Focus on FAME

Through the Lens: The use of video for professional development in FAME

Professional growth is an important consideration in virtually every career. Time, practice, and experience are necessary to improve expertise in a specific subject or skill. Changing demands and expectations also emphasize the need for continued professional growth.

This is certainly expected, if not required, in education. Unfortunately, the climate, culture, and logistics of teaching can present many challenges. Classroom teachers in the United States historically have been isolated from one another. Sociologist Dan Lortie once described the teaching profession as an "egg crate" ecosystem, in which classrooms, with a single teacher and set of students, are stacked on top of one another like egg crates (Lortie, 1975).

This structural separation, in which teachers use and enhance their skills primarily through individual trial and error in individual classrooms rather than through observation of and collaboration with others, has been a major barrier to improving instruction. It must also be noted while this is true in many

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instances, there are still teachers who are able to engage in both formal and informal opportunities for collaboration. Whether it is a struggle or accepted practice, opportunities for collaboration can be further extended through the use of video. Many teachers have already found this to be a valuable resource for professional learning.

There are many research-driven and practical reasons for educators to change their solitary practice and take full advantage of what others can provide them and what they can provide to co-workers to mutually

improve their craft. There are several ways that such collaboration might occur, and one strategy gaining more and more momentum is the use of video recordings in teacher professional learning.

Using video for educator professional development

Jim Knight, senior partner of the International Coaching Group (ICG) and research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, has spent many years studying coaching and

the impact of video. In his book, *Focus on Teaching: Using Video for High-Impact Instruction* (2014), Knight writes:

"When we record ourselves doing our work, we see that reality is very different from what we think. As a result, we are often disappointed by what we see…. At other times, we are delighted by what we see, noticing perhaps that a learning activity truly did engage students authentically. Either way, video is a powerful tool for growth and professional learning."

Over the years, Knight, his colleagues, and other researches have collected and analyzed data about the experiences of educators using video to reflect on and improve instruction. The work can be summarized in a simple statement: "video changes everything…" (Knight, p., XL).

Use of video for teacher self- and/or peer reflection

There are important considerations when using video to improve instruction, especially when it involves teacher self- and peer reflection. The Center for Educational Policy Research at Harvard University published the article, *Leveraging Video for Learning* (Harvard University, pp. 1-21). This work was based on the **Best Foot Forward Project** (2015).

The Best Foot Forward Project investigated whether video technology can make the classroom observation process easier to implement, less costly, more reliable, and more valid. In a randomized control-group trial, the study team placed cameras in the hands of teachers and allowed them to select their best lessons for evaluation.

Researchers aimed to learn whether digital video made the observation process more acceptable to teachers and administrators.

The published work was titled, *The Best Foot Forward Project: Substituting Teacher-Collected Video for In-Person Classroom Observations* (The Center for Educational Policy Research at Harvard University, 2005). The project identified and gathered data to answer several research questions. One question was, *"How did the use of video change teacher perceptions of their own teaching and their classroom?"* The conclusion: *"The opportunity to watch their own lessons resulted in treatment teachers being more self-critical. At the end of the year, they rated their own instruction lower than comparison teachers, particularly in terms of time management and their ability to assess student mastery during class. Of teachers in the treatment group, 42 percent reported that while watching the videos, they noticed previously unnoticed student behaviors or their own behaviors 'quite often' or 'extremely often'"* (p. 3).

The study included approaches to support how educators could use videos, including Video for Self-Reflection and Video for Peer Collaboration.

Video for self-reflection: Structured self-reflection plays an important role in teachers' professional growth. Teachers may enter the profession with preconceived ideas about what good instruction looks like based on their previous experiences as a student. This leads to imitative, rather than intentional, practice. Systematic self-reflection, on

the other hand, sharpens the intentionality of the practitioner and allows him or her to address the unique challenges of the classroom. Education researchers tend to distinguish "reflection in practice" from "reflection on practice" (Schön, 1983). The process of reflecting in practice refers to in-the-moment or situational thinking. Reflecting on one's practice requires remembering past actions, evaluating what did or did not work, and using those judgments to drive a theory of action for future practice. Video of instruction can provide a teacher with the opportunity to reflect on their instructional practices after the lesson has concluded.

Video for peer collaboration:
Teachers' participation in collaborative discussion is predictive of changes to teachers' instruction (Parise & Spillane, 2010). Improvement can also be predicted by the extent to which teachers seek instructional advice from their colleagues (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2014). Yet it isn't easy to facilitate peer collaboration, given that teachers are responsible for instructing their own students during the school day. The introduction of video technology in a school or across schools may make it easier for teachers to observe their colleagues' instruction and give or receive instructional support. Videos of the instruction provided by different teachers can provide teachers with multiple opportunities to reflect on one another's instructional practices following the conclusion of the lessons.

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Practical applications

Research supports the value of video use, and there are practical applications to consider. Dr. Peter DeWitt, classroom teacher and principal, runs workshops and speaks nationally and internationally with a focus on collaborative leadership, fostering inclusive school climates, and connected learning. In his article, *3 Reasons Why Teachers Should Film Themselves Teaching* (DeWitt, *Education Week Blog*), DeWitt identified three important practical reasons why teachers should record themselves:

1. Determine how much they talk as compared to how much the students talk

2. Ascertain how much teachers interact with students

3. Determine how teachers use this visual and audio data to reflect on their practice

With increased emphasis on standards and student performance, many teachers are exploring ways to improve instruction. Some states are using video in the classroom to help teachers identify ways in which they can be more effective in the classroom (McIntyre, 2016).

Kari Arfstom, founder of Arfstom Consulting, is a former educator and senior-level executive of education administration for associations such as the American Association of School Administrators and the Consortium for School Networking. In her article, *Using Video Observations to Improve Teaching* (Arfsorn, *eSchool News*) she writes, "…good teaching leads to increased student achievement… research and common-sense show that self- and shared reflection for beginning and established educators, often by viewing audio and visual recordings made in the classroom, is an important and common practice."

Using video with the Formative Assessment Self-reflection Guide

Research has established the importance of using video for educator professional development and the practical applications of its use and review of classroom instruction. FAME has developed a resource to provide direction in the process of this type of self-reflection or peer collaboration — the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Guide* (Chandler, et al, 2018). The *Guide* is a work product of the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) Research and Development Team, with the assistance of several Michigan educators who field tested the rubrics and provided their insights.

The formative assessment process, as conceptualized by FAME, includes five Components:

1. Instructional Planning

2. Learning Target Use

3. Eliciting Evidence of Study Understanding

4. Formative Feedback

5. Instructional and Learning Decisions

The Components are divided into 13 Elements. Rubrics were developed that provide further analysis of each of the Elements in classroom practice. Classroom teachers may video record their class, review the video, and use the rubrics to identify where they are in their use of the formative assessment process. Due to the complex nature of formative assessment, participants are encouraged to focus on a single Component or a limited number of Elements before moving on to other Components or Elements.

As they look at the video, they use the rubrics to identify where they seem to be in their classroom practice. The videos allow them to look closely at their instruction, the interaction with students, and the student responses. Teachers are able to consider how they could be more effective in instruction, providing feedback, and decision-making. By recording multiple times over a period of time, teachers are able to note their changes and the impact in their instruction and student understanding.

As noted, this can be done as a self-reflection or with a colleague as peer reflection. Responses from teachers using the *Guide* and the process have been extremely favorable, as they are able to identify specific ways in which they might improve, and subsequent videos have supported their efforts. Those who have participated in the peer analysis have commented how they've had rich and informative conversations around the selected Components, Elements, and rubrics.

Want to find out more about the *Formative Assessment Self-Reflection Guide*? FAME participants can access a recorded "Self-Reflection Guide" webinar in the FAME Resource Bank at www.FAMEMichigan.org. FAME participants can also request a print copy of the *Guide* from Kim Young or their FAME Lead.

Conclusion

Ours is a changing society, and these changes also impact the ways in which we teach and learn. Technology is not only one of the major contributors to the changes, it also may be used to help us improve how we adapt to these changes to incorporate them into our craft.

Finding more effective ways to improve one's ability to teach, engage students, and provide them with the skills necessary to succeed is a professional obligation. Using videos as a way to improve is an effective option for all educators seeking to help students learn.

Learn more

Please visit the FAME website at **FAMEMichigan.org** to view sample videos and other resources that can support the effective use of videos as a way for educators to improve.

> " This is the first opportunity that I've ever had to look deeply at my own teaching. After the taping, I had the opportunity to go through the rubric and look at my teaching...it helped me to think more deeply about my purpose. It gave me an opportunity to think about how I could use this with other teachers.... A process such as this allows teachers to come to conclusions on their own, which is far more beneficial.
>
> **– K. Walters, FAME Coach and Classroom Teacher, Corunna, MI**

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What is Formative Assessment?

Formative assessment is a process that occurs during teaching and learning to improve student outcomes. The following definition of formative assessment from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is used by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) in the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) professional learning program.

"Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners."

(CCSSO SCASS FAST, 2017)

What is FAME?

Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) is a professional learning program in which teams of educators work on learning teams supported by coaches working collaboratively to learn about, implement, and reflect on the formative assessment process. The program involves educators in a multi-year commitment to promote significant change in professional practice, supported by internal and external resources. Since 2006, thousands of educators have participated in the FAME program to guide student learning and teachers' instructional practices across the state.

Resources to Learn More About Formative Assessment and FAME

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