Coaching Journal

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**1st Coaching Session – The Paperless Classroom: 10/13/16**

**Strategies**

Mrs. Koester is a relatively tech-savvy teacher but she struggles to truly convert her classroom to be more “paperless.” She feels like she is constantly making copies and lugging home stacks of student assignments that have been turned in that are in need of grading. She is aware of my use of Google Drive but has never really had the chance to see it in action and try it out in her classroom. She has attempted to try OneDrive some, which is now provided by the school, but many of her students do not know their login information and struggle with submissions and she has been wanting to try Google Drive for some time. For that reason, the first coaching session will focus on how Mrs. Koester can use Google Drive to make her classroom paperless.

For this session, I chose to focus on the strategies of “dialogue” and “support” referenced in the textbook (Knight, 2007). To start the process of implementing Google Drive in her classroom, we had to first determine the best route for the implementation of Google Drive. After several discussions, we developed a plan that would work best for her. At this point, she did not want to switch over to paperless for copies and student submissions because she was feeling overwhelmed by the process already. After engaging in dialogue and listening to the needs of Mrs. Koester, I determined that the best approach would be to utilize Google Drive for student submissions only so far and then we could progress toward its use for reducing the amount of copies she makes at a later date. During the coaching session, I demonstrated how to set up individual folders for each class period and modeled how to create a student folder. I then had her demonstrate how to create a student folder to prepare her for questions she may have when implementing this with her students.

The other coaching strategy used in this session was support (Knight, 2007). I knew Mrs. Koester would need support through the integration process in her classroom, so we planned a day that she would start this with one of her classes. We decided that her 7th period class would be best because I am on my planning period at that time and could easily come support her instruction. During this time, I was able to model for students and Mrs. Koester how to create student folders. After this session, I further assisted Mrs. Koester by showing her how to add student folders into the classroom folder we had created during the initial training session.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

Mrs. Koester was quick to catch on during our initial session and seemed fairly confident with the process before we involved the students in the creation of folders. The continuation of the session into her 7th period class when her students made folders was more of a struggle for Mrs. Koester. I think she was confident in her ability to make a folder, but many of the students had difficulties and she quickly became overwhelmed. I was able to be there to support her lesson though which was very beneficial to both Mrs. Koester and the students. Mrs. Koester completed a lesson a few days later in which students created a one-page creative writing. She had her 7th period students type and submit their creative writing through Google Drive. I had a reflective conversation with her afterward and she was very pleased with the process of grading via Google Drive and has plans to set up all her other classes with Google Drive folders.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution**

I felt as if this coaching session went excellent, especially for a first session. I already have a great working relationship with Mrs. Koester and she really values my opinions and expertise. The Knight text often referenced roadblocks and other issues that may arise with coaching and how difficult it can be to get people involved. Maybe I am just being naïve at this point, but I feel like the coaching I am providing is not only welcomed, but embraced. In fact, Mrs. Koester mentioned that other teachers are a bit jealous and want to have me coach them with some new and improved ways to incorporate technology into their classrooms too. I also definitely saw how important dialogue is when working with colleagues during coaching. I struggled to keep the dialogue equal in the beginning and let Mrs. Koester have input. I realized there really is an art to good dialogue when coaching teachers and I hope my dialogue skills will continue to improve as I progress through my coaching sessions with Mrs. Koester.

**2nd Coaching Session – Presentation Skills: 10/19/16**

**Strategies**

During the first coaching session, Mrs. Koester mentioned to me that she struggles keep students on task while presenting lecture notes because she feels “stuck” at the front of the room. This discussion directed the path of our second coaching session which focused on classroom management during lecture. For this session, Mrs. Koester expressed that she is quite frustrated with her students this year and they are unlike any freshmen she has had before. Because of this frustration, her typical method of standing at the front of the room while delivering lecture notes is not successful and students are constantly off-task, bothering other students, and as a whole disrespecting her. For this session, we decided to focus on the use of a small clicker remote to progress through slides which then frees up Mrs. Koester to navigate the room and thus improve her classroom management.

For this session, I focused on two strategies from the Knight textbook. The first being “model lesson” and the second being “observe: I watch you” (Knight, 2007). For this session, I first chose to focus on observe, because I too had a similar problem with classroom management prior to purchasing a presentation remote. After implementing this simple piece of technology into my classroom, I saw a huge improvement. I felt it was important for Mrs. Koester to see this technique in practice so she could observe the benefits. Also, because we both teach freshmen students, the model lesson was a realistic approach to her classroom as well. Having similar groups of students also allowed us to easily compromise on a checklist to use during the model lesson and the observe lesson. After Mrs. Koester observed the model lesson in her classroom with her students, we had a conversation about the lesson based on the checklist and other observations and discussed how she thought she could apply this approach personally. She immediately commented on the difference in behavior of her students but was hesitant she would get the same results as it seemed her students were on their best behavior with a “guest” in the room.

For this reason, I also incorporated the “Observe: I watch you” coaching strategy with Mrs. Koester for this lesson. In this way, she was able to use the same technique and observe how her students reacted to *her* delivery of a lesson instead of me as the instructional coach. She chose to do her observation lesson on a day where she only had a few slides of notes which only took about half of the class period. In this way, we were able to immediately reflect on the lesson while her students completed a worksheet for the second half of class. The checklist was once again a very useful tool for this process because it allowed for thorough and reflective dialogue about the lesson (Knight, 2007). The difference she noticed most in her classroom was that she was able to immediately address distracting or disrespectful behaviors while still seamlessly navigating through the notes. In this way, she commented on how nice it was to be able to address behavior issues immediately without much distraction to the rest of the class, compared to constantly calling students out while standing at the front of the room and losing the attention of students in the process.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

Mrs. Koester could not believe the difference in her classroom and definitely understood not only how to incorporate the technology in her classroom but understood the benefits of this implementation. She easily understood the operation of the device in her classroom and did not require any additional coaching on its use. I am definitely seeing changes in her implementation from the use of this tool. First and foremost, since we share a classroom wall, I have heard her students being much more respectful during lecture. Additionally, I have checked in on her several times during class and she has fully integrated this presentation remote for all of her classes and I have seen her using it several other times since our initial coaching session on this topic. She is also quick to catch on to things and keeps commenting on how beneficial these coaching sessions have been for her so far and how she wishes she could have coaching sessions all of the time.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution**

I felt as if this coaching session went very well. Mrs. Koester could not imagine how such a little device could make such a huge impact in her classroom. We did not face any challenges during this coaching session as the USB that came with the device easily inserted into her computer and was immediately ready for use. The literature references the importance of a checklist on several occasions and this coaching session was the perfect example of why a checklist was so important. First, creating the checklist together is essential, especially for a teacher being coached. If I had created the checklist on my own before the session, I would not have necessarily addressed all aspects of this coaching session and as a result Mrs. Koester would not have reaped the full amount of benefits from this session. Additionally, now that this concluded my second coaching session, I realize that I truly do enjoy being an instructional coach. At first I was a little hesitant in that I did not want to feel as if I was stepping out of place or imposing my beliefs on others, but what I have discovered from these sessions so far is that people want to hear my beliefs and seek my advice on instructional technology issues. I have since engaged in several conversations with other teachers asking for advice and methods to help their classrooms too. I have also noticed changes in my practice in that I reflect more on some of my lessons that are not the best and think about ways to make them more aligned to the exemplar methods present in some of the model lessons I have been using in my coaching. Ultimately, by instructional coaching other teachers I am also constantly reflecting on my teaching practices and improving my methods as well.

**3rd Coaching Session – Screencast Lecture Videos: 10/31/16**

**Strategies**

The “flipped classroom” has been a common buzzword in our department for several years, but fully implementing this method is something only done by a handful of teachers. Mrs. Koester has been debating the advantages and disadvantages of implementing this method of instruction for the past two years. During our previous coaching sessions, flipped her lesson by creating content videos was brought up several times. For this reason, we decided to focus on creating a flipped lesson for the third coaching session. Mrs. Koester was anxious to try this method to create engaging and content-rich flipped videos.

This coaching session focused on one of The Big Four: Content. As I mentioned previously, Mrs. Koester can be relatively tech savvy when she finds the technology engaging and easy to use. For this reason, the focus of this coaching session was more on the content to include in the PowerPoint for the flipped video rather than coaching how to create the video. I first started by showing Mrs. Koester how to use Screencast-o-matic to record videos. This program works by capturing the screen with the option of having a webcam video of the teacher in the corner of the screen the whole time. This program is simple and requires the minimum use of knowledge to operate. After demonstrating the program, we moved on to Mrs. Koester’s PowerPoints. The content of the PowerPoints was where I implemented the content coaching strategy. As Knight states, “By collaborating with teachers to identify the key content structures that are embedded in the content their students will be learning, IC’s can help teachers gain a deeper understanding of what they teach” (p. 158). Using this as my basis in the coaching session, we examined Mrs. Koester’s PowerPoints to determine what key topics she wanted each PowerPoint to cover and determine a better method to communicate this information to her students. Her current PowerPoints are very “word-heavy” with not many graphical or pictorial representations of the content.

During this coaching session I helped her “clean up” her PowerPoints to make them easier for students to understand the key points she is trying to get across without using all the additional wording. Her slides may be appropriate for a more advanced class with all the content included, but for on-level ninth graders, more pictures and representations are necessary to complement the content on each slide. As Knight also states, “when teachers and students do not have a shared understanding of content, it can cause problems in the classroom” (p. 159). In Mrs. Koester’s situation, students are taking notes in class and are still not really understanding the content. To help guide the content in Mrs. Koester’s PowerPoint slides, I sat down with Mrs. Koester and several of her students to help develop a concept diagram for DNA, the topic they were currently studying. We decided to use only a few students for this initial concept diagram as to not overwhelm Mrs. Koester with this process. Together we created a concept diagram that focused on DNA and its involvement in life processes. This concept diagram then led Mrs. Koester to refocus on her PowerPoint and make sure she was addressed common foundational knowledge and also addressed concepts that students struggle to learn. From there, we revamped her PowerPoint to make it more visually appealing and included several diagrams of DNA from different perspectives as well as a detailed, easy-to-understand diagram of DNA replication. From there, Mrs. Koester was easily able to create a screencast using Screencast-o-matic for the DNA video notes and then uploaded these to her blog for student viewing.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

After this coaching session, Mrs. Koester understood how to redo her PowerPoints and use concept diagrams with her students and to then turn this into a flipped video, but she was feeling very overwhelmed by the whole process. She felt as if she needed to redo all her PowerPoints and make them better, which created a very stressful feeling. As a result, we had a conversation about taking “baby steps” and only doing a little bit at a time to prevent her from feeling overwhelmed. I think she understands the importance of the process and changing her PowerPoints to be more effective for her students, but I think she is still hesitant to make all these changes on top of her already hectic schedule. The coaching session definitely helped her see how her content needs to be adjusted to enhance student understanding and she enjoyed creating the lecture video for her students as well. I think I will need to provide additional support to Mrs. Koester moving forward to help her truly implement flipped classroom videos through effective PowerPoints that address all necessary content.

**Reflection on Challenges and Solution**

Overall, I feel as if this coaching session went quite well, but I think it was definitely the most difficult coaching session of the three. The challenges I faced in this coaching session are those we have discussed in the course and also discussed in the Knight textbook regarding being sensitive to teachers and changes, but they sometimes feel as if they are being personally attacked when a coach critiques something they do. I think initially Mrs. Koester felt as if her PowerPoints were great and covered all necessary information, so she was surprised when she felt as if I was tearing them apart to focus on clear content pieces. After this initial hiccup, Mrs. Koester realized the importance of concept diagrams and how these can be used to not only direct the learning of students, but involve them in their learning too.

I feel as if this coaching session was my most challenging and helped me realize that being a coach is not all rainbows and butterflies. I had a great experience with Mrs. Koester in the first two coaching sessions so I was not expecting anything different in the third. I was shocked by how quickly she became defensive and hesitant to change. I was not prepared for this at all so I really had to adjust my coaching style and help her see the benefits without making her feel as if I was attacking her. It also helped me examine myself and my own practices and how I should really practice what I am preaching to her. Some of my PowerPoints could definitely be revamped to better cover the content and address student learning in a better way. I think I also learned a lot about being a coach in this session. First and foremost, being sensitive to the feelings of who you are coaching is very important. Second, sometimes the people being coached need to taught in a manner that does not overwhelm them. In this particular session, I think I may have threw too much at Mrs. Koester at one time and we both left the session feeling as if we accomplished a lot but also overwhelmed by the amount of work moving forward for Mrs. Koester to truly implement the changes discussed during the coaching session.

**References**

Knight, J. (2007*). Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.