



# Increasing Teacher Effectiveness with Video and Professional Learning Communities

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*A Chicago-based teacher training academy is transforming teacher education with video and an online social learning community. See how.*

### Introduction

Today's teachers face more complex challenges than ever before, from increasingly diverse student populations to rigorous new requirements for improved school and student performance. Overcoming these obstacles requires more than the traditional, one-size-fits-all professional development tools of the past. In order to increase teacher effectiveness, professional development solutions must embrace 21st century technology, cater to the varying needs of districts, schools, and classrooms across the country, and offer educators anytime, anywhere access to relevant academic content and best practices.

In this special report, sponsored by Teaching Channel, [T.H.E. Journal](#) looks at how technology is transforming professional development and how one school is using video and collaborative learning communities to better prepare teachers for real-world classrooms.

### Time For Change

Today's teachers are tasked with meeting rigorous standards and growing expectations for student improvement—even in learning environments where diverse challenges and student needs outnumber the dollars and tools needed to overcome them.

This is where professional development must play a part. We know effective teachers produce successful students, but the question is this: how do we increase teacher effectiveness in the midst of education reform, new academic standards, shrinking budgets, complex classroom challenges?

It's no secret that today's next-gen learners rely on a number of digital tools, including social media, mobile devices, and video, to help them collaborate and learn. It's time for a new model of professional development where teachers can use these same tools and technologies to improve their instructional practices.

### Using Video As A Tool For Effective Teaching

Teacher training programs have long employed video as a way to help educators improve their instructional practices.

Microteaching, for instance (when a teacher is taped delivering a lesson the video is used to reflect with peers and master teachers), is a common technique used to train educators. Methods like these enable teachers to better pinpoint areas that need improvement, according to a [2012 MET Project study sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#). Teachers participating in the project reported that they made a number of changes in their instructional practices after viewing the recorded session.



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## Teaching Channel Teams

Teaching Channel Teams aims to transform the professional development landscape with customizable and relevant academic content, social sharing within private networks, and collaborative communities that enable teachers and teacher leaders to connect, share best practices, and interact with instructional videos in a new way.

A safe, online community for educators, Teaching Channel Teams gives teachers and mentors instant, easy access to proven instructional strategies. Districts can host their own video library of best practices. Educators can easily share video of classroom instruction with their peers. Teachers can see how students react and interact with the learning material then add or adjust their own lessons and practices accordingly.

“With the videos, you get to see yourself in a different way,” said one participant.

“Actually you never really get to see yourself until you see a video of yourself. I changed immediately certain things that I did that I didn't like.”

“It was a two-way road,” explained another participant, “seeing what you do well, and seeing the things that have become habits that you don't even think about anymore.”

As teachers record and compare their own teaching with other videos demonstrating high-quality instruction, researchers note they often “increased use of praise with students”, “increased use of caregiving responses”, and “increased attention to student thinking during instruction.”

### Transforming Teacher Training At AUSL

The [Academy for Urban School Leadership](#) (AUSL) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve student achievement in 25 of Chicago Public Schools chronically failing schools while also preparing highly effective teachers via their Chicago Teacher Residency training and certification program.

AUSL understands the importance of teacher effectiveness, particularly in a challenging urban environment. Interested in using video to improve practice among their network of residents and mentors, AUSL partnered with [Teaching Channel](#), a non-profit organization that broadcasts videos of effective teaching practices online and on television, to create [Teaching Channel Teams](#), a private community that provides comprehensive professional learning via interactive video and channels of collaboration. Funding for the project came from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Teaching Channel Teams (known also as simply “Teams”) houses three types of videos: in-house produced video modeling Teams’ “signature strategies” and educator-produced video from live class sessions, in addition to full access to Teaching Channel’s video library. Educators use these videos to learn new approaches and sharpen existing skills.

“When our organization looked to build an online platform for professional development, we wanted to tailor it to the demands of our coaches and teachers,” explained Chris Bruggeman, technology coordinator at AUSL. “We wanted it to be device friendly so coaching sessions could be portable and teachers could capture and upload video of their classroom practice without much technological flak. It’s easy, effective and private, so our teachers are more comfortable discussing their practice. This provides a sense of security so our pre-service teachers can grow.

Teaching Channel Teams offers a mobile app that enables student teachers to upload video of their recorded classroom sessions. With the app, the recording can be viewed and shared with peers and coaches for constructive input. “Teaching Channel Teams is always providing us with new, forward thinking solutions like their new app” said Bruggeman. “It lets our teachers easily upload short videos of their day to private groups



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## Learn more and try it

Schools, districts, and educational organizations—now you can harness the power of Teaching Channel for your teachers with Teaching Channel Teams, a private collaboration platform.

Together, we can help your educators connect, learn and grow. Partner with Teaching Channel Teams to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

Sign up for a [FREE TRIAL](#) now or visit [www.teachingchannel.org/teams](http://www.teachingchannel.org/teams) to learn more.

and share them with their mentors and coaches for feedback, directly from their mobile phones and tablets.”

The platform promotes professional growth and instructional improvement through its social community. Here educators can network with their peers and mentors, sharing experiences, exchanging ideas and best practices, and building a better understanding of new instructional approaches, standards, and shifting curriculum. They can then take these signature strategies back to their classrooms for implementation. This community-based model is designed to promote meaningful discussions among education professionals and offer schools and districts a professional development program that goes beyond basic skills training.

Teaching Channel Teams has been a boon for AUSL students, according to Bruggeman. The platform has helped transform the way AUSL works to develop teachers, allowing its educators to work smarter, not harder towards improving effectiveness on a daily basis.

“All along we have been looking for a tool that would allow us to collect, share and discuss practice within a safe community of teachers and learners,” recalled Bruggeman. “Combining that with a vast library of videos depicting strategies and instructional ideas has helped us develop teachers who need to see effective practice in action.”

### Using Video To Prepare For Common Core Standards

One of the most difficult challenges our schools are now facing is the onset of new Common Core State Standards. These standards, set to go into effect with the 2014-2015 school year, aim to increase rigor, critical thinking and communication skills of students.

Teaching Channel Teams' can help districts and schools prepare for this shift. With a library of more than 170 easy-to-access Common Core videos, growing to 250 by end of 2013, the platform helps teachers put standards in real-world context. Educators can see the Core in action and get ideas for teaching the standards in their own classrooms.

“Seeing educators actually teaching the Core to students within the same school or district is a game changer,” said Pat Wasley, CEO at Teaching Channel. “It helps teachers tailor content to their unique student and classroom needs. Teaching Channel Teams has helped our teachers and mentors discover smarter and better ways to connect complex standards and content to students' everyday lives.”

### Conclusion

Like classroom instruction, professional development is evolving. Effective platforms embrace 21st century technology in a way that helps improve teacher effectiveness through collaborative learning, real-world application of academic content, customization, meaningful peer evaluation, and self-evaluation through tools like interactive video.



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**“There is great potential in using video for teacher feedback and for the training and assessment of observers. The advances made in this technology have been significant, resulting in lower costs, greater ease of use, and better quality.”**

*—Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching: Culminating Findings from the MET Project’s Three-Year Study  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

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Teaching Channel Teams offers an effective solution for districts and schools looking to increase instructional effectiveness. The platform provides teachers and teacher leaders with a channel for collaboration as well as a vast library of relevant, high-quality video content which they can use to improve instruction in their own classrooms.

To learn more about Teaching Channel Teams, visit [www.teachingchannel.org/teams](http://www.teachingchannel.org/teams) and watch the [AUSL Case Study Video](#).



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## About Teaching Channel Teams

Teaching Channel Teams is a private, collaborative professional development platform for schools, districts, and education organizations enabling teachers and leaders to work together to improve practice and prepare for Common Core. At the center of Teaching Channel Teams is a rich library of high-quality videos that you can add to and customize. Teaching Channel Teams helps teachers learn new instructional strategies, try them in their own classrooms, and reflect on their practice in a safe, secure environment with the goal of improving student learning.

## About Teaching Channel

Teaching Channel revolutionizes how teachers learn, connect, and inspire each other and their communities to improve instruction and student outcomes in America's K–12 classrooms. A nonprofit organization, **Tch** engages teachers across the country to reinvent and revolutionize professional learning through video content and online innovation. For more information, visit **Tch** on the web at [TeachingChannel.org](http://TeachingChannel.org), and on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#), and [YouTube](#).

## About T.H.E. Journal

*THE Journal* is dedicated to informing and educating K-12 senior-level district and school administrators, technologists, and tech-savvy educators within districts, schools, and classrooms to improve and advance the learning process through the use of technology. Launched in 1972, *THE Journal* was the first magazine to cover education technology.

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With a distribution of 100,000 circulation, *T.H.E. Journal* is the leading resource for administrative, technical, and academic technology leaders in K-12 education.

**To learn more, visit [www.thejournal.com](http://www.thejournal.com)**

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