I am Benjamin Dotger. I worked at Syracuse University in the School of Education there. I'm the Assistant Professor of Education. I am working right now with a program. The program is called Standardized Parent Conferencing Model, the SPCM and it's a fairly new collaboration between the SU School of Education and SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York. The idea centers around providing pre-service and in-service teachers with an opportunity to engage in simulated parent-teacher conferences. And what we asked is that in-service and pre-service teachers sit down across the table from a hired actor, an actor that we train very carefully to portray a parent according to a very specific protocol.

My name is Steve Harris. I'm the Director of the Clinical Skills Center at Upstate Medical University. I'm running what's called the Standardized Patient Program. Standardized patients are people who role-play clinical situations. Primarily what we do is work with medical students and other people who are learning clinical skills, interaction skills with patients, but we developed a different way of using the methodology of standardized patients which is training people not to be standardized patients who have the set of symptoms and a medical history and things like that, but training them to be standardize parents, which required a lot of changes in the way that we do things and some are different approaches from my folks.

What this class covers is we have a couple of sessions in the beginning where we talk about the process. But they virtually hire actors to come in and to act out this different scenarios and we're given a piece of paper before to prep us, but usually it doesn't contain much information, so we go in there like we would any conference not knowing that much about what we're really getting ourselves into.

What happens is we perform or get the kind of just a page long talking about socioeconomics status, the name of the student. Kind of little hands-on what's going on whether they're having academic troubles or emotional issues, then we'll drop little lines in there about maybe you know both parents coming or single moms or something like that. So, we don't really know exactly what's going to happen, we can kind of make an educated guess.

Well, basically I've noticed recently some ongoing problems with Matt [assumed spelling]. His grades seem to be slipping, he's sort of failing to turn in some assignments and most importantly his behavior is concerning me. Recently, he -- I overheard a comment he made to a female student in the class that could be considered sexual harassment, so...

I'm sorry, it just -- it doesn't sound like Matt.

Well, could you tell me a little bit more about anything that goes on outside the school that maybe affecting that's in school stuff?

All of the cases have come from specific situations that Dr. Dotger has experienced in the four years that he was teaching, so he is kind of
reshaped them to reflect the things he has gone through. One of them dealt with a student who was depressed and was dealing with thoughts of suicide, another was a young woman whose modeling career was conflicting with her schedules as far as completing assignments and we kind of had to defend our educational principles and how we conduct in our classroom.

>> I have to admit we're pretty excited about this true partnership with SUNY Upstate Medical. They have a brand new facility. It opened six months ago that is specifically designated for standardized patient interactions. Each of the 22 simulation rooms in the Clinical Skills Center has a computer attached to it in the outside hallway. So I have my pre-service teachers outside in the hallway just immediately prior to their simulation. What they do on those computers is they address some pre-conference questions were made. There are cameras and microphones embedded in the ceiling, multiple angle cameras at least two in every room and multiple microphones to capture the audio and video. All that data, the audio and video data is dumped again immediately to the SUNY Upstate servers, so it's easy for me and for faculty there to access it and to do what we want with regard to analysis.

>> Basically, after we've had the conference we end with this [inaudible] usually debrief with Professor Dotger either individually or in like a [inaudible], so somebody else who had the same conference as -- and basically that's just the chance to reflect right after it happens on like our general thoughts about the conference strengths, weaknesses, things like that.

>> So I have a lot of friends that are first year teachers right now, a lot of friends. And I took this course because I thought, wow I'm actually going to be doing something it's like student-teaching where you feel like you've learned so much as student teaching in all the other education courses you took were the same thing over and over again. And so, student teaching is such a huge experience for me, but my host teacher has handled everything. Anything that was difficult besides teaching the lessons they handle, so if there are ever student that I have problem with, that was misbehaving or coming in late they would completely take care of it, you know even if I offered, they were just like, oh no, no, no we'll do it, don't worry about it. And so, I had no parent experience like none whatsoever and so, taking this course for me was really, really important to know that. I'm already certified to teach. I should be teaching right now, but I'm not and I can't imagine sitting in a real conference without this course. I don't know what I would do.

>> We're very excited about where we've been so far in this last year with this project. It has taken off like wildfire and the students that emerged from this report feeling so much more confident in general about their upcoming -- now has teaching experiences, but certainly much more confident about their interactions with parents and caregivers and their communications, their daily communications within schools. What we obviously hope is that this becomes a signature pedagogy that begins to defuse to other schools of education. So, in closing we're excited. It's been a very fun and eventful project so far, very productive project and we're looking forward to the future.