

CIDDL Research and Practice Brief 15 Interview Transcript

Ashley Grays: Hello, and welcome to the CIDDL research and practice brief series. The purpose of this series is to have conversations about the innovative use of technology in special education, early childhood, related services and leadership personal preparation programs. Today we have Dr. Sarah Nagro our guest expert to share with us for research and practice on video based reflections, welcome.

Sarah A Nagro: Thank you for having me this is exciting.

Ashley Grays: Alright, so our first question is, can you tell us about your research and the issues you're trying to address and teacher preparation by using video based reflections.

Sarah A Nagro: Sure, thank you, I think the place to start is to say that the big picture for me is how do we focus on retention through preparation. Teacher retention issues are really something that we face, we know that there's chronic teacher shortages in the United States, particularly in the area of special education and so with the work I'm doing, I'm trying to understand how can I better prepare teacher candidates when they're with me in their preparation programs to feel like they can sustain when they enter the field and have capacity to be able to continue to improve their practice and develop as professionals. So I know they're not going to be experts on day one. But I do want them to be able to leave their profession their preparation feeling like they can be successful. As a new teacher who's just beginning, who has the capacity to take on these new challenges and also to continue to improve their practice. We know that a lot of teacher candidates report feeling underprepared when they leave their preparation, and so the research that I'm doing is really about how do we help them to see the things that they're doing in their preparation program as useful tools they can take with them into the classroom to be able to use those skills. When they get there to help themselves, because not every new teacher has a mentor that's accessible to them to be able to walk them through every step of the profession as they transition and so. If we can do something with video base reflection practices in their preparation that shows them, this is a very useful skill, I can take the skill with me when I get into the profession. To help me to analyze my own practice, I think that is a very successful approach, or at least I hope promising approach to being able to focus on retention through preparation so. That requires starting early, that requires building understanding of what is video analysis, what is video based reflection, why do we even care about all these pieces, why do we care about reflection so that's what I'm focusing on in my research, how do we start building those foundational skills early during the preparation that they then can take that with them into their first jobs.

Ashley Grays: That was awesome. I completely agree the chronic shortage is affecting everyone, but especially special education. So what opportunities do you think video based reflections may have for improving hire personnel and related services programs that prepare professionals who serve students with disabilities, how does it help the children with special needs?



Sarah A Nagro: So I think that it's important because well it's very flexible, so I think we'll probably get into some of the details about what this is I'm talking about, but one of the nice things about you know, helping. Students teacher candidates we're going to work with students disabilities is the idea that every student is going to have unique needs and you can read every textbook that there is on all the different characteristics and aspects of the profession, but when you get into the profession, you realize that. Each student presents in a unique way with unique challenges has different set of background experiences, different cultural experiences and so they're going to come to you at a different point and so having a skill of something like video based reflection or video based analysis where you can customize the way that you're thinking about your own practice as a teacher will only help you to then be able to individualize your attention to your students and so we can talk a little bit more concretely about that, but I think that's one of the benefits of focusing more on how do I take this and look at this activity as not just a preparation something on my checklist of things I do while I'm in my teacher preparation. But rather a really useful professional development tool that I can then take with me when I get into the classroom and understand that I can systematically study my own practice to figure out more concretely, using data, how to then improve my approach to teaching students who are the you know at the hardest to reach at points that where they come to you or they're feeling like they haven't seen success, and you are the teacher who's going to make that happen for them, so this is just one approach to helping support that.

Ashley Grays: Awesome! So I know you work with video self analysis and video based reflections, why is having the teacher involved in assessing their own instruction so important? What difference does it make when you compare it to like, if I were to evaluate their performance?

Sarah A Nagro: Sure, so let me explain a little bit about what I'm talking about, and then I can, and then I can get into that so If, during our preparation, we usually approach this at this field as a student learner. So we go through our K 12 learning experience were told here the fears your homework here's the test here the things you have to do to get past each grade each. You know each kind of hope that you're jumping through as a student to advance to the next level and we bring that mindset that student mindset with us into our teacher preparation program because that's the way that we've been successful through school, thus far. And so what tends to happen is we think about our preparation as just a set of you know items on a checklist that we have to complete. So things like all I've got to do you know five lesson plans and I've got to write to reflection journal entries and I've got to be observed four times and what ends up happening is it's a very disjointed experience learning experience and rather than seeing these things as meaningful engagement opportunities into the profession that just becomes a list of Compliance list. I've got to get these things done in order to graduate. And so what my hope is is that we can work on having a more cohesive comprehensive learning experience for our candidates. That through practice-based learning opportunities and through their field experiences we're giving them a structure to engage in the profession that is scaffolded and supported so that it's more meaningful. If you just ask teacher candidates to reflect or teachers to reflect on their learning,

Typically, what happens is they will summarize for you chronologically here's what happened during the lesson start to finish, you know here's where we started and here's where we ended and it's very superficial it's just retelling of the events. Or they'll add in some emotional



components to it, it felt really good it felt like the kids were enjoying it. I was frustrated with this student at this point, or I realized that I was going too slow we weren't going to finish, and so I was rushing, and so I didn't get you know I didn't check with How the students were doing and I think that by the end they didn't understand so it's all very emotion-based because there's not much else to go on, besides what do you, what are your feelings about this at the end, what do you think happened memory-based. So what I'm hoping to do is to introduce something that's much more data-driven and that's much more Based on concrete information, so I focus on video analysis as an approach that teacher candidates can use to think about their practice in a way that's again cohesive, comprehensive, and it's something that's structured in data, so I use this cycle that I call the four C's or the four R's reflect review, excuse me record if I can't get it right who can record, review, reflect, revise so record yourself teaching a portion of a lesson. Review that lesson segment back and look at it through a very scaffold and approach and we can talk about what that is, it can be something as simple as whatever checklist you're already using and your courses, you have them focus on that it could be looking at our church and Hughes explicit instruction.

You know elements of explicit instruction saying we're going to focus on those it can be I'm going to focus on my questioning techniques I'm going to look at specifically home asking I use the Danielson framework quite often because that's something that teacher candidates will be evaluated on when they get into the profession so it's helped me to show them, this is what you're going to be looked at what using this scale when you get into the profession so it's good for you to see it now understand what it means. I think that the Danielson framework does a nice job of establishing that not every teacher is a distinguished teacher on the first day and that's Okay, there are levels of acceptable. You know, satisfactory teaching that can take place and they give you some anchors as to what to look for. And the idea behind any of these whichever you choose, it could be Marzano it can be your university forms that you're currently using during your formal observations. I would just suggest that whatever the framework is that it's consistent so that we get that cohesive piece emphasized. And so the idea here being that we're teaching candidates what to look for how do you review a video because it can be overwhelming to just say okay watch this back tell me how you did they're going to resort to this is how I felt. This is what happened, from start to finish, we want them to analyze more you know deeply thinking about what decisions, did I make Why did I make those decisions were they successful decisions, how do I know looking at student outcomes, how do I know that my teaching choices were useful or not based on student outcomes. So you can capture more of that information using video. The nice piece about it is you can set it up you don't have to think much about it, you can play it back you can watch five minutes you can watch an hour, depending on what your goals are for yourself

As the teacher candidate you start to drive your learning experience. Again I would emphasize that I think the preparation program should offer structure and support to that I use what I call reflection matrices or reflection matrix ro which is basically a graphic organizer that teacher candidates can use to help focus and narrow their review process of what they're looking for in their videos. It's very overwhelming to just hand them a video of themselves teaching and say you know okay tell me right five reflections or whatever it might be again, we want to move away from that compliance mindset and more towards a learner mindset where they're The focus is on the engagement in the activity, how is this going to help me to improve my practice for the



next time I'm in front of students so putting the ownership on the teacher candidate themselves showing them that they're the change agent in the classroom is one of my main focus. I I don't want to hear them saying, well, it was because of the students, that I was unable to do X, Y or Z. Or it was because of my supervisor or my co-teacher that I was unable to do X, Y or Z or accomplish these goals that I had set out for myself. By them recording themselves, and then you know, using that as performance feedback for themselves, they are the driver, they are the change agent, and they start to see themselves in that capacity. And I think that's critically important because If you're in a working environment that you feel like you have the empowerment, to make changes for the better. You will probably feel like you can be successful, and then you really will find success in that career path.

And so we can help our teacher candidates early to see themselves as the change agent through such activities where someone else is not saying I watched your video and here's what I think you did a great job. Now go over to reflection on how I told you, you did a great job that's not the same thing as saying watch your video back look for these key implementation measures are markers. That we were focusing on what with it, whether it's your precision in your language. How you use your vocabulary, whatever it might be that target goal that you're focusing on but they themselves are learning to recognize those behaviors in their own teaching. So you're working on multiple skills, through this one activity. And so, then the reflect pieces where they complete that reflection matrix. They in the way that I structure it it's a graphic organizer it has the you know, three to five teaching elements that they're focusing on and for each of those they need to describe, analyze, judge, apply so describe what the teaching choice they made analyze why they made that choice judge the success of that decision based on student outcomes. And then apply these insights to future plans for teaching in the future, I will you know I will increase the use of this strategy because it was really successful all 12 students were able to complete the task within the allotted time or in the future, I will probably switch and not use this again and, instead, I will choose this other approach. Because it seems like I lost half of the class when I was doing my comprehension checks, they were feeling unconfident. So you, I want to see that they're thinking about. What insights they found through this observation that will change and improve their teaching moving forward and that's really the driver what we're going to do better than next time. How we're going to sustain success and improve on areas of growth. So record, review, with structure, reflect, with structure, and then revise. So, then, we ask them during that reflection period to start thinking about those applications that you must, how can you apply these insights to future lessons and then you want to hopefully see as they revise their approach to instruction that some of that is captured there and again the cycle continues, and you can measure growth over time. If they focus on the same goals, you can see, you know you can track noteworthy changes they can collect data on themselves, and again, all of this is to drive home the idea that the teacher is the change agent in their own environment so a lot to take in there. I'm happy to share some links to some of those resources as we continued our our conversation, but you know record, review, reflect, revise and describe, analyze, judge, apply the four dimensions of reflection that I use to help move teacher candidates away from that superficial description towards more critical analysis of their own performance.

Ashley Grays: Awesome. I think one of the cool things that I liked when I'm looking at technology and it's used for a teacher preparation, as we always think technology is being so expensive. And when I was reading your research, I found that I mean this is such a cost-



effective way to implement change so, are there any other specific examples of how a teacher preparation program could implement video-based reflection in their current practice, or do you have any recommendations?

Sarah A Nagro: Yeah that's a great point I always think of video-based reflection activities as being flexible robust and feasible So flexible in that you can target whatever goals you're looking to focus on within one course or an internship robust and that it gives you so much data to analyze and look at you can you can use one video session and look at it from multiple different lenses so one video session. Then becomes multiple learning opportunities and feasible, which is what you're really emphasizing here it doesn't have to be expensive, we all have you know our cameras on hand and so being able to set up that camera with an inexpensive tripod I usually get them on Amazon those little like sneak \$7 tripod setting your camera up, you can add a fisheye lens if you want to get capture more of the classroom. So there's a few inexpensive things you can do to add on to your either your laptop or your smartphone. That will allow you to really capture what's in the classroom you can add on microphones if you want to, but it doesn't it's not always about production value as long as you're able to hear what the teacher is saying. I think of a teacher candidates saying and doing I think that's the emphasis for me at least it's not always been on the student responses, as much as it has been on. The teacher behaviors because I want the teachers to see themselves as the change agents, so I really want them to focus on themselves so that makes the Recording even more feasible, I want to protect student identities, I think that's critically important that we do that we consider. You know, informing parents about the be the recording practices and how we are protecting student identities and so using something that's very inexpensive that can follow just the teacher around helps with that Other other applications for this, which I would encourage all those of us who are you know interested in building in skills like reflection and being able to analyze and self evaluate would be to start early before the teacher candidate goes into their field experience with some early introductory type prerequisite skill-building almost type video-based activities so where teacher candidates start off with reflecting on videos of other teachers, so they can learn how do you watch video evidence, what are you looking for, how do you see

Teaching choices in action it's one thing to read about you know, using mnemonics as an evidence-based practice and then you're watching the video and saying oh my gosh it happened so fast. How, you know, being able to say how did the teacher plan for this, and so learning what to look for in the video what's irrelevant versus relevant information and that video is a great first step. Early activities, you can start teaching teacher candidates, how do you look at the practices of others it's low risk. It's inexpensive there's a million and one videos as long as you have vetted them before showing them there's 1,000,001 videos you can find for free online. I think, showing exemplar videos and not example our videos are both really helpful discussion points for teacher candidates to say oh look Every teacher is not that distinguished perfect teacher who is in this fabulously prepared video so using inexpensive video clips it can be two minutes and there's so much to talk about And then, once they're comfortable with some of those early and introductory foundational activities, then you can shift to making it more complicated some things like role-playing. Again, it can simulations can be expensive, but in fancy and I know University Central Florida knows all about that, but they can also be really affordable so having you as a teacher candidate in their classroom do some role play simulation type activities, where they set their own phone up or their own laptop up and they teach a group of their peers focusing on just one



small aspect of a lesson. And then right away in a timely manner watching that video back for themselves, it doesn't have to be about evaluative activities where they're turning their video in somebody else's watching it because that adds a lot of pressure. But if the teacher candidate is just in their class. You know they're focusing on the classroom management strategies in the classroom management course that they're taking And they want to practice one of those discrete strategies and then watch it back again very feasible in terms of time and expense. Nobody has to see it, they can delete the video file and save space on their phone if they want to, they can save it to their Dropbox or Google, or whatever they want to do with that video. It's just a simulation it's not a role play there's no, you know students at risk of identities being shared. And so, then again you're getting another layer of complexity there that's added on so now they're watching their own performance in a low stakes setting, no students are at risk here. And they can start to build some more of those prerequisite skills so that by the time they get to their field experience and it's time for those you know for video reflections that are required by the end of the Semester.

Sarah A Nagro: They understand why that would be an expectation why it's helpful why reflective practices, a meaningful thing that's in every professional standard that we can review says, an emphasis on lifelong learning and through reflection there's a reason it's always there it's really does help to be able to develop those skills, but it takes time. And I think that the feasibility of this particular method allows for it to follow the students across time I'm not asking for any expensive subscriptions, although there are many opportunities out there that can make it wonderfully you know complex and cohesive for sure, but expensive and it doesn't always have to be that it can certainly be cost-effective feasible, and still be flexible and robust.

Ashley Grays: Awesome. Thank you so much for sharing that. Do you have any resources or tools that you can provide for those who would like to learn more about your work?

Sarah A Nagro: Absolutely, so I would say, first, you can certainly, go to my George Mason University website profile page and see what I'm working on. Or you can request some manuscripts from researchgate I'm always trying to send those out to people who are requesting of those. If you want actual materials, check out my website it's called trackstudentlearning.weebly.com it's free I just put up examples of the reflection matrix. That I was talking about today, and any other templates that I published papers I usually I don't think teachers should have to pay for additional resources, so I always try to put them there. So that teachers have access to those they're all word documents that you can edit it to meet be meaningful for you, but that's a good place. The last thing I'll mention is you can go to buildtheframe.com Michael Kennedy, Shana Hirsch, and myself are working on an OSEP-funded project. It's called project FRAME and it's focusing on a lot of these components so we're combining Michael Kennedy's COACHED platform online platform with my work with video reflection and Shana's expertise in classroom management, bringing those pieces together to talk about how do you have a comprehensive coaching package that is you know helpful for teacher candidates who are going from introductory Candidacy, see to all the way to almost professional ready so and even following them into the profession so buildtheframe.com there's resources there more description about our project there as well.



Ashley Grays: Awesome, Thank you Dr. Nagro for sharing your research on video-based reflections, we appreciate your time and your work. I hope we have more opportunities to continue our conversation about your research. For more information about CIDDL research and practice brace and other resources for teacher education-related services personnel preparation. Please go to CIDDL.org, don't forget to follow us on social media subscribe to our channel, and leave us a message, thank you all for joining, thank you, Dr. Nagro.

Sarah A Nagro: Thank you.