Best Foot Forward Project
Research Findings from Year 1

Classroom Observation Challenges

- Administrator Time

- Content Expertise

- Adversarial Feedback Conversations

- Inadequacy of Memory and Notes to Change Practice

- Lesson Authenticity

- Scoring Reliability

**Can video technology improve
classroom observations?**

Research Questions

- Does digital video provide **more effective feedback** to teachers than in-person observations?

- Do video observations **predict** student achievement across different state tests and district/state contexts?

- Under what conditions does digital video become a **cost-effective** replacement for in-person observations or PD?

- Do teachers and administrators **prefer** video observations?

- Are video observations as **reliable** as in-person observations?
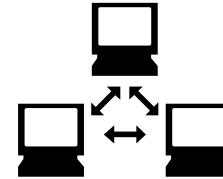
Randomized Controlled Trial

2013–15

- 435 Teachers
- 135 Administrators
- 108 Schools
- 23,000 Students
- 10 Districts
- Mix of Rural, Suburban, Urban Districts

1. Teachers videotape their lessons as often as they like.

2. Teachers choose the lessons they like best.

In lieu of in-person observations

5. All parties meet to discuss the footage and map out next steps.

3. Teachers send their videos to an observer.

4. Observers watch, comment and score the videos.

Did teachers take up videotaping?
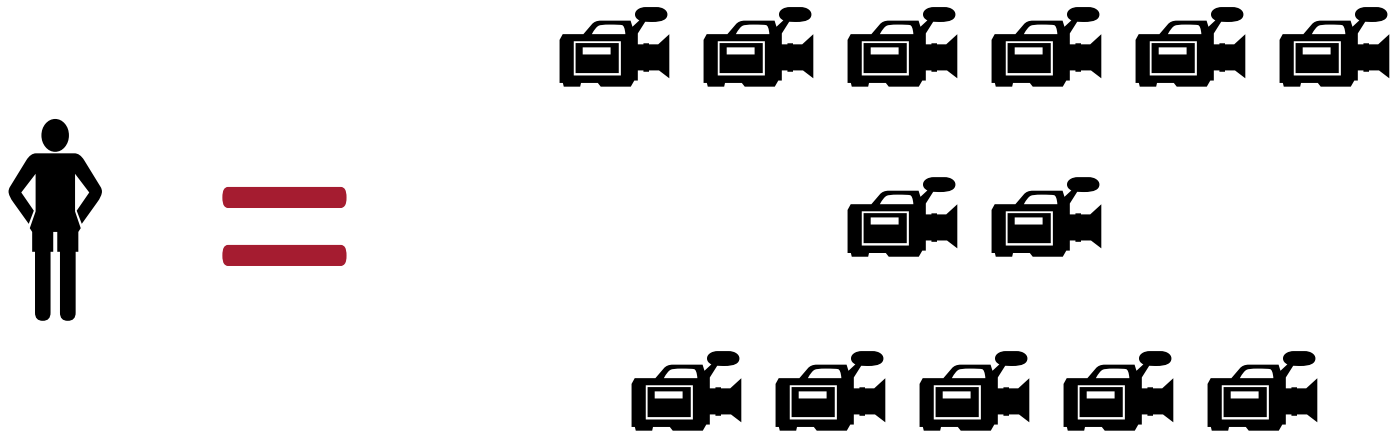

Finding: Despite initial hesitation, treatment teachers filmed more than was asked of them in the study—a mean of 13.3 lessons were uploaded per teacher.

Fairness and Support

Item	Treatment Difference	Control Mean
Overall, how fair was the classroom observation process this year?	0.121*** (0.046)	0.583
How often did you and the observer disagree about the appropriate score for the lesson? (dichotomous; 1="almost always" or "often")	-.06*	.08
How often were teachers defensive as you discussed your observation notes with them? (dichotomous; 1= "never" or "rarely")	.28***	.65

Finding: Teachers perceived their supervisors to be more supportive and their observations to be fairer. Administrators perceived teachers to be less defensive in feedback conversations.

Teachers' De-privatization of Instruction

Proportion of Teachers Sharing Lesson Videos with Colleagues
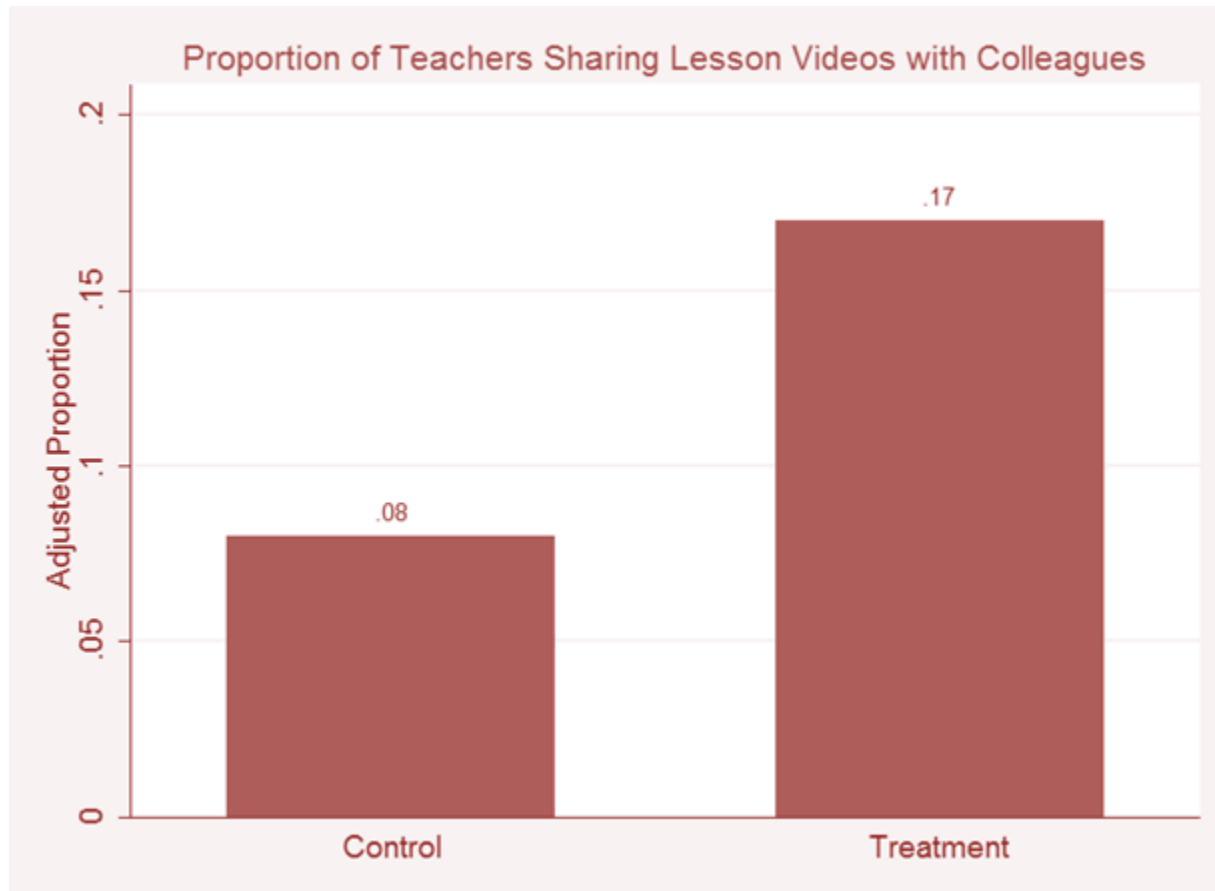
Finding: Though we did not ask teachers to share their videos with in-building colleagues, they did so at a significantly greater rate just by virtue of having the technology.

Admins' De-privatization of Instruction

Amount of Admin Support-Brokering by Condition
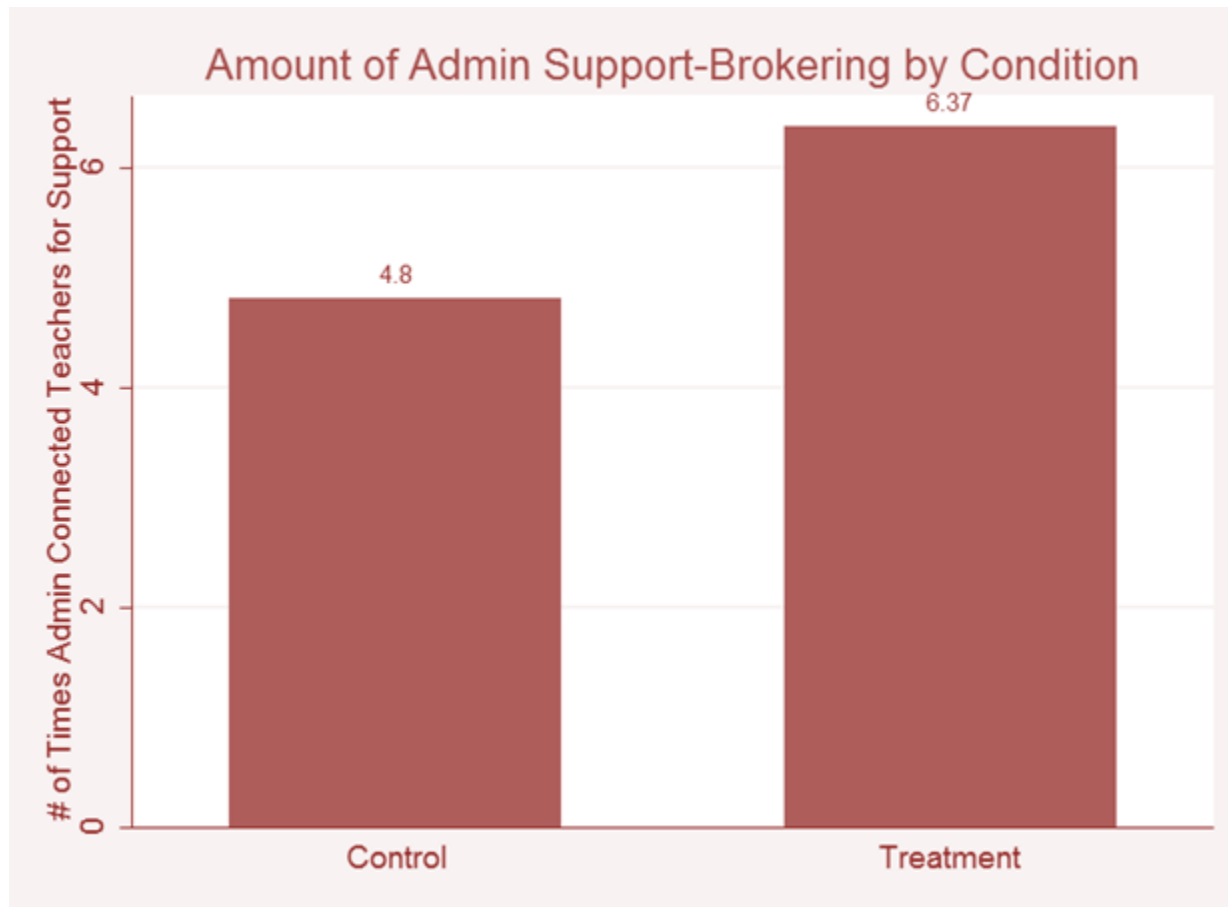
Finding: The process had a significant positive effect on the number of times that administrators requested that teachers connect with one another for professional support.

Supervisor Time and Flexibility

	Treatment Administrator Differences in Weekly Observation Time-Use						
Observe	Prep. Deliv. FB	Deliv. FB	Pre-conf	Sched. Obs	Write Report	Compl. Forms	Total
8.993**	1.238	-0.572	-1.008	-0.512	-1.220	-4.027	1.694
(3.236)	(1.647)	(1.521)	(1.036)	(0.787)	(3.358)	(2.960)	(11.90)

Finding: Treatment administrators spent significantly more time observing instruction, but less time scheduling, writing reports and completing forms (not significant).

Finding: More than half of video observations were done outside of traditional hours of instruction, when in-person observations are typically conducted.

Observation Reliability

Score on Chosen vs. Unchosen Lesson
Teacher average
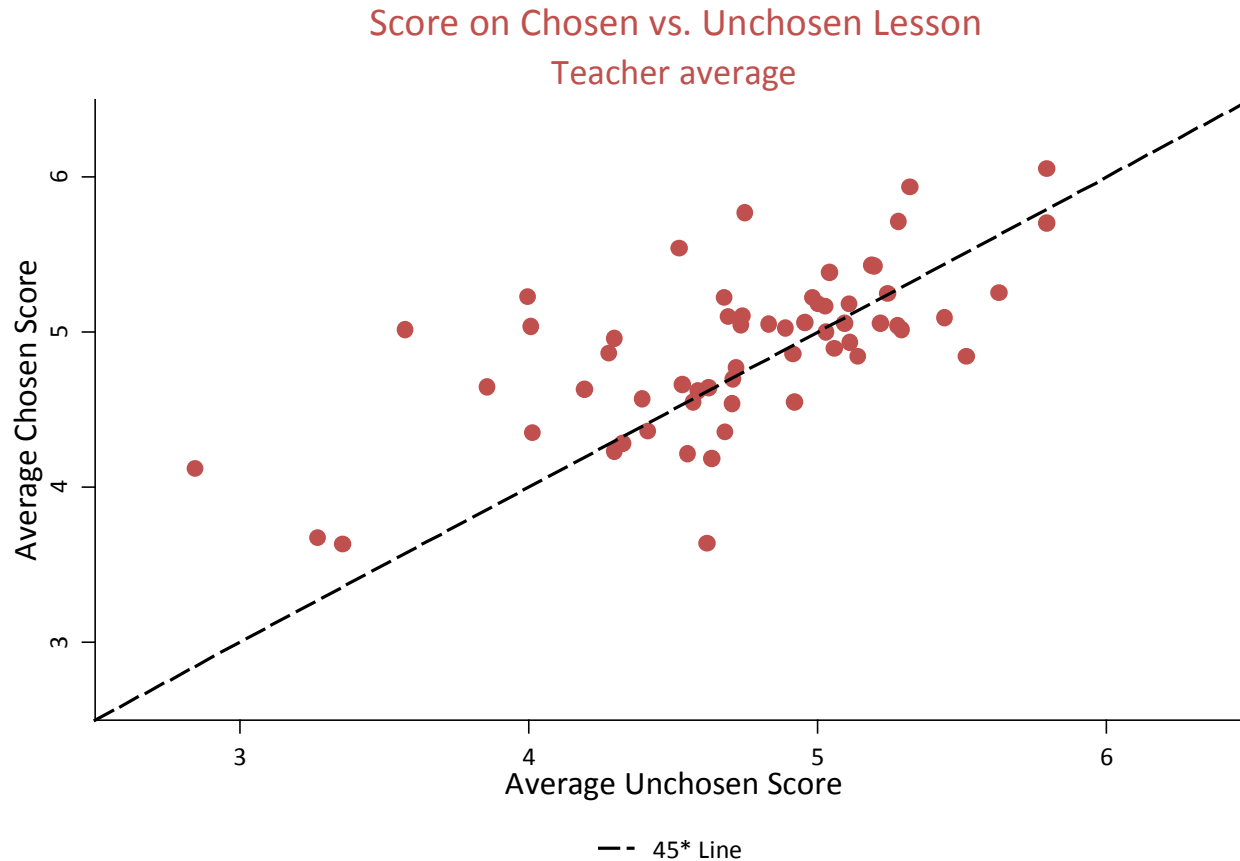
Finding: Mean scores of chosen videos are higher by about a quarter of a standard deviation, but scores on chosen and unchosen videos are highly correlated between teachers.

Video Observation Approval

Item	Treatment Difference	Control Mean
Being allowed to use a camera to voluntarily record and submit videos for your classroom observations INSTEAD OF having in-person observations?	.12*	0.51
Being allowed to use a camera to voluntarily record and submit videos for SOME of your classroom observations (in addition to at least one in-person observation)?	.15**	0.53
Being allowed to use a camera to voluntarily record and submit videos for purely formative feedback (not part of the formal observation process)?	.12*	0.57

Finding: There was a significant treatment-control difference for teacher support of video observations. There was no difference for administrators.

Questions?

- Email: miriam_greenberg@gse.harvard.edu

- Website for Findings/Reports: http://cepr.harvard.edu/best-foot-forward-project