Virtual Field Experiences for Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract: This video is one in a series of teacher training modules based on real-time teaching in a 3rd and 4th grade classroom, beginning on the first day of school. Video data were captured during two-way interactive videoconferencing sessions between Stetson University, Bethune-Cookman College, and Bonner Elementary. Pre-service teachers at both institutions observed the target classroom on a regular basis using videoconferencing technologies and a variety of observation forms. Student and faculty reactions and insights were captured on video to augment written comments. The videotapes were then edited to create modules for undergraduate and graduate teacher education. A handout will be disseminated directing participants to the T3 website, where they will find information on videoconferencing, the data collection process, classroom observation forms, descriptions of the teacher training modules, and other resources available to educators.

In June 2000, the Department of Education at Stetson University received a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to support the integration of technology into pre-service teacher education. Located in central Florida, the T3 project is a consortia of five key partners: Stetson University, Bethune-Cookman College (an historically black college), Volusia County Public Schools, the Florida Independent College Fund, and Time Warner Communications. The purpose of the T3 project is to prepare pre-service teachers to effectively infuse technology across the curriculum to enhance teaching, learning, and student achievement.

Using T3 grant funds, two-way interactive videoconferencing capabilities were established at Bonner Elementary to enable pre-service teachers at Bethune-Cookman College and Stetson to "peer into" an elementary classroom in order to unobtrusively observe real-time teaching. Bonner Elementary is an inner city school located in Daytona Beach, Florida. The teacher, Ms. Carol Colucci, participated in a summer technology boot camp at Stetson and subsequently volunteered, along with her 3rd and 4th grade students, to be the videoconferencing test case for virtual field experiences with our pre-service students. The trials and tribulations of videoconferencing are discussed in previous presentations (see http://www.stetson.edu/t3/resources.htm).

Typically, teacher education faculty at Stetson and B-CC schedule virtual field experiences at specific times to view a specific lesson in a specific content area. In this way, faculty can direct the students' attention to a particular strategy, skill, or learning construct as the focal point of discussion about the observation. Pre-service students were thus exposed to a commonality of experience that cannot be replicated in other types of real-time classroom observations. In addition, faculty and students could observe Ms. Colucci and her students at any time during the school day in the professional development centers at both campuses. Some faculty required students to make a certain number of virtual observations in their courses using classroom observation forms [see http://www.stetson.edu/t3/resources.htm]. Pre-service teachers were also encouraged to ask Ms. Colucci questions through videoconferencing before or after a lesson or by email if the question would interrupt student learning time. We are confident that what our students saw during the virtual field experiences was the regular stuff of everyday classroom teaching.

In addition to real-time videoconferencing, SVHS video data were gathered in Ms. Colucci's class, beginning on the first day of school. These data were subsequently compiled, edited, and used as the basis for pre-
service teacher training modules and for graduate education. The video to be shared in this presentation will consist of real-time teaching and pre-service teachers' observations about the lessons. A handout will be disseminated directing participants to the T3 website, where they will find information on videoconferencing, the data collection process, classroom observation forms, descriptions of the teacher training modules, and other resources available to educators.

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