Program Overview

Since 2011, BYU-Idaho’s Pathway program has given international students the opportunity to develop their English language skills via real-time web-based video conversations with LDS speaking partners. To staff this program, in addition to a recruited volunteer force, some campus-courses have also included this activity as a way for students to gain valuable practicum experience as a unique way to achieve course outcomes. This document outlines the appropriate procedures and items to be checked **before** having your students participate as a speaking partner for credit.

Benefits of Participation

As a practicum assignment or volunteer experience, participating as an English speaking partner helps students and individuals to ponder and prove the four points of the BYU-Idaho Mission Statement:

1. Build testimonies of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage living its principles.
2. Provide a quality education for students of diverse interests and abilities.
3. Prepare students for lifelong learning, for employment, and for their roles as citizens and parents.
4. Maintain a wholesome academic, cultural, social, and spiritual environment.

Depending on your specific course outcomes, encouraging students to be a speaking partner can also offer the following benefits for participants:

- Broadened world view and international experience.
- Meaningful cultural exchange.
- International networking opportunity.
- Opportunity to build foreign friendships.
- Real tutoring / teaching / educating experience.
- Enriched Resume.
- Reconnection with the culture and people of former mission service.
- Spiritual experiences and personal fulfillment.
- Opportunity to love and serve others.

Requirements and Time Commitment

- **1 visit a week, 30 minutes**, for **12 weeks** (= 6hr time load during the semester).

*There will be no variant offered, although you are welcome to encourage students to take on additional partners.*
Scope of our Involvement

In previous semesters we have been quite involved with some of the course participants’ curriculum development, reporting, training, and accommodation of country-specific requests. While aspects of these may continue, we are now moving in a direction where less direct involvement will occur on the part of the Speaking Partner Office, and “guarantees,” which may have existed in the past, might not be given.

We will continue to provide a framework and structure whereby as many individuals and students wishing to participate may register and post themselves as available to be a speaking partner; however, we do not guarantee that all registered participants will be selected by an international student to be a speaking partner (although a majority will be) for the desired time availability. We cannot guarantee that registered participants will be selected by an international student from a country-specific region (although a majority should be able to), or that partners will prove to be reliable in making their appointments (although a majority will be). We cannot “re-match” inactive participants, as we have devolved matching autonomy to the Pathway student. We do not provide a way for either participant to report their visits, and we cannot record the meeting sessions. We can, however, offer information about an individual’s partner and any reported activity (or lack thereof) from either member of the partnership.

Given these parameters, instructors or course-leads wishing to utilize the Speaking Partner Program as a course assignment must: a) provide sufficient and adequate reserve/alternative assignments for their students, and/or offer this activity as an optional assignment; b) understand that participation is not proctored, but self-reported.

Policies and Steps for Incorporating Speaking Partners as an Assignment

1. Check that the speaking assignment activity aligns with one or more of your course outcomes.

2. Send an email to speakingpartners@byui.edu each semester previous to that which you anticipate using the Speaking Partner Program as part of your assignment to notify us of your intent. Include an estimate of how many students might participate as speaking partners (send this before the last week of the semester; this information is merely for projection and planning purposes).

3. Ensure that the speaking partner activity is either an optional assignment or have sufficient reserve/alternative assignments for the student, should for whatever reason, a working partnership not be realized.

4. Feel free to write your own syllabus introduction for the assignment, but direct your students to www.byui.edu/speaking-partners for instructions on how to proceed with signing up, etc.

5. If you would like the Pathway Speaking Partner specialist to give an in-class presentation or introduction to the activity or assignment, please schedule them at least a week in advance.