Coaching Journal

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The following are 5 journal entries detailing my experience as an instructional technology coach. The experience was a one on one coaching with a three year middle school science teacher. This teacher came to me asking for me to assist her integrating the use of 6 iPads she had receive for her class. The teacher wanted to focus on how to use the tools for student engagement and behavior management. The tools and strategies used were a combination of tools the teacher wanted to try and my suggestions.

**1st Session:**

My first session with my teacher was a conversation of what her needs and hopes were in regards to technology integration in her classroom. She had receive iPads as part of a grant and was not sure how to use them every day in the classroom. She also a behavior challenge in one of her classes and with my background in special education ask if I could offer assistance in this area.

As part of the conversation, we identify her needs and how we would precede moving forward. We were going to look to integrate a few tools (Discovery Education, Brain Pop, and Padlet) and in addition see if the use of technology could improve a certain student’s behavior. I would first come into the classroom just to observe the interactions of the classroom. Knight’s partnership approach was used in this session including the following elements: equality, voice, choice, reflection and reciprocity (Knight, 2007, To Sum Up).

**Strategies:**

The strategies used in this session were active listening in which Jim Knight discusses in *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*. The instructional coach listened to the needs of the teacher and at the same time clarify for understanding. In the conversational process I must ensure I clarify anything I am unsure of and do not make assumptions (Knight, Listening Strategies). As we work to identify the needs in coaching both myself and the teacher communicated what would occur moving forward. First, I would observe the class and get a better understanding of her needs and she would convey to me which tools she is interested in using. The most important take away from this conversation was: What is my collaborating teacher most pressing concern.

**Skill and Affective Changes:**

Since this was our first sessions, the skill which took place was really an awareness level of the teacher‘s skill level in regards to technology. However this skill many times is the most important if true understanding of each roles, abilities and knowledge, coaching sessions will not move smoothly. Due to being just an identification and awareness session, no affective change has taken place. In relation to Prochaska’s Stages of Change (1994), this session would be a combination of contemplation and preparation. My collaborating teacher and I discuss what she would like to happen and what steps would need to take place to initiate change. As we progress through our coaching sessions, a change and additional skills will be most evident in the technology integration and student engagement.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution:**

The first coaching session, I believe is the most important session. The relationship is built during this session. If equality, voice and reciprocity are not a part of the coaching process the partnership process fails apart. I truly excited that my colleague came to me asking to be coach. It brings a willingness on their part to listen to other suggestions and feedback, where many times coaches are meet with pull back from those not willing or wanting to be coach. I look forward to modeling new ideas for the teacher and looking at technology and content from a different perspective. The challenge is hopefully meeting all of her needs.

**2nd Session:**

In my second coaching session with my teacher, we discussed an easy way to integrate technology with a simple tool. The teacher has 6 iPad minis in a small class of 14 students. A huge standards in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES) is differentiation. We discussed ways the technology can be used to meets the needs and also help her with behavior management with one student. A simple tool such as Brain Pop is easy for the students to use without a lot of pre planning for the teacher. The website offers different levels and types of activities for the students. The site provides audio/visual along with close captioning to meets the learning needs of all students. As Knight (2007) states coach should reassure and support the collaborating teacher at the same time encourage and push teachers to implementation new strategies.

After discussing with the teacher how the Brain Pop application could be used in her classroom. Working in the partnership approach, I listened to teacher give her thoughts on the use of the tool and how else it could be implemented and managed in her classroom. She did have some hesitant since not all would be working on the application at the same time. She has used the tool in just having the class as a whole watch the videos. So she did see the value in the material/content and did like the fact materials were created already. After modeling and walking through the management of the devices, the teacher felt more comfortable and saw the potential in technology being used to manage and develop lessons based upon different learning levels of students. This could help her manage the student’s needs when there is only one teacher in the classroom.

**Strategies:**

In this meeting, I had to ask my teacher to commit to change and to commit to the coaching process (Knight, 2007). In beginning able to listen and give the teacher a voice in what we were going to work on in our session is supporting the partnership approach. Based upon my observation of the class and the behavior with a student I was able to model and provide feedback in solutions and suggestions which might help her. From observing her classroom, I was able to provide feedback in the area regarding student behavior. Using my experience of formally being a special education teacher, I can provide feedback in ideas in how to engage students who can be a challenge. But at the same time support my collaborating teacher by just listening. I hope I can gained the skill Michel Polanyi (1958) called “tacit dimension”. I want to have conversations with those I am coaching or just talking to other teacher and offer a suggestion which evoke positive change.

**Skill and Affective Changes:**

After our coaching session and the teacher using some simple technology such as Brain Pop, I able to detect a shift in mindset from the teacher. She was able to easily use the iPads as part of instruction and having students completing various tasks when her classroom. With her having a positive experiences using the iPads and technology I see a shift in her thinking and moving from just contemplation and action phases in the change process. My collaborating teacher is able to voice her concerns and work together to make implementation of technology a positive experiences. It is this reflection which furthers initiates change.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution:**

This coaching session went every well. Working as partners to develop a simple solution is using one of Knight’s (2007) core principles of praxis. After using Brain Pop, we reflected together how the class went and how the content delivery was useful. Simple technology tools using her 6 iPad minis I do not see as a challenge. The assignment and use was designed to be just a part of the lesson and student’s completing different activities. With the limited number of devices, she will not be able to design lessons which are whole class for the full length of the class period. This type of instruction she will need to still request additional resources from the media center such as the full iPad cart. These challenges are manageable with simple solutions.

**3rd Session:**

Our third coaching session we started our discussion with the teacher discussing how behavior management is sometimes an issue. According to Knight (2007), behavior management is one of “The Big Four”. Additionally she struggled with how to track certain behavior incidents and how it correlated with discipline process at our school. While this wasn’t to be our focus of our coaching session, I listened to the most pressing needs of the teacher. In our school district, the referral process is an online form in student information system called TAC. The teacher spoke of how she wrote down incidents in the classrooms or having to remember later when students severed silent lunch or detention. I was able to model how I use the TAC system to keep track of classroom issues including parent contact and consequences assigned. This way I and the school have a permanent history of behavior and it can easily be turned into an office referral with a click of the button.

In the same strain, we talked about one of the students in the class I observed is an ongoing behavior issue. We both observed the day the students were doing the brain pop activity his behavior was calm and focused. We discussed that technology could be used as a behavior management tool with this student. Either she could have the student complete his assignments using the iPad or use the iPad as a reward when he has a good day or he earns it throughout the week. In listening to her just talk about an issue she was having gave her a voice in the coaching process. She was able to guide the decisions with her goals and what the outcomes would be.

**Strategies:**

In my collaborating teacher having a voice in guiding our conversation in our coaching session, builds interaction and dialogue which is open and reciprocal. At the same time in our conversation, I make a list of what I believe are my partner’s needs and thoughts are. I go back through them to make sure I am not making any assumptions. While she was talking to me about her frustrations in keeping track of her classroom discipline, I had to be sure she was looking for a solution and not just me hearing that she was looking for assistance. Many times when people are venting people assume the person is looking for a help or solution. Many times, they just want someone to listen. At the same time, I found using my coaching form allowed me to reflect in our sessions. Did I allow her to have her voice without feeling like she was being judged and that there is always a choice in what we will talk about and work on.

**Skill and Affective Changes:**

With our coaching session shifting a bit from technology to other classroom concerns it reflects the emotional connection in our partnership has begun. Our relationship shifted from not just talking about technology but other instructional concerns the teacher was having. We were able to use this same relationship and purpose to guide changes not just within her instructional design. In discussing and modeling of uses of the student information system as a way for her to manage some administrative duties denotes the teacher getting in the preparation stage of affective change in her willingness to try something new and have a change in behavior. Along with the possibility of having a behavior student using technology not necessarily as a reward but a change in instructional delivery further supports the move the process of personal change.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution:**

This coaching session meant a lot to me, helping a fellow teacher deal with challenging students and day to day activities. In my previous career, I was the go between a sales group and the internal development team. I guided decisions, process and designs of software to fit the needs of the sales team. In education, I have not seen a role that does this for teachers. Teachers struggle with instructional planning, classroom management and administrative duties. It can be overwhelming. In working my teacher this session, I am happy if I can just offer a small suggestion which can make it part of easier.

One of her challenges is to be willing to develop assignments for this one student from the others. But being willing to continue this effort even if the student’s behavior isn’t always best. Some could see it as why reward bad behavior in allowing the use of technology. But at the same time, this maybe the best learning style for the student and the classroom environment. Many times changing how to complete task in such including basic administrative tasks are hard to stay on track. I think it could be a challenge for the teacher to trust using an online tool for data collection even though it is the most beneficial. It is a change in process you have to be dedicated to.

**4th Session:**

The purpose of this session was to further our last decision about the use of technology in differentiation. While we used Brain Pop previously in planning and implementation in her classroom and it was for a short period. We had previously discussed how to implement the incredible resources Discovery Education have to offer. I heard my teacher’s concern about how to use these resources for an extended time period with not having enough devices every students. We discussed how Discovery Education could be used for various levels and types of learners. I showed my partner a new feature Discovery Education had which allowed the students to create online posters. This feature is similar to the website Glogster but it is built within Discovery Education, so the teacher has some control on the content which student access and use. The teacher and I worked together to create to type of lesson for her students. One at a lower level for the students who need the content material reinforcement. And one for enrichment using the poster maker feature within Discovery Education for the higher learners. We planned to use Discovery Education over several days which different levels of learners using the devices each day. Other materials would be used for students who would not be using technology on those particular days. The first day Discovery Education was being used, I came in the classroom and modeled to the teacher how to get the class started and each different student engaged in their particular assignment.

**Strategies:**

In using the modeling strategy, my collaborating teacher was able to observe me implementing the strategy with ease. This allowed some of her concerns to go away but at the same time she was able to reflect on procedures or processes she may want to do when she is implementing the technology. After the class, the teacher and I were able to discuss the pros and cons of the lesson design. She was able to see how the use of technology can be used to engage the different levels of learners and at the same time offer activities which included higher level thinking skills. Still concerned about the planning and preparation process, I sat down with her and spent time playing a lesson which different levels of learning using technology and not using technology. In doing this together further developed our partnership with both use bringing ideas to the table. At the same time, the teacher was able to seeing the planning process is not that much more extensive.

**Skill and Affective Changes:**

The teacher was able to develop an instructional design using various content learning levels along with technology integration. At the same time in my role as instructional coach I learned how she goes through planning for her different learners which brings in reciprocity in our equal partnership. Incorporating a big task of differentiated learning using technology in classroom is a huge step in change. In the process of change, I see her moving between implementation and action. However she will need to be consistent and not give up. She has going for her that she wants to change. There is not the frustration that she being asked or told to change or add something else to her plate. She is open and wanted to make technology a routine part of her instructional design and student learning. I do see her to be moving in that directions but there will be hiccups.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution:**

I can see my collaborating teacher having frustrations using Discovery Education to the extent which is beneficial to her students learning. This only due to her limited number of devices. Since she received the iPads from a grant, it is a possibility she could receive additional and also request the school iPad cart. I hope she does not use this as a deterrent to further integration. Her main goal was to try to use technology every day. Moving forward, we could discuss smaller uses for Discovery Education and when is right time for extended instructional strategies. The mutual goal is for the simplest integration which delivers content at the same engages student in a positive learning environment.

**5th Session:**

When my collaborating teacher first approach me about wanting me to coach her in technology integration, her main desire how she could incorporate technology easily every day. I wanted to give her a tools which would be an easy tool to use everyday tool as an assessment tool. In this session, I recommend Padlet tool for her to use. I know she is still somewhat apprehension about the time in planning for technology use. I modeled for her how I had used Padlet in my classroom as a warm up and as a ticket out the door for my students to complete. After showing her how quick it is to set up a Padlet page and to start small with students just responding with text the teacher responded positively to the tool. She saw it had benefits in not collecting papers and having access to everyone’s responses in one place.

Knight (2007) includes formative assessments as one of the “Big Four”. The teacher and students must understand how to gauge their level of content learning. Using a tool such as Padlet as an assessment tool change gauge this learning at the same time guide the teacher as she further develops lessons with future technology integration. The teacher can use different tools in the classroom at one time to meet the student needs. Some student could use one tool to remediate content if needed while others are completing extension activities. When the teacher reaches this level, she will have reached the termination stage in Prochaska’s Stages of Change (1994). I would hope the teacher continues to push herself with my support to reach this level. Even though this was our last scheduled session, she and I both plan to continue to meet so she will reach this stage of change.

**Strategies:**

The strategy which was used in this lesson is modeling. Being able to show my collaborating teacher, I have used the tool and how to best approach technology integration. I modeled how simple it is to create a Padlet page and showed her some of my student’s works. Working with my administration team, the teacher was able to come in my classroom and observe how I used Padlet in my classroom. I think using two approaching in modeling and observation this coaching session was most beneficial. After me showing her the tool and then the teacher observing me model the tool in my classroom, she and I sat down and designed an assessment using Padlet in her classroom. In modeling, the teacher can easily observe and reflect on integration. In this collaborative approach continues the partnership approach in coaching.

**Skill and Affective Changes:**

In reviewing the steps I have taken as an instructional coach to guide my collaborating teacher in her increased use of technology and student engagement this session. I believe this use of this simplest tool will result in the teacher incorporating this simplest assessment tool several times a week in her classroom. Listening to her first desires and goals in our first session has guided us through the process and included several new techniques and tools which can further drive the change in her classroom. However this tool will be the one that leads her to the maintenance stage in Prochaska’s Stages of Change. Using Padlet as a formative assessment tool, will further have the teacher asking the questions what else can I do, which will continue the change process.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution:**

The last coaching session as always was part modeling and conversation. As an instructional coach my hope that the teacher will gain something they will be excited to use in their classroom, whether it is a tool or a strategy. The use of Padlet will be an easy solution for the teacher to incorporate. She just needs to stay positive in her approach and her belief that it will be successful. I think this is her biggest challenge in path. This teacher is a great instructional designer and in accommodating the needs of her students. However, she has that fear many teacher do about technology. I think though with her success in the last few weeks as we have gone through the coaching process has helped her gain her confidence. I will continue to support and observe her and provide constructive feedback where necessary.

References

Knight, Jim. (2007). Modeling, Observing, and Collaboratively Exploring Data. *Instructional Coaching, A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* (pp. 115, 127). California: Corwin Press.