

# Developing an Effective Interactive Online Educational Leadership Supervision Course

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Increasing numbers of university students seek to take coursework in an online format. However, it is a challenge to successfully translate a highly interactive face-to-face course, such as educational supervision in the educational leadership preparation program, to the online format. Course objectives require candidates to demonstrate effective interpersonal supervisory skills and behaviors. This article describes the frameworks for designing effective online coursework and how they were applied to develop the supervision course to enable candidates to meet the course goals. Specific types of active engagement strategies, assignments, and technology used are described. The aim of the article is to provide a case study that is detailed and specific to inform others faced with the same challenge of teaching highly interactive, interpersonal behaviors and skills in online courses.

## Introduction

### Background

Higher education online course enrollment data indicate that every year (since 2002) more students take online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2014). In 2014, 7.1 million students (33.5%) took at least one course in an online format. The reasons students report taking online courses vary, and they include scheduling and transportation convenience, accommodation of the needs of working professionals (Jackson & Kelly, 2002; Sampson, Leonard, Ballenger, & Coleman, 2010); greater independence and control over learning (Merriam, 2001), and lack of bias (Belcher, 1999; Sullivan, 2002). As more and more students take courses online, institutions of higher education are compelled to offer online courses to compete for student enrollment (Sampson, Leonard, Ballenger, & Coleman, 2010).

Graduate programs in Educational Leadership advance the knowledge and skills of experienced educators through degree and certification programs that prepare them to be effective leaders for educational organizations. These programs are targeted to teachers who are currently full-time working professionals in educational settings and who have very busy schedules with many responsibilities competing for their time. It can be a challenge for candidates to find time to attend classes to complete these programs, even when the advanced degrees will enhance their career opportunities. Universities that take these challenges into consideration when designing program offerings are increasingly attractive.

Historically, the University graduate Educational Leadership Preparation program described here was offered only in a face-to-face format, thus limiting the potential candidates to those professionals in local proximity to the University area who have the time and

transportation to come to campus for classes. Although the program included night and weekend scheduling options, the College of Education decided to offer an alternative option in which students could complete the program fully online. It could potentially better accommodate various schedules and provide program access for professionals across the state and the nation.

In addition to building students' knowledge about various aspects of educational leadership, a number of the courses in the program are focused on developing effective interpersonal leadership behaviors and skills. The challenge was to figure out how to translate these highly interactive face-to-face courses into an online format. It was important to ensure the same course content and key assignments across offerings because the specific course of study and content was officially approved for meeting the state requirements for a leadership master's degree, as well as for the College of Education accreditation requirement.

One of the required skill sets of an educational leader is the ability to provide guidance and support to help teachers continually improve their instructional practices and increase student achievement. This includes the leader observing classroom lessons, collecting observation data, facilitating teacher reflection on instructional practices, and providing feedback, thus essentially coaching teachers professionally to reach their full potential. It also involves providing ongoing school-wide and individualized professional development to respond to teachers' needs and to build teacher leaders. In order to successfully perform these functions, the school leader must create a climate of collaboration and build trust (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Jean-Marie & Normore, 2010). In the program at the University, these skills are addressed in the Principles and Practices of Educational Supervision course. The concern with an online offering was how to address and develop the affective, behavioral, and interpersonal skills required

when supervising and coaching other professionals as outlined in the course objectives, which align directly to the National Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) and the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) (Pries, Grogan, Sherman, & Beaty, 2007; Sherman & Beaty, 2007; Sherman, Crum, Beaty, & Myran, 2010; Zhao, Lei, Yan, Lai, & Tan, 2005).

This article describes the development and implementation of the online version of the supervision course. The rationale for the instructional design is explained along with each interactive aspect of the course, the technology used to implement the learning activities and assignments, and the student outcomes. It provides the level of detail needed for other university instructors facing the same challenge: to successfully develop an online course that requires students to demonstrate specific interpersonal skills and behaviors.

### Online Course Instructional Design Considerations

The effectiveness of online coursework (in terms of student learning) has been widely studied with mixed results (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, & Stevens, 2012; Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009; Sampson et al., 2010). These findings could be expected because course design and content vary tremendously across courses and institutions. A more meaningful line of inquiry is focused on identifying the characteristics of effective online instruction/courses. There are a number of different theories or frames of reference for what constitutes effective online instruction that guided the development of the supervision course.

Quality Matters (QM) is a widely used framework for designing and assessing the quality of instructional design in online courses (QM, 2005). QM's research-based rubric consists of standards focused on design principles that are essential to and/or promote learner success in an online or blended (a combination of face-to-face meetings and online content) learning environment. The standards of the quality assessment rubric focus on various key aspects including the following: the course overview and introduction; alignment of learning objectives, activities, and assessments; active student engagement; learner support; and accessibility. This rubric can be used as a holistic framework for online course design. A course can also be submitted to the QM peer review process to receive certification as a high-quality course based on the application of the rubric to the course by the review team. QM as an organization openly acknowledges, however, that the QM framework does not address the quality of the instructional content or course delivery, but primarily assesses instructional design (Swan, Matthews, Bogle, Boles, & Day, 2012). It should be noted that, in accordance with the online course design process at the

University, this course was designed using the QM rubric and was subsequently certified through the QM peer review process in the summer of 2017.

A second widely applied theory related to effective online instruction is the Community of Inquiry (CoI) approach which defines three aspects that must be present for a successful online experience: instructor presence, cognitive presence, and social presence (Garrison, Cleveland, Innes, & Fung, 2010). According to Rubin and Fernandes (2013), "online classes are more successful in supporting deep learning when they are characterized by a community of inquiry" (p. 125). Instructor presence refers to the degree to which the students perceive the instructor to be actively engaged and responsive to student needs (Swan et al., 2012). Content presence refers to the engagement students have with the content of the course through thoughtfully designed learning activities. Finally, social presence refers to the degree to which students perceive they are part of a real community of learners and are engaged in a collaborative learning process. These three aspects of CoI have been researched in numerous studies (Richardson, Swan, Lowenthal, & Ice, 2016; Shea et al., 2012; Swan, 2004; Swan & Ice, 2010), and an assessment, the CoI Instrument, was developed specifically to measure the degree to which these presences exist and interact in a course (Meyer, 2014). Of the three types of presence, research indicates instructor presence is the most important (Boston et al., 2010).

A similar approach is described by Moore (1989) who categorized, and explained the importance of, three types of interactions in online instruction: student to student, student to instructor, and student to content. Each of these types of course interactions are addressed in the Quality Matters rubric. Like CoI, Moore identified the student to instructor engagement as most critical to a successful online experience.

Other instructional aspects described as contributing to effective online learning are project-based learning (PBL) and student reflection on the learning experience. PBL is described as using real-world problems as the basis of instruction, such as in case studies, and is consistent with adult learning theory which indicates that learners are more engaged when they are able to see the practical connections between instructional content and their own life experiences. Similarly, reflection on learning helps students consciously think about how the content is meaningful to them in their specific settings and circumstances.

Finally, the nature of the knowledge and skills identified in the course goals has been described as a factor in the design of online learning. When the course objectives are primarily focused on acquiring new knowledge, certain instructional activities and strategies may be more effective (Arbaugh, Bangert, & Cleveland-Innes, 2010). However,

when the objectives include gaining new affective, behavioral, or interpersonal skills, then other types of instructional activities and strategies need to be incorporated. For example, if the objectives of the course include learning the principles of education budget, finance, and accounting, instructional activities may focus on acquiring knowledge and applying the specific principles. On the other hand, if the course objectives include demonstrating the use of effective affective/interpersonal skills such as facilitating group meetings, counseling individuals, or providing observation feedback, the instructional strategies and activities need to be designed differently to ensure the leadership behaviors and skills can be demonstrated. (Ascough, 2002; Cicco, 2012; Hockridge, 2013; Trepal, Haberstroh, Duffey, & Evans, 2007).

All of these approaches to develop effective online courses were relevant when considering how to design the learning activities and assignments for the online Educational Leadership Supervision course. Working with the University Online Learning and Instructional Technology Support staff, a number of specific technology tools and design strategies were employed to create a highly interactive course to address candidates' adult learning needs as described in each of the previously mentioned frameworks.

### **Overview of the “Principles and Practices of Educational Supervision” Course**

Effective teachers are the most important determinant of student learning and academic achievement (Rowe, 2003). Few teachers start their careers as master teachers and professional growth is key to improving their instructional skills. The educational leader in an organization is responsible for ensuring the highest quality teachers possible for every classroom and each student. As part of preparing individuals to be effective education leaders, understanding and applying best practices of teacher supervision, as well as providing opportunities for teachers' professional development and growth, are critical. At the University, one course, Principles and Practices of Educational Supervision, is devoted to teaching educational supervision. It focuses on developing the knowledge, interpersonal skills, and behaviors of effective educational supervisors who maintain an orientation to teacher growth and reflection, as well as practicing the clinical observation cycle components (Glickman et al., 2001). While technical aspects of recruiting, evaluating, and retaining effective teachers are addressed in the course, the primary approach is one of the supervisor as a facilitator of teacher reflection and professional growth.

Specific course objectives for student mastery, as well as the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) to which they are aligned, are included in Table 1 (Hartman, 2017, pp. 1-2).

The planned instructional activities of the supervision course are consistent with adult learning theory that emphasizes the importance of engaging actively with learning content that is highly relevant to current problems of practice, providing opportunities to apply learning in real-life settings, and supporting professional collaboration with peers (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). For example, candidates observe teachers conducting instructional lessons in core content areas, collect observation data regarding teacher/student behaviors, and then role-play the pre and post observation conferences with a partner (one candidate being the teacher and the other being the supervisor). Candidates not only develop knowledge about effective supervision practices, they also develop interpersonal skills for facilitating teachers' professional reflection and improvement through interaction in mock conferences. Candidates write a clinical observation report with completed data collection tools and artifacts for each of six lessons observed.

Then, in a direct real-life application, leadership candidates conduct an actual observation of a teacher in their schools, preferably accompanied by their own school leader. Specific partner and small-group discussions and activities/assignments in class encourage active engagement with the content and collaboration with peer professionals. Candidates use a specific supervisory practices inventory to assess both their own skills and the supervisory practices occurring in their schools. Finally, candidates also develop a professional development plan to address both school-wide and individual teachers' professional growth needs related to improving instructional practices and student achievement. Given that most candidates have experienced more evaluative supervision than the growth-oriented supervision approach in this course, helping them to move beyond their own evaluation experiences and develop more supportive supervisory behaviors often takes considerable instructor feedback and discussion/reflection in class. The challenge was to translate this highly interactive face-to-face course which is designed to enable candidates to acquire and apply behaviors and interpersonal skills of an effective educational leader, to the all online format.

### **Applying the Instructional Design Considerations to the Online Course**

#### **Course Introduction**

In the face-to-face course, a portion of the first class meeting is spent on getting to know each other individually and reviewing course topics, structure, and policies. To provide an equivalent experience to candidates in the online environment, a variety of materials and activities are used. Upon logging into the

Table 1  
*Course Objectives and Related Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS)*

| Course Objective  | Related FPLS  |
|---|---|
| Demonstrates understanding of the use of motivational theory to create conditions that motivate staff, students and families to achieve the school's vision ( <i>e.g. facilitate collegiality and teamwork, arrange significant work, encourage challenging standards, provide autonomy, support innovation, delegate responsibility, develop leadership in others, provide leadership opportunities, recognize and reward effective performance, provide knowledge of results, provide coaching and mentoring, gain resources, serve as a role model</i> ) | FPLS 6: Decision Making; FPLS 8: School Management  |
| Frames, analyzes, and resolves problems using appropriate problem solving techniques and decision making skills ( <i>e.g. identify problem, seek and analyze problem factors, collect and organize relevant information, identify causes, seek creative solutions, apply ethical standards, determine best solution with others when appropriate</i> )  | FPLS 2: Student Learning as a Priority;<br>FPLS 4: Faculty Development; FPLS 7: Leadership Development                              |
| Works to create with teachers, parents and students a positive school culture that promotes learning; ( <i>e.g. holds high expectations, focuses on accomplishments and recognition, and promotes a supportive climate</i> )  | FPLS 1: Instructional Plan Implementation; FPLS 2: Student Learning as a Priority; FPLS 8: School Management; FPLS 9: Communication |
| Demonstrates the ability to employ collaborative strategies that enhance a learning organization that supports instructional improvement, builds an appropriate curriculum, and incorporates best practices   | FPLS 1: Instructional Plan Implementation;<br>FPLS 2: Student Learning as a Priority;<br>FPLS 3: Instructional Plan Implementation  |
| Demonstrates the ability to utilize a variety of supervisory models to improve teaching and learning ( <i>e.g. clinical, developmental, cognitive and peer coaching, as well as applying observation and conferencing skills</i> )  | FPLS 1: Instructional Plan Implementation;<br>FPLS 3: Instructional Plan Implementation;<br>FPLS 6: Decision Making                 |
| Works with faculty and other stakeholders to identify needs for professional development, to organize, facilitate, and evaluate professional development programs, to integrate district and school priorities, to build faculty as resource, and to ensure that professional development activities focus on improving student outcomes  | FPLS 1: Instructional Plan Implementation;<br>FPLS 6: Decision Making   |
| Applies adult learning strategies to professional development, focusing on authentic problems and tasks, and utilizing mentoring, coaching, conferencing and other techniques to ensure that new knowledge and skills are practiced in the workplace  | FPLS 2: Student Learning as a Priority;<br>FPLS 3: Instructional Plan Implementation;<br>FPLS 6: Decision Making                    |

course for the first time, online candidates are prompted to watch a video that introduces the professor. The candidates are then asked to introduce themselves in a discussion board assignment utilizing the “Discussions”

feature of the learning manage system, Canvas. The discussion board function allows the instructor to create a prompt and students to create a post in response. Other students may respond directly to the prompt

and/or to posts. Within the introduction discussion, candidates create a post on the board to share several unique aspects about themselves, as well as basic information about where they teach. The student introduction discussion is intended to build social presence and provide an opportunity for student to student and student to instructor interaction.

The introductory video presents an overview of the course content outline, structure, and expectations. Candidates are provided access to the course syllabus and a comprehensive set of support materials that include an online learning orientation, academic resources, and technology support. The video and support materials are posted as files embedded on a content page within Canvas. This allows students to view the items on the screen or download them to their computers. Candidates then complete a short syllabus quiz which is intended to actively engage the students in the course content at the very beginning. The quiz utilizes both multiple-choice and short answer questions to emphasize important aspects of the course and its structure. Since the quiz grade is posted the day after it is due, candidates receive immediate feedback from the instructor about any points that were unclear to them. Together, these activities address many of the characteristics of effective courses outlined in the instructional design models that pertain to the introduction to the course such as building a community, instructor presence, and the characteristics outlined in the first general standard of the QM rubric.

### **Weekly Content Modules and Activities**

The course content is organized into ten modules, one module for each week of the online course that mirrors the content layout of the face-to-face course. This is delivered using the “Modules” feature in Canvas. The Module allows the instructor to create segments of content including content pages, files, discussions, quizzes, assignments, websites, and external tools. These content items can be given specific dates for availability or made to appear sequentially when a student completes a prior module. Each module in this course contains learning objectives, assigned readings, and a narrated PowerPoint video of less than fifteen minutes to emphasize key aspects of the module. These include the video-lesson observations and data collection tool to be used, the actual lesson observation video, and any activities or assignments due during the week.

The module learning objectives communicate the learning goals and provide an overview of the module content. Listing learning objectives explicitly for students has been found to be important in helping students know what to focus on in a particular unit of study (Jiang & Elen, 2011). Within the online course,

the learning objectives are listed on the first page within the module and then again within the first portion of the lecture video. The module learning objectives target specific behaviors that, upon student mastery, contribute to the achievement of the course learning objectives. These objectives are supported by the assigned instructional materials and are assessed through the module activities.

The assigned readings for each module in the online course are the same as those used in the face-to-face course. They include both textbook chapters and supporting contemporary journal articles, as well as any additional instructional resources such as other multimedia. The materials are reinforced through their integration into the assignments that take the form of structured partner discussions regarding specific course content designed to provide further student to student and student to content engagement. The Canvas discussion tool is used to create a discussion board that is shared only between the two partners. Examples of these assignments include constructing a professional development plan, responding to conflict resolution scenarios, reflecting on the in-school lesson observation, and conferencing through discussion. In these structured discussions students post their initial submissions by a specific date and then post detailed feedback to their partners by a second specific date. This structure helps ensure both students actively participate in discussions.

### **Lesson Observations**

Modules 3 through 8 contain lesson observation activities, and each observation uses a different tool or method for data collection. Each lesson observation activity provides video of a real teacher providing instruction to a class of students. This video is embedded within the activity page in Canvas. While watching these videos candidates collect data regarding specific aspects of the lesson, such as patterns of teacher-student interactions, positive/corrective teacher feedback, teacher use of open/closed ended questions, teacher use of higher-order questions, and teacher use of culturally relevant instructional practices (Glickman et al., 2001). Candidates upload their completed data collection tool as a document to the assignment submission location in Canvas. The objective of these activities is to provide candidates with practice using the observation data collection tools.

In the face-to-face course, selected candidates teach mock lessons while the rest of the candidates conduct the lesson observations and data collection. It provides a lesson example that the candidates can use to practice using the observation data collection tools. Then the class splits into partners to role-play the “observed teacher” and “supervisor” pre and post observations conferencing to practice specific

conferencing approaches and skills. The instructor moves from group to group to observe and provide feedback. One of the online course challenges was how to enable candidates to observe a teacher conducting a lesson in order to use the observation and data collection tools.

Because of student confidentiality and the time constraints for developing videos of teachers' lessons, recording a lesson within a school setting was not a valid option. YouTube and other public video repositories for videos of teachers delivering instruction were extensively searched, but videos appropriate for these supervisor observations were scarce. Either most of the videos available did not include full lessons, or the actual video was not suitable for collecting observation data (difficult to determine who was speaking or what he or she was saying), or they were offered as exemplary lessons. It was also important to provide candidates with the opportunity to observe authentic teaching situations including non-exemplary teaching practices in order to develop their skills in providing feedback and facilitation that would support teacher growth. A database containing videos of teachers delivering lessons in elementary and middle school settings was located using the internet. This database was created and is maintained by another institution of higher education. Each video presents the lesson from two camera views: one in which the camera is focused on the teacher and the other in which the camera is focused on the class. The audio track was recorded from two microphones, one primarily tuned in to the teacher "talk" and the other focused on student "talk." The viewer can adjust which audio track to listen most closely to, depending on the focus of the observation. Although this was a subscription-based option, the materials it provided were robust enough to justify university purchase. These videos have made it possible to conduct the lesson observations in the online class.

### **Effective Supervisory Conferencing and interviewing: Synchronous Sessions**

In the online course design, another significant challenge was how to replicate the interactivity between candidates, particularly the pre and post conference role-plays along with instructor observation of small group work with feedback. These activities are most effectively implemented synchronously in the online course using a virtual classroom tool, Blackboard Collaborate (BBC). Blackboard Collaborate is a web-based meeting program that allows faculty and students to interact via the following features: video and audio chat, text chat, whiteboard sharing, desktop and application

sharing, file sharing, polling, and breakout rooms for the same interactions with a smaller group of people.

Each of the first five weeks has a BBC session scheduled at mid-week. This tool allows for synchronous audio/video and text chat, breakout rooms, and group work, as well as content sharing. The approximately forty-minute sessions serve several important purposes. First, they provide a virtual face-to-face meeting in which the instructor and the candidates interact. The instructor is able to provide timely comments about trends in candidates' work, positive feedback about general candidates' performances, and guidance on upcoming assignments.

In four of the BBC sessions, the candidates are also sent into virtual breakout rooms in which they are paired with another candidate, and they only see/hear the partner in their room. During this breakout time, candidates role-play the pre- and post-observation conferences for the video lesson in the module. They use the observation data they collect and employ specific supervisory behaviors to provide feedback and facilitate teacher reflection about the lesson and strategies for instructional improvement. The instructor is able to navigate virtually in and out of break-out rooms and listen to candidates' conversations, and candidates are notified when the instructor has entered their breakout room. Following the role-play conferencing, the instructor transfers all the candidates back into the main room and provides general feedback on the conferencing skills observed, as well as reinforces the development of supportive supervisory behaviors to promote teacher growth. This virtual small group work provides extensive, rich opportunities for student-to-student, instructor-to-student interactions, and the building of a community of learners.

Other examples of small group work include one module in which candidates are provided three school scenarios, each containing a different type of conflict (e.g., teacher-teacher, parent-teacher). Their assignment requires them to work in partners to develop conflict resolution strategies that a leader could employ to improve the situation. They use a collaborative tool to share documents via Google Drive. In the Google Docs feature of Google Drive, students can work together on a document, synchronously or asynchronously, from each of their own computers. This tool is hosted in the cloud, saves the work of all contributors in real time, and eliminates the need to email documents back and forth for editing. Candidates work within these documents to develop effective conflict resolution solutions to the scenarios and then submit their final product for grading and feedback.

The final BBC session in module 9 is a mock teacher interview in which the candidates, again in breakout rooms, ask questions they have specifically developed to elicit descriptions of interviewees'

behaviors in prior situations. This synchronous experience requires the candidates to apply learned knowledge of interview question development and to practice effective leadership interviewing skills.

### **Major Assignments and Assessments**

After completing the lesson observations and collecting observation data, candidates write a summary report describing how they would structure the pre- and post-observation conferences using specific supervisory approaches and behaviors, how they would provide feedback to the teacher using the data collected, and how they would facilitate teacher reflection for professional growth. The report also concludes with a brief self-reflection on how the candidate's supervisory skills are developing. This is submitted through a Canvas assignment submission function. The instructor provides timely and specific guiding feedback through comments on the candidates' submissions to assist them in acquiring the supportive supervisory behaviors and approaches emphasized in the course. Using a tablet computer and stylus, the instructor can fluidly enter hand-written comments about various aspects of the observation and conferencing report directly on the report itself upon downloading the submission from Canvas. The comments are saved as a .pdf document and uploaded back into Canvas using the Speedgrader feature. The Speedgrader allows the student to be able to view the original submission, view the annotated version, view the grade, and dialogue with the instructor in comments via text, video, or audio. This enhances the instructor-student engagement.

Other major assignments for the course are conducted and submitted in the same manner for both the online and face-to-face courses. The three major assignments include the creation of a professional development plan to address a need at the candidates' schools, an observation of a teacher conducting a live lesson in the teacher's school setting, and an evaluation of supervisory practices demonstrated by school leaders within their schools. The deliverable for each of these assignments is collected electronically through Canvas and feedback is provided to the candidates through the feedback tools built into the learning management system, including the use of the tablet annotations feature.

At the conclusion of each module, candidates write a brief reflection regarding new course content learning, acquisition of new supervisory behaviors and insights, and any remaining unanswered questions. The instructor reads and responds individually to each reflection in a manner that conveys the instructor's understanding of the specific reflection. This interaction provides critical information about how candidates are learning course content and acquiring supervisory skills, and it frequently provides direction for the instructor to respond to candidates' needs in the

virtual classroom sessions offered through Blackboard Collaborate, the following week.

At the beginning of the course (Module 1) and at the end of the course (Module 10), candidates use a supervisory behaviors self-assessment survey which is administered using a quiz format (the survey function of Google Drive, called Google Forms, for this specific course) in order to reflect on their current understanding of effective supervisory practices and their ability to implement effective interpersonal supervisory behaviors (Glickman et al., 2001). In addition, the candidates are encouraged to use the inventory of behaviors as the basis for the assignment in which they evaluate and report on the supervisory skills and behaviors practiced by their school leader in their own school settings. This activity is designed to engage the candidates with the content in a self-reflective manner.

### **Additional Instructor Feedback and Engagement**

Throughout the course the instructor provides frequent feedback to candidates on an individual basis in relation to assignments submitted through Canvas using the Speedgrader functions mentioned previously. The instructor also provides group and full class feedback through the BBC sessions for the online students verbally when all students are in the main room. The Canvas course Announcements function is used to connect with students and provide constructive and positive feedback to online candidates, particularly in the modules that do not have a BBC session. This function allows the instructor to send a text-based message that can include video or file attachments. It is sent directly to students through their university email account and is also housed within the course for future reference. To further facilitate instructor presence and provide feedback and guidance to candidates, the instructor intentionally responds to candidates' email inquiries within 24 hours. The goal is to maintain frequent individual candidate and whole group communication.

### **Course Outcomes and Student/Instructor Responses and Observations for Both Formats Grades**

In terms of grades, student outcomes for both supervisory course formats are very similar. The average number of points earned by all 110 students who took the course from Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 was 95.73 (out of 100). For only students who took the course in the face-to-face format (27 students) the average was 95.9, and for only students who took the course in the online format (83 students) the average was 95.68.

Table 2  
*Anecdotal Student Course Comments*

| Format       | Comment  |
|--------------|--|
| Face-to-Face | This course helped me develop supervisory skills that I will need in the future. I feel more confident in my ability to collect data and provide purposeful feedback to teachers.  |
| Online       | <p>I have learned so much more about being a supervisor than I ever thought I would. I have learned how much goes into being an effective supervisor. I felt very inadequate and a little lost at the beginning of this course. Through the video observations each week, I have learned and developed more of the tools and thought-process that should go into an effective way to collect data for teachers from which to reflect and learn. My skills have developed a lot more during these past few weeks than I thought was possible.</p> <p>This course has broadened my idea of what a successful conference and supervision approach can look like. Most of my supervision experience is working with extremely new teachers in the first five weeks of their careers. In these interactions, I have been much more directive than I've been throughout most of this course. Throughout this course, I've gotten a better idea of what it takes to successfully interact with more experienced teachers by taking a collaborative or non-directive approach. In the future, I can easily imagine opening the text for this course to re-center myself in collaborative and non-directive approaches as needed.</p> <p>It is important as a teacher and a supervisor to keep the goal in mind of becoming a self-directed learner. As a supervisor that means letting go and as a teacher that means being thoughtful and purposeful in your reflection and next steps. Wow! I cannot believe that this course is over already. I don't feel that I know everything about supervising others and hopefully I never will feel fully satisfied, but I do feel like I now have a wealth of knowledge ready to be put to use.</p> <p>The aspect of supervisory analysis that was most interesting to me is how complex it is. I have to say that our administration does not put a lot of effort into pre-conferences and they are only voluntary. I realized after this class how important they are and how valuable it is to review the observation tool so the teacher knows what to expect during the post conference. I thought this was an excellent class. It was full of wonderful information and I am leaving with a much greater knowledge on supervision. Thank you for the class.</p> |

### Student Course Evaluations

Overall, student ratings of the course in face-to-face and online formats are very similar and from semester to semester range from 4.05 to 4.75 on a 5-point scale. It is important to note that the course evaluation survey used is the same for both formats, and it was originally designed for face-to-face courses. The return rate is generally very low. Anecdotal student comments are included in Table 2.

### Lesson Observations

The lesson observations in the face-to-face course were mock lessons presented by a member of the course, and as a result they were not very authentic. The data collection and conferencing also were not as detailed. However, even with those limitations students reported they were valuable activities. In the online

course, observations and data collection for actual lessons were authentic, and the conferencing in breakout synchronous sessions was reported to be valuable as well. Given these improvements, the videotaped lessons are now used in the face-to-face class. Student comments are in Table 3.

### Effective Supervisory Conferencing and Interviewing: Synchronous Sessions

Conducting the pre-observation and post-observation conferencing is a key component of developing effective supervisory skills to help teachers improve their instruction. Doing this in the face-to-face class was not difficult to implement. However, in the online course, use of the Blackboard Collaborate tool for partner/small group synchronous interactions was essential to provide this learning experience for the

Table 3  
*Anecdotal Student Lesson Observation Comments*

| Format       | Comment   |
|--------------|---|
| Face-to-Face | Through this process I learned many valuable lessons about performing clinical observations. First, and most importantly, I learned that the collaborative supervisory approach should be used whenever possible. It is important for teachers to feel like their opinion is valued and part of the decision-making process. My strength in this process is communicating with teachers and helping them identify ways to grow professionally   |
| Online       | While working on my clinical observation I learned how important it is to document the lesson with data. As I started to think about holding a post conference with a teacher I realized I had better have accurate data to support my evaluation in case the teacher were to question my evaluation. This never really occurred to me before as I have never questioned my evaluation but thinking about what I would say to the teacher, I realized I had better have support for my reasoning. |

Table 4  
*Anecdotal Synchronous Student Conferencing and Interviewing Comments*

| Format       | Comment  |
|--------------|--|
| Face-to-Face | One thing I learned from this module is don't miss class! Although the reading and the powerpoints are available to me, I really missed the discussions we have in the classroom. That being said, I also had difficulty with the observation report as I again missed the discussions from my classmates. I'm enjoying supervision because I find our assignments relevant to the classroom as well as my future leadership role.   |
| Online       | Using the observation tool was easy. It was really messy in my notebook, but I could easily reflect back on my notes to analyze the data and plan for my post conference. I loved the role play with my partner in the Collaborate session. It was helpful to see another person's take on how the conversation might go before writing my observation report. I didn't realize before how important it was to consider my supervisory approach. Prior to this module, I think I may have just told the teacher to use small groups and partner work in addition to whole group instruction. I definitely would have used more of a directive informational or even a directive control approach. Putting myself in the role of this teacher's supervisor made me consider his years of experience and our relationship. |

Table 5  
*Anecdotal Student Major Assignment Comments*

| Format       | Comment  |
|--------------|--|
| Face-to-Face | I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to observe in a classroom. I am thankful for the teacher who allowed me to pre/post-conference and observe with her. I did not find this intimidating. However, if I had chosen someone different, someone I don't know as well, the situation may have been quite different. I may not have felt at ease as I did with the teacher I observed or I may have stumbled over my words more.  |
| Online       | I really enjoyed doing a "real" observation. I felt like I was prepared to hold a pre-conference and helped the teacher to identify a skill to focus the observation on. The modified scripting tool I used is still very time consuming, so I want to hone that to have more attention on the teacher and class. The post conference went really well too and it was nice to use the collaborative approach. I felt very prepared after doing the 6 video observations in the course. |

participants. Student comments in Table 4 indicate the importance of this activity for both course types.

### Major Assignments and Assessments

The major assignments and assessments were the same in both the face-to-face and online courses, and students submitted them online in the same manner. Overall, in both formats students report that the clinical observation they conduct in their school setting is one of the most valuable learning experiences in the course. See Table 5 for sample student comments.

### Additional Instructor Feedback and Engagement

In the face-to-face courses there are many opportunities to engage with students, discuss various aspects of the course, answer questions, and provide individual and group feedback. Instructor-student relationships develop conversationally and naturally in this format. However, in the online course this aspect represents one of the major differences. It takes considerably more instructor time and effort to develop student relationships. Developing the nuances of conveying ‘caring’ for the students is a challenge in the online format, and that is indicated in one of the evaluation items. Answering questions and providing feedback in writing takes considerably more time and requires additional thought to ensure the responses are clear and precise. Since most of the course is asynchronous—that is, students log on to the course at different times—the instructor needs to be “available” more frequently. In general, the recommendation is that the instructor will respond to student inquiries within 24 hours.

### Conclusion

The instructor of the supervision course was initially skeptical that candidates would be able to develop effective supervisory interpersonal skills and behaviors to support teacher growth in an online format. Considering how to apply adult learning theory to an online course design to build specific behavioral and interpersonal skills was a challenge. The instructor worked closely with the University instructional designer for online learning to translate the active engagement aspects of the face-to-face course to an online format.

With the use of a variety of technologies to actively engage candidates in different types of interactions (student-content, student-student, student-instructor), the online version of the supervision course has been successful in enabling candidates to acquire and demonstrate effective supervisory practices. Students’

responses to, and comments about, the courses are very similar, and they provide evidence that it is possible to translate a course focused on developing specific interpersonal behaviors and skills to the online format. This has implications for developing online courses for similar highly interpersonal fields of study such as counseling, conflict resolution, and group facilitation. A critical element to ensure success for these types of courses is incorporating technologies, such as the synchronous tools, to promote high levels of interactivity and to build strong instructor-student relationships.

The technologies implemented within this course were selected based on the required features for course delivery and evaluation of the technology currently available through the university. Many alternatives to these technologies exist and could be incorporated for a similarly engaging experience for learners. Some of the virtual classroom or virtual meeting platforms with functions similar to Blackboard Collaborate include Adobe Connect, Google Hangout, Skype, GoToMeeting, and Zoom. Virtual tools for document collaboration similar to Google Drive include EtherPad and Microsoft 365. Some alternative options for Learning Management Systems like Canvas include Moodle, Blackboard, and Desire2Learn. The list of available potential tools is extensive. It is highly recommended that instructors who are designing online courses work closely with their university’s teaching and learning support networks to explore the many options available.

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