

TEACH, WATCH, LEARN

EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM
PAIRS COLLEGE COURSES
WITH VIDEO COACHING

BY ALAN COHEN



Pam is watching herself on video. It's something that is difficult for all of us, particularly so for Pam today. She is watching a recording of herself teaching a preschool class for the first time.

Pam is taking notes, and, in her initial reflections, she is tough on herself.

"I really need to ask more open-ended questions and wait for children's answers," Pam says. "I find that I will ask a question and then answer it for them. I feel I also need to use more words. I tend to use a lot of one-word comments, instead of explaining what is

happening or asking the children what is happening. I have a lot to learn. I really need to work on encouraging the children to think."

Her self-analysis continues. "I did not see much comparing or categorizing or making predictions. I did bring up that we saw butterflies in two different books and looked at them. I could have asked, 'How are they the same?' and 'How are they different?' But I didn't think to do that."

Seeing this critique leads Pam to a stark, important bit of self-discovery. "To be completely honest, I don't think I personally think critically enough myself. I don't think I was brought up

that way, so I have to work hard now to think to ask the children to think. I do see how wonderful it is to get them thinking. It opens up the world. It helps them learn and grow. I want to get better at it. I know I won't become perfect at it overnight, but I will be trying each day to improve."

Pam and her professor learned three important things from these reflections:

- Pam knows what quality interactions with young children should look like;
- Pam understands some intentional teaching strategies that can help her improve the quality of her instruction; and



- Pam has the growth mindset and passion for kids that promise to result in continuous improvement.

As she works on her bachelor's degree in early childhood education, Pam will record and reflect on her teaching many more times. Each video will be watched and critiqued by herself, her classmates, and her coach to ensure she's using best practices and maximizing every moment possible with children in a crucial phase of their development.

Pam is receiving college-credentialed training through the EarlyEdU Alliance, a collection of

courses and online tools led by the University of Washington and used by more than 50 colleges and universities. EarlyEdU aims to increase the quality of early childhood teacher preparation programs and make them more accessible and affordable for a workforce that needs more people and requires more of them.

"Higher education plays a critical role in improving the quality of pre-K for our nation's most vulnerable children," says Gail Joseph, associate professor of education and co-director of the University of Washington College of Education's National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning,

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Through video coaching, EarlyEdU students not only get feedback on their own teaching but also grow in their ability to give constructive feedback to others.

TINA'S PEER-COMMENTING GROWTH OVER THREE MONTHS

Jan. 25, 2014

"I liked how the other boy was offering help and quietly started to help his friend sort. I also noticed him doing a lot of self-talking. Good work!"

April 25, 2014

"This is a good example of an engaging interaction. I like the way you asked her, 'How are we going to take care of our ponies?' She had some good ideas, and I liked how she got up and got the barn, too. You might want to show more matched affect when she gets happy or excited. Also it looks like the little boy in the video was trying to get involved. You might want to acknowledge the other things that are going around as well. I know it gets tricky when we are trying to film but try to make it as real as possible, even if you have to stop your conversation with the little girl to acknowledge the other children. Good job, thanks for sharing."

which developed EarlyEdU. “This means we must increase the quality of our college degree programs for early childhood education. To be the best possible child care providers and preschool teachers, our students need the latest science on how to optimize young children’s development and learning coupled with practice-based coaching.”

THE CURRENT EARLY LEARNING WORKFORCE

Research shows that a child’s healthy growth and development hinges on high-quality and consistent caregivers and teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This demands a stable, highly skilled, and qualified workforce.

In response to the science, the federal Head Start program and a growing number of states now require early learning professionals, especially lead teachers, to have a college degree.

In the most recent National Survey of Early Care and Education (National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2013), only 19% of center-based teachers and caregivers working with infants and toddlers and 45% of preschool teachers had a bachelor’s degree. More than 60% of providers working with infants and toddlers had “some college” or a “high school diploma or less.”

In 2015, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council published the findings of the Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8: Deepening and Broadening the Foundation for Success. The committee used the science of child development, including biology, environment, and the interactions between them, to frame the knowledge and competencies required by the early care and education workforce.

The report offers recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- www.earlyedualliance.org
- The Coaching Companion on the Office of Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge website is a free version that is used by Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care specifically for professional development with coaches and teachers at all levels. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/professional-development/article/earlyedu-alliance>
- The University of Virginia also offers MyTeachingPartner, a similar professional development tool for teachers at all levels. <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/mtp>

charged with helping the early care and education workforce meet the needs of children and families. The report includes 13 recommendations related to qualification requirements, higher education and ongoing professional learning, evaluation and assessment

of professional practice, leadership, interprofessional practice, support for implementation, and improvement of knowledge base.

Based on the findings in this report, it is clearer than ever that, even among the small percentage of early childhood teachers who have degrees, many attended programs with a wide range of content, field experiences, faculty expertise, and institutional contexts. In short, not all degrees are alike, and too often they are not regarded as high quality (Whitebook et al., 2012).

So with such a critical need for increased scale and effectiveness of early learning training programs, many colleges and universities are beginning to turn to online courses and coaching that can deliver the essential elements of workforce effectiveness outlined by the National Research Council’s report.

CREATING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

EarlyEdU offers a series of courses that combine theory and the latest research with students’ field-based learning. Integrated into each course is

a video sharing and coaching feedback app called Coaching Companion.

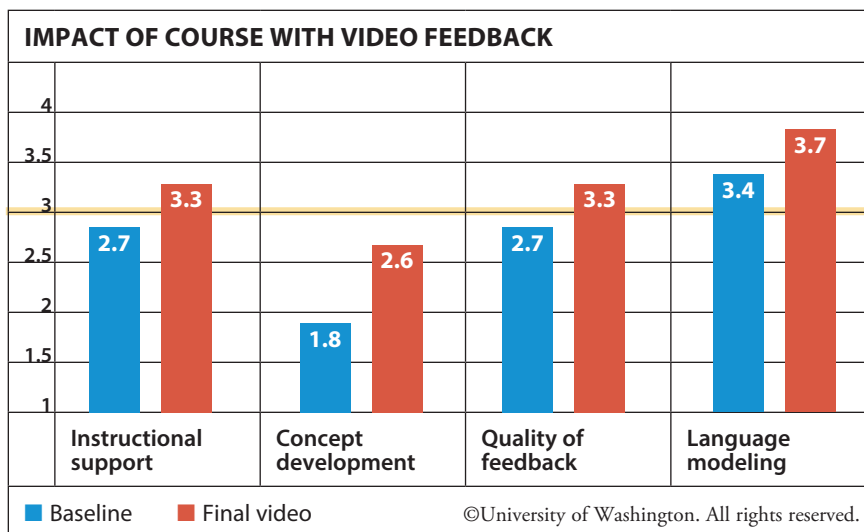
Here's how it works:

- Students set up a camera in their classroom, then take what they learn in their college courses and apply it to their interactions with children.
- Students upload and share videos through Coaching Companion.
- Students reflect on what they learned, and their peers and professor provide insights and suggestions.

The tool gives students a chance to observe and evaluate their own teaching in the moment and over time. Professors can gain insights into an individual student's — and the class's — learning and practice as they provide feedback. The entire process builds not only camaraderie among a small group of teachers that don't even have to live in the same state but also competence in evidence-based teaching practices and coaching skills for early learning professionals.

Sandy, a veteran child care provider who was enrolled in an EarlyEdU course, offered this reflection: "My group videos and comments have helped greatly in my learning to teach more effectively. As an in-home provider who, up until a few weeks ago, worked completely alone, the videos of seeing others teach has been a great tool for me. ... I appreciate that I can see outside of my own day care and preschool. I look forward to pushing myself further with each lesson. In a sense, it is not only me who has gone back to school. It is also my children that I teach and their families with whom I share every day."

Most important, the improved reflections are translating into improved results. Teachers participating in EarlyEdU coursework and video-based coaching are seeing significant gains in



instructional effectiveness, including increased proficiency in concept development, quality of feedback given to children, and language modeling. The chart above illustrates the average improvement of classroom quality scores among teachers participating in EarlyEdU as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which is the primary quality measurement tool used by Head Start and widely cited in research used to gauge the quality of early learning programs.

As the early learning field grows, resources like EarlyEdU that combine classes and coaching will help colleges produce high-quality graduates who will provide the high-quality care and teaching children need to be ready for school.

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