**THE VIRTUAL SOLUTION**

The University of Nevada, Reno uses a traditional student teaching model: the student teacher is placed with a mentor or lead teacher for a specified number of weeks and the University appoints a supervisor to oversee the experience. Supervising student teachers far away from campus presents unique challenges. Some student teachers have reported feeling isolated and disconnected from campus and the Office of Field Experiences (OFX). Since they are miles away, business must be conducted long distance. Here's the virtual solution!

Video conferencing is the next best thing to being there in person. Through scheduled video calling, the supervisor will:

- conduct an initial meeting with the student teacher and their lead teacher,
- foster regular communication with the student teacher and their lead teacher,
- observe the student teacher in action and conduct post-observation conferences to provide immediate feedback,
- discuss the student teacher’s performance with the lead teacher and collaborate on evaluations, and
- conduct formal evaluation meetings at midpoint and the end of internship.

Let’s address a couple things you might be wondering about:

- Video calling requires someone on your end to initiate or answer the call just like on your home phone. You will always know when the webcam is in use.
- Video calling is live and will not be recorded.
- To demystify video calling, explain to your students why a webcam is being used and then introduce them to the university supervisor while video calling. You might not even need to reinforce ignoring behavior because students usually adapt readily to this technology.

The virtual solution of video calling keeps us all feeling connected through face-to-face interactions in real-time. Let’s get started!

At least 1 week prior to internship, get set up for video calling and make the first Skype conference call.

**NECESSITIES:**

- computer – if the classroom computer is unavailable, the intern must provide their own laptop for the duration of the experience
- high definition webcam with a built-in microphone and a 6 foot USB extension – available upon request from the Office of Field Experiences
- internet access – if school access is not available, the intern must obtain wireless internet coverage for the duration of this internship
- Skype account – make a test video call to your supervisor before you start. Skype video calls are free.
- consent forms for the students (this is an opt out type permission slip and the parent/guardian does not need to reply unless they opt out – if a parent/guardian opts out, then position the webcam to exclude that students)
SOFTWARE:
Download and install webcam software on the classroom computer. Video calling generates a lot of data so connect the computer to the internet with an Ethernet cable. A wireless internet connection may result in a choppy stream on the other end so confirm the quality with the university supervisor.

WEBCAM:
Use the classroom computer or a laptop with a built-in webcam or attach an external webcam. The webcam will focus close and distant images automatically. You will need a microphone. If necessary, check out an external webcam with built-in microphone from the Office of Field Experiences before internship starts. An external webcam with a 6’ USB extension cable will increase mobility and viewing options.

Point the webcam toward different areas in the classroom where you will be teaching. Draw a basic diagram of the classroom. Draw the areas the webcam will capture when it is pointed in different directions. Email this diagram to your supervisor. Keep a copy of this diagram with the webcam as you will need to reposition the webcam later.

SKYPE:
Sign up for a Skype account at [http://about.skype.com/](http://about.skype.com/) and add your university supervisor to your contact list.

Email the university supervisor to schedule a specific time to do your first video call. Use video calling only. Video calling is FREE! During this call, check webcam positions, volume and the quality of the video stream. Then schedule the initial meeting the student teacher, lead teacher and university supervisor. Use video calling through Skype for this meeting.

The university supervisor and student teacher will coordinate future video calling for such things as observations, conferences, evaluations, feedback, and collaboration.