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The Ups, Downs, and Potentials of Implementing Video Clubs in Museums

Amber Simpson , Alice Anderson and Adam V. Maltese 

ABSTRACT

Professional development opportunities for museum educators are often short-term experiences that are void of reflections to support one's professional growth and practices within a collaborative environment. Video clubs may serve as an effective approach to supporting the professional growth and practices of educators in museum settings. Video clubs are composed of a group of educators engaged in video-based reflections around their work and interactions with others. In collaboration with six museums, we considered how video clubs, developed and implemented to promote professional growth and learning in school learning environments, would translate to a museum learning environment with a specific focus on interactions of failure experiences in STEAM-related making programs. In this paper, we highlight benefits, challenges, learnings, and recommendations as a way to support museums interested in establishing and implementing reflective practices within video recording and video sharing.

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Introduction

It is not uncommon for professional development (PD) opportunities for educators to be short-term experiences (e.g. 1.5-hour workshop), include a variety of topics, and void of collaboration among educators to support one's professional growth and practices.¹ Lynn Tran, Preeti Gupta, and David Bader,² directors within non-formal learning environments, claim such PD is pervasive in museums. This was confirmed by museum educators, which we refer to as participant-collaborators, as we embarked on a long-term, video-based PD regarding shifting museum educators' pedagogical practices with youth in their making programs experience failure.³ We heard examples from participant-collaborators such as attending conferences, conference-style workshops on a variety of topics, individual and team trainings, and lunch-and-learns with other museums. Video clubs may serve as an alternative and effective approach to supporting the professional growth and practices of educators in museum settings.⁴

Video clubs are composed of a group of educators engaged in video-based reflections around their work and interactions with others (e.g. students, visitors).⁵ The PD process begins with each educator video recording their interactions with others in a classroom, exhibit, workshop, etc. Educators then watch their own videos and select at least one short video clip (e.g. 2–3 minutes) that exemplifies a weak point, effective teaching, or

a moment of personal growth.⁶ Video clips are then shared with others through a video club format with the goals of reflecting on practice and discussing issues of teaching and learning as situated within physical and social contexts. As stated by Miriam Gamoran Sherin, mathematics teacher educator, “the opportunity to develop a different kind of knowledge for teaching – knowledge not of ‘what to do next,’ but rather, knowledge of how to interpret and reflect on classroom practices.”⁷ Video clubs are not a one-and-done process, but an iterative PD format that meets regularly over a course of time.

Benefits of videos as a PD tool, as well as benefits of video clubs, are well documented in research with educators in school settings. The benefits identified by research include an increased focus on student thinking, implementation of new pedagogical strategies, an understanding that educators struggle with similar problems, better comprehension of content and concepts, motivation to learn and improve teaching skills, and acknowledging the need for productive struggle.⁸ However, the use and implementation of video clubs are not without challenges and barriers, such as scheduling time to engage in reflection, institutional support, and a belief that educators do not need PD opportunities.⁹ Teacher educators Charalambos Charalambous, Stavroula Philippou, and George Olympiou argued for video club differentiation and customization, as a uniform video club model does not benefit everyone equally.¹⁰

In collaboration with six museums, we considered how such a model, developed and implemented to promote professional growth and learning in school learning environments, would translate to museum contexts with a specific focus on how educators reflected upon their interactions with youth upon experiencing failure in STEAM-related making programs. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the development and execution of a context-specific video club in each of the six partnering museums, particularly regarding the decisions made and lessons learned, as well as benefits and challenges. We contend that the insights shared from individuals at the six museums will support other museums interested in establishing and implementing reflective and ongoing PD opportunities through video recording and video sharing. In addition, this paper adds to our collective understanding regarding the implementation of video clubs to support educators in museums.

Context

Our use of video clubs is situated within a larger project regarding the refinement of a PD model for productively attending, interpreting, and responding to the failure experiences of youth while engaged in making tasks in museum settings.¹¹ During the 2021 calendar year, we partnered with six museums, located in five states across the United States, in both urban and rural settings. Further, the partnering sites included small and large organizations with varied emphases, including the arts, natural science, innovation, and technology. There were differences in the type of STEAM-making activity that framed the video club at each partnering site – drop-in exhibit, week-long camp, kits with drop-in virtual office hours, and 90-minute workshops. Therefore, while the focus of the video clubs was the same across sites, they differed in their emphasis and type of STEAM-making experience for youth. In addition, participant-collaborators at each site discussed the implementation of video clubs with their educators, including the vulnerability of being video recording and sharing these moments with their

colleagues. All participants – the participant-collaborators and informal educators – signed a consent agreement, which had been approved by the lead author's Institutional Review Board. This agreement made explicit how the video data would be collected, stored, anonymized, and eventually destroyed after the research study. Educators could also choose to be a part of the video club, but not part of our research study.

Our group consisted of three researchers and 14 participant-collaborators. Participant-collaborators had an average of 11 years of experience at their organization and ranged in age from 29–66 years. As a group, we met virtually 17 times through the year. Each meeting lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Ten of our discussions were framed around the development and implementation of video clubs. For example, one of our initial meetings focused on what PD opportunities were offered within each partnering site and if video was a part of their PD. Participant-collaborators discussed this within breakout rooms with individuals from other sites. In the following meeting, we discussed ways to build towards vulnerability in video recording and reflecting on one's experience with a group of peers. As a research team, we also met virtually with each museum to answer questions and gain insights into their thinking regarding video clubs. These individual and group virtual meetings framed the insights presented below and we include direct quotes from participant-collaborators regarding their experience and reflection upon their work alongside educators at their site.

Insights

Prior to detailing the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned, we provide one descriptive example to highlight what a video club might look like in a museum setting. This partnering site decided to focus its video collection on a drop-in exhibit where the design challenge was to create devices to deliver a ball up one of the platforms on a testing “rig” (see Figures 1 and 2). They decided to focus the camera on the testing “rig” as they knew that visitors would experience failures.



Figure 1. Materials used to create devices.



Figure 2 Testing “rig”.

One of the participant-collaborators, Linda,¹² video recorded six educators for approximately one hour per educator. Linda also watched the video recordings and picked out and shared short clips that highlighted a youth’s failure moment from her perspective. For example, Nori, an educator at this site, received six video clips ranging from 35 seconds to 4 minutes and 17 seconds. Next, each educator watched their video clips as guided by an observation sheet developed by participant-collaborators at the museum (e.g. Did you notice any language you used that was particularly helpful (or not helpful) in facilitating around failure?). This site decided to include one-on-one meetings with each educator to support reflecting on one’s effective and non-effective pedagogical moves in relation to youth’s failure moments prior to discussing within a larger group setting. Lastly, educators shared their video clips through a video club meeting in two different workshops. This cycle is represented in Figure 3.

While we presented this one descriptive case to illustrate what a video club looked like in one site, this is not to imply that all partnering sites structured the video clubs in the

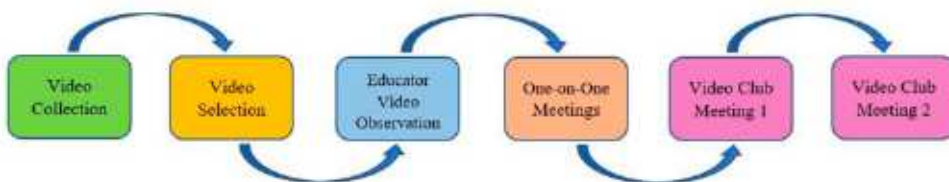


Figure 3 Video club cycle of one partnering site.

same manner or with the same number of educators. Each site was encouraged to adapt the video club model to fit within their schedules, adapt to their program structure, and align with their mission and vision as an educational team and/or organization. A few differences across sites included the following: (a) who selected the short video clips – participant-collaborators or educators, (b) the inclusion of one-on-one meetings or not, (c) number of educators involved, and (d) where to focus the camera (e.g. whole group, small group, testing area).

Benefits

Engaging with others in reflection through video clubs was beneficial to museum educators. Benefits were framed around their interactions with youth and with one another. First, educators found the video club cycle to support their growth as museum educators and their pedagogical failure moments when responding to visitors. For example, one group of educators came to the realization that being too positive around visitors' moments of failure may not be productive in supporting visitors through the iteration process (i.e. pedagogical failure). Consider the following quotation from Kelly who termed this pedagogical dissonance as toxic positivity:

In the moment, they [educators] felt like being really positive when a student or when a family group was failing would help them feel better about the situation. But then in watching the interactions unfold on video, they realized that it was really, really not helpful and that it was too positive and didn't contribute anything to the family actually figuring out what to do to make it better. ... They don't want to do that going forward.

Second, the use of videos afforded a pedagogical realization regarding how kids support one another when experiencing struggle and failures. As noted by Marcel, educators reflected upon opportunities to take a step back as students are able to serve as supports and problem-solving partners for one another. Third, video clubs also provided educators an opportunity to talk to and collaborate with each other about their work, which was often a missing element of PD at the museum sites. As stated by Linda, "They so rarely get much opportunity to talk to each other about their work. They don't generally seek each other out for that type of feedback. So I think giving them the time and opportunity to do so was very helpful."

In addition, our participant-collaborators described benefits for their educational team. First, video clubs provided participant-collaborators with an opportunity to slow down and reflect with their educators. As stated by Kelly, "this opportunity gave us a chance to slow down and take the time to come to a shared articulation of a goal for how we want to tackle kid's failures." Myra agreed, adding that such self- and group-reflections would not "have showed up organically, but something prompted through looking for those things [failures]." Second, through engaging in this process, some participant-collaborators were able to attain a prior goal of self-reflection as a team, specifically, to transition from a rubric and process-oriented support model to a more educator-focused process. As stated by Linda, "Self-reflection may become more of an expectation. If you want to come work with us, we're going to invest in you in these ways because we're constantly learning and trying to support one another." Lastly, video clubs afforded educational teams the time to set future goals specific to youth's experiences

with failure, as well as how to support their educators. As an example of the former, one site reflected upon their physical space (e.g. materials) and how students interact in the space, which caused confusion. They committed to taking care of these organizational elements beforehand because they agreed that the learning environment should not be where failure moments happen. As an example of the latter, Marguerite stated that as an educational team they will continue to support educators through “keeping that intentional time to reflect” and to “continue filming as part of our progress.”

Challenges

There were three main challenges in implementing video clubs: video recording, time and attrition, and feedback. On a more practical level, the placement of the camera proved difficult for some sites. For example, one site did not capture what they described as “amazing” things and also captured a lot of video of building materials as students would unknowingly place materials and tools in front of the camera. Another site placed the camera too far away to observe interactions between educators and students. Audio was also an issue, with most problems related to low-level recordings. As stated by Myra, “Long hair is causing issues with recording as it brushes up against the microphone. It sounds like static on the recording.”

Finding time for educators and/or participant-collaborators to watch the videos during the workday proved to be a barrier that some museum sites could not overcome – “video review was not feasible” (Marcel) – therefore some museums did not complete the proposed video club cycle. Another participant-collaborator, Jason, described how they collected too much data that they were “buried to the point that we didn’t know what to do.” For the sites that moved beyond video selection (see Figure 3), they found the time between video selection and review meetings was too far apart (e.g. approximately three months). This distance in time did not allow educators to set goals and implement at least one new pedagogical move before leaving the summer season. Attrition was also a challenge in that some sites had personnel shifts that made the process difficult or impossible (i.e. seasonal employees left).

The last challenge involved video selection and the feedback given during video club meetings. For one site, this proved to be difficult because educators “picked clips that felt a little perfect in terms of kids succeeding and how the educator moves were effective in that moment” (Eleanor). For another site, there was a sense from educators that clips were chosen as to invoke “self-deprecating conversations” instead of serving as a source of reflection and growth. Additionally, helping individuals to move past self-criticisms, or internal dialogue and feedback to self, became a barrier that was difficult for participant-collaborators to overcome. As stated by Myra, “You’re your own worst critic ... There were a lot of internal dialogues that were happening that aren’t as present to an outside viewer.” This was also expressed by Linda in that there was a focus on failing as an educator and less of a focus on how they facilitated moments of visitor failures within the STEAM-making activity. Educators also had a difficult time stating, “I’m specifically looking for feedback on this element. I think for their first experience in self-reflection, they just didn’t know what to even ask for feedback on” (Kelly). As such, participant-collaborators reflected upon and acknowledged that these challenges may have been due to how they talked about and set up the video club cycle.

Table 1. Video club cycle learnings and recommendation.

Video Club Element	Learnings and Recommendation
Video Club Cycle	• Make engagement in the video club for educators voluntary as opposed to required. (Kelly) • Highlight the value of the video club cycle for educator growth and empowerment. (Kelly)
Video Recordings	• Post signage in the museum that visitors may be video recorded and provide information about its purpose. (Linda) • Test the camera position and audio beforehand. (Marcel, Justin, & Myra) • Do not record more than one hour of interactions. (Linda) • Be sure to pull hair back from lapel microphone. (Myra)
Video Selection	• Educators should be responsible for picking video clips for several reasons: (a) way to get comfortable seeing themselves on camera, (b) have control over what people are seeing, (c) are more aware of what they want to talk about, and (d) removes the participant-collaborator. (Adelaide & Myra) • Minimize length of recording to reduce anxiety of watching hours of video recordings and helps with focusing on 1–2 failure moments. (Eleanor & Jason)
Video Club Meetings	• Meet individually with the educator first as it will help reduce anxiety and increase comfortability. (Adelaide) • Member of the lead educational team should share a video clip first to establish norms for feedback, address problematic feedback, and build a community of reflection and support. (Linda & Myra) • Turn effective clips or things going well into a discussion around how we as educators create failure for visitors. (Eleanor) • Allow for self-reflection prior to directing educators to focus on facilitation around failure moments. (Kelly)

Recommendations for self and others

Through their first experience of implementing video clubs in a museum setting, participant-collaborators not only provided advice to others but also framed what they learned within things they would change during the next video club cycle. These learnings and recommendations are presented in Table 1 and are meant to support museums interested in establishing and implementing reflective practices within video recording and video sharing.

Conclusion

The insights presented in this paper from participant-collaborators at six museums within different STEAM-making activities and formats (e.g. camps, exhibits) highlight the complexities in implementing video clubs with educators at their museums. We contend that the insights shared from individuals at these museums will support other museums interested in establishing and implementing reflective and ongoing PD opportunities through video recording and video sharing. Challenges, particularly the focus on feedback, seemed unique to the use of video clubs as time and video recording mishaps have been documented in prior research.¹³ Yet, it was through these challenges that participant-collaborators were able to reflect on their own learnings and provide advice for others. Participant-collaborators also described benefits to implementing video clubs with a small set of educators in their museums. These benefits highlighted growth for both museum educators and for the educational teams. We leave you with this quote from an educator who engaged in the video club cycle.

I think that it made us more cognizant of each other's facilitation styles and what we bring to the table. ... I feel like I learn a lot from my team members and my team members can also absorb what I bring to the table. I think that it was a great process to get us all on the same page and thinking about how we can really make this a really good experience for different guests and different types of learners.

Notes

1. Sancar, Atal, and Deryakulu, "Framework Teachers' Professional Development".
2. Tran, Gupta, and Bader, "Redefining Professional Learning," 135–46.
3. We do not explicitly establish a meaning of failure but acknowledge how this word is defined, experienced, and felt differently by individuals for a variety of reasons (e.g. social identities, activity, environment, history).
4. Sherin and Han, "Teacher Learning Video Club," 163–83.
5. Amador et al., "Collective Noticing: Teachers' Experiences," 1–26; van Es and Sheridan, "Mathematics Teachers' "Learning to Notice,"" 244–76.
6. Jalilifar and Nattaq, "Reflective Teaching: Nurturing Relationships," 51–68.
7. Sherin, "New Perspectives on the Role of Video," 14.
8. Amador et al., "Collective Noticing: Teachers' Experiences," 1–26; Borko et al., "Video as a Tool," 417–36; Tripp and Rich, "Video Analysis Teacher Change," 728–39; van Es and Sheridan, "The Influence of Video Clubs," 155–76.
9. Moore et al., "Supporting Facilitators Reflective Practice," 99–107; Tran, Gupta, and Bader, "Redefining Professional Learning," 135–46.
10. Charalambous Philippou, and Olympiou, "Reconsidering Video Clubs," 49–61.
11. Simpson, Anderson, and Maltese, "Caught on Camera," 480–92.
12. Self-selected pseudonyms are used to identify participant-collaborators.
13. Moore et al., "Supporting Facilitators Reflective Practice," 99–107.

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