

Coaching Journal

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Session 1: October 14, 2014 (after school, 1 hour)

Strategies:

In this first coaching session, I shared the results and findings from the Classroom Technology Integration Self-Assessment and the Technology Adoption Self-Assessment with Mrs. M. I explained that the results uncovered from her self-assessments indicated that she would benefit from exposure to a wider variety of technology tools and more tools to enhance rigor and higher-order thinking skills in students. She completely agreed with these results and findings. Throughout the coaching session, I focused on explaining the Partnership Approach and its principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2007, p. 37). I particularly wanted to stress the concept of choice. As Knight (2007) explains, "One reason why traditional professional development usually fails is because teachers frequently have little choice in what they learn...offering choice actually increases both teachers' desire to teach with fidelity and the likelihood that teachers will implement learning strategies and teaching routines" (p. 42). We both thought it would be beneficial for me to give her a brief overview of various technology tools, from which she would choose two or three to direct her focus. I also wanted her to feel comfortable voicing her opinions whenever she felt strongly about a topic we discussed, especially if she felt uncomfortable, uninterested, or unsure about any of the tools or implementation strategies. We also discussed reciprocity. Because I am not a first grade teacher, I explained to her that I would rely on her content and pedagogy knowledge (PCK) as we worked through these various tools, and that I was looking forward to learning more about these topics from her for future coaching purposes.

Skill and Affective Changes:

After meeting with Mrs. M in our first coaching session, I believe that she now understands the partnership-coaching model that we will be using. When I first approached her about the idea of working with her as a technology coach, she was interested in the idea of learning more about technology implementation strategies but was hesitant about how much she would be able to learn from me. I believe she was worried not understanding the tools I showed her and feeling like it was a waste of time. However, Once I explained that she would have choice in what she was learning and that we would have dialogue and reflection to personalize the learning to her own interests and needs, she felt much more comfortable and excited about the idea of technology coaching.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

I think this was a successful first coaching session. It seems that Mrs. M has a much better understanding of the partnership approach and has a positive and enthusiastic

attitude about the process. Through reviewing various technology tools and allowing Mrs. M to choose the ones she feels most interested in learning about, I also got to know more about what she is hoping to gain from the coaching. This showed me that the partnership approach is a great way to personalize and even differentiate learning to make sure partners' needs and interests are being met. One challenge I faced in this first session was trying to think of examples of how to use the tools within the context of the first grade curriculum, since I am not very familiar with their standards. Mrs. M was able to help me with this challenge, as she and I were able to work together brainstorm ideas and find specific topics/lessons to enhance with these tools. This made me appreciate the reciprocity aspect of the partnership approach to instructional coaching, because I do not believe we would have gotten as much progress in one session if it were simply one-way delivery.

Session 2: October 20, 2014 (after school, 1 hour)

Strategies:

Before diving into the technology tools that we would be exploring in the coaching sessions, I wanted to learn more about Mrs. M's strengths and weaknesses as a teacher so that I could tailor the learning to address her areas of growth while also highlighting her strengths. I briefly described the domains of the Big Four to help narrow our focus: "The Big Four [is] a framework for organizing interventions and providing focus to coaching practice. The Big Four...includes: behavior, content knowledge, direct instruction, and formative assessment" (Knight, 2007, p. 139). After introducing the concept of The Big Four as a framework for finding a starting point for coaching, I asked Mrs. M to describe her own strengths and weaknesses within these four domains. I was not surprised to learn that she believed her strength was in content knowledge. From the first coaching session, I could tell that she was extremely well acquainted with the content standards and knew exactly what her students were expected to learn in her first grade class. She mentioned to me that one of her weaknesses was classroom management, particularly as it pertains to incorporating technology into the learning. She and I discussed possible ideas and strategies for managing technology in the classroom, such as rotating students through the computer stations, using settings such as Guided Access on the iPads, and setting parameters for student expectations with technology. She began to relate these to the strategies and routines already employed in her class and I could tell she was feeling more confident about her abilities. We also started talking about strategies for helping Mrs. M see these tools in practice, and we decided that the next coaching session would involve her watching me model instruction and then reviewing the results. We reviewed the concept of an observation form and together created our own observation form to suit the needs of our coaching relationship in preparation for the modeling observation.

Skill and Affective Changes:

After describing the Big Four, I could sense even more interest and excitement from Mrs. M about this coaching endeavor. Through really focusing on her own strengths and weaknesses and customizing the coaching to suit her needs, I could tell that she was starting to feel more confident in the process. Teachers are often nervous about incorporating technology into student teaching for various reasons, whether it's self-efficacy with the tools themselves, a lack of understanding how to incorporate technology into the learning goals, etc. After discussing the Big Four, I could tell that Mrs. M had a clear idea of the curricular contexts in which to incorporate the technology, but I could also tell she was unsure about how to logistically roll out the technology in a way that was engaging yet organized and efficient for her students. Once we addressed her specific hesitations, we were able to move forward with a clear direction in mind.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

Because I was still somewhat unfamiliar with the standards and routines in Mrs. M's class, I was not totally sure which management strategies would work best for her classroom. However, I decided to once again employ the partnership principle of choice: I gave her several different technology-specific and general classroom management strategies that could be used either in isolation or in combination with one another, and she was able to decide which ones she thought would be best suited to her classroom's needs. I am seeing that choice is an extremely powerful principle within the partnership approach. I am also seeing the effectiveness of the Big Four, since it helped us hone in on exactly why Mrs. M had hesitations about incorporating technology and work from there. Before discussing the Big Four with Mrs. M, I was unsure how effective it would be for technology-specific coaching. After putting it to use, I can see how it is a universal PD tool that can translate into whatever strategy is being coached.

Session 3: October 27, 2014 (during school, ½ hour and after school, ½ hour)

Strategies:

After having found Mrs. M's specific strengths and weaknesses using the Big Four framework, it was time to put these tools in action. Using the partnership approach, she and I decided on a specific lesson in which to incorporate technology, as well as the specific technology tools that would be used to help students learn about and engage with that topic. We decided that the next step in helping Mrs. M feel comfortable incorporating technology was for me to model a lesson for her. As Knight (2007) explains, "Educators have known for decades that modeling is an important component of learning, and numerous research studies have demonstrated the power of modeling" (p. 110). In the previous coaching session, she and I created our own observation form that would help each of us during the modeling and later observation stage of coaching. According to Knight (2007), "By co-constructing the form with teachers prior to the model lesson, ICs can check for teachers understanding of critical teaching behaviors" (p

112). Our co-constructed observation form included specific, pre-determined strategies to look for, mostly centering on strategies for classroom management of the tools, as well as a few blank spots for Mrs. M to write down anything extra she wanted to discuss. I came into Mrs. M's class during one of my planning periods and explained to the students that I would be teaching part of their class that day. Since I already have her students for Music class, they were already comfortable with having me as a teacher and we were able to begin fairly quickly. I kept a copy of the observation form with me to remind me to use the strategies we talked about: "The [observation] form is also a guide for ICs, to help them remember to emphasize the most important teaching behaviors during the model lesson" (Knight, 2007, p. 114). I came back later to discuss the modeling with Mrs. M after school. She showed me her observation notes and they very closely aligned with what I myself believed had happened in the lesson. We discussed her overall impression of the lesson – she told me that her students were engaged and excited about the learning, and later that day after I left they were still talking about how much they liked the lesson and wanted to do something similar soon. Mrs. M seemed to understand all the concepts we had previously discussed, and even included notes on things that I was somewhat unaware I was doing, such as modulating the volume of my voice to force students to listen and stopping and waiting for students to finish talking before continuing instruction rather than trying to speak over the students. Although these are both effective classroom management strategies, they are not ones that we explicitly discussed; however, Mrs. M was able to notice them and include them in her observation notes to try on her own later.

Skill and Affective Changes:

I could tell Mrs. M was working hard to understand classroom management strategies we discussed by watching for them during the model lesson. I was impressed and pleased that Mrs. M was paying close enough attention to notice even small details that we didn't discuss before hand because it showed me that she was really observing the model lesson closely and purposefully. I could also tell from Mrs. M's discussion of the model lesson and the notes on the observation form that she had a very firm grasp on specific strategies for classroom management with technology tools in the context of a lesson. When I asked her about flipping roles and allowing me to observe her model a lesson with these strategies, she was enthusiastic about the opportunity.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

Even though I teach Mrs. M's students in music class, I was still nervous about teaching them in the context of their core content because I am not an expert in the curriculum. However, the observation form made me feel a little bit more at ease because I knew she wasn't observing me for ideas about teaching the content; that is her domain. The partnership approach continued to come into play because of the different sets of expertise we were each bringing to the table. Through the discussion after the model lesson I could tell that she did gain a lot of understanding through my modeling, and I told her I was looking forward to seeing an even better example of putting these to use within the curriculum even more.

Session 4: November 3, 2014 (during school, ½ hour and after school, ½ hour)

Strategies:

After modeling specific classroom management strategies for Mrs. M, we both agreed that the next logical step in helping her learn about how to incorporate technology would be to switch roles and allow her to model a lesson for me. In order to maintain a feeling of trust and partnership, I was careful to avoid the term “observe” in our discussions, since it can carry with it negative, stress-inducing connotations. As Knight (2007) explains, “ICs need to be careful to stress the informality of the observation, which is why we emphasize the idea of simply saying, “ You watch me and I watch you.’ For some teachers, the very notion of ‘observation’ is intimidating, and some ICs avoid using that term, choosing to stay instead that they’ll ‘visit’ the classroom” (p. 121). In order to promote the idea of partnership, I used the same observation form to record notes about her teaching as she did to record notes about me, including the same predetermined strategies and blanks for extra notes as needed. While I was observing Mrs. M use these predetermined strategies, I made sure to use the observation form to take note of all the positive things she was doing in order to a) encourage her to continue the practice, and b) show her that she was in fact able to do it! As Knight (2007) explains, “While intuitively an IC might think that the most important part of observing a lesson is to find areas of weakness that need to be improved, in reality, the most important part of the observation may be to look for things the teacher does well” (p. 122). I could tell during the lesson that she seemed comfortable having me watch her teach because she would occasionally look up from what she was doing to glance over at me for encouragement or assistance as needed. At one point she did ask for my help specifically, so I briefly showed her how to use one of the strategies we discussed before letting her practice again on her own. During our post-observation discussion after school, I made sure to emphasize every positive aspect of her teaching that I saw during the lesson. Mrs. M seemed both proud and flattered to receive this feedback, and expressed to me that she felt much more comfortable with using technology in her classroom after having done it herself with success.

Skill and Affective Changes:

Mrs. M seemed both proud and flattered to receive the positive feedback during the post-observation discussion, and expressed to me that she felt much more comfortable with using technology in her classroom after having done it herself with success. I really think that the coaching process was a great way to scaffold her learning before having her put it into practice. If she had just learned about the tools in isolation and then tried to implement them on their own, I’m not sure if she would have felt as if she had as much success. I also think that having me there during her first implementation lesson eased the pressure and stress of incorporating these tools into the learning because she knew she could rely on me to jump in if needed.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

Seeing how proud and confident Mrs. M felt after her first implementation lesson made me realize that the coaching model for professional development is truly effective and worthwhile. Because we worked together on an ongoing basis, I was able to build that confidence in her over time and allow her knowledge to grow in the context of her own classroom and her own abilities. I was nervous about coaching a teacher in a different content area, but once again the partnership approach helped both of us grow and learn. I was able to help Mrs. M learn about technology implementation, and she was able to help me learn about the first grade curriculum. I think that from the reciprocity of learning, I will be a much more confident and effective coach next time I work with another first grade teacher because of the specific content knowledge I gained from working with Mrs. M. I also think that this confidence and competence as a technology coach will translate to working with teachers at different grade levels and content areas because I know what I am able to bring to the table while at the same time knowing how much there is to learn from others.

Session 5: November 13, 2014 (after school, 1 hour)

Strategies:

For our fifth coaching session, I wanted to take time with Mrs. M to reflect on how much we have both learned through the coaching process as well as the effect that the technology implementation has had on her students' learning. As with every other coaching session, I wanted to make sure that we acted as partners in exploring the data and not as an expert talking down to Mrs. M. As Knight (2007) explains, "The collaborative exploration of data taking place during this meeting is *not* an opportunity for the IC to share his 'expert' opinion on what the teachers did right or wrong. More than anything else, it is a learning conversation where both parties use data as a point of departure for dialogue" (p. 122). We were able to discuss her teaching practice from our two different perspectives – teacher and observer. She was able to report that since her first implementation lesson, she had successfully designed and conducted two more lessons that incorporated technology on her own. She also told me that the students were always asking her when they would be able to do another lesson with technology, and that she was noticing an improvement in their skills and knowledge of the topics covered in these lessons. Additionally, she told me she had been telling other teachers in her grade level about how effective the coaching process was for her, and that other teachers should consider working with me in an instructional technology coaching relationship as well. She also said that teachers on her grade level were beginning to come to her with questions about incorporating technology after hearing her students' positive feedback to the lessons.

Skill and Affective Changes:

It was clear through the reflection conversation that Mrs. M had learned not only the technical skills necessary to implement technology, but also confidence in her own

abilities and confidence in the effectiveness of the technology tools in her students' learning. It was also clear that Mrs. M was deeply appreciative of the coaching relationship and process because she was encouraging other teachers to do the same. She also expressed an interest in keeping the coaching relationship in tact for further learning about technology. From all these comments and attitudes, I could tell that our coaching relationship had been a successful one.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

I am excited about the outcomes of this coaching relationship. I was slightly hesitant at the beginning of the process because I knew that it would be a fairly involved process and I wasn't sure if it would be worth the effort. After seeing the change in Mrs. M from feeling insecure about how to even plan for technology use to having other teachers on her grade level coming to her for help, I can tell that the coaching process was well worth its time and effort. I would recommend this process to any school looking for an effective way to conduct any sort of PD. I would also most certainly be open to being on the receiving end of a coaching relationship for PD in the future. I am excited about the feedback I have gotten from Mrs. M and the interest she has generated in other teachers at the school. I am hoping to work with many more teachers in the future, not only to coach them and help them learn, but also to advance my own learning. As Knight (2007) explains:

When an IC moves through the components of coaching with a teacher, both the teacher and the coach should be learning. The teacher is learning a new teaching practice. At the same time, the coach could be learning any number of new skills or insights related to working with students, providing model lessons, enrolling teachers in the instructional coaching process, building relationships, addressing teachers' core concerns, or any other aspect of instructional coaching. (p. 130)

I definitely think this coaching process has helped me learn not only about different content areas, but also about how students learn outside my own classroom, how to respectfully work as a partner with a colleague, how to identify teachers' specific needs, and how to be an effective coach in general. I am looking forward to taking what I have learned from this coaching experience and applying these skills to coaching many more teachers in my building in the future. a