

“Window to the World Studio” Accommodates the Demand for Arts Missoula’s Booming K-12 Educational Outreach Services

Data and Photos contributed by Udo Fluck

In March of last year, Udo Fluck pivoted from offering his K-12 in-classroom seminars to recording his narrated PowerPoint presentations.

After 10 months and having offered more than 200 seminars in 2020, Fluck’s program is booming amid the pandemic. He directs the Office of Global and Cultural Affairs in Arts Missoula, and started the *Missoula International and Cultural Education Project (MICEP)* in fall of 2018, which is free to students through a grant from the Phyllis and Dennis Washington Foundation. In *MICEP* Fluck develops and teaches custom-tailored seminars with cultural and global perspectives and content, for students in elementary, middle and high schools.

“When the pandemic hit and schools temporarily closed last March, I still had teaching commitments in Rattlesnake and Chief Charlo Elementary Schools lasting until the end of the school year, in June 2020, and suspending my seminars was just not an option”, Fluck remembers.



He started recording his narrated PowerPoint presentations and created an online learning platform where he stored them. Fluck does this instructional design work in a space he calls “Window to the World Studio”. “While I was able to deliver the content, the pre-recorded seminars were lacking student/teacher interaction, something I find, as an instructor, of tremendous importance”, he claims.

Based on the feedback Fluck received from teachers, students and parents last spring, he conducted a needs analysis to better understand the available technology, and balance health risks associated with in-person learning against the educational needs of the students. He then determined the right method and media mixes, available at the right time and place, making the learning intuitive and as natural as possible. *“With so many changes and challenges brought on by COVID, this was critical to me in moving forward and providing the best learning possible,”* says Fluck.

With the results of his needs assessment, he spent the summer rethinking the pedagogical approach and instructional design of his program and realized that his “Window to the World Studio” had potential to provide a hybrid instructional model, a combination of the web-based online learning with video lectures and a more traditional face-to-face instruction, aided by video conferencing technology. *“I find it very rewarding to work together with teachers, developing interactive, tailor-made learning modules that infuse existing curricula with cultural and global perspectives and content, supporting district-wide learning goals. I customize my content to the class's needs, edit and update the sessions to keep the learning content fresh and relevant”,* Fluck explains.

With the start of the new school year in August, Fluck had added a [synchronous](#) delivery method to his established, [asynchronous](#) online learning platform. With five schools interested in participating in the *MICEP*, Fluck started live-streaming his 15-week cultural and global competence building seminar program into classrooms in Jeannette Rankin Elementary School, the Missoula International School and Meadow Hill Middle School. He was very pleased to also connect Lowell Elementary School, as his first Title I school, to his K-12 educational outreach program last fall. Lewis and Clark Elementary School wanted to continue offering the pre-recorded seminars on their online learning platform and Fluck recorded those on a weekly basis for three 4th grade classes.

With the live-streaming option available to Missoula schools, the studio space had to evolve from the ability to simply record a seminar, using a laptop and a camera, to a five-screen instructional

station that consists of a laptop and a tablet screen for the student/teacher connection, one showing the classroom with the students and the other providing a control picture of the streamed image. That way, Fluck can see what the students see in their classroom, assuring that he stays within the camera frame, or displaying an instructional prop for



a show and tell exercise correctly. The other three monitors display the individual PowerPoint slide, the presenter view, and the instructional notes respectively. *“I repurposed a standing desk and three old computer monitors we had at home, connected them to my work laptop with a camera, added my tablet and included a few clip lamps we had in our garage on the studio ceiling. I have been teaching remotely like that since September 1st of last year”*, he recollects. Using free video conferencing software, Fluck, facing a webcam, broadcasts his seminars via the internet into participating classrooms (a bit like live TV). In the classroom, his live-streamed session is projected on an interactive whiteboard that displays his PowerPoint image and him, on a split screen, providing an enriched learning experience for the students, by projecting visual elements that are accompanied by his live narration. The teacher places their laptop/webcam in front of the class, facing the students. This is how Fluck sees the students, can call on them individually and answer their questions. *“The teacher’s webcam is in essence my window into the classroom, my eyes, it’s almost like being there in person”*, he explains.

The only expenses were a few cables that needed to be purchased, to connect the monitors and an external amplified loudspeaker, so Fluck could strengthen the signal coming in from the

classroom. *“This made a major difference for in-class reflections and post seminar Q and A discussions. Hearing the students loud and clear gave me the feeling that I had missed for almost a year, of being in the classroom, live, interacting with the students”*, Fluck reminisces.

Fluck came to Missoula, from his native Germany in 1989, to study broadcast journalism at UM, which has one of the oldest journalism schools in the country. *“I think back fondly of my time as an undergraduate media student at the University of Montana, in front of, as well as behind a camera remembering the words of my favorite UM Professor Bill Knowles: “Lights, camera and we are live”*, Fluck remembers. Classrooms today are typically equipped with an interactive whiteboard, computer, and webcam, so there is no cost to the participating school, or teacher.

Fluck is thankful for the diverse education he received at UM and feels fortunate that he can utilize his experiences to give back to the local learner community through an international and cultural education outreach program. He believes that a hybrid model helps students learn more effectively by combining the access and flexibility of an online course with the live student interaction in the classroom.

In total, Fluck has collaborated with 40 teachers and 10 principals in elementary, middle, and high schools, partnered with 10 schools; 6 elementary, 3 middle, and 1 high school, taught over 550 global and cultural seminars and inspired over 1,500 students in Missoula. The interest of the teachers to continue to infuse their curricula with Fluck’s *MICEP* and the fact that additional schools were and are getting connected to this unique, free K-12 learning program leave hope that one day, in the not-so-distant future, the *MICEP* can be offered to, and in, all Missoula schools.