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Assessing Student Performance Using Video Recordings in Field-Based Experiences

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Abstract

Field-based experiences are vital components of many undergraduate programs. However, assessing student performance in these settings can be challenging. Video-based observation is an approach to providing performance feedback that addresses these challenges and may also provide benefits not inherent in live observations. Using examples from our teacher preparation programs, we (a) explain the benefits and challenges of using video recordings in field-based experiences; (b) identify the video recording platform we use; (c) describe specific examples in our program, including supervisor performance feedback to preservice teachers, peer feedback/coaching, and instructor feedback on in-home family coaching; and (d) address the logistics of using video recording, including training and getting permissions.

Keywords: Assessment, Field-Based Experiences, Video Recording

Many undergraduate programs include field-based experiences. These experiences provide opportunities for students to apply the knowledge and skills they acquire in university-based courses to real life settings, so they are a vital component to the overall program. However, assessing student performance in these experiences can be difficult. Challenges of conducting live observations include reactivity, scheduling, and cost. Reactivity refers to the fact that the presence of an observer may influence the behavior of those being observed (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Scheduling is difficult because live observations require the supervisor to be in a specific place at a specific time, and if the student to be observed is at a distance from the campus, the cost of mileage to send supervisors to the site can be significant (Hager, Baird, & Spriggs, 2012; Schmidt, Gage, Gage, Cox, & McLeskey, 2015). To address these issues in our teacher preparation programs, we incorporated video-based observations. The strategies we use may be applicable to other programs that require field-based experiences.

Students in our teacher preparation programs have a field-based experience each semester. These placements are often in schools, but may also be in family homes for those preparing to work with infants and toddlers. We assess student performance in these settings based on video recordings submitted by the students because, in addition to addressing the challenges noted above, video-based feedback has some benefits not inherent in feedback based on live observations (Dymond, Renzaglia, Halle, Chadsey, & Bentz, 2008). In the sections below we will (a) explain the benefits and challenges of using video recordings in field-based experiences; (b) identify the video recording platform we use; (c) describe specific examples in our program, including supervisor performance feedback to preservice teachers, peer feedback/coaching, and instructor feedback on in-home family coaching; and (d) address the logistics of using video recording, including training and getting permissions.

Benefits and Challenges of Video Recording

Video recording field-based performances has benefits and challenges for both the instructor and the students. It can save significant time for the instructor, as it eliminates the need to drive to a specific site at a specific time to conduct a field-based observation. The flexibility of being able to watch the video outside of typical school hours allows supervisors to observe more students and enables current teachers to serve as supervisors because they do not need to be available during school hours. Video-based feedback also supports more accurate data collection because the performance can be viewed more than once, if necessary. Benefits for students include decreasing the stress they often feel when being observed live and eliminating the need to arrange observations around the supervisor's schedule. An additional benefit, and one that is critical for our students, is the opportunity to view their own performance, described by Knight (2014) as a “game changer” in improving performance. The examples below describe how our students evaluate their own performance, as well as that of their peers. Managing the technology is the biggest challenge for both instructors and students, and we discuss this in the logistics section below. The delay in feedback, as compared to a live observation, can also be a challenge to both instructors and students. We address this by requiring students to receive feedback within 48 hours of submitting the recording.

Video Recording Platform

We use GoReact (<https://get.goreact.com/>), a platform that supports online video feedback. Before reviewing video recording companies, we identified the features we required, including security (FERPA and HIPPA), time-stamped feedback capability, integrated data collection, a user-friendly interface, and Learning Management System integration. GoReact

includes all these features; how we use them in our program will be described in the program examples below.

Examples of Video Recording-Based Assessments

Performance Feedback to Preservice Teachers.

Students in our teacher preparation program are placed in elementary and middle/high schools each semester to provide academic and behavioral instruction to students in special education classrooms. In order to provide feedback on their performance, they are observed by a university supervisor several times each semester. Video recording is the main strategy for observing these students.

An online training module is provided to the supervisors and the students to prepare them for video recorded observations. It includes instructions for downloading the GoReact app, creating and uploading a test video, and general instructions for video recorded observations (e.g., schedule of observations, data collection forms). The university supervisor then identifies a specific time and lesson to record (e.g., 9:30am reading group on Wednesday). The supervisor also schedules a time to review the lesson together (e.g., 4pm on Thursday). The student then records the identified lesson, and uploads it to the course assignment page (created by the supervisor). The supervisor then watches the recording and types in comments to provide feedback. The video automatically stops when typing begins and resumes playing once the comment is finished (i.e., the supervisor hits “enter”). The comment is linked to that specific point in the video. Clicking on the comment cues up that point in the video, and clicking on the marker in the video that indicates a comment will bring up that comment. This feature makes it easy for the student to view the exact moment in the lesson that the supervisor is referring to in the comment. This is critical for skill development as the student sees exactly what he/she was doing that was effective (“Great error correction – you did the model, skipped the lead because this student does not need it, and did both a test and a delayed test – perfect!”) or that needs to be revised (“When the student remembers to bring all her materials to the group, reinforce her with a high-5 or a Panther Paw”). The supervisor and student then meet, usually online, to further discuss the observation.

The video recordings are also used for student self-evaluations. It is important for them to learn to evaluate their own performance. We provide a simplified version of the evaluation forms the supervisors use and the students view their recordings to collect data on their own performance and create goals for skills they want to improve. A useful feature of GoReact is that the supervisor can provide feedback on the lesson, but then choose not to reveal it to the

student until the student has uploaded his/her own comments. Another helpful feature of GoReact is the availability of markers to use while reviewing a recording. The reviewer labels different colored markers with the relevant behaviors, and then each time the behavior occurs, clicking the marker will mark the occurrence in the recording. In teacher preparation, behaviors we mark include providing verbal praise, opportunities for the pupils to respond, and using an error correction procedure, but any behavior that is observable can be noted with the markers. This system can also generate graphs of the markers, to display how many times the behavior occurred, as well as when the behavior occurred.

Peer Feedback/Coaching.

Inclusive programs for preschoolers with disabilities, i.e., those that include children with and without disabilities, are increasing in many states. A common model to provide adequate support in community preschools for those students with disabilities entails the special education teacher consulting with and coaching an early childhood educator to provide appropriate instruction for a child and to use effective strategies with fidelity (Buysse, 2004; Dinnebeil, 2014). In order for these programs to provide the most effective instruction for young children, the special education teacher needs to develop skills in consulting or coaching another teacher/adult. A deep understanding, as well as practice using these coaching skills, should be, but often is not, included in the preservice program (Dinnebeil, 2014).

In our preservice program for preschool special educators, we have an additional challenge of providing a peer coaching experience to students participating in an alternative certification program that is delivered in an online synchronous format to students across the state. Thus, the students are not geographically close to each other or the instructor, yet need to practice coaching each other by observing instruction and then meeting to share feedback. They not only need to learn to give positive and constructive feedback, they must learn to do so virtually, based on video recordings.

We created an assignment that first requires the students to choose a classroom strategy they want to improve. To assist them in analyzing their current practice, they complete a checklist on their classroom skills, as well as their use of coaching skills. Once the students chose a practice (e.g., environmental arrangements, embedding additional learning opportunities, systematic training for staff, data collection procedures), they are paired with a classmate. The coaching literature stresses building a relationship between coach and coachee in all formats (Buysse & Wesley, 2004). In order to create an opportunity to build a relationship virtually, multiple meetings were incorporated into the assignment. Each teacher is required to view three video recorded lessons of the partner's classroom instruction, and then conduct three synchronous feedback sessions, which are also video recorded. Each cycle of these

meetings is completed within a three-week span; with feedback sessions occurring within four days of uploading the recording. This schedule ensures each teacher has time (e.g., two weeks) to practice the recommendations before the next observation. GoReact allows the course instructor to control access to the uploaded video recordings, so the partners are provided access to view and comment on each other's recordings.

Since the instructors have access to all recordings submitted, they can also view them and provide suggestions to the coaches on ways to strengthen their observation skills, as well as view the video recorded feedback sessions and provide input to both teachers regarding coaching communication skills. The assignment rubric guides students during the feedback sessions to help improve their delivery of coaching concepts covered in the course readings and lectures.

Feedback from students shows that the goals of the assignment are being met. Students comment about the fact that they are much more comfortable giving feedback, especially constructive feedback because of practicing with each other. Several comments also suggest that this experience helps build community among the students in that they feel more connected to other preschool teachers and plan to stay in contact once their course work is complete, due to building a relationship virtually.

Performance Feedback on Coaching Families.

In addition to coaching other teachers, students in our early childhood special education program must develop competency coaching families. To evaluate these skills, they submit a video recording of a home visit.

Students video record their home visit/parent coaching sessions and upload these recordings for instructor feedback. The process is similar to that described above in the section on performance feedback to preservice teachers. Students are instructed to review the feedback, respond to any questions posed by the supervisor, and ask for clarification as needed. If a student does not meet the minimal score for this assessment, the supervisor schedules a meeting with the student to review the video and feedback together. When they view a part of the recording that demonstrates an error on the student's part, they pause it and then role play the appropriate actions until the student demonstrates the appropriate response. The student is then required to submit a new video recording for evaluation to demonstrate mastery at the level required for the assignment. Particularly due to the context of providing coaching in the home environment, this approach is less intrusive for families than a live supervisor observation.

Logistics of Using Video-Based Assessment

Using video recordings to assess student performance in field -based experiences has proven to be efficient and effective, but successful implementation requires systematic planning by the instructor. We have found the following to be critical to effective use of video recordings in our program: training in use of the technology for instructors, supervisors, and students; instruction on confidentiality of video recordings, and getting consent for video recording. To address the technology issue, it is critical to ensure both faculty and students receive adequate training. We developed an online module demonstrating use of the technology, created documents with step-by-step instructions (e.g., camera orientation, lighting, ensuring batteries are charged), and required students to create a test video before actually video recording for an assignment. We also developed specific protocols for each type of assignment with timelines for each step.

In environments in which consent for video recording is required, faculty obtain this consent and/or provide consent documents for the student to have signed by the appropriate individuals. Our students are often recording in schools, so we obtain consent at the district level, and if requested, at the classroom and family levels. Because the video recordings capture children in the schools, we also require students entering our program to sign an agreement to treat video recordings created for coursework as confidential material and to delete all videos from recording devices upon upload to the instructor.

Conclusion

Some of the most beneficial experiences in undergraduate programs, including field-based placements, take place outside the university classroom. In order to ensure students are able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their university-based courses when they are in the field, it is necessary to provide effective performance feedback. Incorporating technology, such as time-stamped video feedback, can provide an effective strategy that eliminates some of the challenges of live observation and feedback, while adding benefits inherent in using video recordings for assessing performance in field placements.

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