



# CAUGHT ON FILM

DAVID WESTON EXPLORES HOW VIDEO TECHNOLOGY IS REVOLUTIONISING  
TEACHER DEVELOPMENT...

**W**e all know that good feedback is swift and helps you understand the gap between your current performance and your target – this is as true for teachers as it is for students. However, too much current observation involves one person passing judgement on another instead of a more developmental process to build confidence, capacity and skill. Taking videos of your lessons may seem daunting, but it has the potential to be revolutionary and supportive.

Classroom camera systems like IRIS Connect, Star Lesson and Class Watch are rapidly making their way into schools across the country; it's likely that your school or a school near you is already using one of these. However, how can you decide which one is right for you and how can you get the most out of it?

The first thing to consider is trust. No teacher will welcome the uninvited introduction of Big Brother to his or her classroom, so it is important that all staff are involved from the very start of the process. Involve teachers in deciding the ground rules which everyone buys into.

Most systems require the teacher in the classroom to specifically activate the camera and there are different levels of control over who gets to see the video. Some systems allow live-streaming of the video to another PC or TV, while others even allow the class teacher to wear a headphone to enable them to receive real-time in-ear coaching from a colleague outside of the room. The key is to decide which individuals will have permission to view the videos, and to pilot carefully to keep teachers on board.

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## ABOUT THE EXPERT



David Weston is the chief executive of the Teacher Development Trust\*, the national charity for effective professional development. He is a primary school governor and a former maths and physics teacher. To read more on the Teacher Development Trust and the NTEN network visit: [tdtrust.org](http://tdtrust.org). Follow TDT (@TeacherDevTrust) and David Weston (@informed\_edu) on Twitter.

\*TDT has previously received sponsorship from IRIS Connect.

The best way to lead the change is to promise that senior leaders will be the first to be observed using the new system, and that these videos and follow-up meetings will be open to other teachers to observe. This helps build trust further – if a leader is prepared to ‘take the plunge’ then it can reduce suspicions of this being a managerial/accountability tool.

## Technology in the classroom

Once trust is gained, the technical aspect of available systems need to be considered. Make sure the system provider has a good track record for technical support. Also, consider portability; would you prefer a fixed camera system in one classroom, or a portable one that can be used across multiple classrooms if required?

Another key technical consideration is quality of audio. Some systems have microphones built into the camera, while others have separate microphone units that can be attached to the teacher or even put on a table to capture student conversations. Think about what will best meet your needs.

Some systems have a digital storage unit installed on the premises which securely hold all of the recordings, while others upload the video to a cloud-based web system with secure log-in. You need to make sure your data protection policy is aligned with whichever solution you choose.

## Coaching and feedback

Once the video system is installed, you need to put in place a clear professional programme. Not only should all teachers be trained in how to operate cameras and software, you also need training for anyone who will be giving feedback, so that they are not passing judgement but building the capacity of the observed teacher.

Some of the best uses of video capture equipment are outside of the traditional lesson observation. Teachers can work peer-to-peer, in triads or larger groups to capture and discuss lessons. Many schools in our National Teacher Enquiry Network are using video technology to assist with Lesson Study, a process of co-planning, observing and group reflection. Video can be used alongside in-class observation or, sparsely, as a way to reduce cover burdens.

Video systems can be particularly powerful when the focus is on observing students – for example, using the camera to investigate why certain learners may be struggling. Some schools use video to capture students and play it back to them later to help them reflect upon and improve their own learning behaviours.

## Evaluating impact

However you choose to use a video system, make sure you are clear on the aim from the outset, and evaluate the impact carefully. Consider how widely/well it is being used, how popular it is with staff/students, how much of a burden it is on technical support teams, and to what extent all staff feel trained. If you plan to focus on learners, identify specific students whom you wish to support and evaluate the impact of the process on their attitudes and outcomes. If focusing on staff, be very wary about measuring impact using inspection-style lesson gradings – research repeatedly shows these to be unreliable and poorly correlated to learning and outcomes.

Video is an exciting technology that has the potential to transform teacher development. Consider it carefully; pilot; build trust... and join the thousands of schools who are using these systems.