



# Letter to Teachers: Benefits of Video Observations and Common Questions about Privacy and Video Use

Dear Teachers,

This year, [\[X School Agency\]](#) is introducing a new option for your required classroom observations: Teachers are now able to use self-selected videos of classroom instruction as a replacement for an in-person observation.

We recognize that video can make some people uneasy, which is why this initiative is optional. It is also why we have carefully designed the video observation process to protect teachers' and students' privacy. The purpose of this process is not to create a permanent record of your practice or to institute "gotcha" observations. Instead, we want teachers to have the best possible tools to reflect on their own practice and to make decisions about what to share with their observers.

Though participation is optional, it is strongly recommended. Research about video observations provides a very clear message—teachers perceive the process as more fair, useful, and satisfactory compared to in-person observations. Consider these benefits to your practice:

- Watching your videos back will give you a good sense of your strengths and areas for growth long before your evaluation.
- Video provides a shared record of your teaching, allowing for more constructive and actionable meetings with your observer. It is more detailed and reliable than written notes.
- Video provides you more flexibility on when you are observed, because you choose when to film and ultimately what is reviewed.
- Video allows you the option to share best practices with other teachers at your school, who may never be able to observe you live.
- Video allows you to notice new aspects of your students' behavior and engagement with instructional content.

Video also holds benefits for your school administrators and the school as a whole:

- Administrators can move in and out of classes more freely, making them more available to respond to students and teachers during the school day.
- Lessons can be reviewed outside of instructional hours.
- Observers may recognize skills and abilities that may not be apparent during in-person observations because video captures a more authentic classroom environment than when an outside observer enters a room.

Included are some responses to common questions about video. We are also available to answer any questions you have by phone or email, and we plan to hold [regional](#) meetings to discuss video observations candidly with our community. As we work to improve our delivery of an excellent education to [\[X School Agency\]'s](#) students, we appreciate your consideration of this innovation.

Thank you,

[\[X School Agency Head\]](#)



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## COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIVACY AND VIDEO USE

### 1. How will video be used?

Video will be used to complete your classroom observations. You will film the lessons yourself and have the opportunity to review your videos before selecting which one is shared with your observer. You are also welcome to use the videos for your own self-reflection, or to share them with a colleague for professional feedback. If your video is exemplary, you may be asked to share it more broadly, but nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.

### 2. How is this beneficial to me?

Using video will allow you more control in the observation process by choosing exactly what is seen by your observer. This process is also inherently more self-reflective as you will review your lessons in order to select your best work. We expect that increased reflection on your practice will help you identify areas in which you'd like to grow and better assess the needs of your students.

### 3. Who will have access to the videos?

All videos are private until you choose to share them.

### 4. How will the video be stored?

The videos will be stored on a secure, password protected platform. You can access your videos at any time and choose who is able to see them. Your videos are stored for as long as you are employed with us or until our software contract expires. You can download your videos at any time to store on a hard drive. The videos are stored on your camera until you delete them.

### 5. Will using video negatively impact my classroom observation score?

Research from Harvard's Best Foot Forward project found that teachers who participated in video observations did not experience either negative or positive scoring bias, compared to other teachers. Further, watching video clips with a supervisor fostered positive dialogue between teachers and observers. The video was a shared source for conversation and analysis about instruction.

### 6. What if I don't like watching myself?

Watching oneself on video is similar to recording your voicemail greeting: it can feel embarrassing at first but eventually you'll grow more comfortable with it. You may feel uncomfortable after watching your first video, but as time goes on, you will focus more on your pedagogy and the behavior of your students.

### 7. Are there negative consequences in choosing whether or not to use video?

No, there are no negative consequences. We believe that this process holds great benefits for you and your students only if you are willing to take the leap.

### 8. Will this interfere with my instruction or students' learning?

Students may be distracted by the camera at first but not much more than having an in-person observer in the back of the classroom. Over time, your students will most likely adapt to the presence of the camera, and you will be able to capture a more authentic representation of your classroom than your observer might see when he or she enters the classroom.