Objective
To develop, implement, and assess “best of breed” distance or hybrid language courses for the STARTALK program, a language education program for students and teachers under the National Security Language Initiative.

Definitions
Distance learning or online learning involves computer-mediated interaction between the instructor and students.

Blended learning or hybrid learning involves time both in the traditional classroom setting and on computer-based activities. Students interact with their instructors and classmates virtually and face-to-face.

Findings
A recent CASL literature review of distance and hybrid foreign language courses revealed the following:

- Distance and blended learning programs will be most successful when courses are designed to maximize the benefits of the online environment.
- Distance and blended foreign language courses are flexible but come with challenges.
- Careful course design and instructor training are the keys to an effective online or hybrid language learning program.
- A high-quality distance or hybrid foreign language program requires a significant initial investment, which will pay off over time.

CASL researchers are currently collaborating with Hunter College to design and implement an online Chinese course for high school students who have completed a summer STARTALK program. Findings related to both student outcomes and course effectiveness are anticipated during the summer of 2010.

Relevance
A well-designed system of online and hybrid language courses could make quality language instruction available to any student with Internet access.

Reports
- Post-STARTALK Chinese: A proposed distance course for summer 2009 STARTALK students (May 2009)
- Learning foreign languages at a distance: Characteristics of effective online courses (February 2009)

For More Information
For more information about this project or for a copy of the reports, contact us:

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