Pepperdine Presents: An Online Video Case Studies Series to Use Throughout a Teacher Education Program

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Pepperdine University has developed a series of online video case studies to use as part of its fifth year teacher education program. These online video cases use the software tools developed by LessonLab. Three cases from the series will be demonstrated. The first case, from a lower elementary classroom, includes four segments from a reading lesson that uses the Language Experience Approach. The follow-up to this case demonstrates how these same techniques can be adapted for use in a secondary level classroom. The second case includes four segments from a unit on Climatology, covering both science and math concepts and highlighting the use of Palm Pilots as part of the unit. The third case demonstrates a variety of techniques used to teach English Language Learners.

The LessonLab tools are based on Dr. James Stigler's findings from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. These findings were documented in his book The Teaching Gap. Stigler & Hiebert (1999) write there that they believe that the teaching profession does not have enough knowledge about what constitutes effective teaching and that there is a lack of a system for developing professional knowledge and for giving teachers the opportunity to learn about teaching.

The cases developed by Pepperdine University using the LessonLab tools include a variety of elements that research indicates are valuable when using cases to better understand teaching. By adding other elements to the video, a richer context for the video case is developed. These elements include commentaries designed to guide the preservice educators while viewing the video. These commentaries may be from the teacher or from other experts in the pedagogy being used or in the technology being infused into the lesson. There are also resources such as the lesson plan used, state frameworks or standards, samples of student work, and the rubrics or assessment tools used as part of the lesson. Because these resources are online, students may also be directed to web-based resources that will be important to them in their teaching practice. In addition to video of the lesson, there is video of the teacher indicating, prior to the lesson, what he or she believes is their intent in the lesson. There is also video of the teacher being interviewed after the lesson, indicating areas that he or she feels could be improved and why. In addition, there is usually commentary from the students about what they understood about the lesson.

While the original intent for these online video cases was to supplement materials used in methods courses, our experience at Pepperdine indicates that the cases have much wider applicability. For example, they can be used in an Instructional Strategies class where preservice educators may be discussing possible classroom management strategies. They might also be used in an Educational Psychology course where preservice teachers might develop their observation and reflection skills. As instructors in the Pepperdine teacher education program use the online video cases, they continue to find new and different ways to take advantage of the rich resources inherent in the video case.

Although the content of these online video cases is important, even more important perhaps are some of the ways that these cases are actually used in preservice instruction. Moving cases from text to online allows preservice educators to watch the video many more times than they might within the context of their face to face classroom time. Preservice educators may also participate in online discussions about the cases, not only with their peers but also with a larger community of educators. Perhaps most important, preservice educators, using the LessonLab tools, can interact with the video in a way that lets them identify key points where they observe certain activities occurring in the video and to reflect on why they believe this is happening.

Finally, these professionally developed online video cases have led faculty to use digital video in even more ways in their classrooms. The availability of low cost digital video cameras and easy to use video editors have led faculty to combine the use of the prepared cases with student-developed cases.