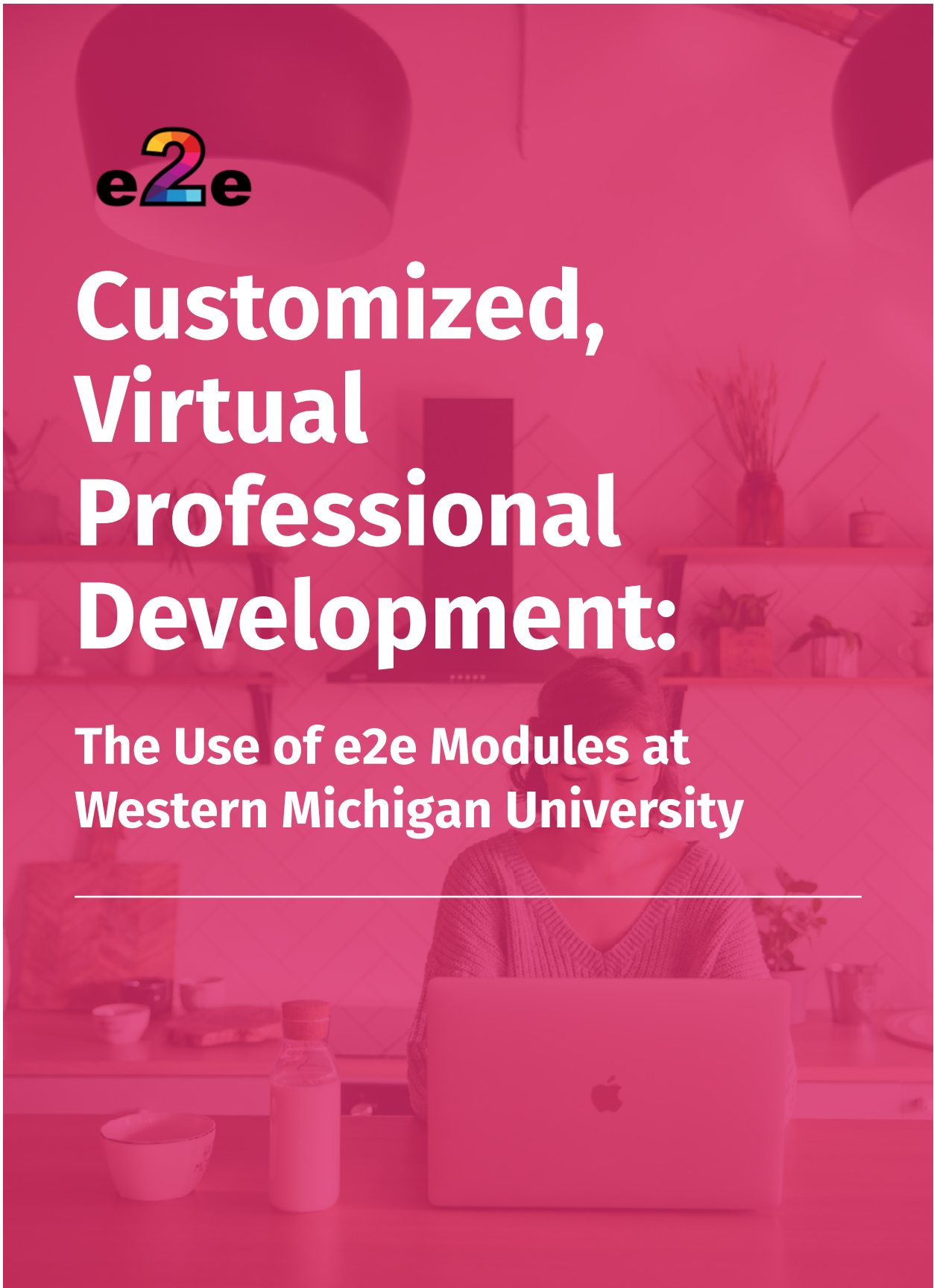




Customized, Virtual Professional Development:

The Use of e2e Modules at
Western Michigan University



Executive Summary

Facing the impacts of the pandemic, Western Michigan University's Office of Clinical Experiences needed to find a virtual way to deliver engaging and customized professional development to its final year teacher candidates. By providing specialized access to one of its modules, educators 2 educators (e2e) delivered a solution that was cost-effective, customizable, and impactful. The solution received strong positive feedback from students for both its engaging format and its ability to deliver tangible, actionable insights to support their development as future educators.



About e2e

e2e was developed by Carrie Conover after 20 years of experience in the field of education. Her goal was to create a vibrant community where teachers could learn to love teaching again, learn how to engage in self-care, and gain the tools they needed to revitalize their time in the classroom.

Since its founding, e2e has grown organically into a vibrant organization that draws more than 20,000 teachers to its two virtual summits every year and that provides more than 150 hours of professional development modules [on its website](#). In addition, e2e provides a free podcast and verified completion certificates for educators who complete certain modules.

Problem

The Office of Clinical Experiences at Western Michigan University exists to support teacher candidates in their pursuit of teaching placements and professional development.

As part of the office's robust offerings is a biannual professional development day, when students in their final year of student teaching have the opportunity to learn from leaders in the field of education through a one-day event of seminars and discussions.

For the first 4 semesters, students signed up for the seminars of their choice, attended those seminars in a traditional event space, connected with their peers and mentor teachers over lunch to discuss what they were learning, and applied what they learned to their classrooms when they returned to student teaching.

In the fall of 2020, however, this young but promising program of professional development faced a problem: In the wake of the pandemic, the office had lost both resources and the ability to meet together in person.

Kerry Hegele and Angie Boynton, Acting Co-Directors of the Office of Clinical Experiences, remained committed to finding a professional development solution for their teacher candidates, but they wouldn't settle for an experience that was less engaging and instructional than their in-person seminars.

educators 2 educators (e2e) provided a solution that met their requirements for a vibrant, virtual professional development experience that ultimately exceeded all expectations.

The professional development solution needed to be virtual, affordable, engaging, customizable, and flexible in order to deliver a meaningful experience for teachers.

Requirements

In searching for a professional development solution for their teacher candidates, Kerry and Angie faced the challenge of identifying a solution that would deliver a meaningful experience to participants.

“We wondered ‘How will we deliver engaging, exciting professional development?’” Angie says. “We didn’t want to just slap something together that wasn’t going to be quality.”

For Kerry and Angie, quality was defined by the following:

Virtual

Any solution they found would need to deliver professional development training remotely in order to keep students safe.

Affordable

In light of the Office of Clinical Experience’s limited resources, Kerry and Angie needed a solution that was affordable in both budget and required manpower.

Engaging

Kerry and Angie were committed to delivering a professional development experience that left students with practical takeaways for immediate classroom application and a format that students found relevant and interesting. Their hope was to find a solution that engaged students at least as much as in-person seminars.

“These were two groups of students who have already had to make so many adjustments. “We didn’t want to take anything else away from them.”

Angie Boynton,
Acting Co-Director of the Office of
Clinical Experiences

Customizable

Western Michigan’s Office of Clinical Experiences serves a wide array of student teachers who are preparing for careers across all grade levels and specialties. Finding a professional development solution that allowed every student to customize their experience to their needs was critical.

Flexible

With students teaching full-time during the week, flexibility was essential. Western Michigan needed an option that allowed students to access professional development in the evenings and/or on weekends.

While other remote options were available to assist Western Michigan’s teacher candidates with teacher development, none of them met all of the requirements listed above.

In particular, solutions such as online presentations through platforms such as Webex lacked the engaging experience that was essential for effective professional development.

Without an innovative solution, Kerry and Angie would have had to consider skipping the professional development portion of their offerings for the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021, an option they were reluctant to pursue.

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Solution

In light of Western Michigan's specific needs for virtual professional development, educators 2 educators emerged as a potential solution to a difficult problem.

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As a leading provider of professional development resources for educators, by educators, e2e has more than 150 hours of online, video-based learning modules available to educators for a low annual fee. In addition, the organization provides two free, virtual events every year that draw more than 20,000 teachers.

Kerry and Angie had connected with e2e previously, both personally as consumers of some of e2e's content and virtual events and in the context of using e2e as a recommended resource for incoming students.

Familiar with e2e's high-quality resources, Kerry and Angie connected with e2e founder Carrie Conover to discuss the possibility of obtaining professional development resources for the University's teacher candidates.

What they encountered in Carrie was a welcoming, creative, and collaborative individual who was ready and able to deliver a customized and affordable professional development solution.

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For Carrie, working with Western Michigan to craft a customized professional development solution is exactly what e2e is all about.

“I founded e2e because, after 20 years in education, I saw the need teachers had for ongoing support to avoid burnout and keep teaching interesting,” she says. “Being able to provide these tools right at the beginning of their careers is an exciting way to ensure teachers enjoy a lifetime of joy and satisfaction in their work.”

The solution offered by e2e was as follows:

- e2e provided one month of access to one of its modules, consisting of more than 70 videos. Western Michigan chose the module *Supporting All Students*.
- Western Michigan gave students one week to watch 8 of the videos and make notes on each video.
- At the end of the week, students came together virtually to discuss what they had experienced and learned from their videos.
- Students submitted Google Form feedback at the end of the week.
- Students were able to access the rest of the module’s videos for the remainder of the month.

This solution met all of Western Michigan's criteria for virtual professional development.

Virtual

The online modules were available remotely to any Western Michigan teacher candidate with no need for in-person engagement.

Affordable

e2e adjusted pricing and access to make one month of access to one module for all the teacher candidates extremely cost-effective.

Engaging

Students came to their virtual discussions not only prepared to discuss the videos they had watched but excited about discussing the things they had learned. Many students went back to watch further videos over the course of the next few weeks.

Customizable

Not only did e2e customize its program to meet Western Michigan's need to deliver professional development to multiple students over a short time period, but the 70 videos in the module covered every area of education and every grade. As a result, every student was able to find videos that were relevant to them.

Flexible

Students could access the videos at any time of the day or night in order to complete their professional development when it was convenient.



Results and Feedback

In the fall of 2020, professional development from e2e reached 75 teacher candidates. In January 2021, the program reached 92 teacher candidates.

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Each student received about 2 hours and 40 minutes of professional development education from e2e, and together, each group of students spent more than 200 hours partaking in professional development through e2e's module.

What was immediately evident was the extent to which the e2e modules engaged each student.

"When it came down to having a discussion, they were so engaged with each other," Angie says. "They were excited. I think that excitement and engagement came from our teacher candidates feeling seen and being excited to see what other educators were doing."

Based on feedback from students and from Kerry and Angie, e2e's professional development resources provided the following advantages:

Diverse Content

Students found content to suit their specific questions, problems, and areas of focus. Instead of receiving only general education instruction, they were able to choose videos with a narrow, relevant focus that enabled the students to grow professionally in their chosen area of education.

“You can imagine teaching kindergarten is going to be very different from teaching composition and literature in 12th grade,” Angie says. “That is the challenge when presenting our own professional development. This really gave us the breadth of topics where there is something relevant for whatever your grade, whatever you are teaching.”

Practical Takeaways

Professional development from e2e was more than just an academic exercise. Students reported being able to take tangible, practical insights from the videos they watched and use those insights in the classroom, right away.

“That is what our focus was when we did the in-person professional development,” says Kerry. “We want to have a takeaway. We want them to pick something and plan for it over the weekend. They really felt like e2e gave them specific, concise activities to try.”

For example, teacher candidate Emma Kinn, who participated in the January 2021 professional development session, discovered ways to shift how she decorated her classroom and stocked it with books to create a more inclusive and diverse environment for her students.

“In one of the videos about inclusion, the presenter talked about functional decor. As a result of the video, I realized that some of the ideas I had for my classroom would benefit myself and not all of my students. As a result, I have thought about different ways I could decorate my classroom that will have a positive impact on all of my students,” she says.

“I have also begun the HONEY method, which I learned from in one of the videos. The HONEY method has you focus and reflect on the books you own. I realized that the books I had [for my classroom] were written mainly by white authors, had white characters and that my students of color wouldn’t be represented in the books I had. I am now doing research on books I could use in my classroom that would represent all students in my classrooms in order to diversify my classroom library.”

“Teachers need each others’ insight and support. Learning from each other creates really relevant and exciting opportunities to grow as an educator and keep that love for teaching alive.”

Carrie Conover,
Founder, educators2educators

Current Educators

Students loved hearing about education from current educators. The insights they received from people who are actively teaching made them feel as if the information they were receiving was more relevant, more applicable, and more authoritative than learning from non-educators or from retired educators.

This connection with active educators was no accident. educators 2 educators was founded with the goal of providing a resource developed by educators for their fellow teachers in order to deliver relevant material that was easily and affordably accessed.

“Teachers need each others’ insight and support,” Carrie points out. “Learning from each other creates really relevant and exciting opportunities to grow as an educator and keep that love for teaching alive.”

Teacher Focus

Teaching might be about helping students to learn, but e2e cares about the teachers themselves, too, with self-care created as one of the pillars of the organization’s educational material.

Students picked up on that concern and reported feeling seen and understood. In particular, they reported learning techniques for staving off burnout and staying healthy, and they appreciated the down-to-earth and practical instruction that made teaching easier and more effective for them.

Accessibility

Students loved how accessible each of the videos was. They could watch the videos whenever they had time, and the short nature of the videos (about 20 minutes each) allowed them to glean professional development advice while maintaining their other obligations and full-time student teaching jobs.

“We wanted something students could do on their own time,” Kerry says. “Something short and concise. That was my big piece, that they have something they could do on their own time.”


Emma agrees.

“Compared to other professional developments, I felt that the e2e videos benefitted me a lot more,” she says. “I was able to pick and choose topics that I felt would benefit my students the most. I was also able to watch the videos at my own speed and pace. I was able to take notes and reflect on the video I had watched before watching the next one.”

Ultimately, says Emma, e2e’s professional development videos had a long-term impact on her life.

“As a result of watching the e2e videos I am a much better teacher, student, friend and colleague,” she says.



A photograph of a person sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook with a blue pen. The person is wearing a white sweater with a red cuff and a ring on their finger. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text is centered on the left side of the image.

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The Future

educators 2educators provides a uniquely flexible, personal, and high-quality resource that can help teachers grow in their abilities and their passion for changing students' lives, and those resources are something that can tangibly benefit student teachers as well as veteran educators.

While in-person professional development events will remain part of Western Michigan's program for teacher candidates, the university also hopes to continue its fruitful relationship with e2e by continuing to take advantage of its resources to support its teacher candidates.

For her part, Carrie hopes that e2e's resources can serve not only Western Michigan but also other educational institutions and their education students.

"Teacher retention is critical during this difficult time in the world. We must start talking about teacher self-care and teacher burnout from the onset of teacher education. It is no longer enough to provide our new teachers with lesson plan templates and curriculum, we must talk, think, and care about the person behind the teaching. e2e provides professional development that sets teachers up for long-term success both professionally and personally."

