

# Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences for Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers Facing Interruptions in Field Experience Placements During the COVID-19 Pandemic

DAWN MOLLENKOPF

*University of Nebraska at Kearney, USA*  
mollenkopfdl@unk.edu

MARTONIA GASKILL

*University of Nebraska at Kearney, USA*  
gaskillmc@unk.edu

In teacher education, the heart of learning culminates in field-based experiences. When these become interrupted such as during COVID-19, teacher educators can be challenged to create alternate learning opportunities. One professor used written and video-based case studies in lieu of cancelled field placements. Survey responses indicate students believed course adjustments were useful and provided meaningful learning experiences for them: 52% said they benefitted most from the case studies and showed preference for video formats over written cases. Case studies, then, can help effectively create meaningful learning opportunities analogous to field experiences, and promote engagement during remote learning.

**Keywords:** teacher preparation, field experiences, pre-service, in-service, teacher, written case studies, video case studies, remote learning

## INTRODUCTION

In Teacher Education, the heart of learning culminates in field-based experiences which connect theory to practice (Sturmer, Konings, & Seidel, 2015). Consistent with a constructivist framework, field experiences actively engage students in authentic situations (Dewey, 1938) that challenge and expand their existing knowledge (Piaget, 1952) until they can distill these reflections into abstract concepts applicable to future experiences (Kolbe, 1984). Field experiences are powerful because they create genuine connections between ideas and experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2000) which immerse students in complex learning environments where they analyze situations, solve problems, and hone teaching skills. When field experiences become interrupted, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, educators can be challenged to find alternatives. One strategy, case studies, builds upon experiential learning theory which harnesses observation and reflection to challenge misconceptions and crystalize learning concepts (Dennick, 2012). Case studies capture the problems and challenges of teaching in specific contexts and require the learner to analyze and reflect to provide a solution (Gunther, Fleige, Upmeier zu Belzen, & Kruger, 2019). Case studies usually supplement, rather than supplant, field experiences. However, when these become interrupted, case studies may create meaningful learning opportunities to mitigate experiences lost.

## INNOVATION

COVID-19 created this situation for one professor teaching two sections of an Early Childhood Special Education course which required students--both in-service and pre-service teachers--to work with two children with special needs and attend Early Intervention home visits. This mentoring would have scaffolded learning so students could make critical connections they could not make on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). However, when school closures and early childhood program restrictions cancelled these opportunities, the professor was challenged to find meaningful alternatives. Also, online delivery requires students to demonstrate more responsibility and accountability for their learning (Hoskins,

2011), and even if they were familiar with technology for personal use, they could not apply these for educational purposes (Greene, Yu, & Copeland, 2014).

The lack of field experience created three gap areas: home visits, journal entries, and summary reports. To replace home visits, the instructor searched for home visits students could virtually observe. She used the Results Matter Video Library ([https://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/rmvideoserries\\_justbeingkids](https://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/rmvideoserries_justbeingkids)) which has six videos in the “Just Being Kids” series of Early Intervention home visits. The videos are free and publicly accessible, and the YouTube format can be watched on multiple devices that students owned (see Figure 1).

## Results Matter Video Library - Just Being Kids

We wish to thank the families and early childhood education teams who have partnered with us to create the videos in the Results Matter Video Library. CDE produces these videos for professional development activities and obtains voluntary written permission from all parties who appear in these video clips.

### How to Access the Videos

You can watch the clips online or download QuickTime versions of the videos for use in professional development activities. To download the Apple QuickTime .MOV file, select the DOWNLOAD VIDEO link located below each video. NOTE: If you download any of these video files you will need a free media player that will play video files such as [VLC Media Player](#) or [UMPlayer](#) on both PCs and Macs. [QuickTime Player](#) is also recommended for Macs but not PCs.

View the [Results Matter Video Library Catalog](#) (PDF)



### Limitations on Video Use

1. You may not use any of the videos on this site for commercial purposes.
2. You may not edit, alter, transform or build upon any of the videos on this site.
3. You may not download and re-upload a video file on this site to any website. However, you may use the YouTube share option to link to or embed the video on another website.

### NOTICE

These videos were produced and posted to this website with voluntary written permission from all parties who appear in the videos including program staff, volunteers and parents/guardians on their own behalf and that of their children.

These videos are NOT extracted in any form from child assessment records but rather were produced by CDE for professional development activities.

For more information about the video library, please contact:

- Marcia Blum, Preschool Special Education Specialist Email [Marcia Blum](#)

These clips were developed to be used in professional development activities to give early care and education providers an opportunity to practice observation and documentation skills.

### Video Categories

(Click on a category below to view a list of videos)

[Videos Home Page](#)

[Early Intervention](#)

» [Just Being Kids](#)

[Clips for Practicing Observation, Documentation and Assessment Skills](#)

[e Chrome](#) [Only Practice Clips in Spanish](#)

Blake's Story (Runtime: 7:15)



This vignette illustrates how an occupational therapist worked with the family to make shopping trips easier and help actively engage two and a half-year-old Blake in the rich learning opportunities found in the grocery store.

[Download Video](#)

Figure 1. A screenshot of the Results Matter Video Library.

Since some students had attended one or more visits before schools shut down, the instructor adjusted assignment instructions to allow students to combine actual home visit observations with video or use all video observations as needed. She also provided an observation form to scaffold students' analysis and a grading rubric to guide their writing of their paper. These supports made it easier for students to be more independent in their learning online (see Figure 2).

Spring 2020

- Home
- Announcements
- Syllabus
- Modules
- Assignments
- Discussions
- Quizzes
- Grades
- People
- Collaborations
- Files
- Pages
- Outcomes
- Conferences
- Instructor Course Evaluations
- VidGrid Portal
- UNK Library
- LockDown Browser
- Settings

## Home Visitation Report-- NEW

Published Edit

Here is the form and rubric for the Home Visitation Report (Same for option 1 and 2)

[TESE 334 EI Home Visit Observation Form and Rubric.doc](#)

### Option 1: For those of you who were lucky enough to complete two home visits.

Students will do two home visits with their Early Intervention specialist to watch how he or she works with families who have very young children with disabilities. It does not have to be the same family for the two visits. Students will record their observations on the forms. Then students will write a report summarizing the focus of the visit, the needs of the child and family, how the Early Intervention Specialist conducted the visit, how responsive the child and adults were to the visit, and how the visit ended, what plans for future visits were made, and students' reflections the process.

### Option 2: For those of you who were not able to finish two home visits.

If you were unable to go to one or more of your home visits, you may complete the alternate assignment. Go to the link below and watch all six videos--they are short (about 10 minutes each). Pick two of them (or one, if you were lucky enough to get one home visit in) and use the observation form you would normally use for the in-person home visits (that is the attachments at the top. Then use those notes to write your paper.

[Just Being Kids](#)

Regardless of whether you do in-person or video home visits, students will upload the report only. It is not necessary to upload the observation forms.

**Figure 2.** A screenshot of the home visitation report layout.

The second assignment gap area was weekly journal entries where students had to identify teaching objectives for assigned children, plan and implement instruction to meet those objectives, measure children's progress in their learning, and reflect on the teaching experience. To replace the journal entries, the professor wrote short scenarios of fictitious children and asked students to analyze, plan, and reflect as if they were teaching these children. She provided clear directions with questions to guide students in their analysis, and had students use a text entry format for their assignment (see Figure 3). This allowed direct, two-way feedback between the student and the professor, a critical feature for adult learning (Dennick, 2012).

**Read the following scenario and in 2-3 paragraphs, tell me how you would teach this child:**

Autumn is 2 years and 10 months old and has fine and gross motor delays. She is not yet walking. She can get herself into a sitting position if she is placed on her back. She can stand alone for at least 10 seconds. She can sit back down if she has been standing. Her physical therapist feels Autumn is ready to work on pulling herself to stand so this is her new IFSP goal.

This week's objective is to have Autumn pull to stand, with teacher assistance, and remain standing on her own for at least 10 seconds at least two times out of five attempts.

Your job is to plan two different activities that will provide multiple opportunities for Autumn to pull to stand. For each activity, tell how you will:

- Set up the activity and encourage multiple opportunities to pull to stand.
- Prompt Autumn to pull to stand, and what assistance might you provide to help her be successful.
- Assess and document her performance so you will know if she is making progress.

Assuming she can pull to stand successfully with full physical help from you:

- What would be your next steps when you teach her next time?
- How would you adjust the objective?
- How would you adjust your teaching?

**Students will get points for the following:**

- Description of each activity and how it is set up for multiple opportunities (4 points)
- How you will prompt Autumn in each activity and support her to do the task (4 points)
- How you will document Autumn's progress in each activity (2 points)
- What next steps you have for teaching each activity and how you would adjust the objective and teaching to continue progress (5 points)

Points 15

Submitting a text entry box

**Figure 3.** An example of the journal entry scenarios.

The third gap area was the end of semester summary reports where students would have described their children, analyzed data from their teaching, and reflected on the experience. To replace the summary reports, the professor created two-page scenarios of fictitious children with special needs which included descriptions of the children's strengths and needs, documentation of how a fictitious teacher taught the children each session, and weekly data charts on how the children performed over time. She also created a form with questions to guide the data analysis so that students would be able to reflect on both the teacher's implementation and the child's responses over time. The form and grading rubric served to scaffold the students to independently analyze and write up their final papers (see Figure 4).

## DAYC Child Intervention and Reflection--NEW

Published Edit

Hi Students!

Read the attached case study of a DAYC Child below, and note the descriptions and the Data Summary.:

[TESE 334 DAYC Child Intervention and Reflection Alternate Assignment.doc](#)

Students will analyze the DAYC Child and, using the form below, write their answers in the form and upload the form into Canvas. Students will discuss the strategies the teacher used, changes the teacher made to instruction over time, the effectiveness of the strategies, and next steps for the child.

[TESE 334 DAYC Child Intervention and Reflection Alternate Assignment Form and Rubric.docx](#)



Points 45

Submitting a file upload

Due	For	Available from	Until
May 1	Everyone	-	-

+ Rubric

### TESE 334 DAYC Child Data Collection and Progress Monitoring Form

Child's Name: Isaiah Barnett Age 5

#### Description of child:

Isaiah has Down Syndrome. He is very vocal in communicating with gestures and some one-word sentences. He knows about 50 words and uses about 20 of them spontaneously. He loves to play with blocks, but he has not been able to successfully stack any blocks without help. He is social and will initiate play with other classmates and adults. He particularly likes the kitchen area for dramatic play. He likes to scribble on paper and can write I, A, H, but is not yet able to write the "s" in his name. He enjoys being read to and will look at picture books on his own.

#### Target skill (goal) and objectives:

Goal 1: Isaiah will be able to independently stack 6-7 blocks when shown a physical model.

##### Objectives:

- o When given 7 blocks, Isaiah will be able to stack two of them independently in three consecutive opportunities.
- o When given 7 blocks, Isaiah will be able to stack three of them independently in three consecutive opportunities.
- o When given 7 blocks, Isaiah will be able to stack five of them independently in three consecutive opportunities.
- o When given 7 blocks, Isaiah will be able to stack 6-7 of them independently in three consecutive opportunities.

Materials: 7 green 4-inch square blocks that are easy to grip

#### Data summary:

Date	Activity and Intervention	Child's progress on the skill	Progress Code*
2-17	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks with full hand-over-hand teacher assistance	B
2-18	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks with full hand-over-hand teacher assistance	B
2-19	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks with only partial physical help from the teacher	P
2-20	Teacher provides 7 blocks; models how to stack two of them	Isaiah stacks two blocks with only partial physical help from the teacher	P
2-21	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks independently with physical model from the teacher	+
2-24	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks independently with physical model from the teacher	+
2-25	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack two	Isaiah stacks two blocks independently with physical model from the teacher	+
2-26	Teacher provides 7 blocks; shows physical model of how to stack three	Isaiah stacks three blocks while teacher holds the first two steady	P

Figure 4. A screen shot of the summary report case studies.

In summary, the professor replaced field experiences with case studies that mirrored field experiences and provided scaffolding so students could take a higher level of responsibility for their learning in an online environment.

## RESULTS

The professor sent an online survey via Qualtrics (see Appendix A) to students as a link in a Canvas announcement just before finals to determine whether course adjustments actively engaged students in the learning process and provided meaningful experiences reflective of experiential learning. The response rate was 83% (35/42).

- 77% stated that the transition to remote learning was smooth, 17% were neutral, and 6% found it difficult.
- 100% believed they were well-informed on how to successfully complete the course, assignments and deadlines were reasonable to complete, and adjustments were sufficient to maximize remote learning.
- 94% said the course had a variety of learning materials to keep them engaged and, of the 25 students who wrote about what benefitted them most, 28% cited video case studies, 24% indicated written case studies, 16% said alternate assignment options, 16% mentioned miscellaneous factors (e.g. instructor flexibility, communication options), and 12% said all of the adjustments.

In summary, most students transitioned well to remote learning. Online learning requires students to integrate self-regulated learning with effective cognitive processing (Greene, Yu, & Copeland, 2014). All students indicated they were well informed on how to finish the course, thought course adjustments worked for them, and believed materials maximized their learning. One student took an incomplete due to COVID-19 factors, and the remaining students completed the assignments and passed the class with a C or better. Therefore, it appears they were able to apply sufficient self-regulation and cognition to accomplish this, and the assignment scaffolds supported this learning.

Also, 52% said they benefitted most from the case studies and found these meaningful. Experiential learning through case studies has been shown to foster critical thinking and self-regulation skills (Kreber, 2001) needed for online environments. Case study analysis supports the social construction of pedagogical knowledge and improves pre-service teachers' informed decision making on educational issues (Floyd & Bodur, 2006). Adult learners are better engaged when it is clear what they are learning will transfer to real life (Hoskins, 2011) and the case studies did appear to meet both pre-service and in-service teacher needs in providing meaningful learning experiences.

## IMPLICATIONS

Teacher preparation programs rely on field experiences to help students connect theory to practice; however, challenging situations like COVID-19 may make access impossible. Case studies can effectively create meaningful learning opportunities and help students consider greater details about problems, situations, and events they would encounter in the field (Floyd & Bodur, 2006). In this study, students benefitted from both formats, but preferred video. Video formats have been shown to help pre-service teachers apply conceptual knowledge and see multiple perspectives (Goeze, Zottmann, Vogel, Fischer, Schrader, 2014), understand classroom management skills, (Tal, 2010) evaluate classroom teaching situations, (Siedel, Blomberg, & Renkl, 2013) and reflect on their own practices (Masingila & Doerr, 2002). Video cases are most effective when embedded in instructional contexts with clear goals and learning purpose (Blomberg, Sherin, Renkl, Glogger, & Seidel, 2011), as demonstrated in this study.

The professor accessed videos and created written cases that were not time-consuming to prepare. While case studies should continue to supplement field experiences, instructors may need to utilize these more intentionally if field experiences are interrupted intermittently or completely in situations such as COVID-19. Emerging evidence shows case study simulations can replace at least part of the traditional field experiences and provide meaningful learning (Chu, Sheppard, Guinea, & Imms, 2019; Kennedy, Jewell, & Hickey, 2020). Providing students quality alternate experiences can keep them on track for degree completion while building critical teaching skills.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

While case studies can be effective in providing meaningful learning experiences reflective of those in the field, more research is needed to determine the extent to which case study analysis translates to improved implementation in later field experiences. In this study, case studies were of multiple children in different scenarios which provided a larger range of experiences; however, case studies of one or two children who “grow over time” would allow a more in-depth analysis. Research could compare the effectiveness of these case study types to determine their effectiveness under specific conditions. Finally, given that video cases are not always available for key objectives, instructors may want to consider low-cost ways to create simple videos that represent the scenarios they want students to experience and then test these to see if they produce the intended results.

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## APPENDIX A

COVID-19 Student Survey (Note: The professor used Qualtrics software because this is what the university used; however, any survey software (e.g. Survey Monkey) could have been used.

Hi Students!

I know that this is a really strange semester with COVID-19. I would really like to hear what is working and not working and how all of you are doing. I have prepared a quick Qualtrics Survey to learn more about how COVID-19 is affecting you related to this class. I also want to know what might help future classes like this in case we are still having to teach remote in fall. Thank you.

Please rate the following 1-6 questions

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

1. I feel I was well informed about what I needed to do to successfully complete the course
2. The course assignments and deadlines were reasonable to complete via remote learning
3. I was able to communicate (zoom, email, phone call, etc.) with my instructor when I needed.
4. I had a variety of learning materials available such as videos, writing journals, online reading, discussion boards etc. to keep me engaged in my learning.
5. I feel the instructor adjusted the course (deadlines, assignments, etc.) to maximize learning remotely.
6. The transition to remote learning was smooth.

What would you like to tell me? Please write your answers below:

1. What learning activity or materials did you benefit the most from during remote learning?
2. What else would you like to tell me to help me understand your experience transitioning to remote learning during COVID-19?