

Instructors in the sciences constantly search for teaching/learning strategies that "level the (communication) playing field" between deaf and hearing students in an inclusive classroom and between deaf students in a homogeneous deaf classroom. In the mainstream classroom/lab deaf students tend to be "marginalized" by the inherent "lag time" between vocalizations and signed communication facilitated by an interpreter.

For the first time in decades we have the opportunity to utilize technology for the purpose of allowing the deaf student to "speak" spontaneously without the constraints of communication management (instructor or interpreter pointing to each speaker in turn to direct eye-contact), thus, simulating a "hearing" classroom where everyone is free to speak at once.

Using laptop computers, IM instructional applications add a portable interactive component that creates learning communities where writing across the curriculum is reinforced. Students conduct literature reviews, hold discussions, and complete individual/group lab reports. In addition, students can transcend the classroom/lab by "chatting" with respected scientists in the field and by participating in weekly facilitated co-op "chats."

Participants in this session will have an opportunity to experience several instructional applications of instant messaging. Presenters will network several laptops for participants to experience potential student interactions in multiple contexts. Related research will be shared with participants.