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NEW VIDEO CONFERENCING CAPABILITIES ENHANCE STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

WHITEHORSE – Distance learning opportunities for Yukon students have improved again. The Department of Education has expanded the availability of video conferencing facilities for students in many rural communities and Whitehorse after the success of a 2004/05 pilot program in Watson Lake.

“The Government of Yukon has introduced video conferencing technology in our schools because we want to provide the best possible learning environment for our students,” Education Minister John Edzerza said. “Due to the remote locations of many of our communities, distance learning is often a necessity for some students. Using video conferencing can really enrich the learning experience and help increase student success.”

“If students choose to undertake distance education, video conferencing provides them with an enhanced learning environment and it gives them access to a larger educational ‘community’,” JoAnn Davidson, Education’s Technology Assisted Learning coordinator, said. “Through video conferencing, students in rural areas now have the opportunity to participate fully in classes with their urban counterparts, and with students from other Yukon community schools.”

As long as scheduling permits, Yukon secondary students can use video conferencing to access courses offered in most Yukon schools. During the video conferencing pilot program in Watson Lake, a physics teacher taught students in Dawson City. This semester, six students at Robert Service School in Dawson City joined 13 peers at Porter Creek Secondary in Whitehorse for a Law 12 class.

“Support for students attending video conferencing courses is available through YESNet, our integrated communications system for public schools,” Davidson said. “With YESNet, students can participate in online discussions, submit homework and projects, and download assignments.”

Video conferencing facilities are available at schools in Dawson City, Watson Lake, Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Beaver Creek, Haines Junction and Whitehorse. Facilities are currently under development for Faro and Ross River.

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