Coming Out from Behind the Curtain:
Face Time in Online Teaching

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Sometimes teaching in an asynchronous online format can make one feel detached from students. I'm assuming that sometimes learning in an asynchronous online format can also make one feel detached from the instructor. Sometimes, it's just a smile to make connections between students and the instructor.

In my early video lectures students could see my PowerPoint and hear my voice. If they wanted to, students could also read the lesson transcript. In fact, I would say that my video lectures followed best practices in that they were within a reasonable time increment (i.e., 10 minutes), appropriately paced, matched to objectives, relevant, and engaging. I could give myself a check next to all the learning senses— see, hear, and read—but there was still something missing. It took me while but I realized that I was missing a human component: faces and facial expressions.

In my goal to create professional materials, I hid in the background, behind the curtain so to speak.

After this realization, I purposefully looked for ways to incorporate my face as I was speaking. Using the multimedia software Camtasia, I recreated my videos but this time with my face in the corner speaking to them. I looked for other ways to add more of my personality into the course. Every week, at the same day and time, I came on "live" with a "What's Up Weekly." In this informal video recording that showed my face and facial expressions, I provided an overview of content and assignments. I reviewed what went well (assignment feedback), what to look forward to (content), and what to do (tasks).

Another way to create a smaller environment was through video feedback on their assignments. In a short video I described areas that were done correctly and perhaps areas to work on. I incorporated feedback videos to create an individualized student and instructor conference time.

In addition to my own video lectures and feedback, I also had students click on their videos as well. Using a program called VoiceThread, I created an ongoing case study, actually a vlog (video blog) of a student named Jasmine who was training for her first "Couch to 5K" race. Each week, students answered two prompts, one sharing advice or experience and one related to course content. For example, as Jasmine shared her vlog on her running progress, students offered Jasmine advice—from what to include on her music play list to recipes to keep up a health lifestyle. Students used the video option to share their comments. Students also worked on content objects individually or in pairs to collect and analyze Jasmine's exercise data.

Yes, there are times (particularly Monday mornings!) when we keep that video icon off. I still use Discussion Boards for textual responses; however, I noticed that students tend to share more about their preferences and experiences when the video is rolling. So we're all out from behind the curtain now!

Using Digital Badges to Engage Student Learners

EDSE 621: Applied Behavior Analysis: Empirical Bases

One way to encourage participation and increase motivation to engage in extended practice activities is through Digital Badges, which can reward students who do work above the course objectives. Digital Badges provide additional learning opportunities to put content into action. It's about learning and doing. Course objectives target essential skills related to the basic principles and procedures to conduct observations, create and interpret graphs, and design research experiments. Digital Badges provide the option to engage in extended practice activities related to these skills. In my course there are three badge opportunities which are all completely optional, so students can complete all three, none, or a number in between. Below is a description of one badge they can earn.

Badge Descriptions
Reliability Badge
This is an extension of the practice activity for measuring behavior located in week 2. First, complete the frequency and duration activities, then get together with a partner to complete the two reliability exercises. Directions are provided below.

After the frequency activity, complete the following steps:

- Meet virtually
- Discuss definition
- Come up with one definition
- Compare frequency data
- Calculate by hand interobserver agreement by using the Exact Count per interval formula (you will only have 1 interval of data)
- Check on the accuracy of your agreement using the IOA calculator with Excel (link)
- Written task: Combine procedural steps for how one would take frequency data, write an IOA plan for when IOA data does not meet criteria
- Submit the behavior definition, procedural steps to calculate IOA, and plan when IOA is below 80%

After the duration activity, complete the following steps:

- Meet virtually
- Discuss definition
- Come up with one definition
- Compare duration data
- Calculate total duration IOA
- Submit the behavior definition, procedural steps to calculate IOA, and plan when IOA is below 80%

Combine the behavior definitions, procedural steps to calculate IOA, and training plan for both activities and submit to the Reliability Badge assignment link. This badge can be exchanged for

the completed Data Collection Methods Table or 2 points can be added to a prior DB assignment in which points were deducted. DB assignment cannot exceed the 4 points allotted.