Center for Education Policy Research
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Measuring Readiness and Assessing Success

Implementing video observations for the first time can feel like a start-up venture: exciting but perilous. There is as much potential for value as there is for unforeseen challenges.

Equipped with a video observation protocol, stakeholder buy-in, and the right technology, you may feel ready to get started at scale. Before beginning implementation, however, we strongly advise that you first test your new observation process and technology with select teachers who can help refine implementation and inform its future direction. This section of the toolkit, based on findings from the **Best Foot Forward project**, helps you design a pilot initiative to test and evaluate the effectiveness of your video observation program.

IN THIS SECTION:

- How will I know that I am ready to introduce video observations into my school or district?
- What are the key indicators of success?
- What data will lead to better supports around implementation?

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Step 1: Ensure Readiness

In the Best Foot Forward project, an impact evaluation of video observations, we started our initiative with a five-month pilot. This allowed us to test the technology to ensure there was sufficient stakeholder enthusiasm to justify expanding video observations into new states and districts. It gave us the chance to identify problems, requirements, and benefits early on, and that made our work much easier in the years that followed.

Additionally, if you are considering using video for evaluation, rather than coaching or peer collaboration, we strongly recommend using video for formative purposes first. Evaluation can cause anxiety to run high. A nonevaluative launch allows teachers to become comfortable with the technological tools and processes before there are stakes attached.

By starting with a small, low-stakes pilot, you can minimize the impact of the challenges you might otherwise encounter at scale. Here are some additional considerations to keep in mind as you get started.

RECOMMENDATIONS

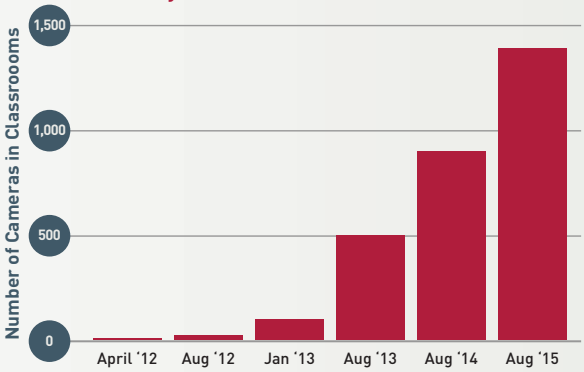
1. **Recruit willing teachers and observers.** If teachers are excited about the video observation process, the pilot will go well. If you compel teachers or observers to participate, you will spend too much time convincing uninterested parties to use the cameras instead of learning from your implementers about how to make the experience successful.
2. **Celebrate and reward your teachers' participation.** Your pilot participants are your partners in learning. It is helpful to identify ways to reward and celebrate them for putting their "best foot forward." Be sure to express gratitude for participants' willingness to inform the future of video observations in your state or district.
3. **Align video observations with your organizational priorities.** If your video observation initiative doesn't align with the goals and efforts set forth by senior leadership in your organization, it will seem like just "another thing." There is no reason why video observations can't reinforce or enhance your curriculum efforts or professional development plans for the year.
4. **Commit to collecting feedback throughout the year.** A pilot will be a waste of time if you miss the opportunity to learn from participants and course-correct along the way. Establish regular check-in meetings with individuals or school teams to learn about the process.
5. **Use an intake form to assess the baseline readiness of participants.** How comfortable do they feel using the technology after initial training? Is their school culture amenable to collaboration? Have they carved out time to discuss their videos? Do they know who their support contacts are? Getting a baseline measure of readiness will allow leaders to provide differentiated support to participants. The data will help explain why satisfaction might be stronger in some contexts as opposed to others.

SCALING FOR SUCCESS: HOW VIDEO OBSERVATIONS WENT VIRAL IN NEWTON COUNTY

Newton County Schools first installed a small number of cameras in its classrooms for safety and security purposes in 2012. "For us video was part of creating a safe classroom environment," says Superintendent Samantha Fuhrey, Ed.S. Teachers using the cameras soon saw an opportunity for professional growth. "We discovered that the camera system could be used for so much more," Fuhrey explained. "We learned that the video footage enhanced our professional learning communities because teachers were able to capture their instructional techniques and share them with their colleagues in a setting that was not evaluative."

Newton County Schools (NCS) administrators saw that there was a need for content-specific support for their mathematics teachers, so they contracted with remote subject area specialists from an outside agency to watch teachers' videos and provide feedback about their mathematics instruction. Eventually, they were able to identify a highly effective math teacher within NCS, and they trained him to provide video coaching to others. "He's still teaching the high level mathematics courses at his school, but he's also using video to provide instructional support to other teachers in our secondary program." Fuhrey believes that creating opportunities for teacher leadership, such as video coaching, allows for time shifting that keeps highly effective teachers in the classroom and contributes to systemic excellence outside of class hours.

Newton County Schools (GA) Camera Installation



In response to teacher demand, NCS received state approval for teachers to have the option to substitute one in-person evaluation for a video evaluation, and they are hoping to expand this option. Fuhrey sees this as a unique example of reaching consensus between administrative and teaching teams. "Last March [2015] we had just over 22,000 video recordings across the district, and that's without a mandate to do so." In three years, the number of cameras installed in classrooms grew from two to 1,390—not because teachers were compelled by administrators but because they recognized the impact of the technology on their practice. Fuhrey and her administrative team followed teachers' initiative and embraced the context that allowed video to flourish.

ENSURING READINESS TOOLS

TOOL ID	RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	INTENDED AUDIENCE
M1A	Assess Your Video Observation Readiness	A high-level checklist to identify gaps in your overall level of preparedness to implement video observations	District administrators, school administrators, instructional leaders

Step 2: Assess Success

Cameras, software platforms, and coaches can be costly investments, so you will want to have clearly envisioned plans for evaluating the effectiveness of your initiative. An honest evaluation of the first run will enable you to determine whether video is helping educators realize their goals or if it is distracting from them. Ultimately, collecting data will help you adjust implementation to better support teachers and observers in maximizing the value of video.

It is important to ask the right questions. These inquiries fall into three categories: teacher growth and collaboration, overall educator satisfaction, and technology and logistical support.

ARE EDUCATORS BENEFITING FROM PARTICIPATION?

In the Best Foot Forward project, we were able to measure the causal benefits of video observations in a randomized controlled trial. We looked at student growth, as well as teacher, student and administrator surveys to assess the value of the process. Education leaders can ask teachers to report on their learning relative to other professional development activities or evaluation approaches. Other questions might cover whether they noticed specific aspects of their instruction not noticed before, whether they gained valuable insight into student behavior, or how they used video footage to address or improve instruction. Leaders can also ask questions to understand whether there is more frequent teacher-to-teacher collaboration in schools resulting from the use of video and whether teachers are more willing to share instruction outside of their schools. Finally, leaders can look at growth in observation scores, student survey ratings, or other available data from the year prior to and the end of the year following the video observation initiative to detect any strong correlations with the video work.

DO EDUCATORS LIKE THE PROCESS?

The acceptance of the video observation process by teachers and administrators is a precondition to scaling technology. Without widespread support in the pilot phase, it is unlikely that other teachers and administrators, who often rely on word of mouth from peers, will support your efforts. Collecting educator satisfaction data and teacher testimonials will help you validate growing the program and cultivate greater trust from hesitant participants.

IS THE TECHNOLOGY USER-FRIENDLY?

Leaders must assess the participants' attitudes toward the technology early and often. Not only should leaders consider teacher and observer attitudes, but they should also quantify the amount of time it takes to manage the technology, whether there is adequate technical support for teachers and observers, and whether cameras and network connections are accessible.

If you are contracting with a software company to provide a video observation platform for your teachers, ask the vendor for usage data. Usage data will help you know how often and how long your observers and teachers interact with the platform. This will help you assess relevancy and value. For example, if teachers repeatedly visit the site and spend a long time in the system, there is a high likelihood that it is relevant to their work. If there are teachers who never use the site, there is a strong likelihood they have encountered technological challenges, are disengaged from the video observation process, or have found a different way to share videos.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Identify someone to collect survey data after implementation.** Use data to identify whether learning and collaboration are increasing due to the program and whether there are technical fixes or adjustments you can make to improve the process.
2. **Use survey data to identify your video champions.** Look for high rates of satisfaction with the process and technical comfort: These are teachers who might be willing to help spread the word about the program or work with teachers who feel less comfortable with technology.
3. **Host a final focus group to explore the meaning behind your survey findings.** Not only will it help you better understand the costs versus benefits of video in your context, but it will also give educators a chance to be heard and shape the innovation going forward.
4. **Share your successes beyond your school, district, or state lines.** Tell us your story or contribute to the video observation toolkit here.

MEASURING SUCCESS TOOLS

TOOL ID	RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	INTENDED AUDIENCE
M2A	Teacher Video Pilot Success Survey	A sample survey to evaluate the success of your video observation initiative and identify areas for improvement	District administrators, school administrators, instructional leaders
M2B	Sample Video Observations Focus Group Script	A focus group script for you to customize to learn more about the value of video observations from your teachers	District administrators, school administrators, instructional leaders