The second semester includes “Medical Terminology”. Students receive one semester credit per course. There are five (5) participating schools with a total of 27 students.

Waterloo School System. The system has 2 high schools, and both participate. They are Waterloo East High School and Waterloo West High School. The classes include “Personal Health”, “Aging”, “Death and Grieving Process”, “The History of Medicine”, “Ethics”, “Anatomy”, “Health Careers”, and “Structure of Health Care”. The instructor originates two (2) days a week from West High School, and three (3) days a week from East High School. Each site has an ICN classroom. Teacher supervision is provided at the remote site on the instructor’s off days (originating from other school).

The Iowa response to Distance Learning in Secondary Health Occupations Programs, as reported, included three (3) small rural schools/corporations, and one (10 urban school district (two public high schools). The popularity of these ICN secondary health occupations programs is overwhelming and very successful.

I would like to express my gratitude to those instructors who with their busy schedules allowed me to visit their programs and to learn about their ICN participation and usefulness. The information they have provided for this article was most appreciated. However, if the reader has further questions and a need for further clarification, these instructors have indicated that you may contact them. Below is how they may be reached.

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Ms. Barbara Hawkins, Adult and Continuing Education, Iowa Valley Community College, 3702 So. Center St., Marshalltown, IA, 50158.

Ms. Jeannie Africa-Mack, Valley High School, 23493 Canoe Rd., Elgin, IA, 52141.

Ms. Joanna Rahnavardi, Waterloo East High School, 214 High St., Waterloo, IA 50703.