Looking Behind Virtual Lenses: Field Experience, Modeling, Coaching, Feedback, Supervision, and Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

Small special education programs (SSEPs) are composed of limited faculty tasked with educating interns dispersed across large geographical areas (Reid, 1994). These needs underscore a call for more flexible educational program options. Moreover, Kebritchi et al. (2017) found professors in higher education institutions sought a variety of instructional methods to critically respond to barriers experienced by SEPPs. The purpose of this article is to highlight virtual methods utilized by SSEPs for field experiences, modeling, coaching, feedback, supervision, and partnerships to leverage faculty expertise effectively and efficiently, to expand recruitment in programs, and to support teacher retention efforts. Using the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) High Leverage Practices (HLPs) of Instruction, Collaboration, and Assessment (McLeskey et al., 2017), this article will look behind the virtual lens to uncover how SSEPs faculty can support interns using a developmental and scaffolded approach.

KEYWORDS

Assessment, coaching, feedback, field experience, modeling, supervision, virtual instruction

Accreditation of educator preparation programs (EPPs) "provides a framework that has pushed educator preparation programs to continually self-assess and conduct evidence-based analysis of their programs and their efficacy" (Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2022b, para. 2). Klingner et al. (2016) found many new teachers are ill-equipped to meet their student's diverse and vital learning needs. Responding to increased demands on EPPs to train interns to meet the critical needs of exceptional learners, the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center, and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) collaboratively identified 22 High Leverage Practices (HLPs), essential areas of practice that should guide EPPs in the development, implementation, and evaluation of special education interns (McLeskey et al., 2017). The HLPs are innovative and situated around four main pillars: instruction, collaboration, social/emotional/behavioral practices, and assessment (McLeskey et al., 2017) and these HLPs can be used as guides for implementation of virtual methods for field experience, modeling, coaching, feedback, supervision, and partnerships for faculty within EPPs. In this article, the four authors provide examples of the lived experiences of working in Small Special Education Programs. Multiple tools are used to facilitate course delivery methods, including: (a) video-conferencing, (b) web-based platforms/learning management systems, (c) filmed classroom instruction/video modeling, (d) virtual reality classroom environments, and (e) video-coaching platforms. Table 1 includes a brief description of each tool and a link to more information. The vignette portrays the

TABLE 1: Tools Used to Facilitate Virtual Instruction, Collaboration, and Assessment

Course Delivery Method	Example Tools	Website
Video Conferencing	Zoom	https://zoom.us/
	Microsoft Teams	https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software
	Google Hangout	https://hangouts.google.com/
	Go to Meeting	https://www.goto.com/
Web Based Platforms and Learning Management Systems	Canvas	https://www.instructure.com/canvas
	Blackboard	https://www.blackboard.com/
	Moodle	https://moodle.org/
	D2l Brightspace	https://www.d2l.com/brightspace/
Filmed Classroom Instruction and Video Modeling	Atlas	https://atlas.nbpts.org/login?next=%2F
	CEEDAR Center/CEC HLPs	https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/high-leverage-practices/
	Reading Rockets	https://www.readingrockets.org/
	Vanderbilt's IRIS Center	https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/
	Project STAIR	https://www.smu.edu/simmons/Research/Research-in-Mathematics-Education/Explore/STAIRR
Virtual Reality Classroom Environments	Mursion	https://www.mursion.com/
	TeachLivE	https://www.ucf.edu/research/research-project/teachlive/
Video-Coaching Platforms	Edthena	https://www.edthena.com/
	Go React	https://get.goreact.com/
	COACHED	https://coachedweb.azurewebsites.net/

authors' lived experiences to further unpack virtual methods utilized in four SSEPs for field experiences, modeling, coaching, feedback, supervision, and partnerships.

Dr. Lynn Ruemoornan (called 'Dr. R' by her students), a faculty member within an SSEP, struggled to do everything required of her. As the lead special education faculty member in a department of three, teaching both undergraduate and graduate students, she found it daunting to balance responsibilities. Preparing interns to meet the Council for Exceptional Chil-

dren (CEC) Professional Preparation Standards for certification; providing meaningful feedback and coaching; supervising field experiences; and forging successful school partnerships across a large, rural geographical area was more challenging than anticipated. She struggled to balance the time needed to do all these things well. Dr. R decided to list all the things that were overwhelming to her. Her list included: limited faculty, rural isolation, program accreditation demands, supervising field experiences and interns, supporting recruitment and retention efforts, and responding to COVID-19 school closures. "How will I ever find the time for all of this?" she asked herself.

Field Experiences

Field experience is one of the best methods for preparing interns for the complexities of classroom teaching (i.e., Phillion et al., 2005). Nagro and deBettencourt (2017) defined field experience as "any teacher preparation activities within authentic school-based settings that integrate course work and require teacher candidates to work directly with students" (p. 8). Field experiences allow for the application of theories and concepts learned in the classroom setting to real life practice-based learning with the supervision of trained faculty (Leko & Brownell, 2011). Additionally, as outlined in CAEP's (2022b) Standard 2, EPPs are required to utilize field experience in intern preparation. These practice situations afford the opportunity for interns to think critically, to problem solve, and to reflect on their experiences (Ludlow et al., 2007). In their review of literature, Nagro and deBettencourt (2017) concluded:

> Field experiences allowed teacher candidates to link pedagogy with knowledge, provided opportunities to implement evidence-based practices, prepared teacher interns to educate and manage behaviors of students with disabilities, required teacher candidates to problem solve in authentic settings, and engaged teacher candidates in all aspects of the profession. (p. 12)

Dr. R found locating appropriate field placements in her small, rural university program challenging, and she needed creative ways for her interns to gain experience. Just as she thought she had some ideas, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused the few local schools she had contact with to suspend in-person learning, necessitating her team to find more opportunities for innovative field experiences.

Scaffolded Field Experiences

Rich field experiences for interns require engagement in a variety of grade level settings and student populations. To be recognized by CAEP, EPPs are required to include a variety of field experiences in which grade spans and disability areas are reflected in the areas for state licensure/certification (Berlinghoff & McLaughlin, 2022). Benedict and colleagues (2016) recommended a scaffolded set of experiences which increase in intensity for interns to be fully prepared. In early field experiences, Dr. R utilized case studies through filmed classroom instruction and virtual reality classroom environments in the EPP. Interns participated in these experiences and were taught how to professionally reflect on the educator's instructional impact on student learning using COACHED (Capturing Observations and Collaboratively sHaring Educational Data; Kunemund et al., 2021). These precursor instructional experiences were foundational in the early preparation experience before transitioning into in-person field placements.

Innovative Field Experiences

One example of an innovative field experience includes interns conducting mini lessons in a before and after school tutoring program at a local school. Once schools closed because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, virtual tutoring of students occurred through the utilization of video-conferencing tools. Some barriers existed for families due to lack of access to reliable internet connections, so the local library and organization partnerships stepped in to facilitate students' internet access. Additionally, as schools began to reopen, Dr. R designed opportunities using video conferencing which allowed interns to deliver lessons during the school day. Explicit lesson plans incorporating functional and adaptive behavior skills were written and taught by interns to local high school students within the life skills classroom through video conferencing. The classroom teacher facilitated technology usage within the classroom, and interns incorporated innovative technology applications to increase engagement in the virtual setting. This virtual response pivot proved to be a valuable experience, as it enhanced the interns' skill set to include virtual instructional skills and the utilization of novel student engagement techniques.

Modeling

Dr. R found the breadth of evidence-based instructional strategies she needed to teach interns overwhelming due to few faculty designated to teach methods courses and the few courses within the program designed to cover all strategies and interventions used in specially designed instruction. Further complicating her work, Dr. R was asked to transition the current face-to-face graduate program to an online delivery model to increase the graduate student enrollment. In addition to her regular teaching load and other faculty responsibilities, Dr. R was

provided two semesters to plan for the transition. Dr. R valued using HLPs, practicing engaging instructional strategies in the classroom, utilizing authentic field experiences, and building community with interns. Now there was the additional challenge of transitioning these to the online learning environment effectively.

Modeling in EPPs is required as standard practice (CAEP, 2022b) and occurs first in the development process. Modeling helps interns develop methods to process their learning and make connections to best practices (Jung et al., 2016). Moreover, Darling-Hammond (2006) wrote modeling in EPPs helps interns not only know how to think like a teacher, but also how to begin to act like a teacher. Through the modeling embedded in EPPs, interns begin to develop the metacognitive strategies required in teaching and reproduce expected thinking, behavior, problem solving, and reflection skills.

Modeling Instructional Practices

Effective modeling of evidence-based practices helps interns to implement practices with fidelity. Interns view video clips that demonstrate the use of specific approaches (i.e., Concrete, Representational, Abstract), which can give them context to how instructional interventions are taught in a classroom setting. Dr. R uses guided questions about a practice and requires the interns to demonstrate the practice to peers, providing multiple opportunities to learn it. Dr. R found utilizing professionally created video clips demonstrating various teaching methods, the HLPs (McLeskey et al., 2017), and evidence-based practices were effective in providing interns with the context needed to prepare for teaching. The expansive video library, *Project STAIR: Supporting Teaching of Algebra: Individual Readiness,* supports interns in learning the principles of data-based individualization, explicit and systematic instruction, and readiness for algebra through various demonstrations with students with disabilities (Powell et al., 2021). In addition, the HLP video clips, created by Kennedy et al. (2018), and Accomplished Teaching, Learning, and Schools (ATLAS) video clips compiled by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards provide the necessary video models for interns to practice effective strategies to support all students when field work is not possible.

Modeling Assessment Practices

Dr. R uses video modeling to prepare interns for administering norm-referenced assessments and found a considerable amount of time was required to create useful videos that taught interns the skills needed. The faculty team who helped create these videos in the university recording studio spent approximately 100 hours recording during the first summer session. Moreover, since norm-referenced assessments were routinely updated, the videos have been rerecorded three times over the past several years. The faculty used the following guidelines for effective implementation: (a) individual videos of no more than 20 minutes for each subtest, (b) prepared materials used for norm-referenced instruments such as marking basals, ceilings, and start points, (c) planned placement of materials for an optimal camera view, (d) duct tape mark placed on the table ensured materials were within the camera view, and (e) tested lighting effects and camera angles as necessary to produce the best video recording. Faculty who used a high-quality external microphone in their recordings were more likely to be clearly heard in the videos.

Coaching and Feedback

Dr. R was intentional with course design throughout the program and sought to be consistent from course to course and semester to semester. Initially, Dr. R's team was especially concerned with how they would provide coaching and feedback to online interns. After consideration, Dr. R. determined they would utilize a video-coaching platform and time-stamped comments to help with this endeavor. In addition, the team realized that intern-led meetings using a video-conferencing tool would not only help to facilitate a sense of community but also foster collaborative conversations among interns and provide many opportunities to provide feedback.

According to Joyce and Showers (1981), coaching interns provide sustained professional guidance when an "observation and feedback cycle" (p. 170) is used to ensure fidelity of practice. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defines the role of a coach as one who provides expert support focused on pedagogy. CAEP (2022b) standards require Dr. R's faculty to provide feedback and coaching to support the development and demonstration of expected knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors. This coaching at various stages of the interns' development ensures the interns' abilities to apply, through demonstration, their knowledge and learning through the curriculum and clinical experiences (CAEP, 2022b).

Video-Coaching and Feedback for Assessment Administration

Dr. R's faculty team implements coaching and feedback in a variety of educational formats but has found the use of video-coaching especially applicable to support web-facilitated instruction (Ottley et al., 2019) and test administration. During field-based

assessment courses, interns record administration of norm-referenced assessments then upload these videos to the selected platform. Once the videos are uploaded, the faculty annotate the videos with time-stamped comments which allows the interns to review the feedback provided (Ottley et al., 2019). Likewise, faculty can pause the videos and provide time-stamped comments (Rowland et al., 2021) that are aligned with CEC EPP and CAEP standards. For example, a faculty member may comment, "Be careful to read directions verbatim, *which of these pictures go here* instead of *which one of these pictures go here*."

Feedback allows faculty to provide a constructive critique. When followed by planned activities requiring critical reflection, interns make adjustments and changes before errors compound negative practices that could impact student learning. This coaching, combined with a self-reflection rubric of the standards, requires interns to evaluate areas of concern and opportunities for growth while citing evidence from the video submissions. In one example, interns were required to reflect on the learning experiences in the class which included lectures, presentations, collaborative group discussions, and video administrations. These self-evaluations further supported the cyclical nature of the coaching and feedback relationship between the interns and faculty. Dr. R's faculty found the use of video-coaching particularly beneficial as their interns were dispersed across large geographic areas and this methodology proved to be time and cost saving, while also allowing for cyclical feedback, instructional efficacy, and expert support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Video-Coaching and Feedback for Modeling Instruction

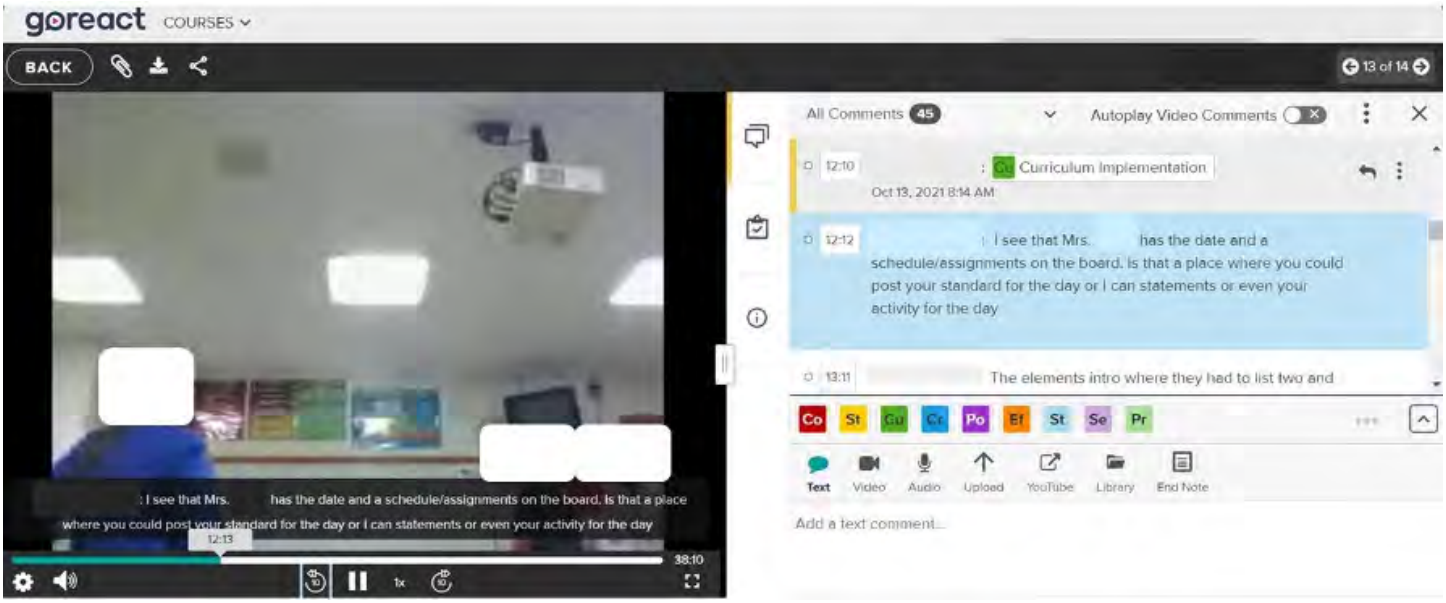
In another use of a video-coaching program, interns teach and video record lessons on three separate occasions throughout the semester. Upon submission of the first video after week seven of the semester, Dr. R uses a video-coaching program to leave time-stamped comments as feedback. The feedback uses a combination of EBPs and the state educator evaluation standards to create "markers" (each standard had its own color-coded marker), which were applied as time coded stamps throughout various points in the lessons (see examples in Table 2). As the internship supervisor, Dr. R views the video submissions and marks points to provide personalized, anecdotal feedback within the video at the exact time the behavior was observed, modeling reflective instructional practice for the interns. For example, in one video, Dr R's time-stamped feedback and connection to the educator standard on eliciting students' critical thinking was coded and the following feedback was noted, "Let's reflect and brainstorm together another strategy or activity to go about getting them to think deeply about the concepts you want them to learn." The interns review their videos with feedback as many times as necessary. They can correct their practice faster when they are able to see themselves and Dr. R's feedback at exactly the right moment. Finally, coaching occurs via a video-conferencing program at the end of the observation by reviewing the feedback provided through the standards rubric, time-coded markers, and anecdotal feedback.

During the second video submission, after week eleven of the internship, interns use the state educator evaluation standards as markers to evaluate their own videos prior to meeting with Dr. R. Currently, the interns also utilize reflection within their videos to time-stamp their own self-reflective feedback. Dr. R reviews the interns' markings prior to their video-conferencing session, which gave her insight into the interns' level of reflection and served as a guide for her coaching of the interns. During the final video submission, after week fourteen of the internship, Dr. R repeats the same process as in the first video submission by marking the video and requiring interns' reflection prior to the video conference session, thus, noting the growth in the interns'

TABLE 2:
State Educator Evaluation Standards and Marker Examples

Marker Abbreviation	State Educator Evaluation Standard
Co	Standard 1: Content knowledge aligned with standards
St	Standard 2: Student learning (differentiation)
Cu	Standard 3: Curriculum implementation
Cr	Standard 4: Critical thinking
Po	Standard 5: Positive classroom environment
Ef	Standard 6: Effective communication
St	Standard 7: Student assessment/data analysis
Se	Standard 8: Self-assessment/improvement
Pr	Standard 9: Professional collaboration

FIGURE 1: Time-Stamped, Color-Coded, Real Time Feedback Example



skills demonstration and instructional implementation. An example of the platform and time-stamped, color-coded, real time feedback can be found in Figure 1. Interns reflect on feedback to develop goals to improve performance between observations (Cornelius & Nagro, 2014), proving invaluable to the interns' learning as evidenced in their end of the course evaluation comments.

Video-Coaching and Feedback for Collaboration

Real Time Group Meetings (RTGMs) are collaborative group conversations between interns occurring online via video-conferencing tools. Like table talks in traditional face-to-face instruction, the use of RTGMs allows interns to discuss a topic, problem, or issue as they share their learning as a team. RTGMs encourage peer-supported learning and interns provide feedback and support to their team as they work toward a common goal. RTGMs are scheduled during a graduate student writing assignment. Within the RTGMs, the Group Report Form (GRF) is used to summarize the group's discussion and to provide evidence of each member's participation in the meeting (see Figure 2). For the RTGMs to be successful, each intern is assigned a role to perform during the meeting (Hentz & Jones, 2013). These roles are (a) Host--This intern organizes a mutually agreeable time and date, sends the meeting link to the team, video-records the meeting, and submits the recording, (b) Scribe--This intern records the results of the meeting on the GRF and submits the GRF, and (c) Facilitator--This intern facilitates the meeting by asking questions, making clarifying statements, and making sure all members are equally engaged in the conversation. During these meetings in the writing seminar, interns discuss the drafts of a paper and the areas where support is needed. Once the meeting is over, each intern makes edits to their drafts based on the feedback provided and participates in a faculty-coached writing conference held via video-conferencing with each RTGMs group.

Supervision and Partnerships

Dr. R and her team understand the need to improve partnerships with both rural and urban schools to increase field experiences in both programs. Due to her university's geographic isolation, providing feedback and supervision are a costly and challenging task. While these partnerships reaped significant benefits and were a win/win for all involved, to ensure authenticity, fidelity, and efficacy of the supervision and partnerships, Dr. R found a significant amount of her time dedicated to planning and collaboration.

Feedback and supervision are critical to interns' development and these opportunities must occur in purposeful ways to allow practice "in a safe environment" (Janssen et al., 2015, p. 138). These safe environments for practice are implemented in school field placements, and Dr. R's faculty experiences challenges when providing feedback and supervision for interns in these placements. Schmidt et al. (2015) explained, "Due to significant management, time, and travel associated with traditional models of field-based teaching supervision, the costs to support such programs in rural schools are high" (p. 37). In addition to the management, time, and travel necessary to provide adequate feedback

FIGURE 2: A Group Report Form (GRF) Example

Real-Time Group Meeting (RTGM) Group Report Form

1. Group #:

2. Those present at the meeting by job duties:
   - Host
   - Scribe
   - Facilitator

3. Those absent from the meeting (if any) and why?

4. Date and Time: Record the start and end times of the meeting here.

Discussion Topic:

Spend 30 minutes to 45 minutes discussing the interpretive report. There are two requirements that must be completed 24 hours in advance of the meeting. (1) Each person will post on the group's discussion page a draft of their interpretive report and (2) Each person will describe the one most valuable piece of information they found during the process of writing the draft of the interpretive report and share it with the group during the meeting.

Job Duties:

• Host: Sets up the meeting and sends the meeting link to group members. Video-records the meeting and submits the video recording.

• Scribe: (1) From the group discussion board page, copy and pastes the paragraphs describing the one most valuable piece of information for each member of the RTGM including yourself. (2) After the meeting, write 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the meeting.

• Facilitator: It is your responsibility to be sure that everyone participates in the meeting and discusses the topic equally. The facilitator should read the contributions of each member prior to the start of the meeting and engage each member appropriately. As the facilitator, you should ask relevant questions during the RTGM and make clarification statements to involve your group members and extend the conversation.

5. Summary of discussion (1-2 paragraphs).

6. Individual Group Member Contribution: (This will be posted on the group's discussion page 24 hours before the meeting and will be used to focus the conversation and discussion). Scribe, copy and paste the contributions by the name of each group member in the space below.

and supervision, Dr. R also participates in on-going collaboration with school district partners to ensure success, requiring considerable time and energy. Darling-Hammond (2006) wrote one critical feature of effective EPPs was instruction and learning closely aligned "with extensive and intensely supervised clinical work" thus allowing "interns to learn from expert practice in schools that serve diverse students" (p. 307), underscoring the importance of feedback and supervision within collaborative school partnerships. Dr. R's team finds many benefits occur when effective feedback and supervision are delivered and collaborative partnerships are developed. For example, Interns as the Teachers of Record (TOR) assisted partner school districts with the increasing issue of teacher shortages and interns were vetted as future teachers by partner districts during their field placements (Rich et al., 2020).

As her faculty continues to focus on developing "co-constructed mutually beneficial" partnerships (CAEP Standard 2, 2022b, p. 1), strong collaborative partnerships are often a positive, natural consequence of field experiences, placements, and employment. The win/win nature of these partnerships also produces secondary benefits for the EPP, such as the recruitment of adjunct instructors and internship supervisors. Additionally, districts' administrators refer teachers to Dr. R's graduate program. While these partnerships yield tremendous benefit, the increased geographical dispersion of interns also serves as an additional feedback and supervision burden, as noted by Burrack (2008).

Supervision Structure

Dr. R's program is a dual major and requires multiple placements to meet certification requirements for both areas (i.e., elementary education and special education). For effective supervision, two cooperating teachers (CT) and two university internship supervisors (US) provide feedback, supervision, and coaching through virtual collaboration which utilizes video conferencing tools. Furthermore, due to the geographical distance of the participants, video conferencing sessions are held between the field experience director, interns, CTs, and USs to provide training, an essential feature to focus all on the developmental needs of the interns (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2019).

Undergraduate Online Supervision

Supervision, when distance between placements is a factor, requires creativity and the use of technology. Dr. R holds weekly online seminars via video conferencing. In addition, she utilizes the video-coaching program described above which allows internship supervisors to view interns teaching live (synchronous) for their first observation. This online format for observations lowers travel costs for the university and improves supervision scheduling for the internship supervisors. With a smartphone or webcam, interns capture high-quality video of their teaching with ease, without requiring extra equipment or significant training (Paulsen & Schmidt-Crawford, 2017). A developmental supervision process facilitates reciprocal conversations (whether verbally or through an online modality) and listening and learning evolves into instruction through coaching the interns (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2019) as they move into subsequent observations and their own self-reflection. This supervision, guided by self-reflection, utilizes Nagro and Monnin's (2022) process, in which interns reflect on their own instructional decision-making and make changes to improve instruction for their students. This is done by analyzing the interns' self-assessment of their own reflective comments during a video conference with Dr. R, providing supervision through the evidence-based practice of reflection and "video recording of one's own teaching" (Soslau & Alexander, 2021, p. 147).

Graduate Online Supervision

In another application of online internship supervision within the EPP, supervisors meet with their assigned intern three times during the semester for approximately 45 minutes each via a video-conferencing program. These virtual supervision sessions allow the supervisor to discuss the interns' progress and to address any concerns the intern may have. Internship supervisors use a rubric aligned with the state educator evaluation standards to assess each of the interns. Interns self-reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and progress made during the semester and discuss specific areas for improvement with the supervisor. The self-reflection is a metacognitive activity (Goupil & Kouider, 2019), which provides an opportunity for interns to think aloud about their own abilities, while they also develop a plan of action for future practice.

Final Thoughts

As Dr. R prepared to transition from traditional face to face models of teaching to online instruction, she was first overwhelmed and frustrated. However, through weekly conversations with her SSEP faculty members she began to prioritize her to do list and to focus on the important task of using technology to support her instruction. In addition to working with her team, Dr. R was able to go to her annual professional conference to meet other special education faculty and to learn fresh, innovative

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ideas. She attended a session in which other professionals in SSEPs shared how they navigated the challenges of working in a small program to benefit their students. She was excited to come away with so many notes full of ideas! But not long after, doubt crept in . . . "I have so many ideas and changes to make, but how do I get started without feeling overwhelmed?" Dr. R reconnected with her colleagues at other small programs through social media (Twitter: SSEPCTED, Facebook: TED - SSEPC, Instagram: SSEPCTED). Her colleagues reminded her to start small to avoid feeling overwhelmed, to continue collaborating with colleagues across the globe, and to utilize the connections, resources, and relationships made through her membership in Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Teacher Education Division (TED) and the Small Special Education Programs Caucus (SSEPC) of TED. Dr. R found the support from her professional social network was what she needed to rejuvenate and tackle the challenges she might encounter.

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