

Videoconferencing is a cost-effective business tool with obvious promise as a communications and distance learning tool for deaf and hard of hearing learners. However, this potential is still largely untapped due to the high cost of commercial systems, which inhibits experimentation. More experimentation to realize the full benefits of videoconferencing in teaching deaf learners may ensue only if the cost barrier is lowered.

The presenters describe their proof-of-concept videoconferencing platform built using open source software components available at no cost and implemented within a simple design framework based on HTML, CSS, and Web-based scripting languages familiar to many non-programmers. They summarize the pros and cons of various commercial systems and explain the rationale for selecting the features that were ultimately built into their completed system. They detail implementation steps and anticipate difficulties for those interested in starting similar projects.

The presentation will include a demonstration of selected features of the final prototype, which allows participants to:

- hold one-to-one video chat or multi-party videoconferences
- record videoconferences for archival purposes
- send files to each other
- brainstorm with whiteboards
- collaborate remotely with each other on shared documents
- share computers remotely