

Tools *for* LEARNING SCHOOLS

LEARNING FORWARD'S VISION: EXCELLENT TEACHING AND LEARNING EVERY DAY

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What to see, what to say

Tips for participating in teacher video clubs

By Michelle Forsythe and Heather Johnson

Video cameras are popping up in pre-K-12 classrooms across the country, expanding the ways we can support teacher learning.

In the past, professionals made videos of expert teachers to use as exemplars (Moreno & Valdez, 2007). Today, the ubiquitous accessibility of digital video technology has enabled teachers to be their own camera operators.

They are capturing everything from 7th-grade students' predictions about natural selection to the varied strategies 3rd graders use to multiply. In so doing, digital films are opening the black box of decisions that teachers make in everyday classrooms. Teacher-generated videos are quickly becoming a fundamental resource for preservice training,



professional development, and even teacher assessment (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg, & Pittman, 2008; Hixon & So, 2009; van Es & Sherin, 2008).

In many learning communities, video clubs have evolved as one particularly salient way to use video captured by teachers to promote professional learning (Johnson & Cotterman, 2015; Sherin, 2000; van Es, Tunney, Goldsmith, & Seago, 2014).

Many teachers are often unsure how to participate in such clubs. Here we explore the design of a typical teacher video club and provide tools teachers can use to engage productively in club sessions.

WHAT IS A TEACHER VIDEO CLUB?

A video club is a group of teachers who meet to view and

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discuss video of either their own or someone else's classroom to improve their teaching (Sherin & Han, 2004). In some schools, teachers have initiated such groups on their own. In others, video clubs are a mandated component of professional development or grade-level initiatives.

Many important aspects of pedagogy, from classroom management to learning trajectories, can be explored during any given video club. However, we have found video clubs to be particularly powerful in supporting teachers to positively reposition students in relation to the subject matter and deeply engage with student thinking (Johnson & Cotterman, 2015).

When caught up in the fast-paced moment of teaching, teachers often fail to see how “wrong” student contributions can make sense within the broader learning context and can be used to press for more sophisticated levels of content understanding. The structure of video clubs, where multiple participants with multiple viewpoints can rewatch key classroom moments, supports teachers in seeing both students and subject matter from new perspectives.

When asked to bring video clips to club, teachers often wonder, “What lesson should I video? What video clip excerpt should I show?” When watching their colleagues' clips, teachers have additional concerns. They often ask, “What should I comment on? There's so much happening. What should I say?” We understand these questions. In fact, we've asked them ourselves.

Over the past five years, we have supported teacher learning communities in using video club as a venue to share their experiences and support their developing practice. Each of these teacher communities had its own characteristic dynamics. We've worked alongside teachers at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels in a variety of



A clip that delves deeply into a narrow content focus can provoke more thoughtful club discussion. One way for presenters to narrow the focus of their clip is to think about how it depicts a problem of practice — a moment of a lesson that was a struggle, is likely to reoccur, and provides rich opportunities for teacher learning. Because such development does not always come from watching instances of ideal instruction, presenters should avoid clips where everything went smoothly and instead select a clip that captures student differences or struggles with content and use this to frame the discussion.

thus to consider implications for what teachers may need to learn to shift classroom practices. In addition, club participants sometimes struggle to find a meaningful entry point for discussion when the presented clip is outside of their content expertise or has poor audio quality.

However, if the clip includes classroom artifacts,

different content areas.

Sometimes the teachers had many years of classroom experience. Sometimes they were student teachers embarking on a new career. Our understanding of video clubs and our recommendations for teacher learning stem from our own personal growth across these diverse contexts.

TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN VIDEO CLUB

When joining a video club, teachers often wonder how they can be effective club members. One of their responsibilities will be to bring a video clip of their own classroom teaching to share during a club meeting. When teachers are unsure about what to bring, we suggest that they select a clip that focuses on their students, incorporates classroom artifacts, is narrow in scope, and depicts a problem of practice. These four elements, easily remembered using the acronym FIND and detailed in the tool on p. 6, can help teachers select a clip that will provoke productive club discussions.

It's likely not a surprise that the video clips that support the most interesting discussions about student learning are those that highlight what students say and do. However, novice presenters often focus too heavily on what they are doing and overlook the importance of making sure that their students can be clearly seen and heard (Star & Strickland, 2008).

Without concrete student contributions — their statements, questions, drawings, or notes — it can be difficult to draw solid inferences about student thinking and

such as a scientific representation or a poem that is being discussed, these artifacts can help viewers make sense of the student talk or activity in the video. Novice presenters also often select a clip that shows the breadth of what happened in their classroom. However, such clips tend to only superficially explore any one idea.

A clip that instead delves deeply into a narrow content focus can provoke more thoughtful club discussion. One way for presenters to narrow the focus of their clip is to think about how it depicts a problem of practice — a moment of a lesson that was a struggle, is likely to reoccur, and provides rich opportunities for teacher learning. Because such development does not always come from watching instances of ideal instruction, presenters should avoid clips where everything went smoothly and instead select a clip that captures student differences or struggles with content and use this to frame the discussion.

During most club meetings, teachers will be observing and commenting on their colleagues' video clips rather than presenting themselves. When teachers are unsure about what to say in these discussions, we suggest that they focus on clarifying student contributions, highlighting classroom connections, analyzing timescales and trajectories, and troubleshooting potential solutions. These four elements, easily remembered using the acronym CHAT and detailed in the tool on p. 7, can help teachers focus on the student learning taking place in the clip.

When novice club participants watch classroom video, they typically focus on the actions of the other teacher and on overall classroom management. However, these foci rarely provoke meaningful discussions of teaching and learning.

It is more productive to start the discussion from a student's perspective. Then, as the video club works to make sense of a student contribution, participants can tie in other elements of the classroom by connecting what a student said or did to the broader learning environment.

For example, participants might interrogate whether a representation or a questioning strategy used by the teacher might have contributed to a specific misconception voiced by a student in the video clip. Participants can also look outside of the timescale of the clip to help interpret what they see. This allows the video club to talk about trajectories, and not just moments, of student learning. Finally, if the clip has highlighted a routine problem of practice, video club participants can suggest ways to address that problem.

Note: Others have written about the logistics of establishing (van Es & Sherin, 2006) and facilitating (van Es et al., 2014) teacher video clubs. The tips we have presented supplement this work by providing teachers and facilitators a succinct guide in what to see and what to say to promote

professional learning in their own video club. In offering these guidelines, we acknowledge that the full complexities of all forms of teacher video clubs are beyond the scope we have detailed here.

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Learning Forward BELIEF

More students achieve when educators assume collective responsibility for student learning.

Setting up a teacher video club

Although what teachers are asked to do during video clubs — to observe and comment on classroom interactions — is a close approximation of their actual practice, teachers at times find observing and commenting on others' practice to be awkward and unsettling. The following guides are designed to help teachers do three things:

1. Determine the most optimal video club structure for their goals;
2. Determine how best to select which video clips to present; and
3. Determine how best to discuss others' clips during video club.

Use these questions and chart as a guide to set up the purpose and structure of your video club. Although most clubs follow a common format, adapt this structure as needed to meet your group's time frame and goals.

Top-level questions to answer

1. What is the group's goal? What will a successful club meeting look like?
2. When and where will the group be able to meet, and how will each club meeting be structured?
3. Will presenters also facilitate deeper discussions, or will each meeting have a different designated facilitator (perhaps a professional learning expert on-site)?
4. How will the group (or the facilitator) identify specific learning goals for each meeting, and what supports, including follow-up after the club, will be needed to help advance the group's learning agenda?
5. How will the group record and report out the discussion and learning that is taking place, and to whom or with what group will this report be shared?

Structure of a typical video club meeting

ACTION (IN SEQUENCE)	DESCRIPTION	QUESTION TO CONSIDER
<p>1. Presenter introduces the clip.</p>	<p>Each clip is a 5- to 10-minute video of classroom teaching.</p> <p>1-3 presenters, depending on time/size/goals of group.</p>	<p>Should the viewers re-enact the classroom activity seen in clip before watching the video so that they can explore the content and ways students might make sense of the activity?</p>
<p>2. Participants watch the clip.</p>	<p>Entire video is played without interruption.</p> <p>Presenter may answer logistical questions about clip or content that help viewers understand the context.</p>	<p>Playing the entire clip orients viewers to the scope and trajectory of interactions in video and prepares them to engage with student thinking and learning. What other ways can we achieve this mindset?</p>
<p>3. Presenter replays clip, with group discussion of call-out moments.</p>	<p>Clip examined in detail.</p> <p>Viewers call for clip to be paused to ask question or make comments.</p> <p>In-depth discussion at moments relating to the club’s goal or that need clarification.</p>	<p>Should a coach or other professional learning expert facilitate these questions or comments? Who should be responsible for ensuring discussions stay focused on the group’s stated goals — and how will that look in practice?</p>

FIND: Selecting video club clips

Teachers participating in a video club have two primary roles. First, they individually select short video clips of their own teaching to share. Second, they collectively discuss the clips shared by their colleagues. Since a lesson can be analyzed for multiple purposes and from diverse perspectives, what are teachers to look for when selecting their own video, and what are they to say when discussing a colleague's clip? The acronyms in the tools on pp. 6-7 can aid teachers in making these decisions.

These four elements are lenses that teachers can use to search for potentially fruitful moments in their video. However, a single clip does not necessarily have to meet all four criteria to provoke productive club discussion.

FOCUS on students. Teachers can narrate gaps where the video does not fully capture their own action, but the video is the students' only voice. Therefore:

1. Select a video clip where students can be clearly seen and heard.
2. When recording, position the camera so that it will capture the students' faces and actions.
3. If using a microphone, position it closer to the (often soft-voiced) students.

INCORPORATE classroom artifacts. These can help orient participants to what is happening in the video and provide the context to interpret students' words and actions. Therefore:

1. Choose a clip with representations, student work, or other tangible resources as well as teacher-student or student-student dialogue.
2. Look for artifacts that the club can use to better understand the students' perspectives.
3. Scientific models, mathematical problems, literary works, and historical documents can all provide reference points for interpreting student contributions.

NARROW the scope. Clips that go more deeply into a narrow content focus can often sustain a more substantive debate. Therefore:

1. Select a clip that includes extended interaction around a smaller piece of content.
2. Look for a conversation with multiple turns.
3. Select small-group work around a single meaningful question.

DEPICT a problem of practice. Meaningful discussion most often centers on moments of difficulty. Therefore:

1. Choose a clip that captures student differences, confusion, or even conflict with content, and use this problem to frame discussion.
2. Pose a question or give a purpose at the start of the club, such as gathering feedback on a new activity, to help guide others in viewing the clip.
3. Focus on a problem of practice aligned with your professional learning goals and targeted areas for growth.

CHAT: Sustaining productive video club discussions

These four elements outline a potential sequence teachers can use to productively examine problems of practice shared by their colleagues — not to evaluate, but to better understand patterns of classroom interactions and identify areas for learning and improvement. Remember, every discussion does not need to address each of these criteria to advance teacher learning.

CLARIFY student contributions. Start the discussion from a student perspective to provide a rich foundation for exploring the full dimensions at play in the classroom.

1. Select a student contribution that was either interesting or unclear in the video, and revoice what the student said or reanimate their actions.
2. Try to make sense of what the student might have meant and what the student might have been thinking.

HIGHLIGHT classroom connections. Tie what a student said or did to the broader learning environment — representations, teacher moves, or other student contributions.

1. Discuss what a representation, or another classroom artifact, shows or hides and how it relates to the student's understanding.
2. Look for patterns across multiple students, or draw inferences about the impact of different teacher moves on students' contributions.
3. Focus on understanding how a specific element of the classroom impacts student thinking and avoid taking an evaluative stance that critiques the teacher.

ANALYZE timescales and trajectories of learning. Consider the typical experience students at this grade level have had with the content in the video.

1. Make inferences about whether a specific student idea might be a common struggle based on prior knowledge or more of an anomaly.
2. Look forward and draw implications for future learning.
3. Hypothesize about what might be fruitful next steps for this classroom, and place the individual moment captured by the video within a likely trajectory of teaching and learning.

TROUBLESHOOT potential solutions. Suggest ways to address the problems of practice highlighted in the clip.

1. Propose alterations to instructional moves, resources, or sequencing that might better support student learning.
2. Build a corpus of alternative solutions, each with specific strengths and weaknesses, rather than searching for a single best solution.
3. Generalize the solutions from the clip to more routine problems of practice that teachers encounter each day.
4. Consider what additional learning and supports the teachers may need to bolster their skills to address specific issues identified in the discussion.

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A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO ELEVATING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

By Joellen Killion, Cindy Harrison, Amy Colton, Chris Bryan, Ann Delehant, and Debbie Cooke

Our latest report explores the benefits of teacher leadership and provides a framework for schools and systems to make teacher leadership a driver of improved teaching and learning.

Created for leaders or leadership teams interested in initiating, expanding, assessing, or revising approaches to teacher leadership within schools or school systems, this report offers a set of guiding questions for each of four core components of a systemic approach to teacher leadership.

The report's team of authors emphasize that teacher leadership, to have its greatest impact, must be contextually defined and operationalized within conditions unique to every school district and deeply embedded in the day-to-day work of teachers and administrators.



To download the full report, go to:
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