

The Development, Use and Impact of an Open Source, Web-Based, Video-Annotation Tool to Provide Job-Embedded Professional Development for Educators: The Coaching Companion

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Abstract : In the United States, to advance the quality and education requirements of PreK teachers, there are concerns regarding barriers for existing early childhood educators to access formal degrees and ongoing professional development. Barriers exist related to affordability and access. Affordability is a key factor that impacts teachers access to degree programs. The lack of financial resources makes it difficult for many qualified candidates to begin, and complete, degree programs. Even if funding was not an issue, accessibility remains a pressing issue in higher education. Some common barriers include geography, long work hours, lack of professional community, childcare, and clear articulation agreements. Greater flexibility is needed to allow all early childhood professionals to pursue college coursework that takes into consideration the many competing demands on their schedules. For these busy professionals, it is particularly important that professional development opportunities are available "on demand" and are seen as relevant to their work. Courses that are available during non-traditional hours make attendance more accessible, and professional development that is relevant to what they need to know and be able to do to be effective in their current positions increase access to and the impact of ongoing professional education. EarlyEdU at the University of Washington provides institutes of higher education and state professional development systems with free comprehensive, competency based college courses based on the latest science of how to optimize child learning and outcomes across developmental domains. The coursework embeds an intentional teaching framework which requires teachers to know what to do in the moment, see effective teaching in themselves and others, enact these practices in the classroom, reflect on what works and what does not, and improve with thoughtful practices. Reinforcing the Intentional Teaching Framework in EarlyEdU courses is the Coaching Companion, an open source, web-based video annotation learning tool that supports coaching in higher education by enabling students to view and refine their teaching practices. The tool is integrated throughout EarlyEdU courses. With the Coaching Companion, students see upload teaching interactions on video and then reflect on the degree to which they incorporate evidence-based practices. Coaching Companion eliminates the traditional separation of theory and practice in college-based teacher preparation. Together, the Intentional Teaching Framework and the Coaching Companion transform the course instructor into a job-embedded coach. The instructor watches student interactions with children on video using the Coaching Companion and looks specifically for interactions defined in course assignments, readings, and lectures. Based on these observations, the instructor offers feedback and proposes next steps. Developed on federal and philanthropic funds, all EarlyEdU courses and the Coaching Companion are available for free to 2- and 4-year colleges and universities with early childhood degrees, as well as to state early learning and education departments to increase access to high quality professional development. We studied the impact of the Coaching Companion in two courses and demonstrated a significant increase in the quality of teacher-child interactions as measured by the PreK CLASS quality teaching assessment. Implications are discussed related to policy and practice.

Keywords : education technology, distance education, early childhood education, professional development

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