

The Effect of Video Announcements in Creating Equitable Learning Environments

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I joined California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) as an adjunct professor during the pandemic when the field of education was slowly transitioning from distance education to in-person learning. My first two courses were held, for the most part, online in a synchronous modality. My third course the following semester was wholly online and asynchronous. As a veteran K-12 Special Educator, I have a lot of wisdom to share with pre-service teachers: wisdom that I wished I'd been told or shown in the teacher preparation program I attended. So, it came as a bit of a surprise to me that students, even at the college level, did not read their course announcements in the Canvas learning management system (LMS). This, I concluded, was evidenced first, by students asking for information that had already been shared in the announcements section of their course and second, by missing or incomplete assignments.

My professional experience as a special education teacher in a local Title I School frames my purview on equity. Student accessibility to curricula and information is a top priority whether for cognition or developmental reasons; socioeconomic reasons; or cultural reasons. As an individual with a speech and language impairment, I considered that some of the students may have had trouble accessing the information, whether that was a result of technological issues, language-based differences, or cognitive processing concerns. I set out to determine how to incorporate more inclusive means by which I could relay information because I learned students were missing out on instruction critical for success by not reading my written course announcements.

I developed a project that aimed to identify the impact of video announcements as an improved means of accessibility on student success (specifically in the areas of emotional affect, increased task comprehension, improved work completion etc.). My hope was that the implementation of video announcements would increase student engagement, reduce confusion, and decrease the students' anxiety levels throughout the course.

To analyze data, I reviewed the number of missing or late assignments mid-semester before the implementation of video announcements and again at the end of the semester after the implementation of video announcements. I implemented video technology to create the video announcements; however, it also served as data collection as it showed how many times each video was played. Lastly, I implemented a quantitative student survey using a Likert-scale to obtain student feedback and perceptions of video announcements. One qualitative question allowed for additional comments/further elaboration.

Though it was difficult to make any meaningful correlations regarding the video announcements and a reduction in missing or incomplete assignments, I did see a decrease in missing and incomplete activities overall. The software that I used, Loom, told me that there were still some students who did not watch the video announcements. However, when it came to analyzing the survey data, the implementation of video announcements appeared to be useful and accessible to most students in providing clarity regarding assignments.

One student wrote at the end of the survey, "Thank you for providing the video announcements! It really helped me to clarify what exactly we were doing each week." Another student who identified as having disability told me that she enjoyed the video announcements because she could pause them or go back and rewatch them. Overall, 80% of those students who engaged with the video announcements appreciated the additional modality and identified them as being helpful and relevant to their learning.

Not all students were fans, however. The class was comprised of individuals who were doing fieldwork at secondary schools in the county. Students are busy: they work; they are in residencies; and they student-teach. Those who did not prefer the modality indicated that they

accessed the video on their cell phones and taking the time to do so in such a public environment was not convenient. Though I made all the videos closed-captioned compatible so students who needed subtitling were able to access it, I did not make a transcript readily available. This is something that I will do going forward. Further, I did not prompt or instruct the students to set their notification preferences regarding my Canvas announcements, which allowed for students to miss some announcements despite the implementation of new media. In the future, I will create a screencast as to how to set notification preferences and make it a part of students' learning module.

That said, the project really helped me to see that a simple shift in my practice, one that would actually take me less time than writing out an announcement, would overwhelmingly help the students in my class. Hardaker, et. al (2010) state, "Digital pedagogy equity is rooted in a desire that technology-enhanced learning is used constructively to enable culturally responsive teaching that meets individual styles of learning." Thus, with multilingual and neurodiverse learners, implementing video and audio for course announcements serves as an additional modality that can supplement reading as well as meet individual styles of learning. This small change has addressed inequalities of accessibility due to disability and language; thereby, increasing equity for my students.

References

- Hardaker, G., Sabki, A. and Dockery, R. (2010) Cognitive learning styles and digital equity: Searching for the middle way. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14 (8), 777-794.