



Video Case Studies: Preparing Teachers for Inclusion

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Abstract

Balancing the need to prepare pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to effectively participate in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) with the constraints of confidentiality as required by law has led one university to develop video scenarios that can be used as teaching tools. Three scenarios have been created, two at the secondary level and one at the elementary level. The videos, which can be streamed via the internet as well as through the university's course management software, deal with the interpersonal interactions that occur during IEP meetings rather than paperwork completion. Thus, the use of the video scenarios serves to alleviate the concerns of pre-service teachers regarding an area that is often perceived to be secretive and daunting. To date, the scenarios have been used with classes in two different university departments and have resulted in richer and more in-depth discussions of what can be expected in actual IEP meetings.

Keywords

Simulation, Individualized Education Program (IEP), confidentiality, technology, video case study

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Public Law 108-446, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), reiterates the provision that students with disabilities and their parents have the absolute right of confidentiality. This right was initiated with the 1975 passage of P. L. 94-142, the *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* and has been included in all subsequent reauthorizations of the law. Although no one questions the reasonableness of the confidentiality issue, it is problematic for those who prepare pre-service teachers, especially pre-service special education teachers. This difficulty has led the faculty at one university to explore alternative methods for familiarizing students with individual education program (IEP) meetings.

The concepts of digital simulation and “e-learning” have been used successfully with medical students and in business training for decades (Brannan, White & Bezanson, (2008); Evensen & Hmelo-Silver, 2000; Kossor, 2004 and; McFadzean & McKenzie, 2001). However, the education field has been slow to adopt the use of even long standing technologies (e.g., telephones in classrooms). As teacher educators work with pre-service general and special education teachers to better prepare them to integrate technology into their practice, it is important for these teacher educators to model instructional uses of technology.

One small mid-western university has provided many learning experiences for faculty, including “Faculty Learning Communities.” In these learning communities, faculty members from various disciplines come together to explore topics of common interest. As education faculty discussed the dilemma of meeting student educational needs while also observing the confidentiality provision, the concept of creating video simulations was developed. Research has shown that the use

of case studies in the classroom serves to intensify the learning experience for student participants (Barnett, 1991, McAninch, 1993, Sudzina, 1999). The uses of both case study and role-play have proven to be effective tools in preparing future teachers (see gray box below).

What Does the Literature Say About Video Case Studies?

Using case studies as a teaching tool intensifies the learning experience for students (Barnett, 1991, McAninch, 1993, Sudzina, 1999). Case studies allow the teacher to provide students with a scenario that encourages the use of higher order thinking skills as the study is discussed. Further, case studies allow students to bridge the gap between theory and practice through their discussions (Duck, 2007). The use of case studies and the ensuing discussion / analysis tends to involve more students in the class than traditional teaching methods. Also, students in classes that participate in case study activities have an understanding of reflective practice (Merseth, 1990, 1991).

Thus, the development of a video simulation of an IEP review would allow faculty to integrate technology into their teaching as well as to allow pre-service teachers to have an understanding of the inner workings of the IEP process while maintaining the confidentiality of students with IEPs. The confidentiality mandate means that only those working directly with the child have the right of access to information about the child. Further, a record of anyone accessing a child’s records must be maintained by the school district. In terms of IEP meetings, confidentiality means that the parents have the power to deny entry to anyone not immediately in-

volved with their child’s education. Therefore, pre-service teachers rarely have the opportunity to attend an IEP review until student teaching; and then only if a child served by

special education happens to be in their class and the parents approve.

Table 1

Case Study 1

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Target Audience | Pre-service secondary teachers, pre-service special education teachers |
| URL | mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-1.wmv |
| Length of Clip | 13 min, 15 sec |
| Summary | A general education teacher, although willing to work with a high school student with a mild learning disability has reservations about the effect of accommodations on the other children in the class as well as the amount of time that making these accommodations will take. He also questions the fairness of the accommodations with respect to the 28 other students in his class and whether or not some accommodations, such as repeating points, could interfere with the flow of the lesson. This case study demonstrates an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation |
| Discussion Points | Communication skills, IEP requirements for accommodations, fairness, inclusion |
| Suggested Resources | <p>Cook, B. G., Tankersley, M., Cook, L. & Landrum, T. J. (2000). Teacher’s Attitudes toward their included students with disabilities. <i>Exceptional Children</i> 67(1),115-135.</p> <p>McTighe, J. & Brown, J. L. (2005). Differentiation instruction and educational standards: Is détente possible? <i>Theory into Practice</i> 44(3)234-244.</p> <p>Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Grading and differentiation: Paradox or good Practice? <i>Theory into Practice</i> 44(3) 262-269.</p> <p>Tomlinson, C. A. (2004). <i>How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms</i>. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA.</p> <p>Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). Grading for success. <i>Educational Leadership</i> 41(4)12-15.</p> <p>Wormeli, R. (2006). Fair isn’t always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom. Stenhouse Publishers: Portland, ME</p> |

The development of the Simulation

Several members of the faculty and staff of this university, including a graduate student, came together to create a video role-play surrounding the proceedings of a case conference. In this case, a faculty and staff members played the roles of a special educa-

tion teacher, a general education teacher, and a school administrator. The graduate student played the role of the high school student. A local educator who is also a parent of a child with a disability played the parent role. Although an IEP was available, with identifying information

removed, the simulations were generalized so that they could be used for various teaching situations. It must be noted that the purpose of the simulations was to illustrate interpersonal interactions that occur during an IEP meeting, not to explain the paperwork requirements.

Two scenarios were created for use with secondary pre-service teachers and K-12 preservice special education teachers. Both of these simulations dealt with Robert X, a high school junior with a learning disability.

Table 2

Case Study 2

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Target Audience | Pre-service secondary teachers, pre-service special education teachers |
| URL | mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-2.wmv |
| Length of Clip | 15 minutes |
| Summary | A general education teacher, although willing to work with a high school student with a mild learning disability has reservations about the effect of accommodations on the other children in the class as well as the amount of time that making these accommodations will take. He also questions the fairness of the accommodations with respect to the 28 other students in his class and whether or not some accommodations, such as repeating points, could interfere with the flow of the lesson. This IEP meeting demonstrates a spirit of hostility with a resistant general education teacher and an equally resistant administrator. In this confrontational scenario, it is clear that both the teacher and the administrator are just barely tolerant of the planning process. “Mom” becomes more adversarial as well. The special education teacher explains the requirements of the <i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act</i> (IDEIA) in terms of the student’s educational needs. |
| Discussion Points | Communication skills, IEP requirements for accommodations, fairness, inclusion, legal requirements for general education teachers |
| Suggested Resources | <p>Cook, B. G., Tankersley, M., Cook, L. & Landrum, T. J. (2000). Teacher’s Attitudes toward their included students with disabilities. <i>Exceptional Children</i> 67(1), 115-135.</p> <p><i>Doe v. Withers</i> (1993). 20 IDELR422 (WV Circuit Court). Available from: www.wrightslaw.com/law/.../case_Doe_Withers_Juryorder.html</p> <p>McTighe, J. & Brown, J. L. (2005). Differentiation instruction and educational standards: Is détente possible? <i>Theory into Practice</i> 44(3)234-244.</p> <p>Mueller, T. C. (2009). IEP facilitation: A promising approach to resolving conflicts between families and schools. <i>Teaching Exceptional Children</i> 41(3), 60-67.</p> <p>Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Grading and differentiation: Paradox or good Practice? <i>Theory into Practice</i> 44(3), 262-269.</p> |

The first simulation involved a case conference in which all parties expressed a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. ([mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-1.wmv](https://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-1.wmv)) The video lasts just over 13 minutes and illustrates a general education teacher, who is willing to work with Robert in an inclusion setting. The teacher, “Mr. Ford,” though, has reservations about the effect of the accommodations on the other children in the class as well as the amount of time that making these accommodations will take. The administrator, while supportive, also has reservations about Robert’s placement. “Mr. Ford” also questions the fairness of the accommodations with respect to the 28 other students in his class; the amount of time that making the accommodations will take; and that making some accommodations, such as repeating points, could interfere with the flow of the lesson. “Mom” points out that Robert is intelligent and suggests a couple of accommodations, for example, extra time and not counting off for spelling in essay tests. The administrator discusses procedural issues such as how the general education teacher and the special education teacher will work together and how the resource room will be used. The special education teacher explains the requirements of the IDEIA in terms of “Robert’s” educational needs.

“The second simulation lasts nearly 15 minutes and highlights a spirit of hostility and a resistant general education teacher.”

The second simulation lasts nearly 15 minutes and highlights the same case conference under a spirit of hostility with a resistant

general education teacher and an equally resistant administrator. During this meeting, both the general education teacher and the administrator talk about the student, who was included as a potential participant, without actually addressing the student himself. As the meeting progresses, the general education teacher expresses the belief that the responsibility of accommodating “Robert” rests solely with the special education teacher. ([mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-2.wmv](https://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-2.wmv)) Common questions from “Mr. Ford,” the general education teacher addressing issues involved in special education such as the effect of inclusion on the learning of the “regular” students is highlighted. It is mentioned that “Robert” really belonged in a “Vo-Tech” setting and that “Mr. Ford” did not believe that Robert would be able to go to college. The administrator is very concerned about issues such as test security if “Robert” needed to complete an assessment in the resource room and “Mr. Ford’s” inconvenience in grading a test that might be submitted later than the tests of the other students. In the more confrontational scenario, it is clear that both the teacher and the administrator are barely tolerant of the planning process and one could surmise that they consider the entire conference a total waste of time. In response, “Mom” becomes more adversarial. She insists that “Robert” would be attending college and that she, therefore, would accept nothing less than the school’s best effort to educate “Robert.” “Mom” also assures the committee in general and the special education teacher specifically that she will not tolerate any attempt to provide “Robert” with less than appropriate ac-

commodations and would immediately address any and all concerns regarding “Robert” and his education. Again, the special education teacher explains the requirements IDEA in terms of Robert’s educational needs.

Table 3

Case Study 3

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Target Audience | Pre-service elementary teachers, pre-service special education teachers |
| URL | mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-3.wmv |
| Length of Clip | 11 min |
| Summary | In this IEP meeting for an elementary aged student, “Mom” feels that teaching is the school’s job not hers. The school personnel present a nurturing collaborative atmosphere. As the meeting progresses, the teachers and administrator address the student’s progress, what they are doing to help him, and his participation in both the general education classroom and the resource room. “Moms” importance in the education process is reinforced. The meeting ends on a positive note. |
| Discussion Points | Communication skills, importance of the parent in the IEP process, inclusion |
| Suggested Resources | Cook, B. G., Tankersley, M., Cook, L. & Landrum, T. J. (2000). Teacher’s Attitudes toward their included students with disabilities. <i>Exceptional Children</i> 67(1),115-135. Tomlinson, C. A. (2004). <i>How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms</i> . Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA. Wormeli, R. (2006). <i>Fair isn’t always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom</i> . Stenhouse Publishers: Portland, ME. |

A third case study is a simulation about an IEP involving “Jamie,” a fourth-grade student. This simulation lasts approximately 11 minutes. Although “Jamie’s” disability is not specified, the school personnel present a nurturing collaborative atmosphere. (mms://wms.indstate.edu/les/Tinnerman_Case-Study-1/Scenario-3.wmv) “Mom” is now the participant who feels that teaching is the school’s job not hers. As the meeting progresses, the teachers and administrator address “Jamie’s” progress, what they are doing to help him, and his participation in both the general education classroom and the resource

room. “Mom” is provided with suggestions as to how she can help “Jamie” and his two younger siblings at home. The meeting ends on a positive note.

Results with Pre-Service Teachers

Junior and senior pre-service secondary education students involved in a five-week field placement were asked to view the first two videos and to reflect on them in electronic journals. The reflections were intended to highlight strengths and weaknesses of each case study. The stu-

dents were also encouraged to post questions for the entire cohort regarding both the effectiveness and appropriateness of each proceeding. Comments in the journals indicated a greater understanding of the pragmatics of an IEP review as well as richer discussions of the accommodations necessary to meet the needs of students served by special education.

Pre-service K-12 special education teachers viewed all three videos via the university's course management system and then discussed them in a class in which they learn about special education laws and how to create IEPs. Thus, these students had some understanding of an IEP meeting and its purpose. The simulations allowed these students to view an event that is, but virtue of the confidentiality issues, somewhat secretive. Therefore, the discussions were more intense and much deeper than was possible before the simulations were available. In particular, the students were distressed by the presentation of the second case study due to the hostility involved. After viewing the video case studies, the students had a greater understanding of what they could expect when participating in an actual IEP meeting, with regard to advocating for students, explaining IEP requirements to general education teachers and communication skills. After viewing "real" IEP meetings, either in practica or student teaching situations, students have expressed how viewing the videos increased their comfort level as they approached actual IEP meetings.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Use

As the population of special education students continues to increase, it is incumbent upon teacher educators to provide resources for both general education and special education pre-service teachers to practice the skills needed to accommodate these students in the

classroom. With inventive usage of technology, many of these obstacles can begin to be addressed. In the case of the above simulations, students were given the opportunity to observe the dynamics of simulated IEP meetings. The simulations also opened the opportunity for discussion and dialog about the IEP process. At the same time, teacher educators were about to address matters of access and confidentiality. These tools were helpful in highlighting and expanding upon the skills of communication and collaboration. In addition, making use of streaming video, live discussions, chat, and blog functions of the course management software, the students expanded their experience with information technology. The use of the electronic journals provided the students with the opportunity to reflect upon the scenarios which they observed and also provided instructors the opportunity to comment on and respond to student observations. The opportunity to expand upon this video case study concept is almost limitless in its potential. Pedagogical concepts involving classroom management, the application of instructional strategies, mock faculty meetings and employment interviews would all lend themselves to this form of technology. In each case, the dynamic piece would involve reflective. Of research interest to this university is the exploration of case study simulation via streaming video and reflective dialog with the use of discussion boards, scenarios, synchronous chat and electronic blog journaling. Future options involve the development of virtual simulations in which students enter a virtual world in which they take an active participatory role in the particular case study. In conclusion, the use of video simulations and virtual reality

simulations offers pre-service teachers the ability to understand the intricacies of settings that may be, by virtual of confidentiality issues, unavailable as a learning tool while si-

multaneously modeling the integration of technology in learning situations.

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